

September 2019 Board Notes—Dr. Tex Sample, SPST Board Chair

The Board of Trustees of Saint Paul School of Theology recently elected three new people to its membership. We are delighted by the commitment to Christ and to the church and to the range and quality of the skills these new members bring to our work as a Board. The descriptions below are necessarily brief but suggest the wealth of capacities each of them brings to our effort. The three are Dana Aldridge, Linda Shipman, and the Rev. David Wiggs.

Dana Aldridge is a Senior Financial Planning and Analysis Executive with SS&C Technologies (Formally DST Systems, Inc.) in Kansas City, Missouri. Having been with the company for 25 years, her major areas of expertise are strategic and operational leadership, budgeting and forecasting, client and product pricing, cost containment strategies, profitability analysis, acquisitions, divestitures and integrations, and operational efficiencies. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Missouri State University, a Graduate Certificate in Project Management from the Keller Graduate School of Management, and a Master of Business Administration from the Keller Graduate School of Management.

Aldridge grew up in a small United Methodist Church about 85 miles southeast of Kansas City where her parents were active members. When she left home for college, she had missed church just one Sunday in her first 18 years of life because she was in the hospital recovering from surgery. God and the church were the number one priority in her family of origin, and that commitment remains true for the household of her husband, her children, and herself today. Her family has now participated in the Liberty United Methodist Church for twenty years, where she has served on the church's Board for six years, with the last two years as Chair. She grew up in a church with an attendance of 50 and now participates and helps to lead a two-campus church of 800 weekly congregants.

Aldridge reports that her small, rural church southeast of Kansas City was a steppingstone for Saint Paul students where the church helped "raise" these students. Some were amazing student pastors, others were not and found a new calling to pursue. Witnessing this "training" in a local, rural church, she realizes that pastors must wear many hats whether the church is small or large, and that formal theological education for pastors must encompass all aspects of social, cultural, and theological teachings in order to become effective church leaders. Recognizing that the allure of the traditional church is fading for many young families, she understands that seminaries and their forms must change to address this new context.

Anticipating retirement in her mid-50s, Aldridge plans to retire "to" something rather than "from" something. Since the unexpected death of her father, she has felt a calling to devote herself more fully to the church. A high school athlete, she has enjoyed working with teams. Being "the boss" does not drive her to work in leadership roles, but rather she loves the rewards of coaching a team to success. In college she struggled with whether to coach basketball or go into business. Choosing the latter, she brought her love of coaching into her career. She thinks team success is far more satisfying for the soul than individual success. In these settings she likes to roll up her sleeves, get her hands dirty, and work alongside people to accomplish goals. She

hopes to continue this calling now, and in her retirement, to continue to coach and work in the church and in theological education.

Linda Shipman is Assistant Director of Corporate Accounting for the Dairy Farmers of America, Inc., in Kansas City, Missouri, where she has been since 2011. She is a CPA and has worked in corporate accounting for Kansas City Southern Railroad, Sprint Corporation, Overland Park Medical Center, and Baird, Kurtz, and Dobson. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration with a dual major in Accounting and Finance from Kansas State University where she graduated Cum Laude. A member of the American Institute of CPAs she is active in the Platte Woods United Methodist Church and in community service.

While she has been a member of Platte Woods UMC for the past 28 years, she grew up in another denominational tradition. In that denomination the coming of a new pastor was a hard experience because of the inconsistency in knowledge and beliefs among these clergy. This led her to embrace the United Methodist tradition. Always believing that knowledge is a key to a successful life, she maintains that our constantly changing world makes knowledge even more important, especially as we work to further the kingdom for Christ. At Platte Woods Church she has served on the Administrative Board, Finance Committee, led many short- and long-term Bible studies, served in student ministry, childcare, and on hospitality teams. For the past eight years she and her husband co-led week-long mission trips to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. In addition to this service to Platte Woods, she and her husband have been active donors to Saint Paul for many years and included the school in their estate planning.

Her specific skills reside in administration, accounting/finance, an analytic approach to problem-solving and planning, and hospitality. In her career she leads teams and finds that she brings these skills and capacities to her work in the church. She especially loves to serve on the hospitality team at Platte Woods. To help visitors find a place at church and to share with members what the church has to offer brings her great satisfaction.

Committed to hospitality, she reports that she served her local church during a difficult time when finances were strained, and the church had to address the leadership of the senior pastor. Serving on the church board she felt that her ability to handle ambiguity, vigorous discussion, teamwork, and confidentiality enabled her to be a calming influence.

The Rev. David Wiggs has been Senior Minister at Boston Avenue United Methodist Church in Tulsa since June 2013. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma, he holds a MDiv from Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. A life-long United Methodist, he has served as an elder in the Oklahoma Annual Conference since graduation from Saint Paul. In his first year back in Oklahoma he worked one year for the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and then for two and a half years as an Associate at Christ UMC. He was then assigned as an associate minister at Boston Avenue from 1987 until 2000. His next appointment was as Senior Minister at First United Methodist Church in Enid and then Superintendent of the Stillwater District, before being reappointed to Boston Avenue as Senior Pastor.

The Boston Avenue UMC has provided an important pulpit for Tulsa and Oklahoma for many years. A large church, its influence extends far beyond its membership and the Tulsa community. That Wiggs had served Boston Avenue 13 years as an associate pastor speaks well of his being brought back there as senior pastor and preacher. He continues an important tradition in a church noted for its prophetic and influential character.

Wiggs has a heart for seminary education and the need for the church to prepare leaders to understand the social, cultural, and ministerial dynamics that shape the church so that these leaders can respond to these dynamics and provide direction in these changing times. He reports that he loved his years at Saint Paul and found it to be some of the most challenging moments of his life. He mentions specifically the integrated and functional theological approach he learned there and the value of this learning to work in a variety of contexts with a diversity of people. This training has proven quite valuable in these polarized times, he reports.

As one can imagine, Wiggs is a pastor with a heavy schedule. Being in the thick of daily life in the church, he believes he has a clear grasp of what leaders need coming out of seminary, and he draws confidence from his conviction that God is always out front creating new opportunities for the gospel. He will bring this attitude with him to the Board of Trustees at Saint Paul. As he comes on the Board, he reports a commitment to being able to speak and listen, to discuss and learn, as he enjoys working on teams.

We greet each of these new Trustees and look forward to many years of working with them.