


ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020





**SINCE 1959, SAINT PAUL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
HAS EDUCATED LEADERS
WHO RENEW THE CHURCH
AND TRANSFORM THE
WORLD.**

OUR MISSION

Centered in Christ and rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary of intentional relationships committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry through rigorous academic life; the exploration of Scripture, tradition, ministry practices; and diverse, contextual experience.

online | on-campus | on mission

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The Reverend Neil B. Blair '80



Dear Alumni and Friends:

This past year has proven an extraordinary one for Saint Paul School of Theology. We have experienced great success in securing the financial health of Saint Paul. Also, we are responding to the urgent need to address issues of race and justice. Additionally, we are pursuing our strategic plan and meeting the disruptions caused by Covid-19.

Enrollment continues to grow at Saint Paul. The last few years we have witnessed double-digit increases. I am pleased to report that this trend continued during the 2019-2020 academic year. Increasing numbers of students see Saint Paul as their first choice for pursuing their vocations. Despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, overall enrollment for 2020-2021 looks promising.

The support so many of you have extended to Saint Paul this year has proven remarkable. Membership in the Saint Paul Council, constituted by alumni and friends who give \$1,000 or more to the annual fund, continues to grow. Thanks to your support, we can now offer a funded scholarship for at least fifty percent of every new student's tuition. In other words, all of you are ensuring that Saint Paul will better serve qualified students called to ministry.

All of us have been concerned about the continuing levels of racial injustice that harm so many in our nation. In response, Board Chair Rev. Dr. Tex Sample

and I issued a position statement for Saint Paul earlier this spring. Since that time, I have undertaken additional steps to act on that position statement.

For example, in my President's Report during our July 9 - 10 Board of Trustees meeting, I declared that addressing the issues of racial justice and racism will form a key goal of our strategic plan. Also, I invited Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Cleaver, III, Senior Pastor of the St. James United Methodist Church in Kansas City and an alumnus of Saint Paul, to lead our board through an examination of racial justice issues in the Church and how we at Saint Paul might address those issues. This work will continue in the months ahead, and I look forward to sharing more about our progress.

Focusing on two central tenets of our strategic plan, we have emphasized efforts to deepen our relationships with Church of the Resurrection and to cultivate other partnerships that will prove mutually beneficial. These partnerships will advance our mission and enhance our capacity for serving our students. Deepening our commitment to diversity within the Saint Paul community also draws from our strategic plan. Utilizing the Intercultural Development Inventory, we will examine how to make Saint Paul more diverse and inclusive.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of our faculty and staff this spring. Like every educational institution in the nation attempting

to move to online education, we had to move all our classes online in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike so many other institutions, our transition proved virtually seamless; we made the transition in less than forty-eight hours! Our efforts were facilitated by the remarkable efforts of our faculty and staff over the preceding two years. Thanks to you and your financial support to upgrade the technological capacity of our FLEX curriculum and schedule. The Saint Paul community's foresight and effort ensured that our students continue to be well-served academically while remaining physically safe.

All these accomplishments would be diminished without the support all of you have extended to our Seminary. On behalf of the faculty, staff, students, and Board of Trustees, I convey our deep affection and appreciation to all of you.

Blessed by God in Christ every day,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil Blair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Neil B. Blair '80
President, Saint Paul School of Theology

SPACE TO BECOME



Saint Paul School of Theology is committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry. We are one institution offering courses online and on-campus in Kansas and Oklahoma. This year, we are proud to celebrate our 60th anniversary with a renewed commitment to forming spiritual leaders rooted in the Wesleyan tradition. As part of our 60th-anniversary festivities, we will welcome Saint Paul past president, Dr. Lovett Weems, to mark the occasion. In addition, we will honor our 2020 Distinguished Graduate Award Winner Rev. Dr. Lois V. Glory-Neal, the first Native American woman to be ordained elder and serve as District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church.

In the past year, Saint Paul has realized important gains in enrollment and significant additions to faculty and staff. Under the leadership of Director of Admissions Shannon Hancock '10, we've seen enrollment in masters and doctoral degree programs increase by 11%. An alumna herself, her understanding of seminary life and vocational discernment allows her to connect with prospective students and guide them down the path of admission. In 2019, Dr. Casey Sigmon joined us as Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship and Director of Contextual Education and brings her understanding of ministry and the digital age to our community. Dr. Sigmon has made innovative changes to the weekly worship service as Chapel Coordinator. Saint Paul also welcomed Dr. Anne Walker as the

new Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Religious Education. Dr. Walker's focus on religious education, vocational discernment and development of youth, and intersectionality of race and ministry provides unique perspectives to students, faculty, and staff.

Saint Paul is grateful for the many partnerships that help us to cultivate the leading edge of education for pastoral ministry. We continue important partnerships with Oklahoma City University and Church of the Resurrection, even as we make space to establish new alliances for continued growth. The Oklahoma campus launched the VisionOK Steering Committee, a group of alumni and community partners invested in the cultivation of Saint Paul's impact in Oklahoma. VisionOK has helped us to understand the importance of Saint Paul's leadership in cultivating innovative ministry in Oklahoma, in supporting pastoral leaders who are women and people of color, and in establishing relationships with Native American communities across the state.

In the past academic year, Saint Paul Course of Study (COS) School educated 265 individual students with a total registration of 650 classes; offering a total of 53 courses located in Leawood, KS; Hays, KS; Oklahoma City, OK; Columbia, MO; and Springfield, MO. Saint Paul is in the second year of offering a

hybrid (online and on-campus) schedule for six courses during the Winter term. Plans to increase the number of hybrid courses are in development. We are thankful for the leadership of Dr. Israel Kamudzandu in the development of Saint Paul's multifaceted Course of Study program.

Perhaps most importantly, we have learned much and grown closer as a community as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our faculty was uniquely adept at managing technology in the classroom which made the transition to all online courses a smooth process. And led by Dr. Sigmon and Associate Dean of Student Affairs Margareta Narcisse '04, Saint Paul has discovered new ways to worship, to communicate, and to celebrate together. Our online Senior Chapel proved sacred space and community can be forged via Zoom. Beyond scheduled worship, pop-up online prayer meetings and gatherings have sustained

our community. Unfortunately, in light of the rising rate in COVID-19 cases in both Kansas and Oklahoma and the many risks that accompany large gatherings of people, we decided to cancel our 2020 Commencement that had been rescheduled for August. Instead, graduates were mailed their diplomas, gifts from the Student Council and Alumni Association, and ribbon wands to celebrate their achievements. Additionally, a digital commemorative yearbook honoring the class of 2020 went out to all our students. We look forward to celebrating our 2020 graduates at a future date.

Our Director of Alumni and Partner Relations Dr. Melissa Pearce '15 has spent the last year reaching out to students, donors, and alumni to hear the stories of their time at Saint Paul and beyond. She has been intentional this year to sustain connections with alumni within the UMC as well

as initiate or rekindle relationships with alumni of other denominations and those with ministries outside the pulpit. Their stories, along with news, SPST shirts, masks, and more have been shared throughout the Saint Paul community on social media and the monthly Connection e-newsletter. Even in this time of social distancing, the Saint Paul community has found space to belong.

Due to an intense focus on finances these last years, the seminary remains in solid financial position during these unsettled times and continues to be thankful for donations from the community which provide technology, scholarships, and emergency assistance to students. May we continue to live into the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses for healing in a broken world for years to come.



NAVIGATING SPACE IS A PART OF BEING HUMAN.

Our bodies require physical residence to exist. We are constantly occupying and moving from one space to another. We spend resources on making space beautiful and optimally comfortable. We travel to find new spaces to explore.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted our normal routines, but it has also forced an examination of space. The span of six feet has taken on significant meaning. Bedroom corners and kitchen tables have morphed into make-shift offices and classrooms as the boundaries between home, school, and work blurred. Even sanctuaries, places deemed sacred, have sat empty. Yet worship has still taken place, and church still exists. It has brought into focus the concept that sacred space transcends walls and is more about relationships with others and interaction with the Spirit rather than where or how we gather.

Saint Paul School of Theology has always known this and has focused its mission of theological education around recognizing the holiness found in relationships with neighbors and with the Divine. Understanding and teaching contextual ministry is the core of Saint Paul and drives its curriculum, worship, and relationships. Our community is full of practitioners seeking and making others aware of the sacred space around us. Today, we offer the story of four individuals — a student, two alumni, and a Board of Trustee Life Member — who are intentional about space to usher the way for the Divine.



Sara Martin

As we sat on the steps of her first appointment, First United Methodist Church of Guthrie, Oklahoma, I grappled with the juxtaposition of her age and the poise with which she detailed her call to ministry and her habit of “following God” faithfully and intentionally.

Almost twenty-two, Sara Martin claimed with confidence and boldness how the question posed to her at Youth Force — “Have you ever considered ministry as a vocation?” — changed her life. At the age of 16, she had not thought about full-time ministry, but the seed was planted, and Sara began to ponder if “maybe there were places in the church where I could use my gifts and talents,” and affirmations of these wonderings began to emerge. |

It was just three weeks later while on vacation in Dallas that Sara randomly met Oklahoma City University Professor of Hebrew, Dr. Lisa Wolfe. Sara listened as Dr. Wolfe explained the 3+3 partnership where students would condense the four-year course of study for the new seminary track of the Bachelor of Arts in religion into three years followed by the completion of the three-year Master of Divinity degree at Saint Paul School of Theology. Sara, still unsure of what she would pursue after high school, tucked the information away. However, she grinned when she relayed this to me as she now knows that her path was being set without her fully understanding it at the time.

Once Sara did discern more fully that indeed she would commit to a pastoral vocation, she did so with deep intent. She continued to be active in the United Methodist Church in Prague, OK, as well as a Certified Lay Servant, which has offered opportunities to write devotions and deliver sermons. Her affiliation with the Oklahoma Conference Council of Youth Ministry has lent practical experience in writing curriculum, leading small groups, facilitating

conversation, and organizing events. She enrolled and graduated at OCU and will start her first year of Seminary at Saint Paul in August of 2020 while also seeking certified candidate status in the UMC.

Sara has also served beyond the Oklahoma Conference as a board member on the General Board of Church and Society for the last four years. During this tenure, she has developed a curiosity and purpose for understanding the relationship between ministry and disabled congregates and what it means to build an inclusive ministry. Her senior paper, *Developing a Disability Positive Hermeneutical Approach for Preaching and Teaching*, stemmed from this passion. She has also co-authored a paper with Dr. Leslie Long, *Web Accessibility and the Church in the 21st Century*, which examines “ways religious educators, service providers, and disability advocates can work towards creating an accessible learning environment whether virtual or in person.” She is currently working with the United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disability caucus group and is committed to creating more accessible space at the table.

She is excited about serving her first appointment and like a wise-sage, she offered that a great deal of her leadership will include listening as the congregation has much to teach her. She hopes to build inter-generational partnerships that spur ministry that is fully inclusive and sets the example of how to love God and neighbor. She proudly detailed the history of the church and offered a description of the congregation as faithful and ever-learning servants.

She chuckled as she ended our conversation telling me that it seems fitting that her first appointment is in Guthrie. "It is the first home of Oklahoma City University in a way." She explained how "the second incarnation of Epworth University (Oklahoma Methodist University)" settled in Guthrie in 1911 before moving to Oklahoma City and becoming Oklahoma City College in 1922. It seems that Sara will be attending Saint Paul on the OCU campus and leading just down the road from its genesis. We both found some irony and the Divine in the symmetry of it all.

Emily Stirewalt & Kelli Hansen



Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals and other health care facilities have become the front lines, and we have honored and celebrated our health care workers serving our nation's most vulnerable populations. For the church, the role of chaplain has also been elevated, particularly as most buildings have been

shuttered in favor of social-distanced worship and spiritual care. Being present with and helping others awaken to holiness in vulnerable moments is the difficult task of the chaplain in "normal times." Social distancing creates entirely different challenges.

Two Saint Paul graduates shared their experiences with chaplaincy in the time of COVID-19. Rev. Emily L. Stirewalt (M. Div., 2011), an Elder in the UMC Missouri Annual Conference and whose appointment with her local church ended in June, will begin a residency in the clinical pastoral education (CPE) program at Saint Luke's Hospital this fall. Kelli Hansen (M.Div., 2016), who received her Spiritual Directors Certification through the Mount St. Scholastica Souljourners program just months after graduating from Saint Paul, is a chaplain at Truman Medical Center at Hospital Hill in Kansas City. She began her CPE at Saint Luke's Health System in Kansas City in 2016 and will complete more than 2000 hours of post-CPE experience as part of her certification. She will be ordained in the UCC in September 2020.

Although their path to and experience in full-time chaplaincy differs, both alumni share a common purpose of the ministry they are doing. They both understand the

importance of meeting people in a particular moment, and regardless of the physical and emotional space between them, forging a connection to help see the Spirit's dwelling among them and receive the gifts of hope and love. Chaplain Hansen is very clear that she does not "create a sacred space—I invite another person to become aware or mindful that the Holy is already there." She uses the story of Ruth to help illustrate her work. "I invite them to remember times and places where they can be in touch with their own sense of the Holy. I offer comfort—a tangible version of the hands and feet of God when someone feels so alone in an institution where they are sick, hurt, scared, and unsure what is happening or what will happen next. I offer advocacy, when appropriate, for someone who may not have the courage to speak their voice or doesn't know they have the right to do so. When Ruth tells Naomi she will go with her through anything, that is a significant way I see the role of



chaplain. There is nothing (short of someone saying I do not want your presence) that I won't accompany someone through."

Rev. Stirewalt echoed her colleague's description and offered that "you are meeting the divinity in the humanity" and that for her, even when those needing help are not present, you feel the Spirit move in clinical staff meetings or when you are alone charting visits. She offered a story to illustrate her perspective. "During my first CPE extended unit, I was surprised to be included on the medical team for patients. Nurses and social workers asked me questions and valued my insights. The most striking example was when a doctor asked me if she made the right decision to put an ethics consultation in on a particularly heartbreaking case. She felt as though the patient's parents

were not offering the best care possible to their child. I reassured her decision. She thanked me. I will never forget that patient, the parents, or the doctor. Being included in that small way had a profound effect on me. I believe that is because I saw myself participating in Kin-dom work. I have always understood the reign of God to be a time when all God's children will be valued fully, a space where all will be free from harm. The doctor was seeking to follow her vow 'to do no harm.' I was following mine as well."

Both alumni shared thoughts on how chaplaincy has changed because of COVID-19. As Chaplain Hansen described it, chaplains "tangibly show up to remind the patient, the staff, and family, that each of these persons matters and has worth." Rev. Stirewalt's experience is similar: "The hallways of the hospital, the patient's rooms, even the Spiritual Wellness office at Saint Luke's all felt sacred to me during the work of chaplaincy." Social distancing makes showing up "tangibly" a challenge and requires sacred space that transcends the physical - the rooms and hallways. For some time, all in-person visits were shut down. Even as they have begun to open up, Chaplain Hansen reminds us that phone visits can be "more fruitful than one may imagine" due to the intention to honor sacred space virtually. This environment can "offer a sense of freedom to share deep conversation—perhaps due to less fear of judgment." However, she notes, social distancing can prevent the element of touch, especially during times of prayer, which can be very healing. Special attention to proper hygiene is essential where an offer of touch is appropriate.

Rev. Stirewalt stresses how the "pandemic has made chaplaincy more relevant than ever before. Chaplains are often the ones who witnessed people taking their last breaths and then told their families that they did not die alone. Our work matters." Indeed, it does.

Sally Firestone



force and a doer of justice.

This is an impressive resume, but perhaps she is best defined by her faith and her love of neighbor, which is apparent when she speaks of how she made sense of her life after suffering a broken neck in the 1981 Hyatt Skyway collapse and the way she has lived since. When asked, Ms. Firestone expressed no bitterness about her injuries that lead to her C4 quadriplegic status and "becoming a member of the community of those with disabilities." Indeed, she detailed that the physical space that failed that evening and resulted in her injuries did not spur self-pity or anger; rather, it sparked "new passion and purpose" and pushed her to become an advocate and to find ways to support the arts, religion, and education.

She became personally aware of how space — even space deemed sacred — can hinder one's full personhood if intentional measures for accessibility are not included in the design of buildings and public spaces. Ms. Firestone's advocacy work included serving on the Mayor's Council for People with Disabilities and the Access Coalition of The Whole Person organization. She was instrumental in the development of accessibility plans for several key places in the metro, including the Kansas City Zoo, Lyric Theater, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Repertory Theater,

Ms. Sally Firestone is a community advocate, a daughter and niece of UMC pastors, a former employee of IBM, a lover of the arts, a founder of a granting foundation, a knowledgeable theologian, a resident of Kingswood Senior Living Community, and an active member of Central UMC in Kansas City. She has been described as a

the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Jazz District and Central UMC. She also offered insights for both Saint Paul's Truman Road Campus and the current campus in Leawood. In 2016, The Whole Person organization awarded her the Paul H. Levy Founders Award for her work.

Ms. Firestone also wanted to support religion, education, and art, but she did not want to start her own charity; rather she wanted to partner with established organizations to increase the breadth of spaces she could champion. She started the Sally A. Firestone Foundation and has offered financial and volunteer support for several non-profits, including her alma mater - Illinois Wesleyan University - and Saint Paul.

She has served numerous organizations, including the Kansas City Academy, AbilityKC, reStart Inc., the Kansas City Jazz Museum, and Kingswood Senior Living Community. Ms. Firestone has been a significant partner of Saint Paul for over thirty years. She served on the board of trustees at the invitation of President Weems. After 21 years of service as a trustee, she is now a Lifetime Member and will be honored with the Lifetime Member Trustees awards at the 60th Anniversary Gala in the Spring of 2021. When asked for her hopes for Saint Paul, her response is "to continue to be a progressive voice of justice and hope."

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Heartland South District in memory of Eloise R. Knight

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Russell E. Anderson '03/'17
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Lynne Overall
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Mrs. Jo Ann Pottorff in memory of Nancy
Brown

Mr. David Ratcliff and Mrs. Emily Ratcliff in
memory of Hazel A. Arnpriester
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Rood
Rev. Mary E. Scott
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Mrs. Lois Slofosky and Mr. Kenneth
Slofosky in memory of Hazel A.
Arnpriester
Mrs. Jennifer M. Smith
Mr. Stephen S. and Mrs. Martha N. Sparks
Mrs. Marianne Vermeer and Mr. Robert
Johnson, Jr. in memory of Hazel A.
Arnpriester
Dr. Anne Walker
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Wilder
Rev. Vida R. Williams '09

GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU...
FOR WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE IT
WILL BE MEASURED BACK TO YOU.

Luke 6:38



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND BEQUESTS

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

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David L. and Julia R. Chinn

Rev. Kathleen Clark '85

Dr. William R. '75 and Mrs. Sarah J. Clark

Ms. Sally A. Firestone

Rev. Carol E. Green '83

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Reverend Harold Dean Knewtson

Reverend Sandra L. Nenadal '92

Bill and Marilyn Taylor

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BEQUESTS

Mr. Laurence E. Hanna

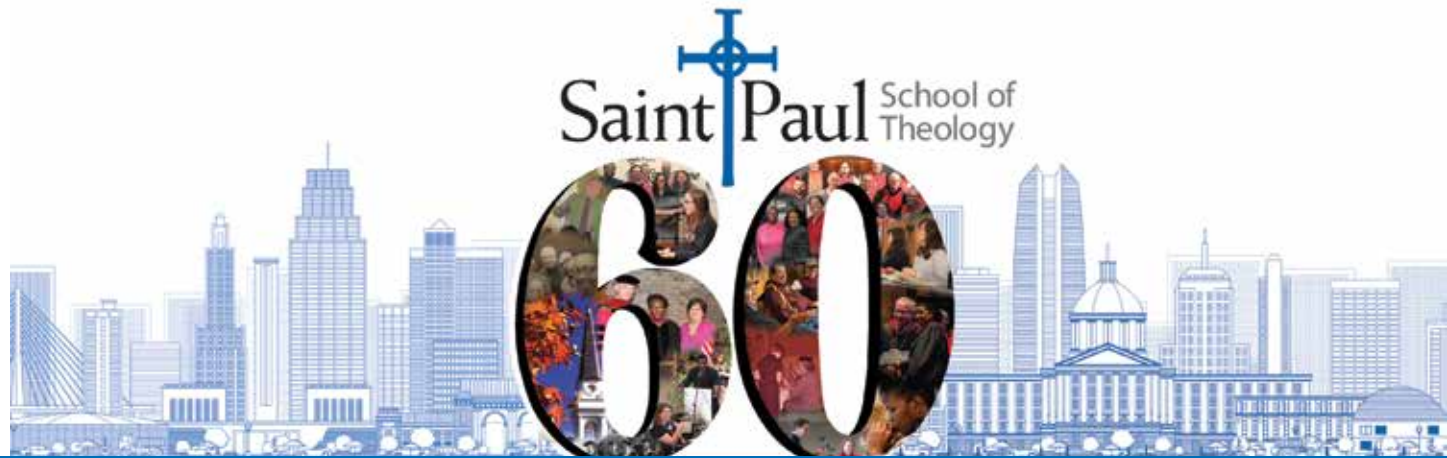
Mr. Robert B. and Mrs. Kathleen Rogers

Travis Campbell Estate

#GIVINGTUESDAY

On Tuesday, December 3, 2019, Saint Paul School of Theology, to support the seminary's mission, once again joined non-profit organizations around the world to collect donations on #GivingTuesday. Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, #GivingTuesday is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. For #GivingTuesday 2019, the seminary not only met but exceeded its \$5,000 goal by raising \$6,310 towards student scholarships. Thank you for being the power behind Saint Paul! It is only your graciousness that allows us to continue our mission - even amid a pandemic. We can't say thanks enough for all your support, and we look forward to joining this global giving movement again on Tuesday, December 1, 2020.

SAVE THE DATE
DECEMBER 1, 2020



Join Us in a Celebration Banquet Honoring the
60th Anniversary of Saint Paul School of Theology

Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Dr. Weems served eighteen years as a seminary president at Saint Paul School of Theology. Following his time at Saint Paul, he became Wesley Seminary's Distinguished Professor of Church Leadership and Founding Director and Senior Consultant of Wesley's G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

Friday, April 16, 2021

6:00 pm Check-In, Meet & Mingle • 6:30 pm Dinner

Sheraton Overland Park Hotel at the Convention Center • 6100 College Blvd, Overland Park, KS 66211

\$35 per person • RSVP by February 28, 2021 • spst.edu/special-event/

Let's get social at SPST1958

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