

Saint Paul School of Theology Board Notes
May 2021
Tex Sample, Board Chair

Congratulations to the Class of 2021

First, we congratulate the Class of 2021 at Saint Paul School of Theology. In a very real sense, to complete a theological degree is to begin a new life with new opportunities and responsibilities. Receiving degrees this year were 12 Master of Divinity students, 1 Master of Arts in Theological Studies, 3 Master of Arts in Christian Ministry, and 1 Doctor of Ministry. We certainly honor all these graduates and wish for each one of them many years of ministry and fruitful work in the church and the wider society and world. We look forward with genuine anticipation to the contributions these graduates will make in the near and ongoing future. Note, too, that the celebration of the 2020 and 2021 Commencement occurred via Zoom this year.

New Faces at Saint Paul

We are delighted to welcome four new people to our Saint Paul community. First, we are pleased to announce that **Dr. Joshua Bartholomew** will join the faculty this fall as Assistant Professor of Ethics, Church and Society. Having recently received his PhD (2019) from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, he holds a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York and a Bachelor of Science degree from Fordham University. His book, *Black Theology and The Black Panthers*, will soon be published by Fortress Press. He worked most recently as Adjunct Professor of Religious and Theological Studies at Iliff School of Theology and Research Project Coordinator for the Institute for the Study of the Black Christian Experience.

Secondly, **Dr. Lucas Endicott** is the new Regional Director of Course of Study. He comes to us from the position of Associate Director for the Office of Mission, Service, and Justice in the Missouri Annual Conference. Holding an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Administration, he is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Dr. Jeanne Hoeft, Saint Paul VPAAD, commented, "Dr. Endicott shares Saint Paul's commitment to theological education through Course of Study in service to the church. He brings creative energy and a wealth of experience to this role. I have no doubt that the Course of Study Regional School at Saint Paul will continue to thrive and grow with his leadership."

Thirdly, we welcome new Board member, **the Rev. Martin (Tino) Herrera**. Currently, a Congregational Care pastor at the Church of the Resurrection on the Leawood campus, he is a graduate of Saint Paul school of Theology (2017). Originally from Oklahoma, he served as a youth pastor and associate pastor at McFarlin UMC. In his pastoral mission statement, he describes himself as a "deeply committed Christ follower who is passionate about shepherding individuals to Christ, engaging the community in missionary work and community outreach, and devising strategies to sustain long-term goals for the church." We celebrate his coming to the Board of Trustees.

Finally, many of you will remember **Rabbi Michael Zedek**, who served as Senior Rabbi at Temple B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, Missouri, and worked as a Saint Paul Adjunct Professor in Bible and Midrash from 1985 – 1991. More recently he was Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati and Senior Rabbi at Emanuel Congregation in Chicago. As Rabbi-in-Residence at Saint Paul, he will teach part-time courses in Judaism and in inter-religious dialogue and collaboration, as well as advising students on what "every Christian minister should know about Judaism."

April 2021 Board Meeting

Several trustees remarked after the April Board meeting that it was one of our very best. The Trustees have increasingly asked that we spend less time hearing reports and more time in conversation and thinking about the future of Saint Paul, which we certainly did at this last Board meeting. One of the highlights clearly was the presentation by Saint Paul Alumni, Rev. Dr. Ben Boswell's DMin thesis, "Identifying Whiteness: Discerning Race

through Spiritual Practice in the White Dominant Church.” The format of the presentation was one in which his DMin advisor, Dr. James Brandt, Professor of Historical Theology at Saint Paul, asked questions and Dr. Boswell responded. Pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC, Dr. Boswell has received numerous awards and honors for his work as a pastor and social justice leader. In 2021, he was awarded the prestigious Martin Luther King Jr. Medallion, the city’s highest honor given to a person who embodies the legacy of Dr. King by promoting racial equality, social justice, and community service.

On the second day of the meeting, the Board spent over two hours discussing visions for the school. This was a brainstorming session, not a time for taking action, so that the Board could think outside the box and, at this point, simply generate ideas and open itself to the future.

The President’s Report featured comments by some members of the Executive Leadership Team.

Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Jay Simmons, spoke to the development of a grant seeking \$50,000 from the Pathways for the Future Lily program. The school has secured the services of Dr. Sharon Tan to write the grant proposal.

Associate Dean of Academic Programs and Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus, Anne Walker, provided an update of the work Oklahoma developing an Oklahoma steering committee and building relationships in Oklahoma in support of our students there. Oklahoma City University also has a new president, Dr. Kenneth R. Evans.

Rev. Sharon Hancock was introduced as the new Executive Director of Admissions and Communications. She reported that our recruitment goal for this year is 33, and that we are halfway there, an achievement for which she praised Tiana Gatewood, Director of Events and Public Relations. She also observed that interest in the DMin program is strong, and she further invited Trustees to take courses at the school.

In his report, President Blair stated that we have had a 51% growth in the annual fund since a year ago and that we are in the silent phase of a capital campaign to provide scholarships for racial/ethnic students. The President also spoke of developing a relationship with Philander Smith College and its president, Dr. Roderick Smothers, Sr.

Reports of Trustee Committees

The Academic Committee reported that educational effectiveness and student learning outcomes are solid, and that the Higher Learning Commission monitoring process is going well. Further, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Self-Study is well underway and in good shape with the onsite visit of the ATS team set for September 27 – 29, 2021.

The Governance Committee reported that Saint Paul now stands ready to move from the previous four years when the institution was dealing with first, survival, then, stability, and that it is now ready to move into the future as it discerns a new vision with a search for best practices in management and communication. President Blair will work with Executive Coach, Gail Parker, as part of this new pivot in the direction of the school.

The Resource Committee described the school’s financial picture in highly positive terms. Revenue is up 7%, the budget is \$436,174 ahead of target, and net income is up \$200K+ year over year; the Seminary is fully funded out of operations with no endowment drawdowns covering operational expenses. All drawdowns cover scholarships or chairs. Saint Paul has \$40 million in assets and only \$1 million in liabilities (most liabilities are non-cash: vacation accruals, timing of payables, etc.). This is the best budget report the school has had since the U.S. financial crisis of 2008 – 2010.

The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee noted that the strategic priorities in our Strategic Plan from now to 2023 will be:

Goal 2: to develop a carefully recruited diverse student body

Goal 3: to employ a faculty able to address changing realities in the church and in the wider world

Goal 5: to create an environment of cultural awareness, diversity, equality, and social justice on campus and in our learning environments

The committee is further working to update key performance indicators (KPIs) in order to gain markers and metrics that serve as suitable targets to identify the accomplishments of goals.

The Trust and Collaboration Task Force concluded its work as of the Board meeting on April 15 – 16. Important discussions were held by the Task Force around issues of organizational culture, additional support for diversity in the school, careful attention to marginal voices, and other issues. The Task Force recommended that it be dismantled and that the Trustees form a new task force dedicated, in part, to the identification and implementation of best practices around these important issues.

CELEBRATION

Finally, note that the 60th anniversary of Saint Paul will be held on Friday, October 22, at the Sheraton Hotel in Overland Park, Kansas. Please join us. You can register by going to the school webpage:

<https://www.spst.edu/upcoming-banquet-honors-60th-anniversary-of-saint-paul-school-of-theology/>