


# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



**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.

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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The Reverend Neil B. Blair '80



Dear Alumni and Friends of Saint Paul School of Theology:

The communications and newsletters you have received from Saint Paul this year have all promoted a theme built around the streams of life. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic for the past year, I am pleased to report that our Seminary has been blessed by good fortune from a variety of lifegiving streams. Enrollment during the 2020-2021 academic year remained stable from the positive increase in the student body we experienced in 2019-2020. Stable enrollment, coupled with strong gains in our endowment, ensured robust financial health for Saint Paul. Especially gratifying were the contributions so many of you shared so generously through your Annual Fund and Scholarship gifts.

During this last year, Saint Paul has continued the efforts I mentioned last year to promote our efforts to address issues of racial justice both within our Seminary and in the larger community. In the 2020 Annual Report, I shared news that Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Cleaver, III, Senior Pastor of the St. James United Methodist Church in Kansas City and an alumnus of

Saint Paul, led our board through an examination of racial justice issues in the Church and how we at Saint Paul might address those issues.

To deepen our understanding of these issues and therefore better equip us to address them, we have continued to invite guest speakers at each of our board meetings who shared their expertise and insight. Last October, Dr. Jennifer Harvey, Professor of Religion at Drake University where she also serves as Faculty Director for the Crew Scholars Program, described how that program increased graduation rates for Black and Latinx students to levels higher than for the majority of students at Drake. In April, Saint Paul alumnus Rev. Dr. Benjamin Boswell, Senior Minister of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, reported on his work to promote anti-racism education. Our July 2021 Board meeting featured another alumnus, The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II of the U.S. House of Representatives, who offered an overview of the challenges and opportunities in working toward racial justice.

You have read in other publications from Saint Paul how our instructional technology, coupled with the

FLEX curriculum and schedule so inventively created by our faculty, ensured continuity in our instructional programs throughout the pandemic. Recognizing that the pandemic accelerated the transition to broader use of digital platforms in education, we invested another \$200,000 this spring in enhancing our various online capabilities. Saint Paul continues to employ some of the most innovative instructional technology available in all of education.

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

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil Blair". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Neil" and last name "Blair" clearly distinguishable.

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



# STREAMS OF CHANGE

This past year, we have all faced new challenges amid these unsettled times. Saint Paul School of Theology began the 2020-2021 academic year offering students an online option for all courses. With many students choosing to attend class solely online, our Student Council created a monthly “Chat & Chew” where students, faculty, and staff came together to eat lunch and talk about life, seminary, and ministry. In addition, Rev. Rod Newman, our Oklahoma Campus Chapel Coordinator, crafted a weekly Community Prayer to provide encouragement and faithfulness as the school seeks to provide spiritual formation in new ways.

Kansas Campus Chapel Coordinator Dr. Casey Sigmon took worship to new technological levels by introducing our weekly online worship service via Zoom, bringing our separate campus chapel services together for one service where all are invited to create a sacred atmosphere from wherever they are. Along with our featured alumni worship preachers, the community was blessed last fall by the presence of Musician in Residence Hannah Rand, from The Many, who led the music each week for worship. In Spring 2021, Odell Talley, Director of Music for Swope Parkway United and organist for Zion Travelers Missionary Baptist, served as Musician in Residence. For those who cannot join us live, chapel recordings are available on the Saint Paul YouTube channel.

Saint Paul staff and faculty continue to contribute to the academy, church, and society.

This year, we added new adjunct professors, including Rev. Dr. Carol Cook-Moore and Rev. Dr. Tiffany Nagel Monroe both of the OKUMC, Rev. Dr. Robert Turner of Vernon Chapel AME, UMC Deaconess Cindy Johnson of Rio Grande Conference, Rev. Adam Hamilton and Debi Nixon both of Church of the Resurrection, Rev. Chebon Kernell of the UMC Native American Comprehensive Plan, and Rev. Dr. Shannon Fleck of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches.

Unlike years past, we have faced several challenges that turned into opportunities for new recruiting spaces and partnerships to enhance students’ seminary experience. With the change from in-person to virtual events, Rev. Shannon Hancock, Director of Admissions and Communications, has expanded her reach to prospective students by participating as a virtual exhibitor at online conferences. Rev. Hancock engages with prospective students via apps such as Whova and HopIn to highlight Saint Paul’s unique course delivery system and formative community.

In February, Saint Paul held the 2021 Slater-Willson Lecture online featuring Rev. Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre. His lecture, “Why Do They Come?” explored the political, economic, and social causes of our current immigration crisis. Before the lecture, Rev. Dr. De La Torre participated in a student-led forum, entering a conversation centering around the practical aspects of ministry and immigration. Later in April, Saint Paul Evangelical Society, led by Dr. Hal Knight, hosted a lecture given



by Dr. Sammy G. Alfaro, Associate Professor of Theology at Grand Canyon University and Pastor of Iglesia Nuevo Dia (New Day Church), on the “Pastoral Strategies for Ministering Among Latinx Immigrant Communities.” And for the first time, on May 22, Saint Paul held a virtual commencement celebration with videos, cap and gown photos, online congratulatory messages from friends and family, and a commencement address by Rev. Chebon Kernell. The class of 2021 had 18 graduates, including 12 Master of Divinity and 1 Doctor of Ministry graduates. Due to the pandemic, for safety concerns, Saint Paul has canceled our 60th Anniversary Celebration.

For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, Saint Paul Course of Study (COS) School educated 255 individual students, 40 of which were new students, with a total registration of 520 classes and offering a total of 51 courses. Due to Covid-19, the school quickly pivoted its course offerings and delivered lessons in both asynchronous and synchronous online formats. In Winter 2019, Saint Paul began a hybrid (online and on-campus) schedule for six courses. Although for 2021, this went fully online, plans to increase the number of hybrid course offerings are in development.

Saint Paul Board of Trustees added three new members to their ranks: Bishop James D. Tindall, Sr.,

Pastor Emeritus at Metropolitan Spiritual Church of Christ Kansas City; Ms. Sharon Cleaver, Senior Director of Marketing, Communications, and PR for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City; and Mr. Rogers Strickland, Founder/CEO of Strickland Construction.

Through a Board initiative related to diversity and inclusion, Saint Paul created a working group on Native American theology and ministries comprised of Native theologians and church leaders. Their efforts are focused on how the church and academy can work together toward healing generational trauma related to the spread of Christianity and the genocide of Indigenous North Americans.

As we have happily reported in past years, Saint Paul is financially sound and operates with a balanced budget. The changes made these last years have established a solid financial foundation for years of sustainability. We continue to be grateful for donations from the community that provide technology, scholarships, and emergency assistance to students. Our significant investments in technology have recently allowed our staff, faculty, and students to transition to a fully hybrid educational delivery model providing a safe learning environment during the pandemic. Our faculty was uniquely adept at managing technology

in the classroom before the pandemic, making the transition to all online courses a smooth process.

With the Board's assistance, led by Board Chair Rev. Dr. Tex Sample, the seminary focuses on its mission. Our trustees work to continuously enhance and evaluate the strategic plans in place to guide us into the future. Perhaps most importantly, we have learned much and grown closer as a community due to the pandemic.

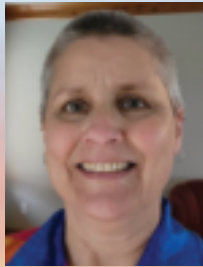
Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking more to answer the call. We are a seminary that offers online and on-campus classes with a flexible schedule to help our students manage pastoral leadership demands in the 21st century. We are grateful for your support of our students and our seminary. May we continue to live into the call of Jesus Christ to be faithful witnesses for healing in these unsettled times and for generations to come.



## STREAMS OF LIFE

Saint Paul has always been a seminary focused on context, community, and creativity. Courses are designed to stretch students both spiritually and academically. Critical thinking is honed in the classroom and through the community. Theology is stripped down, examined through diverse lenses, and reformed with deeper tetherings and textures. All of this is done while context and community are held paramount and creativity expected and encouraged.

It is no wonder that Saint Paul alumni prove to be innovative spiritual leaders. Some of our alum's work is being done from the pulpit, but afresh as it pushes against oppressive systems and dares to bring full life to all. Other alumni are carving out new spaces and building new ministries beyond the church walls. We proudly highlight three alums that are the epitome of Saint Paul's shaping.



### **Angela Fritzsche-Eklund**

For the past several years, soon-to-be Dr. Angela Fritzsche-Eklund's vocation has centered around the private practice of addiction counseling and volunteer work within Missouri prisons. She described the difference between

her Master of Arts in Psychology as a counselor, she waits for the door to be opened by her clients to talk about God and theology. "Since I have worked for private companies and there are rules, I have to be more subtle with discussions and cannot introduce religious conversations, but if a client initiates talk about God, then you better believe I will grab the opportunity." During her tenure as a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry student at Saint Paul and her experience within the Prison Ministry immersion led by Dr. Stan Basler, Fritzsche-Eklund discerned a call to minister with inmates and has done so for the past seven years. "Dr. Basler's immersion was incredible, and I could see such a need to keep going back and knew I had to." She details that she can center the conversations on God, love, and grace without restrictions when she enters the prisons.

She does offer a significant similarity between the two settings: relationship and support. Both positions - paid counselor or prison volunteer - require building a connection with another and helping that person recognize or build a support system. Fritzsche-Eklund emphasized that the classes and community at Saint Paul helped realize that ministry is about relationships and empowering others. "Often helping people see the support they have or connecting them to the people and things they need is what I do. People need community to survive. You would be surprised that support is not always huge things. For people leaving prison, a coat or a bike can go a long way."

Fritzsche-Eklund has recently returned to Saint Paul as a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) student. She knew that she needed further studies both for the training and to legitimize her authority. "I have some things to say and do. I feel like the D. Min will give people a reason to listen to me." She was also intrigued by the new Spiritual Leadership in Unsettled Times and enrolled in the initial cohort. She was sensing a further call to focus on the systems that undergird many of the addiction and incarceration cases she encounters. "I am feeling called to be an agitator. I want to disrupt the systems and call attention to their unfairness. I am ready to go the center of it all and cause some noise to bring about change."

She feels the D. Min, along with the example of many of her professors, including the long history of Dr. Tex Sample as a community organizer and advocate, is preparing her to do just this. Her program thesis will be on the mandate of Matthew 25 ("...when I was in prison and you came to visit me") and exploring innovative ways of accomplishing prison ministry.

Angela Fritzsche-Eklund has recently relocated with her wife of 23 years to Michigan to be closer to her mother and extended family. Her three adopted children are now young adults, giving her more time to make "good trouble" in Detroit. "I am ready to shake things up and call attention to the brokenness of our social systems. Racism and mass incarceration is real and needs to be pushed against." She is emphatic and eager to connect to social justice groups and use her newfound skills as a spiritual leader in unsettled times. "I am thankful for Saint Paul — training me to ask the hard questions about where God is in the mess of it all. Learning to question and doubt and struggle where God is and what God is doing helps point me where I need to be."





## Rev. Charity Goodwin

Reverend Charity Goodwin speaks of her ministry in terms of buckets as if she has several containers in which she and the Spirit try to manage and fill. One can understand why she has invoked this metaphor when they examine her different ministry

spaces. The Missouri Annual Conference currently appoints her to The Gathering in Saint Louis UMC. Specifically, she is the Site Pastor at the Clayton, Missouri, campus where she performs the usual duties of an Ordained UMC Elder (preaching, performing sacraments, performing wedding and funerals) as well as the more specialized duties of Leadership Development of staff and members and the liaison of the Women's Collective. "I lead at the site and make sure members from Clayton are connected to the larger Gathering community." Connecting is a divinely-imparted gift of Goodwin. "People are the greatest resource the church has. I am always looking for ways to bring value to other people's lives by connecting them to others who have something they need or who have something in common with them. There is life-giving power to do this, and I love watching it happen."

For many, her UMC appointment might be the only bucket one would try to maintain. However, suppose you spend a few moments in Goodwin's presence. In that case, you begin to wonder if her surname is actually missing a letter "d" and is really supposed to be Goodwind – as in favorable blowing of air or Spirit. She is a mover, and like the Holy Spirit, Goodwin is not locked into rigid or traditionally defined spaces or practices of ministry. She has created at least two other places to collaborate with the Spirit beyond the church walls.

One relates to her expertise in leadership development and certification in accessing and honing Emotional IQ. She founded Speaking Life, a coaching platform mainly for pastors who are starting new things within their communities or needing a new framework for their ministries. The Speaking Life's website, <https://www.charitygoodwin.com>, highlights Goodwin's words to describe her vision: "Coupled with my professionalism, I also coach, facilitate and speak from the heart and hardcore places to reach, shake, and lift folks so that they make better leadership decisions, are more productive and have healthier relationships at work and home." She believes accessing and understanding one's emotional IQ is a crucial part of this training. "The idea is that an emotionally healthy pastor is one that can lead in an emotionally intelligent, great way. Every pastor undergoes an Emotional IQ assessment and a debrief of the results. I use this information as a framework to the coaching sessions going forward." It is an innovative step in addressing the need for the church to be more adaptive as the landscape of brick-and-mortar worship and ministry is changing. Goodwin is committed to the shaping and equipping of spiritual leaders as they strive to be more innovative and create new ministry experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred Goodwin and sister Tramaine Williams and their children to build another creative ministry space. Like many other parents, Goodwin and Williams were suddenly tasked as support for their children's virtual schooling. To help their kids buy into their "new school," they prompted them to choose a school name, mascot, and name. Thus, Black Genius School was birthed. What stemmed from a simple exercise in naming and claiming space morphed into a daily supplemental exploration of black history lessons and eventually, with the power of social media, has become a reality with several children coming together to learn about black history via Zoom classes. You can visit

the Black Genius School Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/BlackGeniusSchool](https://www.facebook.com/BlackGeniusSchool) and read a more in-depth article at <https://www.moumethodist.org/newsdetail/black-genius-school-learning-at-home-14962542>.

When asked about what lessons from Saint Paul Goodwin carries with her, she details one professor who had the most impact on her and one truth that she learned about herself while seeking her M. Div. "I cannot sing enough praises as a person and as a professor of Dr. Nancy Howell. I took all of her classes and was a teaching assistant in one of her classes. Her teaching was centered on process theology and included reimagining of predominately white male theology through diverse lenses of Black Liberation theology and womanist theology. It was exciting to be exploring what it meant for me personally as a womanist and how that connected with process theology."

"The one thing I carry with me – what I learned about myself – and anyone around me will hear this in me is that I am a practical theologian, and the lessons of praxis theology from Saint Paul has stayed with me. What is the point of theology if it does not help us live better and transform ourselves and [our] communities? I am a big believer in action and reflection model. I am not about information for information's sake. The point is that theology is real and can be applied and lived out, and in that application, there will be transformation. Contextual education is the water we swam in at Saint Paul."

Thank goodness Goodwin decided to take a dip in the seminary pool, as it is evident that her ministries stem from wanting to impart her theology in practical ways and help others live into their own beliefs. Her coaching is about empowering others to innovate and create tangible ministries. Although not a traditional ministry per se, Black Genius School is a living extension of the belief of needing to know

oneself to be prepared for divine purpose. Her leadership at the Gathering is about developing and connecting leaders and disciples equipped to live and transform. May the Good Wind keep moving her forward in creative and daring ways.



## **Rev. Dr. Ben Boswell**

Rev. Dr. Benjamin Boswell is the senior pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He graduated in 2021 with his Doctor of Ministry from Saint Paul School of Theology. His doctoral thesis was "Identifying Whiteness: Discerning Race

through Spiritual Practice in the White Dominant Church."

Although his ministry has long been focused at the intersection of strategic leadership, spiritual formation, and social justice, the events of the past two years caused Dr. Boswell to explore issues of race and whiteness in a much deeper and more meaningful way. Dr. Boswell was deeply affected by the murder of George Floyd and several of the other heartbreaking events across the country, the Black Lives Matter movement, and his own experience - both as a pastor in a predominantly white church and a father to an adopted black daughter. Building on his response to what was going on in the world and this experience, coupled with his seminary education and training at Saint Paul, Dr. Boswell decided he had reached a moment in history that required him to approach ministry differently.

In analyzing his own experiences with conversations about race in his congregations over the years, Dr. Boswell says he realized several things. First, the discussions about race never seemed to "go anywhere" and lacked real "transformative impact." Second, through critical self-examination, he

identified himself as a part of the problem. Recognizing his "own colorblind racist ideology," he acknowledged that he had to take responsibility for his own whiteness to talk meaningfully with his congregation about what it meant to be white and to get them to "confront whiteness" in a way many had never done.

What developed from this experience and examination was, indeed, transformative. Dr. Boswell created and led a 7-week small group training for several members of his congregation. He extended a selected invitation based upon the fact they had approached him over the years about issues of race. As part of the training, he developed a curriculum of black authors such as WEB Debois, Toni Morrison, and Malcolm X to elevate the level of engagement and force the group to face the images of whiteness presented by those black authors. Participants were forced to grapple with the names those black authors give to whiteness - whiteness as evil, whiteness as mythology, whiteness as terror. Weekly sessions involved confessions and facilitated group discussions. Throughout the course, participants would draft and revise their own autobiography of race, a living document intended to help shape and confront their views of race and their own whiteness. This trial run hit the mark of transformation Dr. Boswell had failed to achieve simply preaching about racism over the years, and he developed this trial program into a spiritual formation anti-racism training he now facilitates for white people called "What Does It Mean to Be White?"

Dr. Boswell's transformative work in and beyond the pulpit has not gone unnoticed. This past year, Dr. Boswell was awarded the prestigious Martin Luther King Jr. Medallion by the City of Charlotte, the city's highest honor given to a person who promotes racial equality, social justice, and community service. Dr. Boswell described himself as humbled, breathless, and "at a loss for words" at being selected for the award - an unfamiliar feeling for a pastor. "I used to joke with myself that I had to always wake up remembering that no one is going to thank me for doing the right thing, and I should never be expecting thanks for doing the right thing and for doing what I'm called to do." While it is undoubtedly true that we are called to do the right thing even when no one is watching, the world is closer to the full reign of God on earth because Dr. Boswell has stepped into his call.



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**“NO MAN EVER STEPS IN THE SAME RIVER  
TWICE, FOR IT’S NOT THE SAME RIVER  
AND HE’S NOT THE SAME MAN.”**

Heraclitus

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# #GIVINGTUESDAY

On Tuesday, November 30, Saint Paul School of Theology, to support the seminary's mission, will once again join 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, community, and collaboration. Help us meet our goal and follow our progress online at [spst.edu/giving-tuesday/](https://spst.edu/giving-tuesday/)

Use your smart phone camera  
to scan me to go to the  
Giving Tuesday link.



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**NOVEMBER 30, 2021**





# JOIN US IN CELEBRATING **SAINT PAUL DAY**

On March 3, 1958, the National Methodist Theological Seminary (eventually known as Saint Paul School of Theology) was incorporated in Missouri.

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In celebration of our birthday, we want all of the SPST community to show their seminary spirit by wearing their Saint Paul shirts and hats that day. In addition, we invite you to share memorable moments (stories and photos) that you've experienced at Saint Paul in the classroom, with fellow students, or during events on your social media pages - make sure to tag us and use the hashtag #saintpaulday.

We'll also be having a fundraiser that day to raise \$1,958 towards the programs and scholarships fund. It's a day to celebrate all of us that make up Saint Paul School of Theology!

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022**

**Let's get social at SPST1958**

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