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Interviews in support of For the whole world : a century of mission at Asbury Theological Seminary

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Interviews in Support of
“For the Whole World: A Century of Mission at
Asbury Theological Seminary”

BY

J. Steven O’Malley

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President Maxie Dunnam, *Fifth President of Asbury Seminary*

President Timothy Tennent, *Eighth President of Asbury Seminary*

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Professor Joe Dongell

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Introduction

To follow the metaphor guiding and informing this journey, a ship cannot properly reach its destination without faithful and grateful participation from the hands-on deck, and so we offer a sampling of diverse voices from the Seminary faculty, during the Tennent era, as supplemental enhancement of our effort to present a grateful account of what God has done through the years of this past century at Asbury Theological Seminary. Contributors represent selected persons from the faculty, administration, trustees, staff, and student body, each of whom has offered a thoughtful perspective on what our mission has meant for life and service at the Seminary.

These reflections also bring viewpoints from multiple academic and cultural perspectives, representing a taste of the global diversity found in the campuses of the Seminary. Their focus is upon a common theme: what each person has seen and contributed to our mandate to respond to the mission of Asbury Theological Seminary as a strategic member. These observations represent life commitment to the call of our Lord to go to a lost and weary world with the vibrant message of full salvation in Jesus Christ. Each voice speaks for itself, disclosing a fresh and distinct perspective on what it means to live with gratitude into the mission of Asbury Theological Seminary. As our new Provost, Gregg Okesson, phrased it, “We need different eyes to see together.”¹

For clarification, the observations presented here represent perspectives of persons personally and professionally committed to the mission of the Seminary. In accordance with that commitment, they would reflect a viewpoint commensurate with those who have been born again (John 3:7). This infers that their observation offers a distinct insight into what it means for the Seminary to be functioning under the norms of God’s governance of our common life.² The overarching theme of this discussion is, after all, that mission which the Seminary has been entrusted to extend unto the whole world.

The order of presentation begins with interviews with three former Presidents, with a section

¹ Provost Gregg Okesson, Faculty-Board Retreat, September 18, 2021.

² As a point of reflection on that commitment, it is useful to observe with Chambers that “the new birth gives a new power of vision whereby I begin to discern God’s rule” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, 167, offers comment on John 5:7, “you must be born again,” by explaining that “His rule was there all the time, but true to his nature,” one who has once received His nature has also begun to discern and live in accord with His governance in the Holy Spirit, as defined by the witness of Scripture.)

of interviews arranged around the major academic and other designated areas into which the faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, students and alumni members of this community have been located in the life of the Seminary.

I. Presidential Interviews

President David L. McKenna

A personal interview with our fourth president provided opportunity to probe directly his perception of what the mission of this Seminary meant in the totality of his eventful administration, as it grew in stature and influence in the world of theological education during the “Age of Information.” Here are some of his major observations:

. . . the “whole” in “whole Bible for whole world” is not so much an operational term from a leadership standpoint, but has potential for distilling what are the marching orders to the Seminary. Working off the definition of “Wesleyan” through that lens “gives us a running start for the educational and religious components. That is, when we take ‘whole’ seriously we address the systems that give perspective to our task, even as we would acknowledge that the relation of being and doing leads to “whole”. When I work on the ecology of institutions, he thinks of whole, as inclusive of home church and school as the components that make it a whole. The home has its own integrity, as the starting point for everything to come, and churches have a variety of connection to home, though not as dynamic or powerfully as it should be. This will become more difficult going forward. Studies are showing marriage is no longer popular: spin off the implications of that for the wholeness concept, etc. One of the things I admire of Joh Wesley is the wholeness of the class meetings. It is wholeness that drew me to the Wesleyan position. It is critical for our survival, our integrity, our impact in the world, and our survival.

When I go back to Asbury Seminary in my mind, there was one thing we were working on: we have so much focus on institutions, but we fail to realize what we mean by the term system, or the system world. When fully engaged Asbury Theological Seminary is an educational system more than an institution in Wilmore. In my inaugural address, all places named in Coleson speech, and I have a fond spot to remember with the USA and World Report article that referred to us as “the smart campus,” with reference to our new technology. was the smart campus. Let me cite two examples of that from the early days of the Hi/Tech age: in 1989, at the World Congress on evangelism in Manilla, I spoke to a connection of websites from one location, way ahead of our time. It enabled us to keep the news and the Holy Spirit’s witness fresh across the world.

At the American section of the World Methodist Conference, when on campus at Asbury

Seminary in 1992, we had conversation at the Am section of the WMC when on campus in 92 had conversation with the British Methodist leader, Donald English, in Leeds, England, being the first interactive talk that was global. An exciting moment. When it comes to our potential in a virtual world, the use of Beeson dollars made it possible. It was Dr. Ken Boyd who led our task force at Asbury to put that together. The use of Beeson dollars made it possible. Boyd led the task force to put that together

Another high point at the time of my presidency was the survey saying the Hi/tech component had recently been presented to college and graduate school faculties over the United States but only 20% would buy into it, and my provost, Bob Mulholland with foresight took his sabbatical to learn how to teach online, to lead the faculty to see the potential. He deserves kudos. He made a world of difference. These are great moments.

Here is a tongue in cheek point of humor: when the first computers were given to the Asbury Seminary faculty, they said “thank you” to me for the first time. Do you feel there is a “head of the game” view for online teaching there now? My real question would be, how do you communicate the uniqueness of the Asbury experience on campus through online instruction? If I went out to a prospective donor and said, if only I could walk you from your office to the Seminary chapel to hear them sing ‘And can it be,’ it would make my job.” When I was there we had each class memorize this when they were freshmen, and at convocation they would sing it together. That’s part of wholeness. Can we put the pieces together?

One of the things about Asbury Seminary is evident after looking at theological education in all its expressions and you make comparisons, which is something I regularly did as a representative of the American Association of Theological Schools: look at the difference, in faculty scholarship, in the heartbeat of revival and community experience, and Asbury is an integral higher, so I know. I could name a prominent evangelical seminary where it is a morgue in chapel, and here this is better. Pride is to be avoided, but the sense of esteem of being an Asburian, as a professor, trustee, or student, is in order. My daughter, an attorney, is on the board, and is taken with the board meetings, with the Asbury experience, and says it is unbeatable. A very legitimate statement.³

³ He offers two suggestions at the close: (1) I was teaching at Redwood Part in California, that was begun by J.C. McPheeters when he was at Glide. So many alumni were there that they it was like a week long alumni meeting. Friday they gave me an hour to talk about the Seminary. I gave focus on the need of students to pay tuition and carry loans and then go into ministry with a heavy debtload, that can affect

The board ought to stay so close to the mind of the Holy Spirit at this time, with 140 m, the tendency is to spend or save, and that is God's unusual gift we are called to steward, and not use according to whims of choice. A prediction: If what I see is happening we will have reaction in the political world so that assistance will no longer be available. It is most dangerous to assume we will have tax advantage, minimum allowance, student aid, and faculty grants. All are a chance to depend on. We are in a hot spot in Seattle; see what happens here. The leftist city council are in trouble by the farther left. And protesters are winning. They would be the first to cut off any religion of any kind and are anti-Christian. We say of them, when you are in control you demand our rights, when we are in control you demand our rights.

I am an evangelical with wisdom of experience, trying to figure my way through, but we must be a people seeking the mind of the Spirit to have wisdom, including suffering in the context of Paul. We know nothing about persecution. We have suffering, but I do not know the suffering of when the society comes against you. And that may be imminent. Peter's epistles for the suffering church may need to become our model.

It is a time for learning. Immanuel University in Hyderabad, India, serves 385,000 students from the Dalit class, who are off the scale, but there is now a new accreditation process by which they must show first that they have a \$70 million endowment and must first pay a half of that to the local government, and to pay this first before they pay their own expenses. This is a recipe for a close down. Dalits are murdered. The church is really suffering there. We are to be people on the alert. Have the wisdom from our past experience to be wise in our present circumstances.

On a positive note: One of the things about Asbury Seminary is when you look at theological education and you make comparisons in faculty scholarship, the heartbeat of revival and community experience, Asbury Theological Seminary is at a higher level. I did seminary visitation for the American Association of Theological Schools, and know of a prominent evangelical

everything they do. Afterward there was a couple, Winston and Joy Handwerker—he was a successful commodities worker and tough—both were crying and said we have to do something about this, in the name of J.C. McPheeters. The result was a scholarship fund that has been growing down through the years. (2) As a person who has been in higher education, and knows the impact of endowments on educational institutions, if you want to spoil them, give them a big endowment, because the problem is they do not know how to steward their wealth. When I went to Asbury Seminary as President the endowment was seven million, and when I left ten years later it was \$142 million. So, it was very important to steward the dollars with Conger. As a military man, he knew nothing about higher education. My “brag point” is that I educated him so he would spread those dollars and meet all the needs we had, rather than throwing it all in one place to make a big splash.

seminary which is a like a morgue in its chapel, and this is better. Pride is to be avoided, but the sense of esteem of being an Asburian, as a professor, trustee, or student is in order, and is very legitimate.

In addressing our mission in the new Cyber Age, the faculty led the way, beginning with our Academic Dean, Robert Mulholland, also professor of New Testament. President, whom I remember with gratitude for his foresight in dedicating a sabbatical to learn how to teach online, and so to model that new mode of instruction for his faculty.⁴

Finally, as I see the history of Asbury Theological Seminary, in the presidency I have insight. Asbury has had the advantage of a pioneer elder in Morrison, an evangelist camp meeting preacher in J.C. McPheeters, then followed by Stanger the churchman. Then Asbury had a non United Methodist, Free Methodist educator, followed by a pastor in Maxie, advancing to Timothy Tennent, the missionary. There, is wholeness. God in His Spirit is using these persons who play their role in a grand drama which is unfolding. I can think of the joy that Asbury Theological Seminary is not my institution, or theirs, but each of us is a role player in the grand unfolding drama of the mission. and the grand outcome of Asbury Seminary.

President Maxie Dunnam for the Centennial History Project, interview on August 11, 2020, addressing the theme of the mission of Asbury Seminary

President Dunnam insisted that, whatever the current vision for Asbury may include, “its Biblical and theological perspective has been kept clear, as well as the efforts to express that vision, however we have done that through the years.” He quickly added, “the Person and work of the Holy Spirit has been at the heart of that vision,” and “with the establishment of the United Methodist Church, and our intrigue with the ecumenical movement, we began to be identified with that until it came to diminish our distinctive United Methodist doctrines The beginning of that tendency is what challenged President Morrison when he was certain that we had to have the Seminary as well as the College [to recover and spread our Wesleyan message of Scriptural holiness].” Our ecumenism has been a powerful factor in our history. At first it was a positive force as there was a sharing among churches under the leading of the Spirit in the revival of that day,⁵

⁴ O’Malley, Interview with David McKenna, June 25, 2020.

⁵ A reference here to the eighteenth century Awakening in Europe and England leading to

but later it became a negative influence which is reflected in the current state of the United Methodist Church, with its theological pluralism.⁶

In my first White Paper I emphasized that there was a sense in which we had become too “institutional” [in our approach to church], and had been overly preoccupied with an academic model of church, and so needed to think more in concert with the local church. We needed to recover the fact that the Seminary, in one way or another, is to provide a theological education for the whole people of God, and not just to serve the ordination purposes of the church. We have now seen a corrective to that tendency with the formation of new campuses, as at Florida and elsewhere, which is in keeping with our earlier vision, and so falls into what I was trying to say in the White Papers. The more expansively we can develop theological education, the better off we are, and, by turning to that, the more we can become instinctively related to the Lord, under the leading of the Spirit. If we can see the wisdom of being more closely partnered with the local church, and with church planting as well, that will be tremendous.

To that end, I don’t believe we can rely on the Master of Divinity degrees in all our church planting, either, for we need new delivery sites. To that end, the probability of church division (in Methodism) need not be destructive, but can be redemptive, because the new expression will be very centered in our distinctive Wesleyan biblical and theological perspective. With so much of the church losing its Wesleyan grounding, this will increase the need for planting new churches (in the U.S.) that can recover that witness, as well as in other nations, [where our church planting efforts are now at work within many denominations].

In my Second White Paper, I was responding to faculty concerns that I was challenging traditional theological education, but that was never the case. We were doing what I envisioned, with starting the Florida campus and the virtual campus. That was a step beyond where I was when I began, and was asked what was my vision. The answer given then was that I was buying into the vision we have, but then I began to have the vision in about two years that Asbury needed to connect with the local church in new ways. I trace my new thinking to the awareness given me by one of my Memphis church members, Robert Buckman, who had given me my first laptop and also the vision and the funding for our later virtual campus at Asbury. As an international business

Methodism.

⁶ This phrase was introduced in the 1972 Book of Discipline of the UMC, which placed the Wesleyan the EUB Confession as examples of a diverse group of foundational principles to guide theological discussion.

entrepreneur, he pioneered in linking his clients all over the world via internet, without physically gathering them, and I saw this as a way for us to engage the people of God across the world here at Asbury Seminary. What was distinctive about Dunnam's approach to the world mission of the Seminary was to envision it as other than a clergy paradigm, as a "whole people of God paradigm." His approach was not to go directly from the Seminary to the world, with its mission, but to go from the Seminary to the church and "hopefully help the church locate herself within the world."⁷

For example, when it comes to new sites for the Seminary, Dunnam believes that the new model needs to be more than finding a new place to meet for theological education to occur, and take the "model of partnership" between Asbury and the rest of the world. For example in two or three of these places there would be a "joint appointment" between the Seminary and the local church, with one person serving in a capacity under the Seminary auspices while at the same time serving in a pastoral capacity in a local church. There are two reasons for doing this: (1) for the Seminary to have input into the local church and (2) for the local church to have input into the Seminary. From this perspective, we could then move into the future with our vision intact.

President Dunnam also offers an observation on the challenge to pastoral ministry from the cultural chaos of 2021: "What is happening in the political realm in the nation, in the coming division of the church, the virus raging, and the demonstrations for justice becoming violent, are four ingredients demanding a response of obedience of us to God, because this is precisely the kind of time when God chooses for the Holy Spirit to break out in significant ways, and that is what I am praying for We become more prayerful at times like these, not because our prayers are necessary for revival but because our prayers are the expressions of our dependence upon God, and that prepares us to receive the revival that God wants to bring."

This postscript follows concerning the legacy of H.C. Morrison: if we, like him, are to be focused on the vision, which involves the leading of the Holy Spirit, we should not become preoccupied with explicit expressions of how the Holy Spirit is to be manifested, which we got encumbered with at times past, but center on the Holy Spirit Himself, not on how He will operate in our lives. What Morrison was seeking was at heart, "more of Jesus" and the fullness of His love, which he found could become embodied in a human life, characterized doctrinally as sanctification. He recalled Morrison also pointing to Jesus saying to the Jews of his day, "He came

⁷ The First White Paper of President Maxie Dunnam (unpublished, 2002), archives.

to His own, and His own received Him not,” and Morrison was concerned that the Holy Spirit will want to come to us, and we will be the ones who do not want to receive Him. So, let us keep that message clear, and keep our vision centered on that. I am so happy with the leadership of the Seminary today. I think Tim is God’s man for the hour and what you are all doing is tremendous. Also, the next 20 years will be the greatest years, after those early founding years. And for that I am so grateful that you will be able to live into that.

Keep that message clear

Keep centered on that vision

Amen⁸

⁸ O’Malley Interview with President Maxie Dunnam, September 11, 2020.

II. Two Faculty Interviews with Focus on the McKenna Era and the Aftermath

In this section we explore the faculty perspective regarding the place of the Holy Spirit at work in the McKenna era, with two faculty accounts, based on interviews. The first is an interview with Professor Steve Seamands, who addresses the role of the Holy Spirit in advocating for the survival of the ESJ School amid the threat of its loss in its hour of crisis. The second is an interview with a New Testament professor whose work officially began in the McKenna era, Professor Joseph Dongell, who addresses the evolving shift in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation at the Seminary at this time.

Seamands: I was a student at the Seminary, having come from our parental home in India, during the time of President Stanger's presidency.

While Stanger had an intellectual conversion, and his goals for the Seminary were aligned with his lifelong discipleship to the Scriptures, I trace my walk of faith to what happened in the first year of my life at the Seminary in 1971 [in the wake of the Asbury revival of 1970]. It was during a Holiness Emphasis Week address from President Dennis Kinlaw of Asbury College, when a turning point was reached for me. I gave Jesus my all. It was full sanctification, full surrender, the fullness of the Spirit. This moment had much emphasis for me, and was central to my faith development. Just the small groups in the Seminary community, meeting with other students, were crucial in that regard. When I graduated and began pastoral work (in New Jersey), I started small groups in the churches I served.

Eleven years later (1982, I came to Asbury again, this time as an Assistant Professor in Christian Doctrine, Dr. McKenna was then president, with a strong leadership image, a more public persona, in the way he projected himself.

ESJ had been established in that year, and Dr. Hunter would be serving as its Dean, bringing his prominence in the church growth movement. The School was thinking outwardly and missional, and Dr. Hunter was a leader in this regard.

For a season, the ESJ school also became a center of conflict, which was a new feature. Some faculty members were expressing the concern that the money was not there for its founding. Dr. McKenna himself thought that way. They had five people hired, and few students, so it would be a draw on the Seminary. This tension was in the air from 1985 through 1990. It was a divisive

influence among the faculty, and affected the tone of conversation. Students were not aware, but sides were drawn.

I [Seamands] continued to be for the ESJ School. Not to do so would be to turn back on our mission, yes, to say “no” to God. Yet there was among some a desire to shut it down.

At that time I went to a Wimber conference in Michigan (1990), and a sense of intercession for that conflict came upon me there. While praying at an altar, I heard the Holy Spirit say, “You think the conflict at Asbury is hurting you; it is breaking my heart.” Thus, when I came back, I started an intercessory prayer group. I came to Dad’s house, and J.T. was there, so we had three Seamands meeting and praying. I believe you were there, too. We were not there to fix problems, just to pray.

The theme of Asbury in 1990 became the future of the ESJ. Then we heard, that the week before, Beeson had died. Not long afterward, we got word that there was a bequest coming from his estate, The word began to be heard that it would be \$50 million, and all our money problems would be solved. McKenna was on the fence, then he had a change of mind.

In the midst of all this there was intercessory prayer and fasting. Life changed for him, and for us. Now there would be a “Beeson Center,” and the ESJ School was fixed, and, in the early 1990s we were able to rewire the whole School for Internet!

We were just coming into a period where there was peace and joy on campus! It was in that mode that we entered into the decade of the 1990s, and these were buoyant, and grateful, times.⁹

Dongell: addresses in interview the emergence at Asbury of the doctrine that salvation in Christ is a personal faith journey rather than a crisis leading to fullness of love, and that this triumph has displaced the meaning of full salvation as announced in the Seminary mission.

I began my work in New Testament at the Seminary as a teaching fellow in the Stanger era, and became a faculty member early in the presidency of Dr. McKenna. I recall Donald Joy saying that the Seminary had been walking “on pins and needles” all the time, fearful of the wrath of the United Methodist “University Senate” which had stripped the Seminary of its accreditation in the 1950s and was ever wary of their oversight. ‘And then President McKenna arrived, and he singlehandedly tamed the University Senate. He had the qualifications with a PhD in higher education from the University of Michigan, the charisma, the intellectual sharpness and verbal

⁹ Steven O’Malley, Interview with Stephen Seamands, June 12, 2020.

gifting of being able to speak with great clarity and insight, and instead of walking around on pins and needles all the time, wondering what the University Senate wanted from us to keep from falling again, after David McKenna's ten years with us, we now came to be viewed as being a model institution in the eyes of the University Senate, to whom everyone should look for guidance!

Now I make a comment about our term "full salvation." You wouldn't think a thing about it had we not had this motto, from our statement of faith, that we used as a kind of "code language," to mean something you would not hear about today. Most people would think that means, "you believe all the Bible." In the Wesleyan holiness mouths that expression had a very specific meaning. What it meant was, "don't just preach justification by faith," or "your sins are forgiven," or just that "you could get to heaven" or "be a good person," The message of entire sanctification meant that the heart can be cleansed, that one can be filled with the love of God as a distinctive second step of grace in the Christian life. That is what was meant by "preaching the whole Bible," And so, "the whole Bible for the whole world" meant "holiness evangelism," and taking this message "all around the world." Here was an amazing optimism, almost a postmillennial message that offers wholeness from strife, bickering, or bitterness, or lust, gluttony, or bigotry." It was the whole, gigantic promise of God for full restoration of heart.

In one sense, the Seminary has lived up to the "whole Bible" side of it, and in another sense, not so much. I don't think that a Biblical Studies degree, having academic scholars, and a fine library has quite fulfilled the "whole Bible" part of the founding fathers declaration.

This has been in negotiation for a long time. Talking in the McKenna days to faculty members like Don Dayton, David Bundy and Bill Faupel, part of the knock against Asbury Seminary my United Methodist bishops, deans, and ministers was the same knock that the holiness movement people ran into back at the end of the nineteenth century, that these holiness people are 'country bumpkins,' fire-breathing evangelists with little education, and "uncouth" with the rise of liberalism in the church. There was a large passion for respectability and large tower churches in the quest for upward mobility. That had its imprint on denominational politics. If you were associated in any way with revival, camp meetings or holiness movements, you were not going to get the next best placement for ministry. By 1923, that is why Asbury Seminary was being founded. All the large churches and schools had gone over to this new culture of liberalism, which is really not new at all.

That sentiment has lingered for decades at Asbury Seminary as a kind of subliminal boiling, sub-teranean identity process. Dayton viewed Dr Stanger's preference for etiquette and order in worship rather than camp meeting enthusiasm as being indicative of this shift. It was also tempting to move off this contentious doctrine of entire sanctification because it carried that cultural stigma, but also because it was a difficult and contentious doctrine to propagate. By comparison, Wesley's intention was to recover a religion of being filled or perfected with love, as opposed to using language difficult to exegete.

Exegeting the meaning of all or this for the mission of the Seminary, I would say that Asbury has become more Wesleyan in its program and apparatus, while becoming less Wesleyan in its understanding of full salvation. With all the studies of Wesleyan thought and culture that has occurred in the twentieth century, to ask the question now of what it means to be Wesleyan, there is a dozen different factors commonly listed in giving that answer. So, the focus on entire sanctification has almost completely slipped from our grasp. We take about any answer on this point and it gets attenuated. We have almost surrendered away what was Wesley's crown jewel do you intend to become perfected in love? For Wesley, it is "make me perfect or I die." And when that is delayed, we lose our true Wesleyan focus.¹⁰

¹⁰ In response to this deficiency, Dongell suggested that we focus our effort on the perspective of the gospel of love" He cites John Wesley's articulation of this theme in Jackson, ed, *Works of John Wesley*, !!!, vol. VII of ssermons , 413–430.

O'Malley, interview with Joseph Dongell August 7, 2020.

III. Interviews with Faculty, Staff, Administrators, Trustees, Students, and Alumni, Offering Insights on Gratitude for Asbury Seminary at Its Centennial Marker

This account begins with representative voices from the area of **Spiritual Formation and Worship**, since our capacity to live in the service of our Triune God, the Author of our mission as a Seminary, is the One who forms the core of the Seminary mission and all aspects of its academic program.

>>> In 2018, the Seminary commitment to personal and community formation was upgraded to a Seminary wide initiative, with the leadership of *Donna Covington* as Vice President of Formation. This new title reflects President Tennent’s assertion that “formation” is nothing less than the heart of Asbury Seminary.¹¹ The “Asbury experience is at core the perennial commitment of Asbury to bringing formation to mind and heart, in the legacy of John Wesley.¹² The Wesleyan tradition calls this the process of “entire sanctification,” for which the contemporary term “spiritual formation” is an equivalent. As President Tennent expressed, it is fundamentally “a journey into God’s heart,” ultimately a joyful journey but one also involving the painful stripping away of the “painful scales of sin and death.”¹³

Donna shared her journey of coming to Asbury Seminary from a leadership position in a major manufacturing firm in Lexington, Kentucky.¹⁴ An accomplished senior executive, she has brought competence in corporate and higher education. She also has a heart for ministry, and a commitment to family.¹⁵ Her corporate specialty has included expertise in organizational development, strategic planning and change management, with a record in problem solving and an understanding of diversity and cultural complexities reflecting extensive travel to over 30 nations in her service with Lexmark.¹⁶ An ordained Baptist elder, she has also served as a dean of two colleges of business, and as executive director for several churches, in her role as a “change agent.” A focus of her ministry at Asbury is transformation to become “more like Jesus” as “the work of the Holy Spirit,”

¹¹ Letter from the President: Formation: The Heart of Asbury Seminary, *The Asbury Herald* Fall 2018, 3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Donna Covington served at length with IBM and Lexmark International in Lexington, Ky. <https://asburyseminary.edu/about/office-of-the-president/presidents-cabinet/>

¹⁵ Including her three daughters and three granddaughters. O’Malley, Interview with Donna Covington, July 27, 2020.

¹⁶ <https://asburyseminary.edu/about/office-of-the-president/presidents-cabinet/>

a theme resonating with the mission of the Seminary.¹⁷ She spoke of the centrality of Estes Chapel to the life and mission of the Seminary, serving as “both a classroom and a laboratory.”¹⁸

When she received her call from President Tennent to join the administrative team, she sensed that her acknowledgment of that call placed her in a long trajectory of faculty teaching in this area, going back to Tom Carruth, a man of prayer whom President Stanger had appointed as the first professor of spiritual formation,¹⁹ not only at Asbury Seminary, but perhaps for any seminary in the nation at that time. Donna was humbled by the realization that our first president, H.C. Morrison, had been given a giant mission to which he was faithful, even when starting with just three students in 1923. That did not matter: he had a deep relationship with God and trusted His leadership. Here Asbury experience did more than give her a theological education; it shaped her “experience of God” through “the shaping of Jesus” for a lifetime of ministry. As a former commuting student, she also had a deep burden for helping students who did not live in Wilmore.

Donna saw her ministry here in the line of the Seminary mission, which meant a focus upon “the second half of the gospel,” the part that concerns our life transformation into disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit filled, sanctified life. She also saw that as the blessing of Pentecost for her life, as in the case of H.C. Morrison, with his teaching of the “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” The developmental language in use to describe this work of grace, spiritual formation, concerns first the personal encounter or sealing with the Holy Spirit for redemption in Christ, as promised in Scripture (Eph1:13), followed by the “lived practices,” through the means of grace, and then follows the life of discipleship, the Christlike life. This order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) is the pattern for spiritual formation in the Wesleyan tradition, and it also has a social or communal dimension, as we are called to ministry of redemption and reconciliation at all levels of our community and larger society, which requires a prophetic aspect of the Pentecost message, which had also ignited the mission of the early church. It is also a global call to bring persons of all nations into that whole relationship with God and their neighbors. What a commission this is to be entrusted to humble persons ready for shaping by the Holy Spirit in all they do in their

¹⁷ O’Malley, Interview with Donna Coleman on July 27, 2020, and also in Donna Covington, “Vision on Formation,” in *The Asbury Herald* Fall 2018, 4.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Professor Carruth used to pray with the present author in the office and also traveled with him to preaching appointments, as a prayer partner and guest preacher. He was a life friend who blessed so many on this campus with his love for Jesus.

Seminary experience. Donna described spiritual formation as the manifestation of “Pentecost present,” through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, in our daily lives, involving a twofold “work within,” when we surrender our hearts to be filled with the love of Jesus, and a “work without,” because this personal transformation leads to a “reach” that is global.²⁰ The structures which Donna and her team developed for implementing formation, understood to include the whole community, are addressed in the previous chapter.

Two observations aptly summarize her aspirations for the spiritual formation of the Seminary: first, “to ensure that there are environments and opportunities to be equipped and formed as a whole person while at Asbury Seminary,” and second, “to create places for students and alumni to serve” in our common life together, which includes opportunities and environments for spiritual growth personally and corporately, and doing so with a “cross-functional,” “cross-institutional” team of students, faculty, staff, and alumni “committed to the Seminary’s vision.” That is surely also a commitment to the mission of global awakening which launched the Seminary in 1923.

A central part of the Formation team is the work of *Nicole Sims*, with the strategic role of Director of Community Formation. She described her role as focusing upon recruitment and locating persons in appropriate ministries that correspond with their gifts, grace, and calling. She gives emphasis to a prayerful call for humbling before the Lord as a necessary preparation for advancing a ministry of Spirit-filled unity in Jesus Christ amid the divisiveness of contemporary culture, often including churches. This stance also requires an emphasis on what she calls “house cleaning,” or the readiness for a repentant attitude in relation to our Triune God and the members of the Asbury Seminary community. Particular emphasis is given to outreach to what she termed “people of color,” which is also a call for reconciliation in Christ not at a superficial level but at all levels of our community life. President Tennent and Donna Covington develop the formational themes and emphases and she is charged with “rolling them out” in our community and the Seminary as a whole. For example, when she began her service in July 2017, the theme for focus was “the Spirit filled life.” This involves working with the community, and especially the student body²¹, directly and in small groups, fostering the cultivation of the means of grace and also the life of discipleship. Related to the Seminary mission, her ministry in this is also to emphasize what it means to live in the grace of sanctification, a theme best probed in the context of band groups

²⁰ O’Malley, Interview with Donna Covington, July 27, 2020

²¹ Dr. Danny Romano was hired to head this program.

which she supervises. Much focus is upon cultivating an outlook of receptiveness toward the Lord and those ministering in his Kingdom work. There is always the need to keep in focus living in the “global reach” which ever extends the reach of the gospel to new persons and situations, to extend the community of persons united in Jesus Christ through His Spirit to a wide diversity of those who populate the Seminary and the larger society. It is also important for her to emphasize the instantaneous moment when the Spirit moves to embrace and transform a person amid the challenges they are facing. All of this is a ministry of salvation in a richly Wesleyan context, for which we pause in gratitude on this centennial occasion.²²

>>> **The Dean of the Chapel** and those representing worship, is represented by *Jessica LaGrone*, the first woman chaplain in the hundred-year history of Asbury Seminary. A Texan, Jessica was inclined to prepare sermons from the tender age of nine, and grew to acknowledge the advice of her speech teacher that all her public speaking had a homiletical quality. Graduating from Asbury Seminary in 2002, she had experienced as a student the transition in the office of the chaplain from Reg Johnson to J.D. Walt, and noted that Walt was the first person to ascend that office without a PhD or a faculty position. She served on his chapel “team,” with his emphasis on worship as a base for shaping lives for ministry, increasing weekly chapel services from two to three services. His successor, Robert Stamps, had introduced daily Communion (four times per week), as an ongoing pattern to be expanded by President Tennent to five days. When asked, “why so often?” Jessica remembers Bob saying, “because we dare not worship Him less.” She was also “impressed with Bob’s insistence that “conversations about God,” so plentiful in a seminary setting, need to be surpassed by “conversations with God.”²³ Finally, Jessica had Ellsworth Kalas as a mentor and served as his teaching assistant, forming a bond that lasted to the time of his death in 2015. Her understanding of preaching was formed with his influence, including his ordered daily reading through the Bible.

With a life and ministry forged in the local church, Jessica was ordained to ministry in the United Methodist Church. She also became the first woman pastor on the staff of the 13,000 member Woodlands United Methodist Church in Houston, serving for the span of thirteen years,

²² O’Malley, Interview Nicole Sims, September 21, 2020.

²³ Jessica values a photo of three chaplains in succession, Reg Johnson, J.D. Walt, Bob Stamps, and herself, the sole woman in the company.

where she was responsible for planning the weekly worship, and often preached, demonstrating an engaging communication style. She is also the author of books and studies on biblical themes, in use by persons and groups around the world.²⁴ In 2014 she received the call to the Asbury Seminary chaplaincy, which she accepted with great joy and gratitude as “an incredible honor.” She came with her husband Jim and two young children, beginning her service with the observation that, “At its heart, Asbury Seminary is a worshipping community, and our daily chapel and eucharist services are the deepest reflection of that identity.”²⁵

The first “all community theme,” being “Sanctified and Spirit Filled,” was announced by President Tennent in 2018,²⁶ making this emphasis, straight from the Seminary mission statement, a basis for all community and academic planning, as expressions of spiritual formation. Following that theme, Jessica announced a testimonial worship service, where each person would answer “what has it meant to be led by the Holy Spirit in your life?” The testimonies were diverse and impactful, ranging from life changing moments amid tragedies, dilemmas, and personal challenges to breakthroughs into peace and life purpose in the light of Christ’s love.

Jessica has called the Centennial Era the “Golden Age” of the Seminary, thanks to the leadership of President Tennent, the strength of faculty, the lack of overt controversy, and the overcoming of an era of petty “worship wars” (as evidenced in her mix of contemporary with traditional hymns and modes of worship in each service). Among the greatest challenges of our diversity as a community was for her the great disparity between students ready for high, or liturgical expressions of worship, and those accustomed to the freedom of free church or low liturgical expressions of worship. These differences are being mitigated as it becomes evident to low church folk that the Holy Spirit also works through an order of worship that patterns the worship of the early church. She is eager to see signs that this insight will filter back to the local church, where students live and serve.²⁷ Perhaps this discussion also points us toward another

²⁴ Among her several books is *Namesake: When God Rewrites Your Story* (Abingdon, 2013), among many others.

²⁵ <https://asburyseminary.edu/kentucky/asbury-theological-seminary-announces-rev-jessica-lagrone-new-dean-chapel>

²⁶ Signaling a precedent for future years

²⁷ Jessica also noted that the practice of daily eucharist at the Seminary came Stamp’s practice while chaplain at Oral Roberts University, prior to his coming to Asbury Seminary. It may be ironical that a revivalist, charismatic university would also be the inspiration for an orderly daily liturgical pattern in this Wesleyan Seminary—surely a mark of the authentic, fresh working of the Holy Spirit, in our midst. She also reported that Seminary students have been active in creating new forms of worship and writing

emphasis in the chaplaincy of Jessica LaGrone: the importance of a linkage between vital worship and catechesis, which provides worshipers with guidance on what worship is affirming and why it is existentially important, even salvific, for the participant.

>>> Working hand in glove with the chaplain in planning and executing worship in Estes Chapel is the ministry of *Jonathan Powers*, Assistant Professor of Worship at Asbury Seminary since 2017. His creativity in hymn writing, liturgy, and music in worship, as well as his classroom teaching in the field, sets him apart as a public leader in the worship life of the Seminary. For Jonathan, leading worship in a lyrical theological context is what makes a worship pastor.²⁸ Also, it is important for a pastor to understand music to sing it well, and this includes how music functions liturgically in worship. Organs, choirs and music theory are all components in making liturgical structure flow under the leading of the Holy Spirit. For Powers, liturgical theology is not to be confused with musical performance. Citing Alexander Schmemmann,²⁹ Powers speaks of liturgy as the personal embodiment of the theological reality of the Triune God in Jesus Christ.

In a project with Julie Tennent,³⁰ a \$15,000 grant was received through Calvin College to establish a worship training center on the Seminary campus comparable to the one at Calvin. This program encourages the composition of hymns by students, with the recognition of music and hymnody are both under the umbrella of liturgical theology. Preaching has evangelistic emphasis, while in liturgy this function is lost in adoration. Both are vital functions of worship, but for Powers the priority is in seeing that worship is bigger than being secondary to the preached Word, and so he would reverse this priority, because there is no relationship with God apart from doing acts of praise and worship, for which His word offers clarification and purpose.³¹

With the beginning of the twentieth century, Powers noted that a shift occurred in the meaning of sacramental worship at the Seminary. Before, the emphasis was upon preaching, conversion, and education through worship, and many students did not value sacraments. With the onset of daily eucharist, this changed. Now the global focus highlighted in the E. Stanley Jones School interfaces with all students who enter into the eucharist. In that sense, evangelism, personal

hymns for use that have a strong Biblical core.

²⁸ O'Malley, Interview with Jonathan Powers, July 13, 2020.

²⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (St. Vladimir's Press, 1966).

³⁰ See reference to Julie Tennent in the next section of this chapter.

³¹ This is an appeal to the Anglican heritage of the Wesleyan tradition.

conversion, and the outworking of worship in liturgical theology are all components of the outworking of worship, indicating that “it takes conversion to bring us in.”³² With his important work in worship leadership, the Seminary mission of furthering “full (whole) salvation” in Jesus Christ is being advanced.

>>> A revered voice in worship within the Seminary community is found in the gifted ministry in organ, piano, and hymn composition and collection provided by *Julie Tennent*, the First Lady of the Seminary, as spouse of President Timothy Tennent. Julie shared in interview how worship comprises the “central act of the people of God,” whether it occurs in the “privacy of our lives” or in the “corporate context.” Gatherings for worship have deep biblical roots, especially in the Psalms, and she observed they have long been the major sign of the vibrancy of Asbury Seminary, signifying that “singing is truly a means of grace.” It is a tangible expression of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

With the Spirit-filled life, or sanctification, as the basis for empowering the Seminary mission to the world, worship enables us to experience “how the Holy Spirit works in our lives to do this.” “We are formed by the Holy Spirit into the people of God through the channels of music, linked with heartfelt prayer, to become living offerings, holy and pleasing to God.”³³

A tangible expression of this “holy affection” is the new Asbury Hymnal,³⁴ produced under Julie’s direction, in concert with a working committee of music associates, in cooperation with Estes Chapel. The hymnal presents a collection of the great hymns of the Church from the era of the Reformation—with some as early as the second century, along with the early church creeds—through Pietism, the awakenings that gave rise to Methodism, and the free type of Christian worship through the universal church. In brief, when in use the Asbury hymnal becomes a living expression of catechesis in repentance and discipleship for the Asbury community, an enabler of the common mission of the Seminary.

In addition, a high point in Estes chapel services has been Julie’s worshipful rendition of the great hymns of the church with organ, piano, and voice, and her active participation in worship, with personal care and prayer for students and other members of the community, and their families, as she graciously serves as the Seminary First Lady, alongside her husband.³⁵ Another highpoint

³² What it means to be a “seeker” in worship is thereby for him an unclear concept.

³³ Romans 12:1f.

³⁴ *The Asbury Hymnal*, (Seedbed Publishing: Franklin, TN, 2018).

³⁵ O’Malley, Interview with Julie Tennent, on June 14, 2020.

was the occasion in 2021 when the Tennents' daughter, Bethany, speaking from Hebrews 2:14–15, shared with the Seminary chapel in Estes about her courageous ministry with indigenous believers in Tanzania, amid the challenges to faith they face. Here was an inspiring and tangible expression of the Seminary mission in action, as expressed through the family its President, and Mrs. Julie Tennent.

>>> The task of the **administration of Academic Affairs** during the first decade of the Tennent presidency was entrusted to *Douglas K. Matthews*, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost. A seasoned leader in Christian higher education with a love for the local church, Matthews began his service in 2012 from his post at Mt Vernon Nazarene College (Ohio). Ordained in two denominations and licensed in another,³⁶ He relayed that his conversion and call to ministry occurred as a non-Christian, and in a Wesleyan context. His leadership and experience included the areas of student development, residence life, accreditation, strategic planning financial aid, and multi-cultural affairs, as well as radio ministry, enrollment, academic records and registration, chaplaincy. He also has served in all areas of seminary academic affairs, in traditional and non-traditional education models.³⁷ A graduate of the Free Methodist Spring Arbor College, his graduate education was completed at Wheaton (MA) and Baylor (PhD). While studying at Asbury Seminary in the early 1980s, he appreciated the teaching of Professor Bauer in New Testament studies, who stretched Doug's learning with copious notes on the exegetical assignments.³⁸

Matthews came to his administrative post at the Seminary with a unique account of how two of his grandfathers had different connections to the Seminary. In a recently discovered photo of these forebears from 1923, which occurred just one day before his decision to accept the administrative post at Asbury, one grandfather is shown as a recruiter for the first financial campaign of the Seminary in 1923 and another appears who had written a letter of reference for Matthews when he had first applied to the Seminary.³⁹ They were Methodist pastors who supported

³⁶ He was ordained and served churches in the Southern Illinois Conference (UMC), the Free Methodist Church, and a licensed worker in the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Georgia and Texas. [Asburytheologicalseminary/faculty/douglasmatthews/](https://asburytheologicalseminary/faculty/douglasmatthews/)

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ As it happened, Matthews completed his theological studies at Wheaton, before later returning to Asbury Seminary in his administrative role. O'Malley, Interview with Douglas Matthews, November 12, 2020.

³⁹ Matthews showed this amazing photo to the present author. Their early support for Asbury had to do with its mission of the whole Bible to the whole world,

the Wesleyan mission of “the whole Bible for the whole world” going back to an early age of theological drift in that denomination.

By the spring of 2012, the Seminary had successfully convinced Doug to accept the position of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, since he was seen as having administrative skills that were “transferable” to the Seminary. For his part, Matthews regarded Tennent as a “perfect fit” for his position due to his adherence to its Wesleyan mission, and in light of the timing of his arrival. The Seminary had only recently formulated its Strategic Goals for the coming centennial marker and it was time for administrative leadership focused on their gracious implementation.⁴⁰ President Tennent’s concern in prioritizing economic viability in the big 10 of the Strategic Goals for 2023 did not remain a merely transcendent aspiration but instead led to community implementation, through fervent intercession and rigorous planning, with a lion’s share being borne by the faculty, Here is an explanation provided by Provost Matthews of how that outcome occurred, which is found in chapter seven.⁴¹

After successful and creative administrative leadership toward completing the three phases of the path to 2023,⁴² in terms of the Strategic Goals, Doug, with his wife, took a deserved sabbatical, where he produced a creative theological study of “The Cross and the Kingdom”, with historical roots in the Reformation, and contemporary social and ecclesial application. In 2021 he was led to shift from his administrative duties to a fulltime position in the School of Theology and Formation in theological studies, where he begins a new chapter in his many contributions to the Seminary

Matthews noted that developing and implementing steps to long-term economic viability has undoubtedly been the most important and distinctive contribution of the Tennent administration for actualizing the mission set for the Seminary by our founder HC Morrison, acting in intercessory alignment with the leading of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Provost Matthews laid out the steps taken by the Seminary in the first decade of the Tennent presidency whereby our Lord as Head of the mission might that includes which is His Church might actualize these outcomes, through the prophetic leadership of Timothy Tennent, working through his Presidential Council, the faculty, students, and Trustees. All of these parties

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ O’Malley, Interview with Douglas K. Matthews, November 12, 2020.

⁴² These developments are highlighted in chapter seven, under the heading of “Strategic Goal 10” on the economic model and developing a network of supporters.

to the discussion had important stakes in what might be identified as the growth of a globally positioned Seminary emerging from the context of a movements of awakening, that showed affinities with the historical Great Awakening. These were heralded as anticipations of the Kingdom of God breaking through into this world, in accordance with the great Prayer taught by our Lord, who came to fulfill its petitions.⁴³

>>> *Bill Arnold* has observed that, “after 26 years of teaching the Old Testament at ATS, I can reflect on what a great blessing it is to be here in this capacity. Asbury has provided a platform for writing for both the academy and the Church. I have colleagues that I respect greatly in other institutions where their work for the Church in writing popular-level material for pastors and laity is not appreciated. Such work often does not count, for example, toward promotion and tenure in those institutions. But ATS appreciates what I do, whether it is publishing an obscure article in a technical journal, or writing Sunday School material for children or college-level textbooks. And that has been liberating in ways that I understand better now looking back over these decades. It is truly a blessing, and I pray it will continue to be Asbury’s gift to the Church.”

The School of Biblical Interpretation, has placed emphasis upon the authority for mission in God’s Word. This theme resounded through the diverse observations offered in interview by representative voices from this School.

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>>>Old Testament archeological study has had a distinguished history at Asbury Seminary with the pioneering work of Professor Herbert Livingston from 1959 to his retirement in 1987.

⁴³ “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.”

This important area of study was then discontinued,⁴⁴ until the arrival of Professor Sandra Richer in 2000 when she launched a program in archeological research that “imparted a new vision for study in Israel at Asbury Seminary,” as “relationships were built with the archeological community in Israel, establishing Asbury’s reputation for providing excellent volunteers, and creating a curriculum that could carry the school into the future.”⁴⁵ With her departure in 2009, the work was renewed with vigor and creativity by *Lawson Stone*, Professor of Old Testament Studies. His work in this area began in 2006, when he conducted an archeological dig, as successor to Professor Richter, with a class of six students, and as an active field director for the Institute for Holy Land Studies. He simultaneously was called to write for a Bible atlas. Lawson’s early encounter with Old Testament archeological research led to his coining the apt phrase, “Reading the Land, Living the Book,” which has come into prominence among scholars.⁴⁶

Stone indicated that these initiatives in renewing the archeological program of the Seminary “reignited” a fire for him to see this as a vital work of God on behalf of the mission of the Seminary. He put it this way, after one student had retrieved with great excitement an antiquarian jar from an early archeological period, he declared that “there were many jars to be retrieved, but not many students like Jason, who will not be the same after that encounter with the legacy of David in the earth of Israel.” It was a moment that made the Word of God concrete for him, as well as audible. As a cumulative result of Stone’s annual teaching-oriented excavation tours in Israel for Asbury students, there developed momentum for him to secure the foundation on campus of a collection of Asbury-related Holy Land artifacts, to be known as “The G. Herbert Livingston Archeology and Israel Studies Learning Laboratory”⁴⁷

>>> *John Oswalt*, distinguished professor of Old Testament at Asbury Seminary, offered valuable insight into the journey of the Seminary in its abiding in the holiness message that was inherent to her missional commitment to the whole Bible for the whole world. Highlights of this conversation are presented here, which also provide a larger historical perspective for gratitude to

⁴⁴ With the exception of a one-time class led by Professor John Oswalt to Israel, prior to Stone’s archeological work.

⁴⁶ “Reading the Land, Living the Book: Over 50 Years of Asbury Seminary in Israel,” is also found as the descriptor for for the G. Herbert Livingston Archeology and Israel Studies Learning Laboratory at Asbury Theological Seminary

⁴⁷ O’Malley, Interview with Lawson Stone, March 17, 2021. This Laboratory is located on the third floor of the Crary McPheeters Building at the Seminary.

God for our tracking with the precious gift of this community with its mission, at the centennial marker of its life story. John began our conversation by recalling that our founder, H.C. Morrison, was called “the most powerful preacher in the United States” in his day.⁴⁸ His account began with his student days at Taylor University in Indiana, first awakened to the call of God upon his life through Dennis Kinlaw, then a visiting preacher from Kentucky in the chapel. This precipitated a decision to attend seminary after graduation, which led to an extensive vetting of preferable options. It was through the counsel of Kinlaw that he chose Asbury, where he completed a B.D. degree in 1961.⁴⁹ He had been introduced to a full encounter of the holy life at a camp meeting in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, but he “had no language” to express what happened. The good news was that Asbury Theological Seminary was what taught him to express the reality of that encounter. Committed to the holiness message and preaching, he continued his research in graduate school. His student days at the Seminary occurred when Stanger was president and McPheeters was chancellor. Both were advocates of holiness. He experienced McPheeters as a dynamic, excited exegete, and Stanger as more reserved in preaching and demeanor. The first was the bridge to the second. Oswald completed his graduate studies in 1969, maintaining a firm claim on holiness as cleansing. His initial inquiry to teach at Asbury Seminary proved premature, diverting him to another location, but within five years he was invited to join the faculty at Asbury Seminary in Old Testament Studies. His research in Old Testament studies proceeded, including a seminal two volume, *The Book of Isaiah in the International Commentary on the Old Testament*, regarded as a paramount study of the prophet.

With a surge of new students and new faculty hired under President Stanger, a shift occurred in the tenor of the faculty, which precipitated a firm and occasionally unpleasant reaction from the “old guard” of traditional exponents of the doctrine of sanctification, issues probed in the chapter on the Stanger administration. Oswald served on a faculty committee appointed by Stanger to develop a statement of faith for the Seminary in light of this controversy, which had resulted in three faculty members leaving the Seminary in the mid-70s. For John, the issue at heart went beyond terminology used to the need of drawing ever nearer to our holy God, through the Redeemer and the witness of the Holy Spirit. For Oswald, the 1970s was also a decade heavily

⁴⁸ This statement was attributed to the notable national statesman of that day, William Jennings Bryan, a close friend of Morrison.

⁴⁹ The Bachelor of Divinity has since been replaced by the Master of Divinity degree in TAATS.

influenced by the larger impact of the Asbury College revival of 1970. The revival made a large impact on the growth of the College and probably the Seminary as well. In 1983 he left the Seminary to begin a season as president of adjacent Asbury College, and then a season of teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School at Deerfield, Illinois. He was back at Asbury Seminary from 1989 to 1999, when he was called to serve at the Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, during this period, where he remained until he was summoned back to Asbury, in the McKenna era, and again in 2010, after his retirement, when he was invited to return to participate in the new PhD program in biblical studies, where he has continued to serve.

Oswalt emphasized the vital aspect of full cleansing of sin in the shed blood of Jesus, conveyed to the surrendered, watchful child of God, as the second decisive work of grace in the life of a believer. Here emphasis was made upon the grounds for the holy life inherent in entire sanctification in the Holy Spirit. For John, the heart of the issue was maintaining the Seminary position on the absolute authority of the Word of God, especially since he had observed less consensus on this than in earlier times at the Seminary. At times it seemed to hear discussion of salvation that did not mention sin. His concern was closely tied to the mission of the Seminary to preach the whole Bible, meaning full salvation, going beyond pardon to regeneration and transformation into the image of God,

It was in 2010, when invited to participate in the opening convocation with our new President, Timothy Tennent, that John Oswalt was taken by Tennent's enunciation of the biblical authority on holiness, and personal commitment to the Seminary's mission to the sanctified, Spirit filled life, challenging all students and members of the community to come to terms with this second half of the gospel before their graduation. More than anything else, it was on that basis that Oswalt renewed his commitment to resume his service at Asbury Seminary. His powerful witness to this message has since given strength to a new generation of students, and serves to keep the ship on course of the great mission legacy of our founders.

>>> David Bauer, Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation, and the Ralph Waldo Beeson Professor of Biblical Studies observed how the Seminary mission came under scrutiny in the area of Biblical studies during his student days and long tenure on the faculty at Asbury. First, he identified as a turning point the holiness lectures presented in Estes Chapel by Professor Robert Lyon in 1975, in which he offered his clarification and critique of the holiness tradition as taught and practiced at the Seminary at that time. This critique had come at a time when President Stanger

had opened the vistas of the Seminary to engage critically in theological reflection, including implications for the missional focus on the “whole gospel” as it had been articulated and lived out in the Seminary community.

Criticism of Lyon’s position from traditionalist members of the Seminary faculty had led President Stanger to convene a full day consultation of the faculty at Shakertown for the purpose of questioning Lyon’s position and his suitability to remain as a member of the faculty. He ably defended his case by showing his basic fidelity to the centrality of holiness in the ethos of the Seminary. The faculty responded with a consensus supporting Lyon by acknowledging the validity of using different modes of expressing doctrine than had traditionally been used. For Bauer, this encounter had the positive effect of “opening up the possibility of positive engagement with how to interpret the meaning of biblical authority and entire sanctification,” matters central to the Seminary ethos. It enabled a more critical or dialogical approach to theological study to be introduced into the entire sphere of theological education at the Seminary, and made room for more latitude of expression in articulating the meaning of the themes of Biblical and theological studies (including publication).

Professor Bauer addressed the theological tensions encountered in the emergence of the E. Stanley Jones School, as some members of the traditional faculty objected to shifting funds and influence in theological education to a new School without due regard for attention to the programmatic needs of other areas of the curriculum and faculty. This came to a head during the latter period of the Stanger administration, and remained a source of tension, perhaps until the resolution of these concerns was achieved under the new global missiological thrust of the Tennent administration. That thrust was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on recovering the theological basis for the Seminary mission as basic to defining the import of this new global focus.

Bauer observed as a faculty member that the Seminary was successful in integrating the new technology of the internet into its academic program, after the unexpected and gratuitous gifts of Ralph Waldo Beeson, and that Asbury grew in stature and stability through the more tumultuous events impacting the Seminary during the Greenway and Kalas administrations.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of the beginning of Seminary lectureships during the Stanger administration, which have continued apace, such as the annual Ryan Lectures, beginning in 1967 and alternating in content between Biblical and historical/theological studies. The Ryan Lecture Series was established by the gift of Paul and June Ryan in 1964. Through the ensuing

decades Asbury Seminary has become distinguished by the extraordinary line of world class scholars in these fields who have come to campus as Ryan lecturers, including the names provided in the appendix to this volume. As a case in point, Professor N.T. Wright, Chair of New Testament and Early Christianity at the School of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), and one of the world's leading Bible scholars, has lectured twice on the Asbury Seminary campus, most recently as guest lecturer for the Centennial of Asbury Theological Seminary in 2023, thanks to arrangements initiated by Professor Bauer, as he explained in his interview for this publication. The impact of these lecturers was also highlighted by the distinguished list of Theta Phi Lecturers who have appeared on campus since 1985.

These lecture series have been complemented by the Freitas Lectures emphasizing the wholeness of heart and head and body as intrinsic to the Seminary mission, the Staley and Beeson Lectureships, and the Kingdom Conference, placing focus on an annual week of teaching and worship in selected themes encompassing church and society on an international scale.

Bauer also noted the achievements in music with the distinguished history of the Singing Seminarians, who for several decades beginning in the 1940s regularly toured widely as well as singing in Seminary worship services at Estes Chapel, which since the 1970s has been guided by the musical prowess of Professor Albin Whitworth, Bauer noted that the lowering of Christian influence on culture was “partly due to a steep decline in the influence of the music of the church upon the culture.” In his view the Seminary could have a significant role in addressing that defect, which had earlier been given emphasis when a master's degree in church music was offered.

Finally, Professor Bauer has observed that the implicit disdain of applied ministry courses by those in the “academic” disciplines of Biblical and theological Studies has significantly diminished in the Tennent era with growing research in Global Ministry studies requiring a heightened integration of theological content with praxis. Here an expression of “bravo” (gratitude) was in order for an outstanding example of where attention to the Seminary mission to the whole world has heightened the readiness of the Seminary community to marshal its academic and praxis resources on its behalf.

>>> Among the benefits of having *Ben Witherington* as a member of the School of Biblical Interpretation has been his vital role in elevating the academic stature of this School as well as the

larger mission of the Seminary.⁵⁰ In 1994, while serving on the faculty of Winebrenner Theological Seminary in Ohio, Ben received a call from President Dunnam tersely exclaiming, “Get yourself down here pronto.” A Ph.D. program in biblical studies became a priority not only to extend the Seminary mission but also to raise the bar of respectability in the wake of its internal altercation regarding shared governance. This issue was also addressed with the hiring of a front line scholar, such as Craig Keener, in New Testament studies, given his prolific and qualitative research. This addition reflected his ongoing concern for increasing the Seminary presence in the sphere of serious academic study. Any concern that Asbury Seminary would not be a place from which professors could be invited to first tier theological schools was dismissed in 1996 when Dean Leander Keck contacted Professor Witherington with the request that he apply for an open position in New Testament Studies at Yale Divinity School. In addition, the earlier opening of the E. Stanley Jones School was a deterrent to any who might object that Asbury Seminary was a parochial institution with no global focus. From that time Witherington accepted the role of also serving as a “good will ambassador” for the Seminary among first line academic institutions.

President Tennent became aware of the interest being generated for a PhD program from the presence of these front line scholars in biblical studies, and its potential for enhancing interest and funding for this program. A major boost came when Southern Association institutions of higher education in Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama developed a working connection with Asbury Seminary, which became a major factor in attracting funding for the PhD program in Biblical Studies from the Paul and Jean Amos Educational Fund, of Columbus Georgia.⁵¹ Ben enhanced this relationship when he began teaching CEU units for the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. Asbury was becoming a leader for doctoral study in Biblical Studies in its competition with thirteen United Methodist seminaries and independent seminaries like Fuller. The quality of candidates for admission to the PhD program was also steadily increasing, and many were coming from also from non United Methodist channels, especially evangelical Lutherans, Baptists, and the Christian Church. The rigor of an Asbury Seminary PhD advanced with the degree in Biblical Studies now joining that offered in Intercultural Studies. The design of the PhD degree also included a Wesleyan orientation, which enhanced its standing a representing the

⁵⁰ O'Malley, Interview with Ben Witherington, September 17, 2020.

⁵¹ Amos, a prominent industrialist, was from St. Luke United Methodist Church in Columbus, Ga.

mission of a confessional school, committed to the whole Bible for the whole world.⁵² In overview, Witherington observed that it was the providence of God that “Cooley found Timothy Tennent”, who has done an attestable job of “righting the ship” that is Asbury Seminary. By being unapologetically Wesleyan, its PhD also impacts the culture more effectually in a day when the term “evangelical” has unfortunately been given a “black eye” in the general culture.

>>> One part of the mission of the seminary is for faculty to train theologically educated men and women for ministry. As an example of that priority, *Ruth Anne Reese*, a Professor of New Testament Studies and accomplished scholar, also chairs the work of the Faculty Committee. Her task here involves overseeing faculty approvals for sabbatical leaves and reports, promotions, tenure, and emeritus status. These opportunities either recognize faculty for the work that they have already done (promotion, tenure, emeritus) or provide time for sustained study and growth for a faculty member. As our faculty continue to deepen their own theological education (it doesn't stop with the acquisition of the Ph.D.!), they are enabled to provide even deeper theological education to the students the seminary serves. The structure of sabbatical leaves is an important aspect of the seminary's mission as it encourages ongoing growth and participation in theological education.⁵³

We turn next to those charged with safeguarding and communicating the mission of the Seminary through **Theological Studies** pursued in light of the Wesleyan tradition, which takes us to interviews with the School of Theology and Formation.

>>> Interview with Professor *James Thobaben*, Dean of the School of Theology and Formation and Professor of Ethics, provided crisp insights into the Seminary and its engagement through its mission with the larger culture. He joined the faculty to teach ethics in 1994, after an extended service as vice president of a hospital in Mississippi, noting that the only Seminary that would draw him from that fulfilling post would be an invitation “either to Yale or Asbury Seminary.” Having complete a PhD in ethics at Emory.

At Emory he chose the latter option, where he found his ministry in the context of the mission of Asbury Seminary. He scrutinized the Wesleyan holiness movement, took courses at the College, and immersed himself in Kierkegaard, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley’s hymns.

⁵² Witherington also noted that the confessional statement was a response to fundamentalism in America.

⁵³ Written response to interview question from O’Malley to Professor Ruth Anne Reese, Professor New Testament Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary for several decades.

Thobaben offered this historical observation that offers context for how the mission of the Seminary may be understood in Wesleyan terms. When Wesleyan themes became intertwined with moral law theory in the nineteenth century, revivalists like Finney took too far how love can be manifest in the government of society, thus confusing social moral perfection with a Wesleyan view of Christian perfection. In conclusion, Asbury Seminary is a good place to work, and the School of Theological Formation in particular.

James affirmed these views on recent Seminary administrations whom he had personally encountered, from Dunnam through Tennent: “They have held the Seminary steady to its original mission as a high priority and, from a human perspective, they have kept the organization together in a manner that avoided the institutional problems of routinization and also the danger of becoming a bureaucracy.”⁵⁴

>>> Another faculty member of prominence who spoke to the role of the Seminary mission in their discipline was *Christine Pohl*,⁵⁵ who served alongside Thobaben in teaching ethics during her 29 year period of service at the Seminary. Her specialty before Asbury was hospitality, which first has emerged as an academic discipline in contemporary theological studies in large measure due to her contributions to that field as a young evangelical scholar.⁵⁶ In succinct overview, her extensive interview delved into pedagogical and curricular issues touching on her subject. John Kilner, then professor of ethics at the Seminary, first invited Christine to explore coming to Asbury in 1989 as a second ethics specialist, and one of the few woman faculty members serving at the Seminary to that date.⁵⁷ She was then beginning her doctoral studies at Emory in her field. When she came, Christine soon found herself “cherishing” the Wesleyan tradition, with which she had little familiarity in her Northeastern culture. She found herself surprised when she accepted the invitation to teach here, realizing she would not be returning to family and familiar culture.⁵⁸

Christine developed her field while at Asbury, through writing, speaking and conferencing, in addition to classroom teaching, and established a wonderful life with the faculty and the

⁵⁴ O'Malley, Interview with James Thobaben, October 3, 2020.

⁵⁵ O'Malley, Interview with Christiane Pohl, November 19, 2020

⁵⁶ She noted that for American middle class Christians hospitality is largely about the etiquette appropriate to entertainment or home table customs.

⁵⁷ She identified a total of four who had taught there since the 1940s, representing different fields, and as orthodox believers provided no challenges to the academic tenor of the Seminary.

⁵⁸ Although her brother and family and their parents later relocated to Wilmore from New York City, and remained here.

community. She paved a way for women to find greater acceptance as peers in the faculty, which has increased in recent years. Her niche was to explore hospitality in light of the amenable Wesleyan tradition featuring the Spirit-filled and sanctified life, and to use her perspective as a “wedge” for looking at issues in ethics, and to interpret and apply the discipline of Christian ethics to personal and community life. She fleshed out a tradition of hospitality running through the history of Christian thought. For example, she viewed the house church in the first century of Christianity as a seedbed for developing hospitality practices for Christian faith, although that function would later be removed from the church and relocated in monasteries, hospitals and other specialized institutions. With regard to the Asbury Seminary mission of the “whole Bible for the whole world,” Christine came to interpret that formulation as a hospitality concern.⁵⁹ For her, the Wesleyan tradition represented at Asbury was found to be more amenable in “DNA” to embracing formation thinking as a foundation for community, than would other theological contexts.⁶⁰ There is also promise for its renewal in the academic sphere since her retirement, with the work of Maria Kenney, her successor in ethics at the Seminary.

>>> An insightful interview from our longest serving faculty member, Professor *Larry (Laurence) Wood*,⁶¹ Frank Morris Professor of Christian Doctrine, provided perspective on earlier developments in the Seminary history that were instrumental in helping Asbury to remain faithful to her mission imperative. He recalled his faculty interview conducted in a car by President Stanger, who invited him to campus and hired him in spring 1976. Stanger had been agonizing over the loss of three faculty members in the wake of disagreements over the best way to affirm the Seminary doctrinal position on the authority of the Bible in light of calls to affirm its inerrancy, He had been seeking a strong person in systematic theology to help restore a sense of theological stability on such foundational matters. It was *déjà vu* or Wood, since he had graduated from both the College and the Seminary, where he doubled as fulltime student as well as student pastor and also the Seminary bookstore director.

⁵⁹ O'Malley, Interview with Christine Pohl, November 19, 2020

⁶⁰ She found the pattern of hospitality in such campus locations as chapel, offices, community events, and in ESJ. Ibid

⁶¹ O'Malley, Interview with Laurence (Larry) Wood on May 29, 2020. A graduate of Asbury College 1963, Asbury Theological Seminary 1966, Christian Theological Seminary ThM 1970, and University of Edinburgh 1972, he taught at Roberts Wesleyan College before coming to Asbury Seminary in spring 1976, where he continued to teach for over forty years, serving as the Frank Paul Morris Professor of Systematic Theology

When he arrived as a new faculty member, his Dean, Herold Kuhn, made clear to him “that he would be his own man, and have freedom to teach as he was led,” so long as he embraced the Seminary confession. This declaration was actually an appropriate proviso coming from a man who had come to his Wesleyan position as a Quaker. Wood found it to be a liberating experience for a scholar who affirmed the confession of faith along with “parameters that were not confining.”⁶²

In light of the heavy concentration of United Methodist students at Asbury Seminary, Wood strongly affirmed the strength of that denomination was largely due to the influence of Asbury Seminary upon its congregations, who had received more pastors from that Seminary than from any Methodist Seminary. At the same time, it would be a mistake to say that Asbury has caused the theological turmoil in the denomination. This is because the Seminary has been careful to prepare students for ministry more broadly, and the seminary has not have affiliated with any political agenda but has advocated for a Wesleyan theological orthodoxy that brings life and stability to congregations.

As a case in point, Wood noted that because Asbury has a high affirmation of humanity created in the image of God, we see the issue of homosexuality in a sense that distinguishes the person from the practice, i.e., we do not reject any person regardless of their sexual preference, and there should be a distinction between having a homosexual tendency and one who willfully engages in its practice. In all, we should be led by the Holy Spirit in addressing that issue.

Larry Wood offered an important observation highlighting the role of Asbury College in the first recognition of the validity of the ordination of women in Methodism, which he verified from historical sources. In 1956, The College president, Z.T. Johnson, was a delegate to the Methodist General Conference. When a motion was made to retain the prohibition of ordaining women for ministry, he strongly objected, arguing they ought to be ordained and should not be so denied when they are called of God to that office. The amendment passed, and to this day, women are ordained in the United Methodist Church. He also noted that we should remember that this is our legacy also, since the College is the “Mother” of Asbury Theological Seminary. [Parenthetically, President Tennent related to the author that in 2020 our student body has now includes more registered women than men for the first time in its history.]

⁶² He noted the Seminary would soon be prepared to embrace the language of the Lausanne Conference (193) on biblical authority as the best expression of its own position.

Wood's significant contributions to Wesleyan theology were noted, with his pioneering studies of the seminal role of Pentecost in the latter preaching of John Wesley, as well as influencing the hymnody of Charles Wesley. He found that the Pentecost theme also has historical roots in the Anglican practice of invoking the Holy Spirit in the service of confirmation, as well as in the Moravian connections of Wesley with Christian David at Herrnhut.⁶³ Further research in the School of Theology and Formation has also demonstrated that David acquired his theology of Pentecost not from the Moravians but from his conversion in the Silesian revival and, in particular, in the preaching of the Lutheran evangelist Johann Adam Steinmetz, whose recently recovered Pentecost addresses represent the first linking of Pentecost with global awakenings in the history of modern Christianity, and the point of origin for the Wesleyan understanding of salvation proceeding from justification to sanctification through the gift of the baptism (also sealing) of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴

>>> Within the School of Theology and Formation, Spiritual Formation serves as a theological, academic discipline under the direction of *Stephen Martyn*, who, with his colleague *Michael Voigts*, preside over a stellar program encompassed in an M.A. in Spiritual Formation. Students in this program completed studies in core courses within the School, including designated core electives and specialized courses in their field, and study in personal and local church contexts. This academic degree places heightened emphasis upon fidelity to the Asbury Seminary mission, expressed by Professor Voigts as “providing foundations for students to understand who they are in Christ so they may be better equipped to lead others into Spirit-led-lives. . . .that the fire of the Holy Spirit can become unleashed in them, burning brightly with the saving and sanctifying message of the Gospel.”⁶⁵

>>> The Asbury mission has its home base in the coterie of scholars focusing on Wesleyan studies in the School of Theology and Formation. *Professor Kenneth Collins*, Professor of Wesley

⁶³ See Laurence Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* (Scarecrow, 2002) and *Pentecost and Sanctification in the Writings of John and Charles Wesley, With a Proposal for Today* (Emeth, (2018).

⁶⁴ J. Steven O'Malley, *The Origin of the Global Wesleyan Theological Vision in the Spirituality of Early Pietist Revivalism: The Pentecost Addresses of Johann Adam Steinmetz* (Emeth, 2020). O'Malley also began the symposium for the study of Pietism in the American Society of Church History in 1998, was founding editor of the *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies Series* with Scarecrow Press (1989-2004) and with Emeth Press since 2004).

⁶⁵ Michael Voigts, “When we invite God to form us . . .” *The Asbury Herald* fall 2018, 7. Voigts is author of *Letters of ascent: Spiritual Direction in the Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux* (Wipf and Stock, 2013).

Studies and Historical Theology, a major representative of that circle, has regarded its program as warranting the observation that Asbury Theological Seminary is now the place for serious scholars to come who are seeking a seamless doctoral program in theology done under the consideration of Wesleyan theology, and pursued as one integrated piece. There are three considerations presented by Professor Collins that would substantiate that observation. First, several seminal research volumes have been published by a group of senior and also junior scholars in this field.⁶⁶ Among these, Collins cited his influential work on the heart of John Wesley's theology.⁶⁷ Second, programs and institutions have been formed to advance the Wesleyan tradition. In 2015 he launched the Wesleyan Summer Studies Seminar, held annually, which brings together scholars around the Wesleyan corpus. The launch of the Studies of the Summer Seminar has also enhanced the holdings in Wesley studies of the Estes Library. Third, this School brings to the table scholars around the Wesleyan corpus for reciprocal deliberation toward the advancement of scholarship in Wesley studies. As a result, the work of the Wesleyan Summer Seminar has enhanced the state of research sufficient to make Asbury the place to come for comprehensive study in the field.⁶⁸ Ken has also graciously shared his knowledge and commitment to Wesley's reading and application of Scripture through an extended series of weekly meetings with students in the Seminary cafeteria.

>>> An insightful viewpoint pointing us toward the future of Wesleyan theological studies at Asbury Theological seminary has come from the insights of our systematic theologian, *Jason Vickers*, who aspires to "move the conversation" in Wesleyan theology beyond Wesley himself, to embrace the comprehensive Christian tradition at ultimately to come to terms with the Holy, which is a reference to the doctrine of God for the twenty first century, in light of Wesleyan theology. He presented his position in three points. First, we begin with Wesleyan theology more

⁶⁶ These scholars were listed as Kenneth Collins (see works below), the seminal work of Jason Vickers, Laurence Wood, and younger scholars, Chris Johnson, with her published research on Wesley and the theology of death [a relevant topic in an age of covid] and Brian Yeich, on Wesley and sanctification. These persons are all related to the School for Theology and Formation.

⁶⁷ Here he cited his earlier Scripture and Salvation, *The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*, and his subsequent major study, *Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*, translated in multiple languages, and his volume on John Wesley's Sermons, *John Wesley, a Call for the Journey*, where the sermons are arranged in the ordo salutis.

⁶⁸ The editor would add one other area for inclusion: the Wesleyan perspective within the context of Western theology and spirituality in early Modernity, a vital area for understanding the place of Wesleyan theology in its global setting. Two studies have been contributed to this discussion by faculty of the School of Theology and Formation, discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

broadly, “moving the conversation beyond Wesley himself,” who has been the source of prolific research in recent years, to the Wesleyan tradition after and beyond Wesley.⁶⁹ The nineteenth century has not been attended to and needs to be studied by the contemporary Wesleyan denominations.⁷⁰ Second, professional societies, like the Wesleyan Theological Society, are moving toward expanded conversations after and beyond, Wesley, to the larger tradition. The recovery of Wesley over the past sixty years has been important, with focus on the historical tradition of Wesley’s era. Jason’s focus had come upon a nineteenth century Methodist Episcopal systematic theologian, William Burt Pope, who has been the focus of a dogmatics working group over the past four years. The focus is not to turn from Wesley to Pope but rather to view Pope as a prime example of the direction of constructive theology that needs to be resourced for the twenty first century, in the face of widespread historical amnesia. Third, Jason’s own interest is in holiness as the organizing theme for a new Wesleyan dogmatics, being a theme that needs to be addressed not from the standpoint of ethics (as a morality issue) but as a divine attribute: a word first about God, and then a focus upon church as the organizing thread for Wesleyan dogmatics in the twenty first century. He was also planning to write *A Methodist Christology for Wesleyans to the Twenty-first Century*, that would include a chapter on Pope’s doctrine of atonement. It would be about more than knowing Wesley. Research on this task will also include preparing an extensive volume, *The Oxford Handbook of Holiness*, a massive, collaborative volume from Augustine to the twentieth century, projected as 700–800 pages.

Professor Vickers also responded to the question, How do your scholarly concerns relate to the mission of the Seminary? He note that, as a Seminary with a Wesleyan tradition, Asbury is poised to expand its vision to encompass the comprehensive fullness of Christian theology. A starting point was Jason’s extended weekly meeting to read the patristics with Jonathan Powers, whose field is worship. A goal is to develop a three year lectionary reading schedule, reflecting Christian material indexed to the Christian calendar, and made available to students. He speaks of this as arriving at the fullness of the Christian tradition backwards from the present day, viewed with a global energy, appropriate to the global emphasis of President Tennent, for the new Asbury Seminary of the twenty-first century. Biblical studies, worship, historical theology are

⁶⁹ An apt counterbalance to the present author’s appeal for a closer look at the pre-Wesleyan world of early modern spirituality that contextualizes and influences the rise of Wesley.

⁷⁰ He excludes “proto Pentecost” traditions from this analysis without explanation.

encompassed in this outlook, and we have” a phenomenal faculty talking about discipleship in a Wesleyan way,” although we cannot say that about other schools, where there are “token Wesleyan scholars, but not, top to bottom!” We also have two signature Wesleyan journals, *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, which Jason edits, and *The Asbury Journal*, edited by Robert Danielson. Ken’s summer Wesleyan program is also important. The history of the Wesleyan Theological Society is filled with Asbury Seminary connections,⁷¹ The aspiration for the PhD program in Wesley Studies is important for this plan to be forwarded, and represents fulfillment of another dimension of the Seminary global mission. The global aspect of this degree program will magnify the impact of the Wesleyan message of full salvation. In short, there is a future role for Asbury Seminary in theological education. Producing these scholars is the real barometer in assessing the Seminary’s health in putting this together, and the work of prayer to that end is the work of the people of God.⁷²

>>> A fresh voice to the discussion of the meaning of the Spirit-filled life, to which Wesleyan soteriology aspires, has been that of *Brian G. Edgar*, Professor of Theological Studies, whose instruction has largely been given in digital fashion across thirteen time zones, from his home base in Australia. Distinctive features of his recognized research in public theology were presented to the Seminary faculty on the occasion of his retirement.⁷³ Identifying the “disconnect” between play and spirituality, Edgar’s carefully documented and developed theme is that playfulness lies at the heart of all authentic Christian spirituality, past and present., including biblical references to a New Jerusalem “filled with boys and girls playing” (Zachariah 8:5) and Jesus’ admonition that we should “learn from children” (Matthew 11:25). Play transports one into “another world” involving trust, and joy in the presence of God. A Wesleyan observation might note that this is the vital experience of the person who has come to terms with his mortality in repentance of sin, and not defiant joy in unrepentant sin. This research also substantiates the significance of the recent discovery that it was the joy of songs and prayers from the lips of Spirit-awakened children amid a season of profound human tragedy that triggered the first awakening of modern Christianity,

⁷¹ Its current president, Luther Oconer, has joined the faculty of Asbury Orlando as an associate professor of theology, coming from his role as professor and director of the EUB History Center at United Theological Seminary.

⁷² O’Malley, Interview with Jason Vickers, July 21, 2020.

⁷³ Brian G. Edgar, *The God Who Plays: A Playful Approach to Theology and Spirituality* (Cascade, 2017), highlighted in retirement celebration on August 26, 2021.

leading to the birth of Methodism,⁷⁴ a people known for the joy of their fervent hymn singing.

>>> The mission of Asbury Seminary also reverberates through the teaching and research of *Michael Peterson*, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, in his “reflections on My Time and Work at ATS.” His distinctive articulation of that mission is best encountered in his own words, provided for the occasion of the centennial marker of the Seminary:

Upon entering the faculty in Fall 2011, I knew that I was going to participate in the great communal energy for preparing theologically educated persons to evangelize the world and spread the message of holiness. I also knew that as an established professional philosopher my work would flow into that vital energy for theological education in the service of Christ in particular ways. Since I had been influential in the renewal in Christian philosophy in the last quarter of the twentieth century and was a charter member of the Society of Christian Philosophers launched in 1978, I brought these connections with me. In fact, I was founding managing editor of the Society’s scholarly journal, *Faith and Philosophy*, launched in 1984 at Asbury University but which I brought to Asbury Theological Seminary. *Faith and Philosophy* is now open access on the ATS website, free for anyone in the world to retrieve the best in Christian philosophy of religion. The cover story of *Time* magazine (April 7, 1980) was the amazing revival of Christian philosophical thought in an otherwise atheistic discipline, which led to the creation of *Faith and Philosophy*.

Early on, I knew that this resurgence in Christian philosophy would need, in addition to a first-rate journal, some fundamental textbooks, which led me to design and be the lead author in *Reason and Religious Belief*, first published by Oxford in 1991 and now in its 5th edition. *Reason and Religious Belief* was recognized in February 2022 by the Society for Philosophy of Religion as the most influential philosophy of religion text of all time. I did a companion Oxford anthology, *Philosophy of Religion*, which is also currently in its 5th edition. These two resource texts have been used in major universities as well as Christian colleges and seminaries since the early 1990s. In its April 1998 issue, *Faith and Philosophy* carried my article chronicling this amazing movement in Christian philosophy. In my long career, I have also worked specifically three areas: the problem of suffering and evil, the science/religion dialogue and debates, and the philosophy of C. S. Lewis. Not only have I produced various books and articles on these topics, but I have found great demand at ATS for courses in these areas.

⁷⁴ The work of Edgar’s colleague in the School of Theology and Formation, J.S. O’Malley, in *Origin of the Wesleyan Theological Vision*.

Since the classically Wesleyan tradition is dedicated to forming the whole person, including the intellect, I have perfect freedom at ATS, whereas some seminaries offer no philosophy and thus cannot engage numerous issues in the intellectual arena that are so vital to representing the intellectual credentials of orthodox Christian belief. Although the familiar ideas of foreign missions and evangelism are prominent in our seminary environment, my less-visible work helps the community understand that evangelism in some sectors of contemporary society does not take stereotypical forms and yet harkens back to a more ancient activity of the Church. All of my professional publishing and interaction relates to influential thinkers, mostly non-Christian, at secular R1 (top research level) universities. I believe that orthodox Christian voices are needed in these areas, largely to demonstrate the intellectual strength of orthodoxy coupled with good philosophy. Students generally, whatever their calling and intended career path, recognize that they must be conversant with the realm of philosophical ideas, both because their faith needs deeper understanding, as Anselm taught us, and because being conversant with these ideas helps them to guide their congregations and constituencies and even to engage the secular world at some levels.

In mid-2021, due to my profile and connections with a network of authors, I was commissioned by Cambridge University Press to edit and manage a 50-volume series entitled “The Problems of God,” volumes that will address a wide variety of intellectual and practical issues related to belief in God. Cambridge carries countless dozens of these series in all academic fields, all edited by major scholars at R1-level research universities—except for my series, in which each volume will carry my name along with the name of Asbury Theological Seminary. Although my competitive nature wanted this, my desire was also satisfied that the relevant problems and issues related to belief in God get fair and balanced treatment on a top tier scholarly secular platform. I am deeply grateful to be a part of a diverse but unified academic community that encourages my interactions with an often-neglected part of God’s world: the intellectual world generally and the secular academic world specifically. These are nonbelieving professional philosophers who also need to see the intellectual strength and credibility of Christian orthodoxy so that perhaps they would be more open to God’s grace

Although much of my philosophical engagement with secular thinkers, many of whom have been notable public intellectuals, has been in the larger academic arena of conferences and publications, some of my engagements have more directly intersected the ATS main campus.

Historical memory of three figures that crossed the path of Asbury Theological Seminary in this regard will be lost if not recorded here. In approximately 1993, Rev. Howard Mumma, a retired United Methodist Pastor from Ohio who had served the American Church in Paris during the decade of the 1950s, visited the B. L. Fisher Library in order to find *Faith and Philosophy* in the journal stacks and thus find its Managing Editor. He had the library desk call me (I was still at Asbury College at the time) to see if I would talk with him in the library. He told me that he wanted to publish his recollections of his decade-long interactions with the famous atheistic existentialist Albert Camus. It is difficult to imagine a more influential intellectual in literature and culture in the twentieth century. Yet, unbeknownst to anyone else in the world at the time of our talk in the library was the fact that Albert Camus visited his church and expressed that he was seeking Christian faith. This justly famous novelist could not live with the lack of meaning that his own novels reflect. Since this was history and not analytic philosophy of religion, I could not publish it in the journal but rather connected Howard Dr. Mumma with a friend of mine (Dr. John Cooper, who studied with Tillich at Chicago) who helped people write their books and find suitable publishers. *Camus and the Minister* was published in 2000 and must be read intently for the gripping conversations, including Camus's plea for baptism (subsequent to his Catholic baptism as a child) and Mumma's official refusal, Mumma's return to Ohio, and Camus's suspicious death in an automobile accident.

Another notable intellectual—this time a professional philosopher—crossed the path of Asbury Theological Seminary and Asbury University, but for quite an extended period of time. Edward H. Madden was my dissertation advisor at SUNY. I did philosophy of science with Ed, but after each weekly three-hour advising session, Ed would ask me to stay longer and talk about why he was an atheist. In the 1960s, the two towering books on the problem of evil were John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*, offering a theodicy for theism, and Ed's *Evil and the Concept of God*, attacking theism for inadequate explanations of evil. Shortly after I received my Ph.D. in 1976 and entered the Asbury community in 1978, Ed called me and said that he was taking early retirement and that he and his wife, Marian, wanted to move to live near me, his last doctoral student, so that we could continue our close friendship. I was overjoyed, but I was also nervous that a famous, well-published atheist living in our midst might be cause for contentiousness. My fears were never realized, as both Asbury communities embraced Ed and Marian as soon as they arrived in 1981, and inviting Ed to speak in philosophy classes or to give special public talks. Ed

was always respectful but simply articulated objectively his disagreements with theistic and Christian belief. Due to advancing age, Ed and Marian left in 2000 to live with an adult son in Vermont. In our farewell lunch together, Ed said that he had loved being here and that, over his nineteen years here, he had relinquished many of his criticisms related to the problem of evil; but he stated that he was nonetheless remaining an atheist due to unexplained animal pain. Our task, our calling, especially for some of us, is to interact intelligently with reasonable nonbelievers on behalf of Christian belief; the reset is in the Lord's hands.

The third very public intellectual to cross the path of Asbury was philosopher Antony Flew, who was to the second half of the twentieth century what outspoken genius atheist Bertrand Russell was to the first half. Interestingly, Ed Madden's wife, Marian, was friends with Tony Flew's wife, Annas, so that whenever Tony did a speaking tour in the states, he would fly into Lexington so that the two women could visit. Unknown to virtually everyone but me, Tony Flew came through the Asbury community several times while the Maddens lived among us. On some occasion, Ed must have told Tony about the publication of *Faith and Philosophy* based in our community because in the late 1990s, I received a check from Tony for a two-year subscription to the journal in a note that said he wanted to keep up with the materials we publish. I returned the check with a letter saying that we were honored to give him a lifetime subscription for his outstanding service to the profession. Upon the publication of Flew's blockbuster book *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, I watched the atheist community pan him for declining mental abilities, but I knew that he had been ingesting *Faith and Philosophy* for many years.

On a grander scale, Asbury Theological Seminary has been the hub cutting-edge intellectual discussions of science and Christian belief among world class scholars. I wrote a grant to the John Templeton Foundation in 2009 for their "Science for Ministry Grant Competition," which provided generous funding for elaborate three annual science-religion conferences during covered 2010-2012. Over the three-year grant period, numerous scholars who are well known for contributing to the science-religion area spoke on campus and interacted with our faculty and students. Audiences were always large for major addresses by scholars such as Owen Gingerich (astronomer), Jeffrey Schloss (biologist, ecologist), William Willimon (preaching), Pamela Gay (astronomy), George Murphy (physics), and Ted Davis (history of science). At the end of our grant period, Michael Murray of the Templeton Foundation told me that Asbury held the highest quality

of all the programs funded; the other programs were at Princeton, Calvin, and Fuller. One result of the grant award is that PH605 Science and Christian Faith was put in the Asbury catalogue in 2012, and I have taught it regularly at least annually in order to create ongoing discussion of science for Christian ministers and leaders.⁷⁵

Engaging and Linking the Seminary mission with the world is the function of the **E. Stanley Jones School of World and Evangelization:**

>>> It is surely appropriate to begin this section with an acknowledgment, via interview, with the founding Dean of the E. Stanley Jones School, *George Hunter*. Precisely four decades ago, he was honored with that position by President Stanger, making the centennial year of 2023 the fortieth anniversary of its founding. Recalling that occasion, George recalled that just two years earlier he had been invited to a meal with the President, while Stanger was serving on a committee of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education. Hunter learned that the Seminary was facing financial constraints and that “we won’t soon be starting the new School of Mission.”

Fuller had a School of World Missions, and had been committed to a world mission throughout its history, and had been producing three out of every four mission doctorates then being graduated. “We would be standing on the tired shoulders of our California neighbor, surmised Hunter.” By 1981, Stanger called a meeting of the whole faculty, to whom he introduced three consultants, McGavran, founding dean of the School of World Missions at Fuller, Sam Kamaleson, an Asbury Seminary graduate and now leading world evangelist from India, and Arnett, representing Asbury. The decision was then made to start the E, Stanley Jones School, as soon as possible. Trinity and Fuller targeted Europe, and North America as well. We had lost Coleman to Trinity, where he was dean, and J.T. Seamands stayed, as a founding member of the mission faculty. He sought for scholars at other schools, wanting to staff faculty who were experts in their field. He expressed delight in locating a real anthropologist, Darrell Whiteman, who would join the ESJ faculty, as well as an expert in World Religion, Matt Zahneiser⁷⁶. The newly elected President, David McKenna, urged action to fill the ranks of the faculty for the new School promptly, but finances were not available, delaying this action from two to four years. Under Hunter’s direction, the School. added a ThM, then a PhD in Intercultural Studies followed. continued as Dean until 2001,

⁷⁵ Michael L. Peterson: Personal Statement Prepared for the Centennial Volume, on November 1, 2021.

⁷⁶ Darrell Whiteman also succeeded George Hunter as Dean of the ESJ School.

when he stepped aside, and returned to the faculty, retiring in 2011.

In retrospect, he regarded their School theologically emphasized as an apostolic ministry, in the ancient tradition of the apostles of the first century, holy, catholic and apostolic. It would become less apostolic after Constantine in the fourth century, when the Christendom model emerged. An abandonment of the apostolic vision ensued. One had to be culturally Latin speaking to be considered Christian, as well as literate. The empire “ruled out the barbarians” at Constantinople, as well as the rural populations. St. Martin of Tours challenged the assumption that rural people couldn’t be reached. Then a young priest in England set out to take a contextual mission to the Irish, and the impossible became possible. We have stood on the shoulders of the image of Patrick. Much later, John Wesley renewed the apostolic vision of early Christianity. He unpacked what this theory might have been: it was in refutation of the mantra “they don’t look like us,” or “how could people like that become Christians?” The people Wesley reached were not culturally shaped for eighteenth century society, nor for the culture of their music.” Christianity can only be contagious when you adapt to the style and the world of the target group. Is that not what Jones was about, when he wrote on “The Christ of the Indian Road.” Amen!⁷⁷

>>> Since we have introduced in the previous chapter the work of *Gregg Okesson*, Dean of the E. Stanley Jones School,⁷⁸ space here is devoted to his personal and ministry life apart from that latest position, also expressing his commitment to the Seminary mission. Gregg learned of this open position at Asbury Seminary while attending a missionary conference in Capetown in 2010, and at that moment President Tennent had already sent correspondence to Gregg inquiring of his interest in the position. After all conversations were completed, he found himself accepting the post and by 2011 he had immersed himself in the Seminary and its mission and reported that he was “thoroughly Wesleyan in nature,” although he then had no official connection with any Wesleyan church body.⁷⁹

Born of missionary parents in Tanzania, he had served there in mission for a decade, learning

⁷⁷ George Hunter has left a major footprint in scholarship and publication, as well as a global speaking legacy, developing themes of church growth and discipleship in cross cultural settings, as well as solid historical studies in major figures of Christian mission, such as St. Patrick. His churchmanship was reflected in his leadership in the Board of Discipleship of his denomination, the United Methodist Church.

⁷⁸ Gregg Okesson was recently repositioned as Provost succeeding Doug Matthews, who relocates as a classroom professor of theology in fall 2021, at his choosing, after almost ten years in the office of the Provost.

⁷⁹ O’Malley, Interview with Gregg Okesson, November 11, 2020.

an indigenous language in use there, as well as serving in Kenya. That period also included his completion of graduate degrees at Wheaton and a doctorate in missiology at the University of Leeds (UK, in 2010).⁸⁰ He served a decade as dean at a missionary Seminary in Tanzania, where he hired two PhDs in theology and developed a sound program of study, based on hybrid and on-site learning. He described his faculty as “phenomenal,” with a global outreach. His specialized focus was on church planting, and offered coursework on this theme, understood in the context of theology and culture.

His working position, that “the local church is the barometer of the gospel,” was taken from a book by that title from Lesslie Newbigin,⁸¹ and described how Gregg understood and practiced church planting. The challenge he found in this ministry was to reach them in those settings where they lived.⁸² For him, Word-based ministry is about context, which, he noted, was similar to the Doctor of Ministry model of ministry then in practice at Asbury Seminary. Gregg also established a small cohort of Anglicans in North Carolina, as support for this Tanzanian church plant, illustrating what theological education in the context of a global based partnership is all about.⁸³ He noted that “global church planting is the most lifegiving part of the task of bringing good “mission-shepherding” information to people. “Accept them in their places of ministry, establish cohorts, and keep the Spirit in their lives and ministries.”⁸⁴ President Tennent also laid hold of this message, making it the pattern for Asbury cross cultural missionaries.⁸⁵

Gregg summarized his use of this method under three headings: (1) commit to teaching in a peer oriented partnership, (2) recognize that developing global partners is the greatest benefit to the outreach of Asbury Seminary, because “we write units, books and commentaries through the lenses of our own cultural background,” and (3) realize that systematic theology categories put in indigenous settings is writing that conveys assurance and stability, including power, blessing, life,

⁸⁰ Gregg was American Baptist by background, had served as a youth worker in his native New York state, although he had not been called to ordained ministry. Ibid

⁸¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Local Church as the Barometer of the Gospel* (Eerdmans, 1989), cited in Okesson, interview November 20, 2020

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ The success of this church plant became the basis for a printed manual on church planting at the University of Manchester (UK), entitled *The Manual of Church Planting in All of the UK*, reported by Okesson in Interview on November 20, 2020.

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ President Tennent authorized this method for use by several persons in global ministry settings at the Seminary, including Mark Royster in his international ministry in Africa, Tom Tumblyn in Practical Theology, and alumni, as well as Gregg.

and feeling. He writes in the context of cultural themes, which may be expressed in theological terminology, since the Holy Spirit often chooses to work most effectively through the means of peer oriented partnership. At this third level, it becomes apparent how evangelism is related to church planting, undertaken in a secular world, where such witness is normally taboo. This *modus operandi* has also become instrumental in the intercultural studies PhD program now in use in the E. Stanley Jones School.

>>> Interview with *Steven J. Ybarrola*, Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the E. Stanley Jones School of Mission and Evangelism,⁸⁶ demonstrated how the Seminary has been engaging human culture in a global dimension, intrinsic to its mission. After completing a doctorate in his field at Brown University, Steve served in the Frank and Grace Moore Chair in Anthropology at Central College (Iowa). His extensive international involvement in intercultural ministry included being the first social scientist to be invited to be invited Foreign Expert at Ningxia University in China in 1996. He has also conducted frequent and extensive site visits to the Basque population in northern Spain, resulting in significant anthropological research into this culture from the standpoint of the Asbury mission to bring to fruition a global witness to the transforming message of Jesus Christ and his salvation. Steve also served with the Revitalization Center in its Luce grant, which included engaging multiple cultures in Toronto impacted by international diasporic migration.

In conversation with Steve, insight was gleaned into how he has been at work in developing anthropological studies on a Christian foundation.⁸⁷ Anthropology is important to viewing our cultural reality in the world today, but it does not provide answers to the important cultural questions. For Steve, this comes from engaging culture with theological perspectives from the Christian faith. For example, he observed how prevenient grace was richly at work in the Basque area, especially in the way they formed community around food as a family based focus of their culture. Gastronomic societies were the basis for their cultural identity, reflecting their daily regimen of one to seven pm, for their larger society. He asked the question, why couldn't a church be formed around this center of community focus, especially since Christians have the eucharist as the source of their spirituality? He cited other scholars at work in this field, and found it

⁸⁶ In fall 2021 Steve became interim dean of the ESJ School, with the appointment of Dean Okesson as Provost.

⁸⁷ O'Malley, Interview with Steven J. Ybarrola, September 18, 2021.

engaging from the standpoint of the Seminary and its global mission.

>>> Interview with *Howard Snyder*, retired Professor of the History and Theology of Mission in the ESJ School, offers a glimpse of the early life and development of this School. A Free Methodist, Snyder's numerous books offered probing insight into the implications of Wesleyan theology for missiological history with a focus upon church renewal in the context of its social and environmental dimensions, beyond the pale of institutional denominational concerns. In his current post (2021), he is the international representative for the Manchester Wesley Research Centre in England. Born of Free Methodist missionary parents in the Dominican Republic, he was educated at Asbury Seminary in the early Stanger era (1966), served as pastor and seminary professor in Brazil, pastor in Chicago and faculty member at North Park and United Theological Seminaries. A recognized author, he also has been a frequent speaker at global missiological conferences, beginning with Lausanne in Switzerland (1974). He completed a PhD in historical theology at Notre Dame (1983). He and his wife Janice have visited thirteen nations in four continents, studying the renewal of the church.

In 1996 Howard was invited to join the faculty of the ESJ School at the invitation of Dean George Hunter, where he taught and conducted timely research and publication probing issues of theology, history, and anthropology in intercultural and environmental context. Working with doctoral students, he observed that all ESJ faculty were present at all doctoral examinations, and were at that time more international, inter-ethnic and interdenominational than was the rest of the Seminary. He worked to give academic stature to the Doctor of Missiology degree program. A major theme of his research has been the stewardship of creation, based on God's covenant with the created order in Genesis 9 and Romans 8. He was also instrumental in developing the first Revitalization Studies Center at the Seminary, in collaboration with interdisciplinary colleagues, including the present author, resulting in two research grants from the Henry Luce Foundation (2007 and 2011). His work did much to establish a receptivity for the current emphasis on global Christianity, which is central to the Asbury mission.

The practice of ministry, expressed in practical theology and pastoral care, introduces the ministry of the **Beeson International Center**.

>>> Citing Philippians 3:10,⁸⁸ the mission of practical theology, in the vision of *Tom Tumblin*, is “to secure the redemption of Jesus Christ in every set of circumstances where he is engaged.”⁸⁹ He came to his position as Dean of the Beeson School of Practical Theology and Professor of Leadership⁹⁰ through a deep grounding in the Asbury mission dating back to a grandfather who graduated from the College in 1921, on the eve of the Seminary founding. Tom was a student at the Seminary in the aftermath of the Asbury revival of 1970, arriving in 1980, and remembered formative times of ministry as a student pastor. He recalled how Seminary dorms were vacated each weekend as student pastors, representing the bulk of the Seminary enrollment, found their ways to their weekly appointments and then returned after hours of often arduous ministry to hit the reserve readings in the library for the Tuesday classes. Such was the life of a student in those years for men in Seminary, and there were only a few women who then ventured to join with them in that calling.⁹¹ Tom sensed he was sharing with his colleagues the edifying cultivation of a pastor’s heart and a scholar’s mind, and seeking ways that the twain might meet in the real practice of hands-on ministry.

Remembering his exhilaration in greeting the newly elected president, David McKenna, he recalled how McKenna’s arrival electrified the campus with reports of his being considered for the post of Secretary of Education in the Reagan administration, and then there would come his launch of the hi-tech renovation that swept through the campus before the end of that decade. The doctrine of sanctification was uniformly explicated through the instruction of Professor Arnett, and Tom found himself called to implement its message as a summons for whole life transformation through Jesus Christ. With the ministry of President Dunnam Tom discovered a new focus on the spiritual transformation of the community as a whole, and as distinct from an exclusive focus upon personal salvation.

He also later recalled President Tennent thanking former President Greenway for walking through a dysfunctional time that was preparatory for enabling the Tennent administration to enlarge and elevate the Asbury vision to its global mission, with his focus on the Spirit-filled life.

⁸⁸ “I want to know Jesus Christ, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and to share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

⁸⁹ O’Malley Interview with Tom Tumblin, July 16, 2020.

⁹⁰ Tumblin was also the founding Director of the Church Planting Initiative.

⁹¹ O’Malley, Interview with Tom Tumblin, July 16, 2020.

⁹² Tom has sought to implement an integrated, holistic approach to practical ministry in the academic programs offered through the Beeson International Center, including the Doctor of Ministry, discipleship, counseling, and pastoral ministry programs of study.

>>> A result of conversation with *Ellen Marmon*, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program in the School of Practical Theology, was the insight provided regarding the changing patterns among students in that program of advanced study for those already engaged in pastoral ministry, and especially among women in that program. Ellen noted eight women students then serving in cohorts within the DMin program of study. They were part of a larger enrollment of 45 to sixty students in the program, with 12–18 then starting, and 40% represented international students, indicating a far higher level of diversity among students, in terms of nation, culture, language, and vocational preference, than in past years, when the DMin program consisted largely of students who were pastors.

Originally a professor of Christian discipleship at the Seminary, her position with the Doctor of Ministry program has enabled her to interface her training in discipleship with that three year doctoral degree program which “creates opportunities for participants to develop the humble posture of learner and embrace a season of growth” for the renewal of pastoral ministry. Her research and ministry include annual field trips with oral cultures and literacy in central Kenya, N. India, New Guinea, and Darwin, Australia.⁹³

Ellen also led a study group for women in the Lilly funded “Thriving for Ministry” project in 2017, with other groups consisting of students who were either bi-vocational or Latino/Latina.⁹⁴ Each group was asked the question, what do you need from Asbury Seminary, and how can we come alongside you in this journey? These were women who had completed the MDiv degree and were under five years in ministry. Their names remained anonymous since they were part of a survey. One person responded, with others affirming her statement, that she faced a dilemma when going before the certifying board of her local congregation⁹⁵ If she was theologically orthodox and Wesleyan, and the congregation was as well, she would find agreement on doctrinal issues but discomfort due to her status as a woman minister. On the contrary, were she to interview before a

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ <https://asburyseminary.edu/faculty/ellen-marmon/>

⁹⁴ This program was launched by her previous administrator and mentor, Dr. David Gyertson, whose work is discussed in a previous chapter.

⁹⁵ Usually known as the Pastor Parish Relations Committee in United Methodism

congregation committee that was theologically “progressive”, she would find herself at odds on doctrinal issues, but supported as a person who was entering ministry as a woman.

This dilemma led to the student’s frustration and disappointment in her attempt to gain entry into the ministry for which she was called and prepared. She received support from others in the group for her struggle, but could there be a resolution? [author’s note: Could one resolution be a deeper attention to the Bible on the part of all parties to the discussion (example: to see that Jesus welcomed women in ministry to him in ways considered wrong by Jewish law and practice, as in the case of Mary washing Jesus’ feet; second, for those who support her as a woman in ministry without accepting plenary biblical authority as a basis for ministry, the issue again is whether the congregation can function as a redemptive fellowship in Christ apart from normative biblical authority. If that question is not addressed, the candidate being questioned may be left without resolution from the only normative source available to a Protestant congregation.)]

These were important conversations that Ellen was surfacing with the DMin students. All persons entering ministry as students at the Seminary need to have those kind of issues addressed, in a venue such as the DMin program where those in ministry can come to understanding and clarification of important issues in pastoral ministry that greatly affect the wellbeing of a congregation.

Ellen also expressed great appreciation for her peers at the Seminary, including Professor Catherine Stonehouse, who was Ellen’s mentor as a student and for whom she is grateful in helping her realize her ministry gifts and pursue a doctoral program in Christian Education.⁹⁶ That mentoring began the journey which led to her joining the faculty in 2005, after fifteen years of active ministry in a large congregation in Lexington.⁹⁷ She expressed grateful recognition of the Beeson family for their generous gift which funded this program, and the facility in which it convenes. Ellen has also been active in writing, consultation and conferencing beyond the Seminary,⁹⁸ enabling her to be part of the ministry to the Global Church, whose representatives have also been present in her DMin cohorts at Asbury Seminary.

⁹⁶ Professor Stonehouse gave emphasis in her research and teaching to intergenerational spiritual formation. <https://prayer.asburyseminary.edu/catherine-stonehouse-intergenerational-spiritual-formation/>

⁹⁷ This was the Centenary United Methodist Church. O’Malley, Interview with Ellen Marmon, July 20, 2020.

⁹⁸ Her global ministries have included teaching in congregational settings in Australia in recent years.

>>> Serving as Professor of Discipleship and Human Development, *Chris A. Kiesling* brings perspective as a Master of Divinity alumnus of Asbury Seminary (1990) with ministry experience and a doctorate in human development from Texas Tech in 2002. His areas of focus in teaching and published research have included discipleship with young and middle-aged adults, campus ministry, marriage and family, and moral development. Chris has inherited the responsibilities in human development studies pioneered on our campus by his predecessor, Professor Donald Joy, including the summer trail camping class at Red River Gorge.

Chris pointed out that Professor Steve Stratton has built his work upon the counseling legacy of David Seamands, former professor of discipleship and dean of the chapel, who conducted premarital counseling weekends and /marriage enrichment studies.⁹⁹ Chris has also pursued ministry in practical theology as a colleague of Professor Cathy Stonehouse, the long serving professor of Christian Education at the Seminary whose work featured bringing her Catechesis of the Good Shepherd/Godly Play into the curriculum and introducing students to new ways of doing children's ministry. He also noted the significant work of Professor Beverly Johnson Miller on the Aging and Spirituality degree. Through the leadership of Chris, his work in human development involved partnering with the Martha Jones Foundation, which built the Day Care Center. In 2021 that location became the site for the developing Van Tatenhove Counseling Center.¹⁰⁰ (along with the site of the former Free Methodist Church adjacent to the Seminary campus).

Among these varied expressions of practical theology offering concrete expression of the Seminary mission to the world, Chris prioritized the work in developing and promoting the Kingdom Conference. Held annually in the fall semester, in concert with the Dean of the Chapel, this event brings the larger Seminary community into vivid display and insightful engagement with the great challenges and vistas of opportunity for mission in the Global Church of the twenty first century. It is a publicized event that brings attention to the Seminary at work in its mission to the world.

A parallel development of like significance for the world mission of the Seminary has been the recent restructuring of the Master of Ministry degree, through the leadership of professors Ellen

⁹⁹ An area continuing to be taught at Asbury University as well.

¹⁰⁰ Used in conjunction with the site operating in the building of the former Free Methodist Church adjacent to the Seminary campus.

Marmon and James Hampton.¹⁰¹

Practical Theology also finds a focal point in the ministry of *Virginia Todd (Toddy) Holeman*, as Professor of Counseling and Chair of the Counseling and Pastoral Care Department at the Seminary. After service in local churches as a Christian educator she discovered her need for the tools to assist families in crisis, that were provided by pastoral counseling. Becoming a licensed professional counselor, she practiced in counseling centers, and pursued a post-graduate program of study which ultimately brought her to the position at Asbury. Her first notice of the Seminary was via a notice in *Christianity Today* regarding its open position in pastoral care¹⁰² While attending a national conference in pastoral care, she found herself seated next to Professor Fred Van Tatenhove, then serving as Chair of the Department of Counseling and Pastoral Care at Asbury Seminary.

The ensuing conversation was an important step to her coming to the Seminary in 1995. She saw the hand of God in this decision by observing, “God is the best recycler ever . . . When I came to Asbury Seminary to teach, all my past experiences were brought into play.”¹⁰³ She knew counseling was an important ministry, but also became aware that, through teaching, she could “impact the next generation.”¹⁰⁴ Impact it she did. She has regularly taught courses within the mental health and marriage and family counseling degree programs, Linking to the eminary mission, she followed the counsel of E. Stanley Jones that “all truth is God’s truth,” leading her to the goal of helping students “find resonance” between theology and counseling. She also observed that this was “where God had called her to be,” with a vital program and “great colleagues.”

She provided further explanation stating that

counselors-in-training need to learn that in the context of working with their client, the counselor’s job is not evangelism. The counselor’s job is to allow truthfulness to emerge in the counseling relationship. The Holy Spirit will be with the counselor, and by extension with the client. While the counselor would need the client’s informed consent to use spiritual or even

¹⁰¹ Christ also noted that Asbury Seminary has become the recipient of the archives of the International Youth Movement, an important publication in global Christian ministry to youth The data for this discussion has been provided by Chris Kiesling in interview. O’Malley, Interview with Chris Kiesling, September 18, 2021.

¹⁰² O’Malley, Interview with Toddy Holeman, October 9, 2020

¹⁰³ Faculty Highlight: Virginia Todd Holeman, *The Asbury Herald* Spring 2018, 8

¹⁰⁴ O’Malley, Interview with Holeman, October 9, 2020

Christian interventions as part of counseling, the Holy Spirit does not need the client's informed consent to work in [the] counselor and the client's lives.¹⁰⁵

Through Toddy's diligence, Asbury Seminary's clinical mental health counseling program has been accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), with the goal requirement for graduates to pass licensing exams to work as professional counselors. On that basis, counseling graduates of the Seminary have received counseling training equivalent to university training in counseling, plus courses in theology that point them to the missional purpose of bringing wholeness to persons, made in the image of God.

The work of Professor Holeman was also preparatory to the announcement in 2018 of the opening of the Van Tatenhove Center for Counseling, which has offered "discreet and convenient access for the campus community to receive mental health and career counseling and consultation." Students and other members of the Seminary community are given access to health and career counseling by advanced student-counselors, free of charge to currently registered students and their families. The plan is for this Center to be an arm of the mission of the Seminary to the whole world, as it extends its services to persons throughout the "Bluegrass Region" of Kentucky.

>>> In chapter seven the ministry of J.D. Walt and Seedbed was introduced, including the ministry of New Room. Here we introduce *David Thomas* as a key resource person in presenting the message of awakening in Christ in the New Room conferencing. An ordained United Methodist minister, he serves the Seminary mission alongside his wife Karen, a long serving and member of the Board of Trustees. David completed doctoral studies on the history and theology of evangelical awakenings, and he has communicated that passion for revival in his plenary addresses to the New Room conferences, including the 2021 conference in Nashville. A seasoned pastor and teacher with emphasis upon leading persons in travailing prayer, he draws upon these gifts and grace toward awakening the people of God through the practice of prevailing prayer. He serves in this capacity through his office as Senior Adviser to the New Room Conference and Network.¹⁰⁶ He explained that his teaching of prevailing prayer is grounded in the gift and goal of the Beeson International Center through which this initiative has been developed. David also spoke of his niche in ministry has grown from his research in his study of the "patterns of prayer before the

¹⁰⁵ email communication from Toddy Holeman on November 8, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Seedbed homes/authors/posts by David Thomas

Great Awakening,” from which he had developed a focus on prevailing prayer in asking the Holy Spirit to direct persons to the prayer of the desperate who have come to pray in a “non-desperate way.”¹⁰⁷

>>>Finally, in a unique partnership between the Beeson School of Practical Theology and the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission there is yet another of the explosive and recent developments in the global ministry of Asbury Seminary in the form of the church planting initiative, which has become a “global phenomenon.” Locating this ministry takes us to the office of *Winfield Bevins*, director of church planting at Asbury Seminary. Bevins came in 2015, as an Anglican pioneering in this ministry which has become central to the Strategic Plan 2023 of Asbury Seminary.¹⁰⁸ He became engaged in church planting while serving in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, as a church planter and network leader. His experience in church planting helped prepare him for an extensive and globally expansive ministry of church planting based at the Seminary in Wilmore.

When he learned about the seminary’s 2023 vision for mission to a Global Christianity he thought, “we can’t do that through traditional methods.” Degree programs alone would not meet the need. Bevins’ focused on training leaders in strategic locations around the world through the church planting institute, which has helped train leaders on five continents, including India, Africa, Latin America, Australia, and the United States. In Orlando, eighty Hispanic/Latino church planting leaders. These initiatives are done without academic degree credits. A church plant movement gains traction when the leader avoids taking credit for their activity so it can be practiced by the planter on site.¹⁰⁹ Institute participants receive continuing education credits with certificates when they complete the training. Multiple degree specializations are now offered in church planting at the Seminary. The program involves a hybrid teaching plan, bringing leaders together three times over three years. It is a community ministry approach to training where students come together in a cohort to meet professors in hybrid mode and stay in their “context.” A Doctor of Ministry in Church Planting has also been established, and church planting leaders have been located at strategic sites, such as Anglican Bishop Rick Thorpe, now Bishop of Church Planting for the Church of England, spanning throughout England in networks that have emerged

¹⁰⁷ O’Malley, Interview with David Thomas, September 16, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ See program discussion in previous chapter.

¹⁰⁹ The unit is a CEU

only recently. The church planting office has produced an interactive website to connect church planters from around the world that provides hundreds of free resources and shares testimonies of church planting leaders from around the world.¹¹⁰

An important factor is that early Methodism was a “multiplication movement,” in a “perpetual movement of awakening” such as the world had never known. The demographics of it today can be traced in Africa and in other locations in the Global South.¹¹¹ The key is to study movements, the way early Methodism started, and not church growth (a dated term). Winfield noted that movements have always been “messy,” being reasons why mission declines apart for the leadership of the Holy Spirit. All Wesleyan mission had the DNA that declared, “the time has come.”¹¹² Such a movement is “the thing that the larger body needs.” It had a Pentecost character, and a mission thrust.¹¹³

The modus operandi applies to entire nations, with multiple ethnicities, as well as churches. Bevins has developed a list of 300 Hispanics who have established a Latino/Latina network in the United States The Church of God in Christ, a denomination larger than United Methodism in the United States, have used this approach, with great results. Bevin projects training 1000 leaders in five more years from 2020 in 20 nations, as the network Asbury Seminary has launched, expands.¹¹⁴

>>> The Asbury Seminary commitment to “**serve the emerging ethnic churches**”, as well as to “**equip pastors for missional engagement in service to the church**”¹¹⁵ are central to the ministry of *Steve Gober*, in his post as Vice President of the Florida Dunnam Campus. He sees his focus as an interfacing of spiritual formation with theological learning for Hispanic students, that they might transmit the full gospel to the lives and cultures where they live and serve. His personal background as dean of the Methodist Seminary in Costa Rica is a case in point, demonstrating how

¹¹⁰ See <https://asburychurchplanting.com/>, where sites are discussed.

¹¹¹ A source for this study is Donald McGavran, see titles online.

¹¹² Bevins notes it is a movement that has also appeared to New Light Presbyterians at places like Cane Ridge in Kentucky, as it had with Congregationalists, like Jonathan Edwards. See also Winfield Bevins, *Marks of a Movement: What the Church Today Can Learn from the Wesleyan Revival*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).

¹¹³ This also describes the data found in the present author’s research on the first Pentecost Awakening in Europe, preceding and precipitating John Wesley and the Methodists in England. See O’Malley, *The Origin of the Wesleyan Theological Vision for Christian Globalization..*(Emeth, 2020).

¹¹⁴ O’Malley, Winfield Bevin, Interview August 10, 2020. A partial list of his recent publications on this subject appears in the previous chapter.

¹¹⁵ Strategic Goals 7 and 6.

this ministry has been done over the past two decades, under the leadership of his father, the founder of that mission, Bishop Luis Palomo, an Asbury Seminary graduate.¹¹⁶ Steve came into a full contact with the Seminary while attending a President’s retreat at the Cove in 2009, resulting in being biblically and theologically challenged in a Spirit-filled setting of worship and reflection. Within one year a received his call to become part of its mission, as Director of Student Formation on the Orlando campus. He succeeded in relocating the chapel to the center of the campus, so there could be a seamless connection between worship, study, and dining.¹¹⁷

A focus in his ministry in Student Formation was to develop face to face contacts with students, many of whom were shifting because they were commuters, unlike the pattern at the Wilmore campus. In 2015 Steve set out to “reboot” the campus by shifting to a largely hybrid teaching, combining the best of online and face to face instruction. He offered resources and appeals to Latino and Latina communities, finally enabling a curricular program for this ethnic community to be established for the Seminary.¹¹⁸ By 2017 a Bilingual Certificate in Hispanic Ministry Formation was launched. The composition of his classes became over 50% nonwhite (Black and Hispanic), with only 38% white, an inversion of the pattern on the Wilmore campus. In Orlando, the typical Seminary student was non-traditional, off campus, and reflecting the corporate world, and also became a member of the same community of faith that affirmed the sanctified life in Christ, involving Spirit-filled repentance and discipleship, now focused and contextualized for a different kind of audience. [note: the context for this ethnic ministry will be reconfigured the Centennial year of 2023, with the present Florida campus facility being replaced by local congregations as the base for community and instruction.¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁸ O’Malley, Interview with Steve Gober, October 8, 2021.

¹¹⁹ The first congregation being tapped for this pedagogical service was the . . . * Church in Orlando. Report of President Tennent to the Asbury Seminary plenary faculty o2 September 4, 2021.

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¹²³ O'Malley, Interview with Steve Gober, October 8, 2021.

¹²⁴ The first congregation being tapped for this pedagogical service was a congregation in Orlando. Report of President Tennent to the Asbury Seminary plenary faculty 02 September 4, 2021.

Note: The first Bilingual DMin cohort launched in 2015 along with the start of the Bilingually delivered MAM in Latino Ministry and Leadership were key contributors to the growth in diversity on the Florida campus.

>>> Complementing and Resourcing the academic fields of theological education, we present the interview with *Dr. Paul Tippey*, Dean of Library, Information and Technology Services, whose services are explained in this statement by Dr. Tippey, prepared for the Centennial History project:

The primary function of the Library, Information, and Technology Services is to develop and make resources available for the Seminary community, including faculty, students, staff, and other local patrons. While it is currently under the direction of Dr. Paul Tippey, Dean of Library, Information, and Technology Services, He follows both Dr. Bill Faupel (as Director of the Library, 1978-2003) and Dr. Ken Boyd (who served as the Executive Director of Information Technology, 1991-2003, and then later as the Dean of Information Services, 2003-2010).

While the Seminary's mission has remained unchanged, the best means of supporting it have developed considerably since the founding of the library, changes reflected by the increased unification of Library services with Information Technology. The overlap in mission between these two formerly separate areas was first explicitly recognized in 2003, when the departments for each were merged in 2003, and reflects the growing importance of technology in accessing information resources. This shift helps to advance the capability of the Seminary to actualize its mission in an increasingly globalized world, by making resources more easily available to students and researchers no matter where they are located.

For a brief time from 2010 to 2017, the library and information technology were once again separated, but worked in a close partnership. In 2017, Dr. Tippey met the challenge of a budget reduction of \$1.5m. by merging Library Services and Information Technology once again as part of the “Box 3” reduction program in the academic area recommended by Landrebe. These changes were part of a larger effort to improve the long-range financial viability of the Seminary.

While studying at Asbury Seminary for a MATS in the late 1990s, Dr. Tippey served in the library, and this led him to pursue an MSLIS with a focus on theological library science, and ultimately a Ph.D. in the field of Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education and Research at Regent University. This academic work was accomplished while serving in library administration at the Seminary, first as Director of the Library (2010-2015), then as Executive Director (2015-2017), before becoming Dean of LITS in 2018.

Dr. Tippey is committed to creating a new future for theological library science, beyond traditional conceptions of librarianship, by focusing on organizational leadership. Some of these ideas were based on the innovative work of Robert Landrebe and the leadership model of David Gyertson, who both served at the Seminary. In 2014, Dr. Tippey taught the first mentors' level course to certify theological faculty to teach online, at United Theological Seminary. He has expanded the role of the library in hiring the first Instructional Designer and the first Writing Center Director. He also instituted the development of First Fruits Press, an innovative Open Access project in 2012.

When the Library and Technology offices merged for the second time, Technology was relocated from the Beeson Center to the Library, accompanied by a restructuring of the area to its new name: Library, Information, and Technology Services (LITS). Wesley Custer was appointed to the new position of Director of Instructional Services, which includes the helpdesk, instructional design, and general reference assistance. Dr. Ginger Stelle was appointed as the Director of the Writing Center, while Don Butterworth was appointed as the Director of Strategic Collections, and Bryan Amstutz was appointed as Director of Administrative Technology. Don Sweigard went from serving as Infrastructure Manager to Director of Technical Support,

The Library and Information Technology departments were merged to address inefficiencies, correct long-term systematic issues, and ultimately reduce the budget. In Spring 2018, LITS began addressing the budget, reducing waste, and redirecting those resources to additional issues, such as the catastrophic cloud backup solution and the aging wifi infrastructure. In 2019, the focus was to address the inadequate Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) with a total replacement. In addition, the aging desktops and printer infrastructure needed to be addressed all within budget, as well as migrating the library system to a cloud-hosted solution.

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for a number of upgrades, including improving the classroom infrastructure by upgrading to a Video Conference System (Zoom), setting up a cloud-based solution for the web servers and authentication software, and upgrading multiple firewalls as well as servers. It was also essential to separate the Seminary's Financial Software (GP) from Asbury University's, establish a file-to-file backup solution for all Google services for staff and faculty, update the Board of Trustees wiki by transitioning to Google, address the need for additional Ph.D. level material in the library collection, and update and re-develop the LITS website and Library searching interface. In the midst of this, over the last three

years, LITS has also upgraded both Estes Chapel and McKenna Chapel, the new Alumni Center, Royal Auditorium, and all of our site locations with the latest technology.

In 2021, with President Tennent's support, LITS began a comprehensive Network Infrastructure overhaul to support the technology demands of Higher Education. Mobile solutions, streaming, and cloud-based applications can overwhelm an older network infrastructure, while upgrading increases productivity across the entire institution. At the same time, the modern infrastructure will dramatically simplify network deployment, operations, and management. The most critical reason for upgrading our network infrastructure is to support the Seminary's needs, giving a competitive edge, from cloud computing to high tech higher education applications. The older the network infrastructure is, the more vulnerable an organization is to cybersecurity risks. Upgrading the network infrastructure with an updated Cisco network; intelligent sensors and enforcers embedded into our switches; routers; and wireless solutions gives LITS enhanced protection and monitoring capabilities.

With the ever-changing nature of technology and the resources needed to support a modern academic graduate institution, the work to improve systems to access and use information will never be finished. LITS strives to put the best solutions forward with excellence to meet the needs and desires of Asbury Theological Seminary.¹²⁵

Developing the resources for communicating and mobilizing the ministry of the Seminary takes us to the Offices of **Advancement and Enrollment Management**:

>>> After a successful career in private financial management and as Vice President for Advancement at Spring Arbor College/Director of the Free Methodist Foundation, a Wisconsin native, *Jay Mansur*, became president Tennent's first Vice President in his new cabinet in 2009, with responsibility for Advancement. This father of seven children, and his wife Penny relocated to Wilmore, met with President Tennent, and without delay they sensed God was directing them toward a new path for advancement, congruent with the mission of the Seminary. This task would henceforth not be equated with fund raising, or development, but would be all about "expanding our relational circle." This would occur in a fourfold way, through (1) developing our donors, (2) communications, (3) future events (reviewing Presidential retreats and all external events to learn how to strategize for expanding the Seminary relational circle), and (4) advancement through

¹²⁵ Statement prepared for this centennial history project on December 20, 2021, by Dr. Paul Tippey, The Library, Information, and Technology Services.

alumni relations. This approach brought a coherence around managing and strategy that it had not possessed, and the results would be astounding.

The board had previously contracted with a consultant whose mathematics led to a projection that the Seminary should be able to raise \$80m. dollars by its centennial marker. Jay noted one thing was missing in that calculation: the God factor. “God is always bigger than human planning,” He asked the Board to “raise the bar” to \$100m. Shocked trustees said they never heard of an advancement man raising the bar he had to meet! They said “give it a try tiger, and we will be behind you.” It should be noted that, before this centennial campaign in 2015, the Seminary had previously raised \$62 m. for buildings, which had now been built and paid in the early years of the Tennent presidency. This \$100 m would be in addition to that.

Here was the plan: Jay and his team had agreed together that “resources follow vision,” and that vision is built on strategic planning. The Seminary was then coming together as a community, under President Tennent’s leadership, and, through a deep process involving much intercessory prayer and deliberation, they developed a 10 point 2023 Strategic Plan that a donor could “grab onto.” The result: the plan was implemented. By 2020, they had reached the \$100m. goal and knew that by 2025 the total would go to \$125m.

The key was feeding into the spiritual formation of the donors, done without coercion by working together with a sensing of divine calling to help God’s people experience the joy of giving to a Seminary with a Christ-centered mission. Seminary advancement then means serving God and His Kingdom and not the self-interests of an institution that needs specific amounts of income.

>>> A chief vehicle for this advancement came in the appointment of *Tammy Cessna* as the first fulltime alumni director, who was ever focused on creative ways to reach out to alumni, forming life partnerships between them and the Seminary. Two outstanding examples was, s the plan to invite burned-out pastors to campus for all expense-paid restoration sessions through education and worship and community, and then to see them return as rejuvenated pastors who were gratefully welcomed by their congregations—which now also became energized supporters of the Seminary. Tammy also launched the Shepherd Plan which has resulted in the Seminary giving over \$1m. to elderly alumni faced with unexpected emergencies of all kinds that threatened to overwhelm them. Imagine, a Seminary that cares for its alumni and pays for their acute needs in emergency situations!

That, remarked Tammy, is not fund raising; it is Kingdom building, which is precisely what

the Seminary mission is about! The pastoral letters, internet blogs, and other outreaches of President Tennent were being directed toward extending the care circle of the Seminary's influence, which also would become a channel for giving by Jesus lovers who are touched by these outreach expressions. Jay noted that the success of the campaign has not so much been a result of expertise as from becoming embedded in new external relations that people are forming with the Seminary community. According to Jay Mansur, this campaign has succeeded in large part due to the prophetic vision of President Tennent, in commitment to the mission of Asbury Seminary to share the gospel to the whole world. This outcome also reflects his unselfish, long-term commitment to the Seminary, that it might have deep resources for its next century of ministry, long beyond the time of his service.

Serving with Advancement as the Director of Alumni and Church Relations Tammy has played a key role in reaching out to the 11,000+ alumni of Asbury Seminary, who are the fruit of the global ministry of the Seminary. Her field of responsibility embraces graduates living and ministering on six continents, 65 nations, 22 of 24 time zones, 152 denominations, and all 50 states. There may not be another Seminary as globally diverse as Asbury.

The diverse work and programs of the Alumni Association are reviewed in the seventh chapter of this book. Here we focus on the heart and mind of the creative person God has called to this ministry. Tammy's abiding vision has been to see the alumni as one community, or body in Christ, with their common bond to the Seminary whose mission reached them as students and for which they now serve as ambassadors. Her commitment to reach them with an attractive program of lifelong partnership is also among the most vital sources of future enrollment and donor support for the Seminary. By these means God provides for the mission of the seminary to move forward into its second century.

In conversation with Tammy, an Asbury Seminary MA in Church Leadership, class of 2013, we learn that she "feels an affinity with other alumni" because she is "one of them." She continued: "There's this unity and oneness we have." "It's like I have found a lost family member because you have a common bond and a common belief that unites you even more."¹²⁶ Reading between the lines, this common belief infers her faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the full salvation provided by our triune God through Christ, culminating in the sanctified, Spirit led life, as a

¹²⁶ O'Malley, Interview with Tammy Cessna, October 20, 2020.

message intended for all persons created in God’s image, to the ends of the earth.” When she came to her post and saw the vast list of alumni, with so many lives and testimonies to be heard and to be enrolled in a lifetime partnership, her initial response was, “I want to awaken the sleeping giant.”¹²⁷ And so she has done.

It happened in steps leading ever on toward the opening of new doors for life relationship and reciprocal support with this vast multitude waiting to be tapped. Raised as a Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) “preacher’s kid” in western Pennsylvania, she came to Wilmore for a degree from Asbury College (1983) that was an education “a caliber above the rest.” Living in Wilmore, she made friends with Seminary figures, including Paul Baddour, then director of major events for the Seminary under President Dunnam. and volunteered to assist in alumni events through Michael Voigts, then director of alumni. She had more interest in the alumni than the major events. By 2007, before her start as a Seminary student, she created a plan for a “Wesley doll” for alumni with assistance from the Seminary. It was distributed in large numbers globally, and became a hit. When the office of Alumni Director became vacant, it remained so until after the arrival of President Timothy Tennent in 2010, when he saw it was time to fill the office, and intuitively offered Tammy the job, for which she was ecstatic with joy. Now came her steps to awaken the giant: First, she chose to do her MA degree at the Seminary, after she had already begun as alumni director. Second, she prayed and was directed to create “Wesley dolls”, to be sent over the world to alumni, which happened, with assistance from the Seminary budget.¹²⁸ She “got the alumni support up” to cover expenses and then more. A key moment was a photo of a girl receiving a Wesley doll by the Great Wall of China, a scene repeated in several other distant locations. Next, a peer group study of seminaries showed Asbury had gone from eighth to first place,¹²⁹ as the Wesley doll campaign proceeded, then came a portal website for alumni, requiring a password, where key Seminary courses were made available, including Keener’s lecture on the Holy Spirit, and Seamands’ on spiritual formation. The Shepherd’s Fund raised \$1.6m. in the first year and continued to grow. The Golden Grad program, at the 50 year mark, raised morale and support globally.

The “Asbury for Life” program also motivated prospective students to come for Seminary

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ \$100,000 was raised by the office of Jay Mansur in Advancement. Ibid

¹²⁹ Her source for this research was Jay Mansur.

hospitality, intercessory prayer on their behalf, and to have the opportunity to enroll as “future alumni.” Study Bibles, signed for new students were sent out. In one case, when an Alumnus retired six years ago, the Alumni office supplied the congregation with a new pastor-alum, and the church was “set on fire” with new growth and a building campaign. That is all a part of the legacy of Asbury for Life! Tammy says a key has been a strong Alumni Council, that provided funds for the Seminary, including the renovation of McKenna Chapel, in a hallway project to highlight our history.

In conclusion, Tammy put it this way: “our (the faculty) job is to send forth” and her job is “to keep them” as a vital part of the Seminary community, through renewal retreats, a student interactive map, careers as vocations, internships for students, and helping them get placed, honors for international students, and a variety of other options. That is all the work of the Alumni Association, as Tammy might say, “our God is creative and resourceful, when we are on track with His mission. . .”

Closely linked to advancement is the **Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services**, headed by *Kevin Bish*, who came in 2009 from his post as director of enrollment and management at Oral Roberts University, where he now joined the company of three other persons at Asbury Seminary who had also served at that site.¹³⁰ Bish was guided by the prophetic vision of President Tennent to “lead the charge” in reshaping theological education as it had been practiced in the United States,¹³¹ by prioritizing the leading of the Holy Spirit at all levels of the operation. Bish transitioned from a primary reliance on getting out as many enrollment invitations as possible to focus primarily upon developing relationships with persons from a wide perimeter. Vetting and cultivating them by building solid relationships, these persons would be challenged to come aboard the mission of the Seminary as students who would also become lifelong donors because they thrived here.

The Seminary soon entered a seven year period of annual enrollment increase through this focus on God-based long-term relationship through cultivation of heart and mind, following a Wesleyan model, rather than sign a form and go on to the next person. Kevin’s team was also ready to be honest with those who were not perceived as becoming good fits for the Seminary and

¹³⁰ Those were Timothy Tennent, a graduate in 1978, Robert Stamps, Dean of the Chapel there and here (2009), and Steven O’Malley in church history (1985). All served there concurrently.

¹³¹ ORU had also been a voice in that reshaping process.

its mission. The result was the formation of a community of persons with a clear sense of commitment, getting to know our “DNA”, so that the retention rate grew to its highest levels over these years. In his student management role, Kevin has noticed that the Seminary has grown more closely together to walk as a community in this process, with mutual trust and respect for others, including students, faculty and administration, largely because students had become invested in that community. A transparency also developed based on telling expectations up front and being consistent. A basic rule of thumb was to get out of the way as much as possible, realizing enrollment is not about numbers but about Kingdom.

Kevin found a highly effective word for new students in an address given to them by Chaplain Bob Stamps, who was reflecting on healing encounters with different persons, explaining it as “God’s called you to this but you’ve got to get out of the way” for the right things to happen. Also, ministry is “not about what you think but about what God wants to do through you.” This pattern was also modeled by President Tennent in his visionary leadership, and it speaks to the disciplined and dedicated work of our Asbury Seminary church planters, working in tandem with enrollment management.¹³²

After the seven years of growth, “covid” came, but “God also showed up in a big way,” as enrollment reached a peak in that challenging time. In a day when many seminaries are closing or in decline, seminaries need a new charge, and President Tennent and his team have remained confident that “we can lead it” if we humble ourselves before God, becoming “more authentic in our walk as a community, to share the light.”. The peak enrollment was in 2004, the last year of President Dunnam, with 1741 students in enrollment, a record broken in the “covid” year of 2020 with enrollment at 1806. There was also a record number of 515 new students in 2020, and “head count” kept pace with “credit hours sold” in 2020, an ideal balance. President Tennent reported this outcome as a “Triple Crown” for the Seminary, with new highs in enrollment, in new students, and in hours sold.¹³³

A major part of the successful work of this raise in the enrollment was located in the stories shared by Kevin Bish the new people groups being reached for Seminary recruitment, often being people on the margins, representing the realm of the church planters and their success in that

¹³² Timothy Tennent, from conversation after address to faculty-board retreat, September 18, 2021.

¹³³ Timothy Tennent, “Triple Crown” announcement, cited by Bish, interview with O’Malley, October 1, 2020. The other data provided under Enrollment Management was also the result of this interview.

mission.¹³⁴

Finally, Kevin lauded the ministry of Tom Harrison at Asbury Church in Tulsa, as exemplifying a God led congregation based on the humility and attentiveness of this pastor to the work of God in their midst. This congregation also serves as the site for the new Tulsa satellite campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. Harrison shared with Kevin, his former colleague in ministry in that city, that he aspired to spend the balance of his life after retirement mentoring ministers in training at that site.¹³⁵

Stewarding and Making Accessible the Visible Campus of the Seminary is the task of **Finance and Administration**: *Bryan Blankenship* has led the way in this domain since 2007 as Vice President of Finance and Administration. He came as a student in 1990 as a Free Methodist on a pastoral ministry plan. It was in the wake of the Beeson bequest announcement and also the rebuilding of the physical plant at the Seminary. After graduation (MDiv) and then completion of graduate studies in business administration at the University of Kentucky, Bryan was invited by Duane Kilty, business manager, to join the Asbury Seminary administration in 2004, with approval of President Dunnam, then becoming Kilty's successor as Vice President of Finance, until 2007, when he entered his present position under President Kalas. Serving under four presidents,¹³⁶ Bryan has oversight of Finances, Human Resources, the Physical Plant, and Security, gives oversight to the committee making decisions on investments in the Seminary endowment, and makes the official annual audit of the physical property of the Seminary campus. He coordinates with Jay Mansur, Vice President for Advancement, in receiving and processing gifts to the Seminary, and oversees the office of the Controller, a position long held by James Brumfield. A major part of his financial oversight has concerned oversight of the construction and maintenance of the complex of residence halls and related buildings that make Asbury the largest residential Seminary. He pointed out it is "exciting to build a building," and then comes the long-term responsibility of providing for its maintenance.

In this responsibility Bryan serves as the steward of the resources God has provided the Seminary, to enable it to actualize its mission to the world. These responsibilities have also become

¹³⁴ Abraham B

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Including President Greenway 2004-7

more complex as he works in partnership with other business entities with the renovation of the campus as a center for virtual learning, including the delivery of technology to global sites. In the area of church relations, Bryan observed that the reality of the issues affecting the United Methodist Church have led his office to expand their relations with other Wesleyan bodies, “because we realize these challenges can have negative impact on the Seminary.” It is thereby important to emphasize that Asbury Seminary can serve other denominational circles that want to come to campus, especially those having a “Wesleyan spirit.”¹³⁷

The big picture from the side of governance has been provided by the **Board of Trustees**, whose important superintending role of the mission of the Seminary has also been strengthened and expanded in the Tennent administration. Interviews with four representatives of the Board are included here.

>>> First, the Reverend *James Smith* expressed gratitude for the mission entrusted to the Seminary in the ministry of President Morison, citing the amazing advance of its program from the time of its founding under President Morrison, from the 1920s into the 1950s, and then from the time of the Tennent administration, when the anointed power of the Holy Spirit was reappropriated along with the original message from the 1920s, and updated in 2008. He observed that the landscape of Seminaries in America is littered with Seminaries that had once been solid in their Christian beliefs but had lost it and, if he returned today he would be astounded at the growth of the seminary and the growth of Christianity globally.

Smith described his decision to enroll at Asbury Seminary in the early 1960s, as being made in the face of his district superintendent in Texas declaring that if he attended that Seminary he should not expect to be assigned in that conference. He came anyway, declaring it was God’s will. A highlight of his Seminary education was coursework on the theology of evangelism, completed with Professor Coleman. Highlighting the lack of married student housing in the early 1960s, Smith and his bride rented a room in the home of the widow of Professor Turkington until the new Broadhurst Manor was completed.¹³⁸ After graduation, he vowed to serve the Seminary in the future as opportunity provided. He was enabled to able to return to his Texas conference and be assigned to a congregation, which experienced marked growth under his ministry. James was subsequently invited to a vacant position on the Seminary Board of Trustees, in 1991, serving as

¹³⁷ O’Malley, Interview with Bryan Blankenship, September 1, 2020.

¹³⁸ O’Malley, Interview with James Smith, October 7, 2020.

its president in the years of transition from Greenway to Kalas. He noted the Seminary is now advancing with enrollment increased, that 25% of all United Methodist Seminary student enrollment is registered at Asbury Seminary, and that the Seminary now stands as the third or fourth largest in the nation, thanks to the strong leadership of President Tennent and his team.¹³⁹

>>> Second, Bishop *Al Gwinn* brings the perspective of a consecrated and effective Kentucky local pastor and then an elected bishop in United Methodism. Being also an Asbury Seminary graduate in the Stanger era, and a long-time supporter of the ministries of the Seminary, Bishop Gwinn was elected as a member of the board at the suggestion of President Greenway and became its president for a term of service.^{140*} His well-known pastoral benediction, “Bishop Gwinn’s blessing,” has been widely distributed in local congregations.

Bishop Gwinn spoke personally of his work with the following presidents: Stanger, an administrator with pastoral and scholarly gifts who also became attracted to a long-term ministry of prayer and healing; McKenna, with whom he developed a friendship kindled by this president’s “keen mind” and love of God; Dunnan” whose books on prayer and his local church perspective were instrumental to his ministry and with whom he was closely associated due to Dunnam’s transfer of membership to the Kentucky Conference during his presidency. Bishop Gwinn offered several insights concerning the next three presidential transitions, noting that Greenway was a friend and invited him to join the trustees, which happened. In hindsight he sensed that the decision of the trustees to select Greenway may have been too hasty, which complicated the readiness of both parties to work together effectively.¹⁴¹ By contrast, Kalas had collegial relations with all stakeholders and could emerge as a consensus building president.¹⁴²

For Bishop Gwinn, Robert Cooley, the external consultant leading to the transition to Timothy Tennent, was a “Godsend” to the Seminary because “God used him to do a marvelous work: to bring the board members to a deeper love for one another” marked by forgiveness and respect. He deemed this as “the work of God” that built the trust resulting in progress toward the need for shared governance with the faculty and administration.¹⁴³ Here was surely evidence for where God

¹³⁹ Information from James Smith presented to the Asbury faculty on September 17, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ O’Malley Interview with Bishop Al Gwinn, October 8, 2020.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Bishop Gwinn noted that an important sign of that progress was the Board’s acceptance of tenure for Board members, introduced as part of the important process of approving vetting standards for persons nominated for Board membership. Ibid.

was at work with Asbury Seminary amid its struggles for faithfulness to its historic mission in times of challenge for which we are grateful on at its centennial marker.

Gwinn regarded Timothy Tennent as one who “fit into Henry Clay Morrison’s vision for the mission of the Seminary,” on the basis of Tennent’s humility, obedience [to God], and his expectancy of God’s blessing.” Gwinn sensed that Tennent had “experienced a very personal journey, with significant events” that enabled Tennent to fit into that line of service which he discovered in the mission of the Seminary.¹⁴⁴ Bishop Gwinn also commended the faculty, many of whom he had come to know, for their “attitude as well as their service” on behalf of the Seminary and its mission.¹⁴⁵ These comments were made in the context of his observation that “Henry Clay Morrison would be proud of how we have taken the world as our parish.”

>>> Third, *Bishop Linda Adams* was serving as guest pianist for faculty trustee worship in their joint 2021 retreat when she paused for an interview on the mission of the board of trustees as the administrative head of the Seminary. Linda was selected as a board member and her proper title is Bishop Linda Adams, one of three new bishops elected to serve in the Free Methodist church, each of whom was also a graduate of the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Seminary. She came to Asbury at the recommendation of friends after beginning theological studies at another evangelical seminary. She happened to visit the Asbury Seminary chapel service when representatives of the Women in Ministry initiative were leading in worship, an era in the 1980s when the number of women enrolled in the School was a distinct minority. Professor Stonehouse, the only woman faculty member at that time at Asbury Seminary and a Free Methodist, took Linda “under her wing,” as one of four women students, all of whom were Free Methodist. Her homiletics professor, Ellsworth Kalas, commended her preaching.

She prepared for ministry in her denomination, as a church where women were welcomed into ordained ministry earlier than had Methodists.¹⁴⁶ Linda obtained her PhD degree in Chicago while serving in the Olive Branch mission of the Free Methodists in that city, and taught preaching at Roberts Wesleyan Seminary, a Free Methodist school in the Northeast, before her election as

¹⁴⁴ O’Malley, Interview with Bishop Al Gwinn on October 8, 2021.

¹⁴⁵ A prime example of that new attitude was, for Bishop Gwinn, the way in which the Board had shifted in its mode of operation from “reporting to engaging together in strategic planning.” Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Among United Methodists, female clergy ordained in ministry did not begin until 1956, although United Brethren had licensed and ordained woman preachers from the mid nineteenth century.

bishop in 2019. Serving in the mid region of North America, Bishop Adams also had jurisdiction over several Latin American Free Methodist conferences, since her denomination had spread exponentially outside the United States as a part of the Global Church.¹⁴⁷ Her election to the Seminary Board of Trustees occurred in 2020, and she soon learned first-hand of President Tennent's strong leadership in the Global Church mission at the Seminary. Her heart for that mission came into joyful expression in the context of worship during the retreat where we met, as she lifted the standard for worshipful singing with her inspired piano accompaniment.

>>> Fourth, observations on the current era of board leadership was provided by the current board president, *Joseph Harris*, or Joe, as he prefers to be called. He came to the board from his position as administrative assistant to the bishop in the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church. His present appointment occurred after completing his ordination requirements and education at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹⁴⁸ He joined the Board in the McKenna era, at the invitation of James Buskirk, then serving as board chair. He was impressed that these two gentlemen from Mississippi reflected a remarkably wide commitment to both the need and the goal of evangelizing the world through Jesus Christ, from the perspective of both the Seminary and the church. Joseph acknowledged deep impact from the 'white paper' proposals of President Dunnam, and desired to build on these resources to increase the impact of the gospel on the present world. Joseph also named Dr. Tennent the surprise candidate who won the hearts of the board, especially with his significant ministry in India. He came to help our board to become more collegial, to become more than persons overseeing the Seminary, and to be as participatory as possible in the global mission of the Asbury. He was also aware of an alignment between the focus on converting the whole person, heart as well as mind and body, found both at ORU and at ATS

Joseph was elected as the first African American president of the Board, serving with distinction through 2023. His ministry began with an urban apartment ministry in Tulsa, where many lives were impacted for the gospel through his ministry. He and his family have valued the relationship with Asbury Seminary as standing at the vanguard of theological education for

¹⁴⁷ In 2021, Free Methodist missions outside the United States represented 94% of its 1.2m world membership, with 20 General Conferences in the world church, of which North America is one. O'Malley, Interview with Bishop Linda Adams, September 18, 2021.

¹⁴⁸ He completed both an MDiv and a Doctor of Ministry degree at Oral Roberts School of Theology, where the present author served as his professor church history and a Doctor of Ministry supervisor.

Wesleyans, and especially United Methodists, whom he represents.

He had first met ATS graduates while studying at Oral Roberts, and was impressed with the mission focus of their ministries. He highlighted the Seminary focus on the primacy of God's Word and its redemptive application to all conditions of human life, particularly in light of the societal breakdown and the denominational decline that provides the larger context for the ministry of Asbury Seminary at its centennial juncture. He extolled the Seminary for its faithfulness to orthodox Wesleyan theology in a time of massive theological drift in official UM seminaries, and for making that message the focus of its global emphasis. He spoke as one who chaired the 2019 United Methodist General Conference session discussion on human sexuality and ministry, upholding the traditional biblical stance of that church. He is grateful that other board members share this vision and commitment, and also that their number includes women, including the first woman president of the board, Joan Krupa.

A compassionate and caring man of God, he first gained denomination wide attention through his previous position as the first African American president of United Methodist Men, in Nashville. He also has extensive experience in ministry and networking with United Methodists across the world. Above all, Joseph Harris is a man of deep intercessory prayer, for the Seminary and its members, the church, and the present world.¹⁴⁹

>>> Interview with *Karen Thomas* offers insight on how we have tracked with our mission from her perspective as a student, a student council president in the early Dunnam era, then later as a member of the Board of Trustees, whose presidency she will enter in 2023. She affirmed that, for the Board, "the mission is the foundation of all." Karen initially represented the perspective of students from her standpoint as student body president when she affirmed President Dunnam as a leader who turned the interests of the Seminary toward the world. As expressed in his two "white papers," his intent was to immerse the Seminary in the needs of the culture, and did so by emphasizing the role of laity as the key to revitalizing the church and the society, and for making sure Asbury Seminary would have a key role in that endeavor. This outward focus was an impetus toward his approval for the opening of the Florida campus of Asbury and has been greatly expanded during the time of President Tennent, including church planting and international conferencing. His initiative for bringing the message of the gospel to bear upon the social and

¹⁴⁹ O'Malley, Interview with Joseph Smith, October 1, 2020

economic structures of society led to forming the Market Place Initiative. This effort has been effectively developed through the teaching and conferencing of Professor Jay Moon, working in tandem with a new board member from the business world, Greg Spillyard, with Christian laity in the business, professional and commercial segments of the population. The intent is to impact every phase of society, including the business world, with the gospel, in our day. Spillyard also graduated from the Seminary with an emphasis in market place ministry.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ O'Malley, Interview with Karen Thomas, September 27, 2021

IV. Student, Alumni, and Staff Perspectives on the Asbury Seminary Mission in Practice

This kaleidoscope of perspectives on the Seminary mission now includes observations from several students and alumni who graduated and later assumed positions with Asbury Seminary.

>>>*Christina Liu* was interviewed as a third year MDiv student and the only student from the Pacific island of Tonga. Her mission is aligned with the global mission of the Seminary of taking the whole Bible to the whole world. A member of the indigenous Wesleyan Church of Tonga, she plans to return to her homeland after graduation and serve as a teacher of historical theological, with special emphasis on Wesley studies, in her homeland.¹⁵¹ Her introduction to Wesley had come through reading a selection of his writings translated into the Tonga language, while she was a student in an academy sponsored by her home church in Tonga. She also made use of Methodist worship liturgies translated into her language. She has eagerly learned about the theology of Wesley while a student at the Seminary, saying that it helped her “make sense” of what she had learned of Christ at home. She explained that Methodism was among the first expressions of Christian faith that was introduced into her homeland, as early as 1826, through a missionary who converted the king of Tonga, which led, in turn, to the extension of the faith through the islands.¹⁵² She remarked that over 50% of the islands are still identified as Wesleyan, although there has been limited teaching and experience of the power of its message. Tonga is strategic to missions in the Pacific, with its status as the “cradle of Polynesia,” with an oral history tradition dating back to the era of King David (ca1500BC). Christina’s vision is to see that pastors are trained in the Tonga Wesleyan school who will spread out over the approximate 270 islands comprising that nation, scattered over the Pacific, with the message of the living Lord. Praise God!¹⁵³

>>>*Jeff Weber* explained that he came to Asbury Seminary with his wife Evelyn solely by God’s leading. An international family, with her home roots in Guatemala, they spent several years in the Southwest, where he had established a business as a landscape contractor. Jeff was called to prepare for ministry in the context of an independent “sectarian” church, whose pastoral leadership

¹⁵¹ Liu was interviewed while completing a seminar in Calvin with the author. O’Malley, Interview with Christina Liu, October 17, 2021.

¹⁵² She also noted that this expansion occurred, tragically, by violence as well as the spoken witness, even as was the case in Europe, with its state church system. Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

had attracted attention with reports of numerous miracles through the work of the Holy Spirit, which eventually were shown to be inauthentic, thus undermining the morale of the congregation. While rebounding from this dysfunctional experience in ministry, Jeff received in his mail the random delivery of an announcement from Asbury Seminary, featuring an article by President Timothy Tennent on “The ATS Story”. Scanning through the content, he was drawn to the presentation of its mission and program of study, grounded in a Wesleyan understanding of the faith. Jeff and Evelyn prayed and the Holy Spirit directed him to apply for entry into the Seminary. They would come with their three young children to share in the community life of Kalas Village. Lacking a college degree, he studied diligently to pass the GRE, and became accepted for admission to the Wilmore campus, and acting in faith they left their unsold home and within six weeks were in Wilmore. The Lord had told him he was at a crossroad and “you are to go!” In retrospect, he observed that “ATS lives up to what it professes, a good bit, within its “theology and good professors.” He also rates spiritual formation as “excellent.” The ATS mission was “a new concept” to him, and a sure remedy for churches having “toxic relations” and “manufactured miracles”. He has since become grounded in inductive Bible study and in learning about the church in history, including its challenges and advances through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. His family is actively engaged in a local congregation. He also remains deeply grateful for gaining a new perspective on what it means to become part of a living Christianity and its mission to all persons, through a Spirit filled, sanctified ministry to others, grounded in discipleship to our Triune God. Jeff will be a credit to the mission of the Seminary.

>>>A visit to the state of the art ATS fitness center, located in the Sherman Thomas student center, resulted in my meeting the physical education director, *Davie Ferraro*, and his wife *Robin*, who serve together in that strategic center on the Wilmore campus. Both are also students in the Seminary. I soon learned from Davie that he had arrived in recent years from Georgia, where he had gained traction as an accomplished professional hunter traveling the globe to visit wild game preserves. All of that was put “on hold” when they received the call from God to surrender their lives in ministry unto their Lord, and also to come to Asbury Seminary as a preparatory part for that call to be fulfilled. They have since purchased the former home for Seminar presidents, last occupied by the McKennas as the last president to live there, before the present stately and historical presidential home, the eighteenth century Rose Manor, was acquired. The Ferraros have arranged to convert their home into a “transformational discipleship” center, where persons are

invited to participate. In interview with Davie, he explained that his model is transformation involving the soul but also the body, especially for personal dealing with conditions that physical training, linked to prayer and the Word of God, would address.

Davie sees this calling as a part of his call to ministry that includes a theological education at Asbury Seminary, which is his priority at this time. He reads Scripture, prays and fasts, beginning at 5am, to ‘hear the voice of the Lord’ He directs his path, including what passages of the Bible to read, and for whom prayer should be offered. He is in sync with the Seminary mission on the “whole body for the whole world,” and would like to see more Seminary students have a greater concern for discipling and shaping their physical as well as their spiritual and mental well being. He is intent on following a tried and true pattern¹⁵⁴ of helping persons identify and address those parts of their bodily life that is impeding their readiness to respond wholly to God’s call upon their lives. He finds that the gospel is contrary to our world, and that “it takes time to expose things that nullify the Word in our lives.” All that we take into our bodies is part and parcel of how we can be fitted for building up God’s kingdom, of which we are part, when the Holy Spirit has embodied our lives in the love of Jesus. All of these dimensions of the godly life become, for him, our expression of what it means to hear and obey God, to embody the gospel, for ourselves, and, in line with our mission, for the sake of the world. Asbury Seminary is a richer place for God’s dwelling with humans, because of the Ferraros.¹⁵⁵

Graduates who found meaningful sites of ministry in the legacy of the whole Bible for the whole world include persons of multiple vocations in nations across the globe.¹⁵⁶

>>>Among the many called to ministry in local congregations, this kaleidoscope has chosen to interview *Gregg Parris*, a distinguished graduate with an MDiv degree in the late 1980s. Assigned to a small congregation in Muncie, Indiana, Greg’s faithfulness in that ministry resulted

¹⁵⁴ Davie’s approach is akin to that presented in the first “Methodist” related sermon preached in America: “ignorance, stubbornness against God, and impurity; these are all the Kingdom of Satan in each of us” (cf Hebrews 1:14-15) . . . whoever builds his salvation on Christ in a way that is merely outside himself, so that all the while he remains in his sin, is building on a foundation of sand. This is why Christ demands of us to bear the cross after him. And here is the really great mystery; Christ in us, the hope of glory” (2 Corinthians 13:5). -from “The Salvation-bringing and Glorious Victory of Jesus Christ over the Devil and Death” (Philadelphia, 1760), by Philip William Otterbein, who also served in the ordination with Coke of Francis Asbury in 1784, at Asbury’s insistence.

¹⁵⁵ O’Malley, Interview with Davie Ferraro, October 21, 2021.

¹⁵⁶ See statistics for alumni places of service are provided in the discussion of Tammy Cessna’s ministry as Alumni Director, in this section.

in unprecedented revival in an older, established congregation, that has resulted in a congregation of megachurch proportions. The story behind this is one of a humble man of God sold out to Jesus, who found the moment where awakening could be ignited in a sleeping congregation, and the results were immense.

When Gregg graduated from the Seminary in 1980, his ministry in the local church became a lifelong commitment which reached far beyond the scope of his immediate congregation, Union Chapel United Methodist Church, where his primary ministry has continued for decades. He also became a long serving member of the Seminary Board of Trustees, serving from 1981 and continuing, and has had many occasions for ministry overseas in various global settings. Through all these events his primary love and commitment has been to His Master's call to remain steadfastly focused on the laity in the local congregation he has served in Muncie, Indiana.¹⁵⁷ Gregg was mentored by a pastor in Indiana who was an Asbury Seminary graduate, which led to his decision to apply to the Seminary in response to his call to pastoral ministry. His first visit to the campus had also led to this decision, having experienced Asbury as a place where God was at work in tangible ways. After completing his MDiv degree, where he remembers personal guidance extended to him by Professor Kenneth Kinghorn, Gregg accepted his first and only pastoral assignment in Muncie. As a twenty-six year old pastor serving a small, largely senior congregation with a few dozen worshippers, he had deep commitment to serving his congregation with the message of full salvation he had learned at Asbury Seminary.

There were three elderly women in this congregation who had been meeting for thirty years to pray, as their spokesperson Opal put it, "that God would do something in the church" akin to what He had done in its early history, when revival had been alive. There was to be a "*kairos*" moment in this congregation through Gregg's ministry, a sense that "something could happen," that caught everyone by surprise. As context, he mentioned Archie,¹⁵⁸ a "tribal chief" in the community who had long been chair of the board and active in the business community for decades. Gregg said "he was known to all."

There was a service in the church where Gregg was preaching, followed by the singing of "Just as I am," with no one doing anything, by way of a response. The preacher was about to close the service, when Archie stood, pointing his finger, because Opal, who had been playing the piano for

¹⁵⁷ O'Malley, interview with Gregg Parris, October 30, 2020

¹⁵⁸ A pseudonym to protect the identity.

the invitation, had stood up, and caught every one's attention as she reminisced about times when people melted and actually came to the front, praying in tears. But no more. She imagined it was because she had been too faint to pray. The woman beside her broke down and sobbed, beside the piano. It was at that moment that Archie stood, not to put people back in order, but to say, "I have been here for forty years, and chair of the trustees, and Sunday School chairman, but I am tired of going through the motions. I don't know what anyone else will do, but I will get right with God." He walked down and knelt. His wife was in tears.

Looking at him, Gregg impulsively said, "I appreciate you, but I ask, have you ever made a decision to make Christ your Lord and Savior? Would you like to?" Archie said "yes," as Gregg led him in the sinner's prayer, and he finally received Christ, in that meeting, exchanging reliance on his power and position with peace and humble submission to His Lord. Gregg continued to describe how "the phones lit up" on that day, with the message, "Archie's got religion." By the next Sunday the small congregation had grown to a record number of 147 persons present for worship, a feat never seen before, and twenty six responded to Gregg's invitation that day to come to faith in Christ.

It was now 39 years later, and Gregg reported that, from that moment to the present, he had been in an "all out sprint" keeping up with what the Holy Spirit was doing in that community of believers. It seems there are striking parallels between the move of the Holy Spirit in the full gospel revival meetings conducted by the founder of Asbury Seminary, H.C. Morrison, that led to the *Pentecostal Herald* and the founding of the Seminary, and the explosive growth of Union Chapel under the Asbury Seminary alumnus, Gregg Parris. The congregation, including its online satellite ministries, now numbers in the thousands in four nations, and the people have been planting churches in several states, akin to the church planting initiative of the Seminary which shaped his ministry. In all of this, it is for Gregg a matter of "keeping up with God." "In reaching people, you can't keep it from raining." He relayed that God told him, "If you will take care of the depth of your ministry, I will take care of its breadth." Also, "If you take care of God's mission, God will take care of you." Here is also a word for his alma mater, pondering now in gratitude the fruit of the Asbury Seminary mission of commitment as

A community called to prepare theologically educated, sanctified, Spirit filled men and women to evangelize and spread Scriptural holiness throughout the world, in the love of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and to the glory of God the Father. So be it. Amen

>>> Interview with *Robert Jones*, MDiv class of 1988 and former Vice President for Enrollment in the Dunnam years, conducted by Steven O'Malley on January 15, 2021.

Here is an account of an MDiv student from the 1980s who became director of admissions in the later McKenna and Dunnam administrations. Rob was recruited to the Seminary from a lucrative job in metallurgy in Pittsburgh, wrestling with a call to ministry, but having no clear direction. He graduated in three years through rigorous discipline in what he termed "an impressive program," including his insightful introduction to Wesleyan doctrine. He loved his experience.

Returning to western Pennsylvania, he pastored a thousand member church, following the advice he learned from Wayne Goodwin to "love the people and let the people love you," and after two years he had a call from Bob Bridges, VP for Advancement at the Seminary, asking Rob to come back because the office of admissions needed to be filled. It was hard on Rob because they were friends, but he was led to accept the post in 1991, nearing the end of the McKenna years. He learned there was an enrollment decline and a goal of 78 new students to meet in spring of 91, and so he doubled his efforts.

That fall they met their goal, after an enormous effort. He received a memo from the President that the presidential goal was a total student body of 1000 by the year 2000. When McKenna saw Rob was on the verge of doing this, he installed new enrollment rooms, new systems to do the math of recruitment, and Rob was on track toward meeting this presidential goal. Soon he was made Director of Enrollment, then VP of Enrollment Management, and found he had a new problem: they were now growing too fast, and Asbury needed an internal support model, where all services would be under him, for this rapid growth to result in an effective student body.

By then it was 1996, the Dunnam era, and now the goal had been increased to 1200 by 1997-8: the cap was 1235 and they would not accept 1236. At this time he moved to his office in the Student Center, since enrollment management included retention and student services. At that time, he sensed the food in the dining room was marginal in competence, and needed upgrading for enrollment to increase. He brought in a new food provider and chef, and meals were now delicious. This being the Dunnam era, he now used the President's approach of organizing all students into small groups that would regularly meet for meals in the commons, and in 1998 75% of the new class signed up for the small groups. As a result the attrition rate was cut by one half, as "our numbers went through the ceiling."

As another result, they were 80 over the Board enrollment goal for that year, because of retainment. The small group was the factor the Board had not anticipated. Now the Board said things were moving too fast, and to “hold the lie.” Eventually, there were campus renovations, and new buildings were constructed. They reached the goal of 1200 and now the goal was raised to 1300 by the late 1990s.

As a consequence of his success, Rob was advanced to Vice President of Enrollment Management. He also did the ministry of a dean of students. Relocating his office to the student center, a new food vendor was found, numerous Stephen ministers were added to serve the student body and a budget was expanded to expand student counseling.

There was then economic trauma in those years before 2000. As the goal was attained, Rob also found he was at last exhausted. He had not planned for self-care, and he paid the price with his health. With this positive outcome, Rob found himself both grateful for and with a sense that it was time for a change, for personal renewal, occurred the next year. He remains grateful for the achievements of his tenure of service at his alma mater as preparatory to later service in recruitment and enrollment management. He organized small groups to help orient incoming students. Maxie sold the idea at orientation and 80% of the incoming class signed up for orientation in the following semester. The student attrition rate was cut in half, with the result that total enrollment exceeded the projected cap. Throughout this effort, Rob observed that quality standards for admission were carefully monitored and maintained, and several core faculty served effectively on the admissions committee which assisted his work, with “tremendous oversight.” In retrospect, he said, “I believe we grew more quickly than we were able to serve adequately.” There was also economic trauma in those years before 2000. As the goal was attained, Rob found he was at last exhausted. He had not planned for self-care, and he paid the price with his health. With this positive outcome, Rob found himself both grateful and with a sense that it was time for a change, for personal renewal, which occurred the next year. He remains grateful for his years of service at Asbury Seminary, including the achievements that resulted, and for his subsequent years of service in this field. The Seminary had been strengthened for its mission into the future.¹⁵⁹

>>> During the fall semester 2020, *Sharon Yancey* (MA in Religion, 1979) presented a homily in Estes Chapel that addressed her ministry with the Matthew Initiative, a project she regards as

¹⁵⁹ O'Malley, Interview with Robert (Rob) Jones, January 15, 2021.

congruent with the Seminary mission to reach whole world. She explained that her passion in ministry has been for children, who represent the future generation of a congregation but are often underserved in local church ministries. They increasingly lack access to resources for spiritual formation given the breakdown of the family in the contemporary culture.¹⁶⁰ This ministry began as a result of her own faith formation as a student at Asbury Seminary, followed by her discovery that when children experience awakening in a congregation it became electrifying for families and for the congregation as a whole. This entire trajectory seemed fully congruent with the historical record in revival: based in the first revival in Europe, the Holy Spirit began with children before the older generation was impacted.¹⁶¹

When Yancey discovered many congregations in Georgia with no or few children, and no plan to start a program for them, she started Matthew Initiative to empower “under resourced and under serviced churches to become places of joy, hospitality and hope for the children of their communities.”¹⁶² It began on Maunday Thursday in Cedartown, Georgia, where the Kresge United Methodist Church had only five to ten children. After intercessory prayer in Matthew 19:14, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven,” the church developed an outreach to the “invisible children of their community” meeting on Wednesdays, complete with a van, and with focus on a trailer park and a local housing project. On a single night, the attendance jumped from 10 to 40 children, giving demoralized kids hope and new life in Christ.¹⁶³ They found caring friends, and by the end of the first year (1915) there were 600 children enrolled in the Matthew Initiative in several congregational locations. Her theological insights reflect the leading of the Holy Spirit, that might apply to any number of projects of ministry that have been spawned by Asbury Seminary students and alumni: (1) form a powerful prayer team involving persons newly humbled and empowered by a visitation of the Holy Spirit

¹⁶⁰ O’Malley, Interview with Sharon Yancey, October 27, 2020

¹⁶¹ In conversation after presenting her story in an Estes Chapel homily on October 27, 2022, Sharon shared in conversation with the author, and was drawn to the pattern traced not only in Silesia, where the first account of revival was written under the title of *The Power of the children (Die Macht der Kinder in der letzte Zeit, 1709)* but also at Herrnhut with Christian David in 1727, at Northampton, Massachusetts, with Jonathan Edwards in 1734, and in England where John Wesley, amid revival there, became instrumental in enabling the start of the children’s Sunday School movement under the direction of Robert Raikes. In addition, H.C. Morrison had been drawn to a living faith as a child in the context of revival in Kentucky (see chapter one of this study).

¹⁶² <https://thrive.asburyseminary.edu/sharon-yancey/>

¹⁶³ Ibid

in the midst of their brokenness, (2) Focus on front end funding for the ministry to get funded, letting God show you people to put in your path, (3) recognize that transformational ministries take time: up to two to three years, (4) when you get turbulence you are moving the needle for the Kingdom of God, and the greater the turbulence, the greater the breakthrough on the other side, (5) realize that uncertainty will become the new normal, and that miracles happen when outside of comfort zones, “which is exactly where God wants us to be.”¹⁶⁴ This was her pattern for ministry in the Matthew Initiative. Does not this sound like the Asbury Seminary mission to the whole world, in action? Sharon said, “when churches began to be children’s churches, the barriers went down, and other churches followed the Kresge kids.”¹⁶⁵

>>>The **staff** members of the Asbury Seminary community are represented in this interview with *Audrey Wagner*, Administrative Assistant to Craig Reynolds in Custodial Services, and to Brian U’ren, Director of Major Facilities and Security. Audrey has now served in her post for over nine years and loves her work in a supportive environment, where persons relate to one another in a lighthearted Christian atmosphere, where they are dealing with “real” issues pertaining to the well being of the physical structure of the campus on behalf of those who serve in those facilities.

She sees her work as “foundational to all else,” making it possible for the rest of us to do our work. The overriding priority is the structural integrity of the physical campus in Wilmore, apart from which we would have a visible presence, as a Seminary. She is also a graduate of the Seminary with dual degrees in the Master of Arts in Theological Studies and the Master of Arts in Counseling, and she finds herself drawing from insights from both areas in the role she has in ministry at the Seminary.

A native of South Bend, Indiana, Audrey learned about Asbury Seminary through professors teaching at her undergraduate college, Bethel College, in Mishawaka. She also explored several denominational traditions before choosing to affiliate with the Orthodox Church of America, in its Nicholasville parish. Her motivation was an appreciation for its worship style, grounded in a patristic tradition of faith, and for embodying an emphasis on humility and a non-judgmental respect of life before God and other persons. She finds these emphases congruent with the mission of Asbury Seminary to the whole world, which includes Eastern Christianity. Her parish emerged

¹⁶⁴ Ibid

¹⁶⁵ The name of the first congregation to be impacted by this transformative ministry. O’Malley, Interview with Sharon Yancey, October 27, 2020.

from the Russian Orthodox Church, and is a full partner with other Orthodox Christian bodies. She also finds congruence in her faith with John Wesley, who gained insight into sanctification from reading the Orthodox fathers' focus on *theosis* (an Orthodox theme signifying a life sharing in God's holy nature), and also in seeing God at work in all people, regardless of what they do, as brothers and sisters in Christ.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ O'Malley, Interview with Audrey Wagner, November 1, 2021; this author is grateful for the care provided by the office of Custodial Services for the details of the physical plant on behalf of its occupants.

V. Reflections on Recent Developments in the Life of the Seminary, from President Tennent

Preliminary observation by the editor: Asbury Seminary has taken the lead in developing cutting edge research in the major areas of the Christian life and doctrine; that accomplishment may also leave a void in attention given to the readiness of the human community, ecclesial and non-ecclesial, to become thoughtful recipients of the vital insights communicated through this literature. That void is addressed in the following project set forth by the Asbury Seminary President in 2020, on the eve of its Centennial marker.

>>> *President Timothy Tennent* set the 2020 theme for community emphasis and reflection with his book and a lecture series in Estes Chapel on “The Theology of the Body.” Major insights of this discussion included the following:

Given the cerebral focus prominent in the academy, the Seminary community was alerted by President Tennent with a proclamation that “God is [also] talking to us through our bodies.”¹⁶⁷ His premise: are created as iconic windows of God’s image. His thematic treatment proceeded along these steps: (1) creation of good human life (versus cosmologies that vilify the created order, like Gnosticism), (2) creation that anticipates new creation (. . .that God created the body in anticipation of the new creation),¹⁶⁸ (3) marriage as the design of creator God (contrasting the world’s functional, socially determined view versus God’s covenantal, non-commodified, and binary view that males and females are created for one another), and (4) body with two meanings: spousal and celibate, under the overarching theme that we are all children, created as “part of God’s fruitfulness”).¹⁶⁹

In exposition of these themes, President Tennent has observed (a) that they reveal “we are part of the Trinity itself,” i.e., where being created as “one flesh manifests God’s mystery, and that (b) in Wesleyan terms, childbearing is a part of our sanctification, as a “radical turning to another.” From this basis he inferred that “God wants us to see the love bond in the Trinity by God’s design

¹⁶⁷ “The Theology of the Body,” President Timothy Tennent, Estes Chapel, October 20, 2020.

¹⁶⁸ E.g., he cites Hebrews 10:5, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Tennent, “Theology of the Body,” October 20, 2020.

of childbearing.”¹⁷⁰ There is also a place for adoption of children in the mystery of God, since Paul considers our salvation as entailing adoption into the family of God,¹⁷¹ for which he yearns in writing that he is “in pains of childbirth” for his spiritual children (Galatians 4:19).¹⁷² Perhaps the strongest incentive for childbirth is that “the world needs your children because they are the agents of great awakening.”¹⁷³

This presentation of the trinitarian mystery inherent within the binary creation of humanity, including the design of childbearing, has provided a profound theological grounding for understanding the imperative inherent in the Asbury Seminary mission, which is linked to Awakening in its mandate to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the world. Implicit in this formulation is an enhanced recognition of the role of human receptivity to this powerful portrayal of the theology of the body, with its inherent divine-human mystery. Upon the basis of this new theological grounding of our mission as a Seminary community, it is incumbent upon every facet of that community to come to terms with its implications.

One major example of how that occurs was to be found in considering how the Seminary conducts recruitment and maintenance of students amid often complex demographic challenges from contemporary culture. This discussion also involves how to handle the social inequality issues. Here the theology of the body has guided President Tennent’s stance in addressing Asbury’s outreach to minority students. Initiatives include the use of focus groups to address the needs of minority students to understand where there has been neglect of this segment of the population in the recruitment done at the Seminary. The intent has also been to acknowledge that Asbury Seminary has highly migratory students as well as faculty within that category who would benefit from full access to the Seminary community. In addition, provision for scholarships for minority students, not previously targeted for recruitment, has been made. Those recruited were to be introduced to the mission of the Seminary and its ethos, as part of its larger mission to the whole world. President Tennent would prefer for this initiative to be addressed without resorting to a peripheral “diversity Czar” appointed to speak into the whole realm of this concern.

¹⁷⁰ Tennent defines sin as “all places where we elect the absence of God.”Ibid

¹⁷¹ As distinct from the Son, who is Son by nature, not adoption

¹⁷² Tennent, “Theology of the Body,” Ibid.

¹⁷³ This observation recalls the children’s awakening that ignited the first Great Awakening, leading via Steinmetz to the Wesleys and then to Morrison’s recovery of the second half of the gospel in his Pentecostal Herald, resulting in the founding of Asbury Theological Seminary. Here we discover the roots of the grateful legacy narrated in this centennial history of the Seminary.

Underlying the discussion of how to engage the larger, unreached population for our Seminary constituency, consideration has been given to deciding what would be an appropriate response to such controversial issues as critical race theory or reparations. There is concern from those who would support engaging these issues, as well as others would regard the premises of these positions to be antithetical to the Seminary mission and ethos. In the view of President Tennent, these discussions would not be resolvable apart from agreeing on how they would be framed in larger political issues. There was also the need for clarity on whether positions taken on these issues are “aspirational” or also reflect realities from real experience. In addition, responding to these issues primarily within a cultural context would not in his view represent a proper theological response.¹⁷⁴

Another matter of consideration was whether the Seminary has long normed male over female students, and also those who are United Methodist. While the proportion of female students was much lower in past years, the number of women now exceed men in the seminary student enrollment, and new access to all levels of ministry has received support from the Seminary. Likewise, although Asbury Seminary has had no official relationship with the United Methodist Church, and has received no support from that denomination, it has educated far more of its ministers than has any official United Methodist seminary, yet, its current enrollment also reflects a highly diverse range of denominations from all over the world. One focus participant observed that this diversity at multiple levels underscores the need to find “how to use language that would be inclusive of the whole Asbury Seminary community.”¹⁷⁵

To maintain fidelity to the Seminary mission the President also observed that decisions on resources to be recommended for use in Seminary deliberation and action in response to these issues would require referring them to a shared governance response, involving the Seminary Board of Trustees. In retrospect, President Tennent received commendation for his “concerted stand on social inequality issues.”¹⁷⁶

Another matter of consideration was whether the Seminary has long normed men over women students, and also those who are United Methodist. While the proportion of women was much lower in past years, their number has now slightly exceeded the number of men in the total student

¹⁷⁴ The source for these important discussions is found in the record of the focus groups assembled for strategizing on the future of the Seminary, from 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Comment from Beverly Johnson-Miller in response to Donna Covington. Voce President of Formation.

¹⁷⁶ Notes from a focus group discussion with President Timothy Tennent, recorded October 19, 2020

enrollment.¹⁷⁷

The discussion of these diverse concerns leads to a synopsis on the “state of the Seminary” by fall 2021, as delineated by President Tennent in the joint faculty-trustee planning retreat for that academic year. The theme was “Asbury Theological Seminary is mission done!” This statement reflected the following considerations: (1) ATS had the same mission today as at first, with no wavering therefrom, (2) ATS has maintained its calling to proclaim globally its mission of full salvation in Christ, plus a high level of commitment to sound knowledge linked to vital piety, and (3) our legacy is not our customers we serve but our product we produce. The intent is not to grow fruit to adorn tree called Asbury Seminary but rather it is “to grow fruit on other peoples’ trees.”¹⁷⁸

This fruit on “other trees” represented a description of the more than 13,000 Seminary alumni then impacting lives and communities of faith around the world. There were also the many donors giving large and small gifts to fund the costs for students at the Seminary, in the amount of \$45m., going on to \$100m expected in the short term. There has been the community of donors giving to Kalas Village, and \$45 m. has been raised to date. There have been the hundreds and soon thousands of church plants that are flourishing thanks to the church planting initiative of the Seminary.¹⁷⁹ There has also been the \$6m. designated to fund the Seedbed program of resourcing the leaders being raised up by the Holy Spirit to ignite new awakenings of vast numbers of sanctified, Spirit filled life transformers for Christ and His Kingdom. There has been the row of accrediting bodies that certify the ministries of the Seminary, including SACS, TATS, CACREP, the University Senate (UMC), and a host of others.¹⁸⁰ There are also the eleven life chairs for tenured faculty, which announce our academic quality to the world, alongside the forty states who have accreditation with us, the core stakeholders.¹⁸¹

This outcome results comes from a baseline in the time of our founder H.C. Morrison, when

¹⁷⁷ O’Malley, Interview with President Tennent on November 11, 2020.

¹⁷⁸ President Timothy Tennent, address to faculty-board retreat, September 18, 2021, derived that metaphor from its usage by the Lausanne Conference in Switzerland in its legacy of mission since 1973.

¹⁷⁹ President Tennent observed that training the church planting involves the use of such programs as Alpine Ministries, and also the text, *Reaching our Broader Wesleyan Heritage**

¹⁸⁰ These initiatives denote the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities, The Association of Theological Schools, and Commission on Accrediting, consisting of all certified Seminaries operating in the United States.

¹⁸¹ Most schools started by a founder(s) with a mission have shifted from their founders’ positions and have lost that as a resource for their life, but not Asbury Seminary.

there was only three students and one graduate in the early 1920s.¹⁸² By 1927 there was a consecrated faculty, although no one had a PhD and there was no accreditation. By 1947 there now was accreditation under McPheeters, followed by a stewardship model of academic and program organization under Stanger, that was not as explicitly tied to the mission as is the Seminary organizational structure in the Tennent administration. That is all fruit bearing for the Kingdom of Christ.¹⁸³ With twenty- two new faculty added by September 2021 in the Tennent administration, and with one half of the trustees arriving as new members of the board, the President is eagerly addressing the sometimes complicated challenge of providing seamless transition in advancing the strategic goals for 2023.¹⁸⁴

A renewed sense of purpose led to enhanced transparency in the functioning of the Board, based now in a clearer practice of shared governance. The torch for the work of the Board of Trustees was ignited to a new level of Kingdom fulfillment. Well-functioning board resolutions resulted in a flurry of new initiatives by 2021, such as the decision to open two satellite campuses in Florida, after the disposition of the present leased Seminary instructional building. One site would soon be opened in a church in south Orlando, while another was planned in a different church site in the fast growing metropolis of Tampa.¹⁸⁵

A Concluding Word . . .

These observations on Christ and culture in the current era of the Tennent administration are presented in relation to his formative presentation of the theology of the body. The reason for highlighting this relationship at the end of this study is to demonstrate how his theological exposition of human anthropology has presented a compelling normative focus for discussion and action in relating the gospel of full salvation in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit to a waiting global humanity, and doing so amid the challenges of an unprecedented adversarial culture in the twenty first century. In our Lord's *kairos* timing, the occasion for this important discussion has been a grateful chronicle of the centennial history of a Seminary whose mission has been closely

¹⁸² His name was Samuel Maxwell

¹⁸³ Data provided by President Timothy Tennent in address to faculty-board retreat, September 18, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵ While transition of faculty was often painful with the loss of the familiar classroom and chapel building, all but a few of the twenty five present faculty members in Florida will be transferred to the new Florida sites, later in 2021.

aligned with tracking and actualizing the fruit of that glorious *missio Dei* to its global extent, and into the second century of ministry now awaiting. This new day was highlighted by President Tennent's acclamation that "Asbury Global is now reinventing Asbury Theological Seminary" in a post-traditional era that was now upon us.¹⁸⁶

The key for the President was waiting upon God's leading, in the Holy Spirit, particularly when apparent ditches in the road were encountered. For example, in 2021 President Tennent explained to the faculty and trustees that a major donor had recently chosen to discontinue their significant commitment to a major ministry project due to their disagreement with Tennent's unambiguous affirmation of the Seminary mission and ethos statement. He momentarily sensed despair, but, turning quickly to guidance of the Holy Spirit, he received the assurance that God could handle this, too. Indeed He did, as within a short time a new donor stepped up to fund that particular program with in an enhanced manner. Through this leading, unity in mission became a realizable goal for the Seminary, in this second decade of the Tennent administration. Finally, with the introduction of regular auditing practices for the Seminary, the President sensed that indeed, as the leaks were fixed in the health of the budget and program of the Seminary, it was God who was steering the ship.¹⁸⁷

In all of these developments, we offer Gratitude to God at this approaching Centenary moment in the history of a faithful and singularly influential witness to God's work in the modern history of theological education, Asbury Theological Seminary.

¹⁸⁶ Tennent, Address to faculty-board retreat, September 18, 2021.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid