



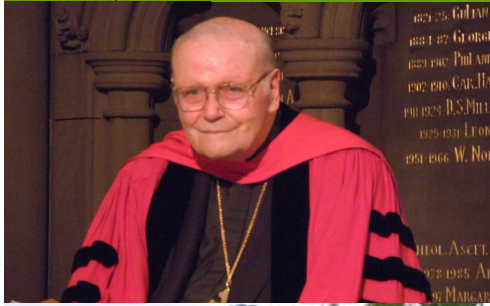
THE CHELSEA SQUARE



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Spring 2022





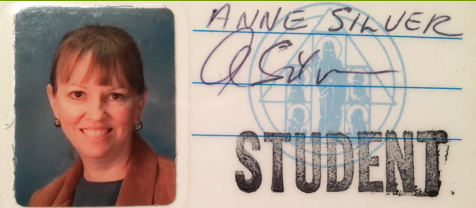
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SPRING 2022
the general theological seminary

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GTS.EDU/GATHERINGS



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THE ALUMNI GATHERING

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ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
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THE 200TH COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

Necrology

- The Rev. Dr. Philip L. Culbertson
- The Rev. Dr. Robert Friedrich '86
- The Rev. Dr. Jane Gaeta '02
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- The Rev. Christopher Porteus '82
- Mr. Brian-Paul Thomas '14
- The Rev. Louis Weil '61
- The Rev. Canon Dr. J. Robert Wright '63, '10

BEYOND WOMEN & MEN: THE NEXT 50 YEARS:
THE MINISTRY OF TRANS & NON-BINARY PERSONS
MODERATED BY THE REV. DR. APRIL STACE
WITH THE REV. EVAN FISCHER '92 & FLOURISH KLINK '24

Writers & Contributors

Tim Cheux
The Ven. Douglas B. Edwards
The Rev. Dr. Valerie Bailey Fischer
Dr. Anne Winchell Silver

Acting Dean and President
Head Editor
Assistant Editor
Assistant Editor
Copy Editor, Layout

The Very Rev. Michael W. DeLashmutt
Joshua Bruner
Robert Wohner
Jonathan Silver
Matthew Puckett

440 West 21st St., New York, NY, 10011
(212) 243-5150 www.gts.edu

— The Ethos at General —

There are four expressions of our ethos at General Seminary: Urban, Anglican, Contextual, and Benedictine. For this and the next edition of *The Chelsea Square*, we will focus on a single expression of the ethos, both to tell the story of how they reflect what it means to be General Seminary today and to reflect on how these will shape our character going into the future. If we are driven by our mission and oriented by our vision, the four expressions of General's ethos describe the character and qualities of how we fulfill our mission as directed by our vision. General at its best is when the presence of our ethos is strong and self-evident. Other times, these expressions in the daily life of the seminary appear dim. During these seasons, we must remind each other of these values — to reinvigorate our work and become the body Christ has called us to be.

FROM THE ACTING DEAN AND PRESIDENT'S DESK

SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN CONTEXT

The Very Rev. Michael W. DeLashmutt, PhD
Acting Dean and President

One of my favorite experiences during my time (so far!) at General Seminary was taking my first pilgrimage to the Holy Land with General alumnus Rev. Matthew Dayton-Welch '15 in November of 2018. He was such a skilled leader and he really opened my eyes to the importance of the physical places where so many of the stories from scripture were set.

I recall standing just outside of the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum and being struck by how compactly the ancient town would have been laid out in Jesus's time. You could imagine the hustle and bustle that would have flowed through those narrow streets. Jesus would have rubbed shoulders with Capernaum's residents. As the story of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-41) hints at, Jesus' mission was tightly wound up with the context of everyday life in this, and many other, everyday places in the Galilee of the first century CE.

The stories of scripture, including those about the life of Jesus and the mission and ministry of the earliest Christians, point to God's particular concern for the concrete realities of everyday life and everyday places. It is in these everyday lives and everyday places that we find God's movement of mission in the world. In David Bosch's words, "To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love"

(Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390).

It is because God is already active in our everyday lives and our everyday places that General Seminary has been shining a light on the importance of 'context' as a



DeLashmutt in Capernaum in 2018.

facet of our Seminary's ethos. We believe that theology and ministry are things best learned through the practice of thinking, being, and acting 'theologically' within the context of real-world ministry. When I read

through the applications written by the incoming students to our new Hybrid MDiv program, I was delighted to learn about all the deep connections that they share with in their home contexts — commitments to lay vocations in their home parishes, employment at service and advocacy based non-profit organizations, careers in education. These are people who are already at work in their home context, participating in the mission of God in the world. Through our new hybrid program, we are able to bring Seminary to them, to their everyday lives and everyday places, walking alongside them as they make a difference in God's beloved world.

Attentiveness to context isn't something new to General Seminary. When we were first settling into our new home in the Chelsea neighborhood, the early faculty, staff and students at General recognized the importance of their ministry context. They met for weekly worship in the library of the West building until, in 1831, they exceeded the capacity of that space and petitioned the Bishop of New York to plant St. Peter's Parish down the street, to serve the needs of this growing community. This passion for a ministry that was steeped with in a 'context' continued over the following decades as students at General were dispatched throughout the city—and eventually throughout the world—to learn about how to become ministers of the Gos-

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IN MEMORIAM: THE REV. CANON DR. J. ROBERT WRIGHT, '63 (1936-2002)

The Rev. J. Robert Wright, M.Div., D.Phil., D.D., D.Cn.L., Th.D., St. Mark's Church In The Bowery Professor Of Ecclesiastical History, Emeritus, died January 12, 2022, around 5:00 p.m. in his home in New York City with caregivers present. He was reading a book in his chair, fell asleep peacefully, and went to God. He was 85 years old. He arrived on the Close when he matriculated in 1960, living and working amongst us until death, an honored and beloved member of the community.

Our In Memoriam is a collection of remembrances received from those who knew him during their time on the Close.



At the reception for our exhibition of his iconography collection, Fr. Wright lifts a toast as his old friend and colleague, the Rev. Canon Carlson Gerdau '59 (deceased 2017) looks on.

September of 1976 to let us know that the General Convention had approved the resolution. In my General years (1973-1976), it was traditional for seniors to take Dr. Wright's "mass class." Some women, not knowing whether or not we would ever be able to preside at the Eucharist, chose not to enroll in that class. In early 1977, though, Bob spent a day with newly-ordained and about-to-be-ordained women, taking us through the essentials of Eucharistic presiding. That class was held at the Church of St. John's in the Village, where I was a clergy associate. That willingness to offer that class was yet another sign of Bob's generosity. Many good memories of tutorials and classes with Bob during my seminary years, and I will always be grateful for Bob's support and later years of good friendship. I am grateful for having known him. May the saints and angels guide him into paradise.

The Rev. Dr. Jackson Hershbell, '63:

Quite recently Bob Wright asked if it was ok to put one of my translations in the library; one of two translations of *Iamblichus* done in collaboration with John Dillon, retired Regius Prof., Trinity College, Dublin. Bob and I would sometimes discuss his growing number of works, and I believe the last of them was a Companion to Bede. While still students at General, we often discussed what we had learned. Bob was a great roommate. Little did we know that he would someday follow in the footsteps of P. M. Dawley and R. Boshier. Bob was also best man at my wedding shortly after graduation and subsequent student at Oxford. I saw him just before for he boarded ship for England, and we have remained in contact ever since. Bob was serious about his faith, very friendly and concerned for others, students, colleagues, and those outside the seminary community. Dear Bob, in the words of an ancient Roman poet we bid farewell to you in this life, *Ave atque Vale*.

The Rev. Susan Mills, '76:

I remember that he was a strong supporter of women's ordination long before the first women were ordained to the priesthood. He called me from Minneapolis in

The Rev. Canon William Cavanaugh, '81:

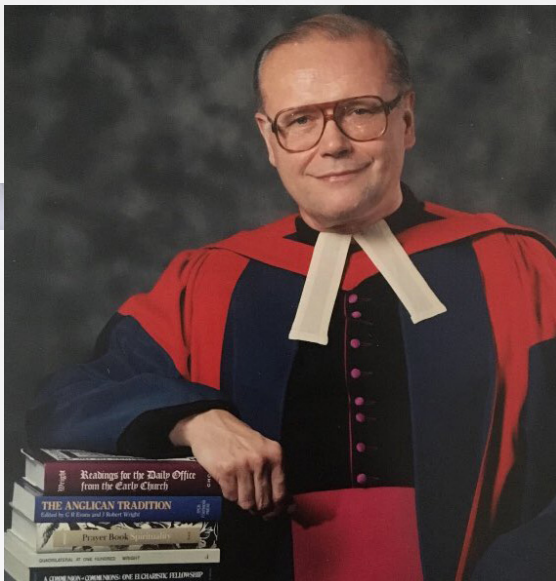
When we gathered in September 2019 for his tribute, I asked the assembly “What is it about Fr. Wright that brought you here to recognize him?” My guess was that like me, people were not there to honor the first-class ecumenist and great Church historian. They came because of the impact he had on their lives and ministry. He will always be remembered as a Mentor, one who helped form many for service in the Church and beyond. J. Robert Wright poured his life into his many and varied interests; and he into his students as well. I am sure that every faculty advisor at General had profound impact on their advisees, but I would argue that few had as much as did Fr. Wright. Advisee meetings were always wide-ranging affairs, touching on many topics related to the priestly life. But to be honest, what I remember most was the caviar, which Bob loved and loved to share. If you took his legendary Mass Class, you would gather at the Oratory in Kohne Hall where one would learn about Big Swoops and Little Swoops and gain hands-on experience dealing with clumsy or clueless servers—a role usually played by Fr. Wright himself. One time, he took my friend Joel and me to lunch at the Union League. He knew that two middle class guys like us probably hadn’t been to a place like that before (we hadn’t) and wanted to make us familiar and comfortable in the milieu.

Perhaps my most appreciated aspect of having Fr. Wright as a Mentor at General was his seemingly uncanny ability to contact me and other advisees when we were struggling. As I approached graduation, hoping to acquire valuable tools for my upcoming ministry, I asked Bob what his secret was. I felt like Elisha asking Elijah for his special powers. How did he know to contact us when times were difficult? Well, his ‘secret’ was simply that he took note of our Chapel attendance. If we were regular attendees and suddenly stopped, something us up. If we were sporadic in showing up at Chapel and suddenly were there every day, a phone call was in order. Simple, yet a sign of the commitment Fr./Dr./Professor Robert Wright had for those fortunate enough to have him as a Mentor. Once upon a time the space where we held the tribute was a gymnasium, and one September long ago, a dozen or so gathered on the court as the General basketball team. Anxious to get going, we waited for our Coach to arrive. In came Dr.



Fr. Wright coaching the General Basketball Team, circa 1980

Wright, black suit & tab collar, carrying a sheaf of papers in his hand. Were they plays? Our schedule? Well, they were the notes to a scholarly lecture on the relationship between Athleoo and Askeoo in the Patristic writings, which he delivered to us, shorts, sneakers, and all! Only at General. Only with Dr. J. Robert Wright!



The official portrait of Fr. Wright displayed in the Refectory, arm resting on the books he had written.

Dame Mary Tanner, '91:

Prof. Wright was a close and dear friend for many, many years. We worked together in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in the 1970's and 80's. He made a very significant contribution at the final session in Lima to what proved to be perhaps the most important ecumenical text of the century. We also served on many committees and theological conferences of the Anglican Communion and were members of the Second Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission. It was largely due to Bob's suggestion, I suspect, that I was invited to be a Visiting Professor at General in '88 and then in '98. I valued my time being part of a community of teachers and students sharing in a life grounded in prayer. I am proud to be an honorary graduate of General, again, I suspect supported by Bob's nomination. Bob often visited us in England. I remember the time he presented me with a copy of his lovely portrait, his arm resting on a pile of books he had written. He told me he the artist had agreed that each time he wrote another book it would be put on the pile and his arm raised so somehow it would be inserted into the picture. I never knew if that happened or was a joke. He was a great scholar, teacher, and faithful friend to myself and my family. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Kevin J Moroney, '92:

In August of 1990, celebrating the end of CPE in the old Seabury's Bottom, I was approached by the looming figure of J. Robert Wright, who commented that he had heard of my interest in Ireland and asked if I would be interested in spending the next Summer working in the Church of Ireland. I could not believe my ears and jumped at the chance. Fr. Wright arranged for the whole thing through a friend of his, John Paterson, whom he knew from Anglican/Roman Catholic International Dialogue and was the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The three months I spent in Ireland were the most transformative part of my entire formation and, in many ways, set the arch for my priesthood. That summer I met the Principal of their Theological College, John Bartlett,

who knew General Seminary and took an interest in me, eventually hiring me mentoring me through a doctorate in liturgy. This, in turn, led me back to teach liturgy at General, where I became reacquainted with Fr. Wright by bringing him communion. Through sublime irony, I was in Ireland a few weeks ago visiting my extremely ill mentor John Bartlett when I heard of Fr. Wright's passing. It was a "full-circle" kind of moment. One thing I know is true is that I would not be the priest or professor I am today if J. Robert Wright, our J-Bob, had not seen some ability and taken some interest in me as a student. I will never be able to thank him, or God, enough.



Fr. Wright meets Anglican-Orthodox leaders with former Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold.

for a book, but nonetheless agreed to help me (the original title was *Feminism and the Nicene Creed*). Long story short, he ended up urging me in the epilogue to call for another council to discuss the Creed! Needless to say, that has never occurred, but his support of my work was critical, unwavering, and even included his positive review in ATR. I will never forget Dr. Wright's boundless generosity.

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, '93:

He was my mentor on my book, *Gender and the Nicene Creed*. When I told him my topic, he said he didn't think it could ever be enough

The Rev. Canon John Perris '98:

In my first year at the General Seminary, Fr. Wright learned that I had lived and worked in Europe before beginning my seminary studies. When I started his class on the Episcopal Church and its ecumenical relations, Fr. Wright remembered my interests and suggested that I write my course paper on the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. I was fascinated by what I learned about this communion of churches that identifies as Catholic and yet not as Roman Catholic.

When I graduated from General, my family responsibilities did not permit me to follow Fr. Wright's suggestion to continue my studies at an Old Catholic seminary in Europe, but I remained strongly interested. When I became the Rector of the Episcopal Church in Frankfurt am Main, my interest led me to attend the summer course in Old Catholic Theology and Ecumenical Relations in Utrecht, to rebuild the long-term partnership with the local Old Catholic parish in Frankfurt, and to contribute in a few small ways to strengthening the relationship between the Old Catholic Churches and the Episcopal Church in Europe. Such is the lasting impact of Fr. Wright's teaching.

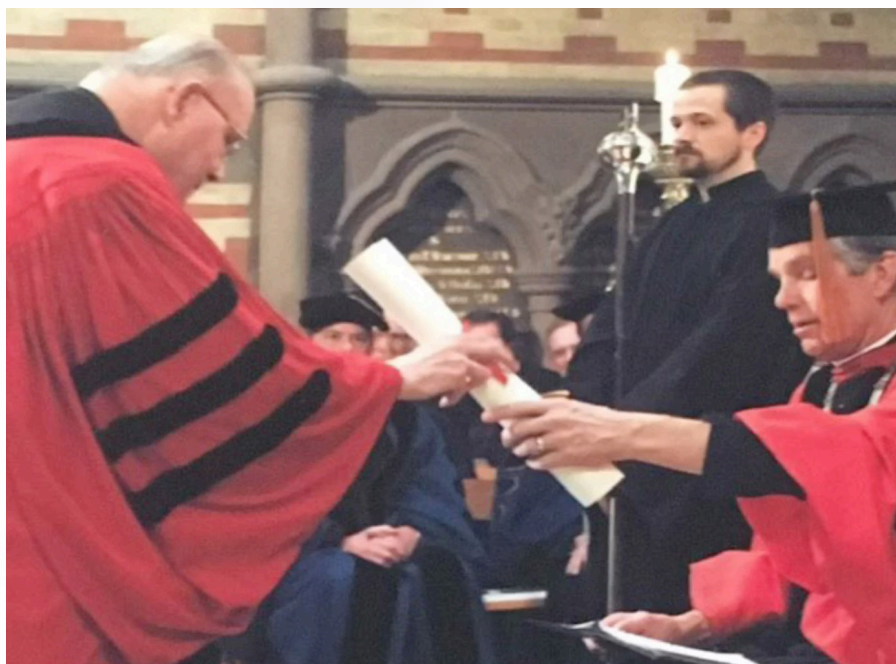
The Very Rev. Benjamin Thomas, Th.D. '07, '11:

During my doctoral research, I came across a scholarly footnote that acknowledged “the most comprehensive private collection of Anglican Prayer Books known to the author was that of the Rev. Dr. J. Robert Wright....” Anyone who ever set foot in Bob Wright’s apartment in the Moore building could readily attest the truth of this observation. In addition to the prayer books, Fr. Wright’s treasures included an impressive lot of icons, crosses, prayer cards, and every other sort of ecclesiastical memorabilia. These were sacramental reminders, outward and visible signs, of the things that he held dear: the tradition of Anglican worship, his ecumenical relationships, the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and above all, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. Fr. Wright downsized in retirement and handed many treasures on to others’ keeping. His icons went to a former student and collector, his prayer book collection went to the New York Public Library, and countless other items found new homes. When asked to create a slide show for a gathering in his honor, I wondered what artifacts might remain in his apartment. I found a Madonna and Child in a window overlooking 9th and 21st, a well-thumbed prayer book in a somewhat less dusty place near his chair, and a great collection of photographs on the kitchen table. Our conversation about these cherished belongings reminded me of what Bob taught to hundreds of seminarians, namely that we can always rely on the goodness of God, the faith of the church, and our friends in Christ, and that finally, we can do no better than to share these treasures now and then to hand them over to the next generation of Christians.

The Rev. Joanne Izzo, '13:

I met Fr. Wright for the first time as most did walking on the Close. His walk was a slow gait, a little shaky, but his facial expression held eyes alive and alert for an encounter and conversation. One conversation led to another and another and another. Working together to create his icon exhibition and catalog cemented our relationship as friends. On the evening of the opening, dressed in his best and in his wheelchair, his good friend Cardinal Egan next to him, Bishop Mark Sisk standing at his side with a leader from the Serbian Orthodox community, I saw a living icon to ecumenism. Fr. Wright was seeing an icon as it was being written and being seen by Author of Unity. That moment was a response to Our Lord’s prayer; it was pure grace.

The last time I saw Bob was on the Feast of St. Andrew. He engaged deeply in conversation. After prayer and communion, he did something he hadn’t done before; he asked me for my blessing. Retrospectively, I think somewhere inside he knew his time was drawing near. Our last conversation was short and over the phone when he returned from hospital. Saying each other’s names, affirming a loving friendship, praying for each other and we would see each other soon.



Fr. Wright receiving the Doctor of Divinity, Honoris Causa, in 2010

The Rev. Ryan Bennett '21:

Canon Wright was a large presence in a room. Not just physically, but intellectually and personally as well. I shared pastoral ministry for Bob on behalf of Saint Thomas, Fifth Avenue along with Fr. Moroney from General and longtime friend, Mthr. Joanne Izzo. On taking Holy Communion to Bob, he was always grateful to have the opportunity to share in the Sacrament. In this recent wave of Covid, I had to postpone his Christmas communion visit - then discovering that he had tested positive for Covid. His strength of body and spirit enabled Bob to rally and return home - miraculous. In our visits, I felt he would look straight through me, his perceptive mind making assessments and subsequently asking enquiring questions. There was a natural intuition in Bob, coupled with his outstanding intellect - making him a large presence in any room. His knowledge of the Anglican Communion was vast and was interested to know about the life of the Australian Church from which I came. He struck me as a resolute thinker who knew his own mind and capacity, and yet, had a keen desire to share this with others - a natural teacher. It was good for Bob to die in his own home on his own terms. I believe his ultimate wish! Bless you, J. Bob!

50 YEARS OF WOMEN AT GENERAL

THE JOY OF SPIRITUAL WELCOME

Dr. Anne Winchell Silver, '02

I remember walking onto the Close for the first day of class in September 1998 and feeling like I was exactly where I was called to be and exactly where I never imagined I would be. I'd assumed I was done with being a student when I finished my PhD at Fordham years before. But now here I was, feeling irresistibly drawn to this new and unexpected learning opportunity.

The spiritual direction program was called "Thursdays at General." I'd rearranged my full-time work as a community college counselor to fit into four long days so I could spend entire Thursdays as a student. The fourteen members of our spiritual direction class represented four or five Christian denominations and an interesting cross-section of careers. Nine were women and most were laypeople like me. We quickly formed a warm and supportive community.

Under the leadership of Prof. Bill Doubleday and a team of outside spiritual directors, the spiritual direction practicum course met for six hours a week and had experien-

tial components in addition to seminars and lectures. Even the lunch break included time with prayer partners. Outside of class we were expected to have several spiritual directees so we could receive individual and group supervision. Each term we made a weekend retreat at a monastic guesthouse. And the academic courses that followed the practicum were some of the most challenging I'd ever taken, taught by superb scholars like Drs. Elisabeth Koenig, Judy Newman, and Deirdre Good (laywomen like me!). It was a relentlessly rich and demanding experience.

Thursdays at General was not entirely integrated into the life of the Close. We were once-a-week commuters in an era when most students and faculty lived at the seminary. The year I started was the first year we had lunch in the refectory rather than takeout from Frankie's. We were welcome to attend chapel, but it wasn't easy to figure out which hymnal, prayer book, leaflet, flyer, or loose-leaf notebook to use at any given time. We earned certificates and degrees from our program, but we didn't

sign the matriculation book.

In my experience, it didn't seem difficult to be a woman at General in that program and in the company of my classmates and faculty mentors. The interpersonal challenge for me was the insider/outsider dynamic that so clearly valued residential, ordination-track students. On the Close there were innumerable situations where we were subtly or not so subtly talked down to or treated as invisible. There was a lot of talk about "community," but often it didn't feel like it included us.

Nevertheless, I persisted. In fact, after spending two years completing the Certificate, I wasn't quite ready to leave, so I stayed for another two years for the MA in Spiritual Direction.

After graduation I assumed I was done with General. But in 2007 I was invited to teach a course about lay ministry for MA students, and I accepted. Not long thereafter I was invited to assist in creating and teaching courses as an adjunct in the spiritual direction program, and I accepted. In 2015 I was invited to be in charge of the Center for Christian Spirituality, and I accepted. And now, almost a quarter of a century after I first arrived, I'm still here! What keeps me here now, what fuels my joy, are all the opportunities to offer spiritual welcome and to help others find new ways to do the same. I am exactly where I'm called to be.

LIVING INTO THE MISSION

COMMITTING YOUR LIFE ENERGY TO AN IMPACTFUL VISION

The Ven. Douglas B. Edwards, '84

What's your BHAG? What's your Big Hairy Audacious Goal? It's the question that changed my ministry, my life, forever. This core question of CREDO clergy conferences asks you to look long over the horizon and commit your life energy to an impactful vision. The guideline is that you cannot know how you will achieve your BHAG, nor can you readily identify the resources required. It is visionary.

My BHAG some 25 years ago: to bring financial resources for retirement to indigenous Ghanaian clergy through the establishment of a pension plan and to provide sustainable potable water to 250,000 souls in remote villages. Pursuing this vision, inspired by a series of dreams during my first year of parish ministry and meetings with

clergy in Ghana's rainforest, ultimately drove me outside of parish ministry where I had served for twenty years as rector of two parishes to a career in private business where I hoped to raise some three million dollars to accomplish my goals. Five years ago, the pension system was fully funded with each diocese in Ghana in charge of their pension funds as well as clergy entering the national social security system. Against all odds, BHAG #1 was accomplished. Last year we drilled seven water wells, bringing the number of people served to approximately 50,000.

In retirement I have a new BHAG: to free 1,000 children from the ancient scourge of slavery which is alive and well in Ghana and literally everywhere else. So far, our family foundation and a small charity,

established to complete these BHAGs, has funded the rescue of more than 350 children in eight years.

I AM AN ABOLITIONIST!

I am what was known as a "shareholder" in the days of America's Underground Railroad. I have met nearly eighty of the children rescued, children who were kidnapped or sold to slave traders for fishing work on Ghana's Lake Volta, the world's largest manmade lake. The children receive extensive rehabilitation, medical treatment, intense education coupled with psychological and spiritual support, and, finally, are reintegrated with their families as is appropriate.

The children are bought for less than the price of a goat. They are forced to work

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The Chelsea Square • Spring 2022

A SCHOLAR IN SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

The Rev. Dr. Valerie Bailey Fischer, '20



ate in Interfaith Studies at Hartford Seminary, CT, and as the developer of Hartford's Multifaith Chaplaincy Program (2012–16). Both Cowart and Mosher were drawn to study at General for similar reasons as I did: to be a scholar in the service of the church.

Mosher said what she remembers most is how she enjoyed studying in the midst of a community of faith. However, by the time I enrolled in the doctoral program in 2011, the atmosphere of the seminary was different from Cowart and Mosher's time. The seminary began to reflect the changes that were happening in the church. For example, the board of trustees and the senior administrators began to consider ways of extending theological education to people who were not on an ordination or academic track. Some of these conversations led to conflict between the faculty and the board. At the time of the conflict, I was starting my comprehensive exams and was allowed to continue my work since all of the members of my committee were still at the seminary. The faculty involved in the conflict returned for about a year, then almost all of them left General. I missed their voices and scholarship, and I am grateful for the brief time I studied with a few of these professors.

The work continued being rigorous and challenging after the conflict. In addition to writing my dissertation and making presentations at conferences, I began teaching courses in Anglican Studies at the Bexley-Seabury Seminary Federation, another theological education institution facing enormous change. The changes at General continued: the commuter students, like myself, outnumbered the residential students. As a result, I did not have the advantage of living on the Close. Instead of a cloistered environment, my halls of study included Metro North, the subway and Starbucks. I missed regularly being with other students. The changes and financial uncertainty made me wonder if General would still exist by the time I finished my doctorate. Yet this time at General was not the first time I faced uncertainty at a seminary.

I began the M.Div program at Union Theological Seminary in the shadow of the September 11, 2001 attacks. We were told at the end of the day that more planes were coming and that it was not likely that we would survive into the night. Days after the attacks, Union declared financial exigency. While the world changed and the semi-

I had always wanted to be a clergy-scholar. I was inspired by numerous narratives in Medieval Church History about persons whose vocations were both spiritual and academic, including monk and Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). However, my twenty-first century vocational plans seemed to make people nervous. I heard comments like, "The doctorate is unnecessary, you can do ministry without a doctorate (and ordination)." However, I was interested in forming communities of faith and teaching its leaders how to care for themselves and their communities. I wanted to do this in the same way as scholars study science and philosophy, engaging in thoughts and ideas, not just looking for the answers, but for the questions that challenge and inform our faith. Over time, the call to the vocation of clergy-scholar persisted and eventually I applied to doctoral programs.

General's program caught my attention because of its commitment to forming scholars for service to the church. At General, no one asked me to choose between priestly duties and scholarly pursuits. I was being invited to learn how to be both. My

classmates and colleagues were priests and lay church leaders who were committed to rigorous scholarship and to the Episcopal Church.

Dr. Courtney Cowart (Th.D '94) described her program in the mid 1990s as very challenging and rigorous. She worked with numerous scholars, many of whom were historians. Among her professors was Dr. Bruce Mullin, who became my academic advisor 17 years after Cowart graduated from the program. Cowart said that her goal was to be a scholar in service to the church. Cowart has used her research and scholarship in many roles in the church. Most recently, she is the Executive Director of the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (SIM), "a learning community of thought leaders" who support emerging scholars and church leaders through recruitment, scholarships and publications (<https://sim-ministry.org/>).

One of Cowart's colleagues in the program was Dr. Lucinda Allen Mosher (Th.D '02). Mosher also spoke of the rigorous academic work, which for her, included opportunities to take classes at other seminaries, especially in the study of other religions. Mosher currently serves as Faculty Associ-

nary's finances were uncertain, the love of learning continued along with intense discussions on theology and history among the faculty and students. "Theology is forged in times of crisis," one of my professors said. In other words, uncertainty and crisis is a clergy/scholar's playing field. Doctoral work is designed to form the student into someone who can find not only answers, but new questions.

I decided to approach the post-conflict General in the same way, continuing to study and learn and adapt, and to pay attention to the emerging questions. I would look for clues in the past, assuming, as Solomon says, that nothing is really new under the sun.

"At General, no one asked me to choose between priestly duties and scholarly pursuits. I was being invited to learn how to be both."

And what describes "new?" J. Robert Oppenheimer, a physicist who led a team building the first successful nuclear bomb, said, "This world of ours is a new world, in which the unit of knowledge, the nature of human communities, the order of society, the order of ideas, the very notions of society and culture have changed, and will not return to what they have been in the past," and described something as new "not because it has never been there before, but because it has changed in quality."

More than 50 years ago women became a new aspect of seminary education and the issues surrounding women and theological education were numerous. Early women students were directed toward religious education. The possibility of priesthood came shortly after the first women matriculated at General. And now, 50 years later, women have graduated and become lay and ordained leaders in the church. Only recently did I discover that of the 38 students who were awarded the Th.D, only eight were women. And I think, as far as we know, I might be the first African American woman who was awarded the Th.D from General. Is it possible that women are still a new thing after all? Or, perhaps there are newer questions that challenge our understanding of gender and sexuality than how many

women have earned this degree?

Does being a woman student at General matter? I do believe the admission of women to General and other seminaries was critical to theological education in the United States. The admission of women not only coincided with the entry of women into the Episcopal Church's hierarchy, but the admission of women meant that women's voices and ministry experiences were seen as sources of thoughts, ideas and possible solutions. This inclusion of women into the theological conversations and the councils of the church has allowed the Episcopal Church to be forward thinking in terms of its care of humanity.

What I enjoyed about the program at General was its focus on being a scholar, not just a woman scholar or a male scholar. The experience was strangely liberating in terms of gender roles. However, why the lack of women in the program? Was this lack of women doctoral graduates a holdover from the earlier days when women were considered new and rare? Today, the seminary is committed to providing theological education for all people regardless of gender. And as a result, it has produced almost 40 scholars for the service of the church, including eight women.

Many seminaries have shifted focus away from academic scholarship toward practical studies, assuming that what is needed are more pastors with skills than scholars with ideas and research projects. However, I believe doctors in the church are needed more than ever. We need doctors to join the team of clergy and lay leaders and offer unique gifts to face the challenges of our time. We need out-of-the box thinkers who are formed in similar ways to scholars of the past: people of faith who followed spiritual practices, including the study of theology, history and sacred text. These scholars are ones who can address the bigger questions such as what is the theology of new rites or what are the implications of the Open Table to our theology of the Eucharist? Do we believe what we do in the church is so small that great minds are not needed to define that which is new and lacks definition?

I am so grateful for the opportunity to study, and I am enjoying who I have become as a result of my time at General. I do not sit in the pew or stand in the pulpit or teach from the lectern with despair about the Episcopal Church. My service to the church is to provide ideas and inspiration to reach an understanding of our present reality so we may figure out what we are and who we are as we together serve God and each other.

from before dawn until dusk, seven days a week. They are expendable, often dying as they are literally tossed overboard their panga to release fishing nets snagged by the ever-present tree branches submerged by the lake's formation.

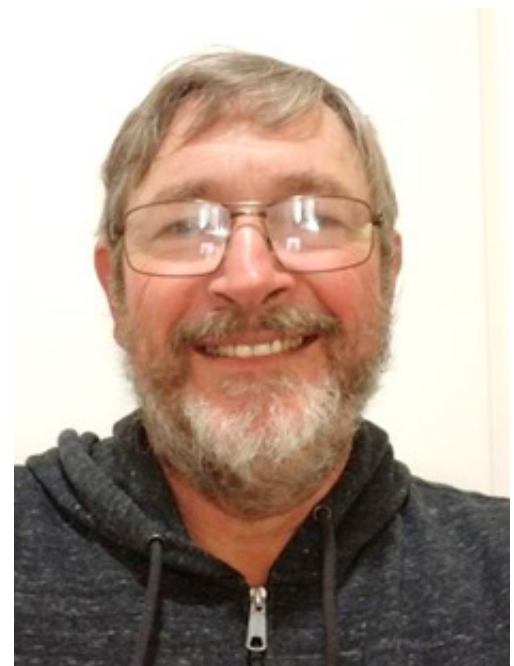
Other children suffer a similar plight as slaves on cocoa farms. Seven-year-olds, working with machetes, cut open the pods which contain the beans that will become chocolate sold in your neighborhood store. They sleep on the ground in the rain forest, marking their years served by the number of missing fingers.

Imagine if every church in America stood up against child slavery, against sex trafficking. Imagine our forcing candymakers to stop buying slave-produced cheap cocoa or coffee beans in order to make a larger profit. It was the churches of America and Britain that ended legal slavery in our countries in the 19th century. It is the churches in America today that alone can raise their collective voice to demand that corporate America stop bringing tainted goods to our shores.

Until the churches use their voices, we will continue to underwrite the scourge of slavery through the products we buy. In the meantime, I will continue to raise funds to free these children, as God gives me days and means. I am an abolitionist.

What's your BHAG?

The Ven. Douglas B. Edwards, '84, "retired" to California's Central Coast where he remains active in business and serves voluntarily as Interim Chaplain at Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo. He can be reached at canondougedwards@yahoo.com.



CONTEXTUAL, from page 3

pel of God's love by engaging in real-world ministry while still attending Seminary.

In addition to the development of our new hybrid programs, we're also surfacing context by developing non-degree programs (workshops, courses, events) that reflect the Seminary's immediate context here in New York City and in the Chelsea Neighborhood, in particular. Over the next year, we are investing in infrastructure and personnel to revitalize the use of the campus for non-degree programs, workshops, courses, conferences, and events. Some of these will be offered in collaboration with mission-aligned partner institutions who share our value for faith-based programs in and for the city; other programs will be offered and developed through the Tutu Center or the Center for Christian Spirituality. We also hope to develop programs that engage with Chelsea's vibrant arts and creative scene (our neighborhood alone is home to over 350 galleries and arts ven-

ues), and in recognition of the importance of this neighborhood within the American LGBTQI+ history, we want to begin to develop programs that surface and foster the emergence of a theology of queer liberation.

“Theology and ministry are things best learned through thinking, being, and acting ‘theologically’ within the context of real-world ministry.”

As General Seminary turns toward its third century of mission and ministry, we do so with an eye fixed on our immediate context here in NYC and with hands outstretched, ready to partner with students and dioceses around the country to participate in what God's up to in ministry contexts around the country.

(RE-) ENTERING HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING

Tim Cheux, '22

In the midst of the pandemic, I felt an urgency to want to go to church. We were all denied access to our physical religious buildings and the time away helped me to recognize what it is specifically I like about “going” to church. When you enter a nice restaurant you appreciate the ambience, the environment, decor and appearance of the venue. When you enter an Episcopal church or any denominational traditional church building specifically there is something which challenges me to think differently.

Whether it is the altar, the stained glass, the rows of pews, the raised ceilings, elevated pulpit or the simplicity of the cross, a church building calls me to repentance, to enter dialogue with God and, ultimately, to get on my knees and pray. Now, a fancy restaurant and a church can both be extremely appealing, but the difference is the feeling I have when I leave. Leaving a good restaurant, I always feel full, happy and perhaps a little bit like I ate too much or I spent too much money! When leaving church, I always feel leaving full, happy and perhaps like I had not given enough money! The experience of going to church fills me in a different way, like what Jesus described

as spiritual food in John 4:27:

Jesus said “Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures [and leads] to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for God the Father has authorized Him and put His seal on Him.”

As churches begin to re-open across New York and we return to more regular in person chapel services at General, the ability to worship inside a sacred building has been more and more restorative for my soul. As this is my last semester, I have intentionally sought, when possible, to attend Morning Prayer, Eucharist and Evening Prayer more regularly as a commuter from New Jersey. The ability to be in church, in community, and in person has helped my private prayer life, theological application of theoretical practices and my ability to learn, study, sing, say prayers and build deeper relationships in community with fellow seminarians.

I will continue to enjoy going to sacred places like restaurants, galleries and coffee shops. However, my heart, my head and my health are better inside of the church. Thank God for the sacred building of our churches in Jesus' name. Amen.

STAYING CONNECTED

The Chelsea Square

General's print magazine, published four times a year.

UpClose

General's monthly electronic newsletter, sent out the first week of every month.

Online

The official website for General Theological Seminary. www.gts.edu

Join us at our next event www.eventsatgeneral.com

Take a course www.generallearners.com

Please contact the Alumni Office – we welcome updates on your ministry and life, or other submissions to the Alumni News. Please feel free to call Jonathan Silver at 646-717-9705 or email gtsalumniae@gts.edu to arrange a visit or to share your ideas.

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