

1971-2021



A COMMEMORATION



50
Years
of Women at



GENERAL

SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022

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The Class of 1974

For One Hundred and Fifty Years, the only names that appeared in the Matriculation Book of the General Theological Seminary were men. In September 1971, at the Matriculation Ceremony in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, two new names were added: Page Bigelow and Margaret Ann Muncie. Throughout the 2021-2022 school year, alumnae (and a couple alumni!) contributed remembrances of their time at General, reflecting the impact of the depth and diversity of educational and formational experiences women have brought to General and the church over these past fifty years.



THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

50 Years of Women at General: A Commemoration is a publication of
The General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church
440 West 21 Street
New York, NY 10011
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Visit www.gts.edu/50years for more details and information

Foreword

by Donna J. Ashley '06
Vice President, Advancement

From a vantage point as both student and staff member, I have witnessed the vital presence of women who have called General Theological Seminary home. Members of the Alumni Executive Committee joined the staff in planning how we could best commemorate 50 Years of Women at General, beginning Matriculation, September 2021. This resulted in a diversity of offerings, as well as the call for reflections representing the range of educational and formational experiences GTS brought to your ministries.

Setting out to celebrate this legacy we realized two things: 1) although 2021 marked five decades since *women began matriculating on the ordination track at General*, remarkable women had been passing through these gates for many years prior to that significant date; and 2) the depth and breadth of ways our amazing alumnae have gone on to lead the church ranges from extraordi-

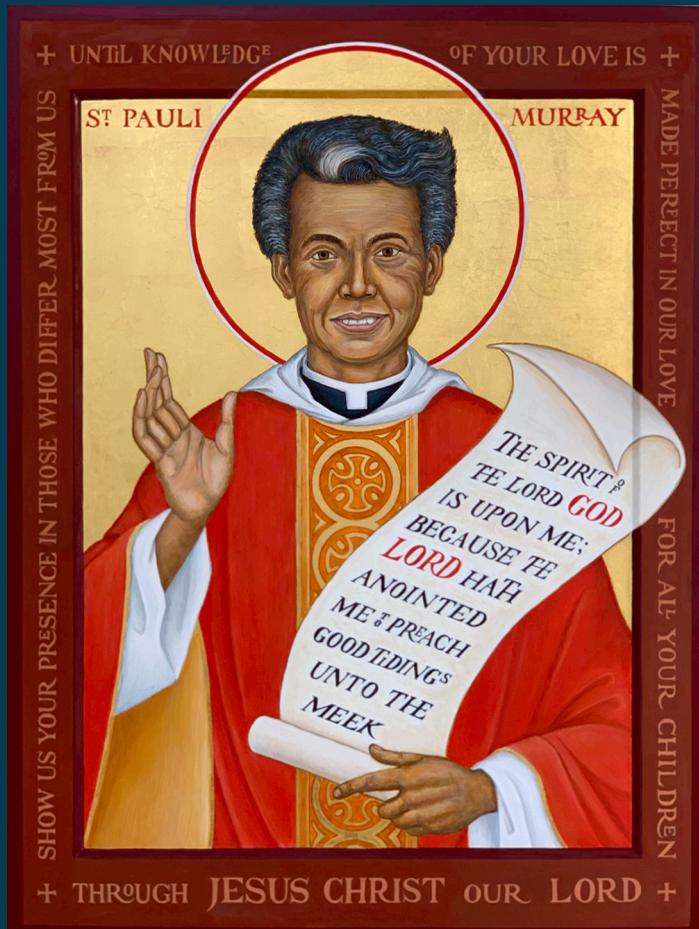
nary and pathbreaking to quiet yet notable ministries of Church Planters, Writers, Scholars, Artists and many, many wonderful Parish Priests all over the world.

So, from the start of planning, we knew we could only do our best to represent their resonance, remind ourselves of their impact, and take the opportunity to engage (and re-engage) with our community. These voices have become the heart of this booklet.

We ended the year with *The Next 50 Years: Beyond Women and Men* so we might seize this moment to live into the inclusion of all regardless of their gender identity as we do Christ's work recognizing the dignity of every human being. This year's Distinguished Alumni Award was presented posthumously to the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray and the Chapel of the Good Shepherd now has a beautiful new icon of Saint Pauli. I hope that you have celebrated along with us as we recognize this essential milestone in our history.

With all humility we present this remembrance of this milestone. There are so many people to thank for their time and dedication this past year! I will end with sending blessings to all of you and ask you to keep General Seminary, particularly the Women of and at General, in your prayers.

Peace be with you, always!



The icon of St. Pauli Murray consecrated during the Alumni Memorial Eucharist, May 17, 2022.

The Distinguished Alumni Award 2022 The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, Class of 1976

This year's Distinguished Alumni Award was conferred posthumously on the Rev. Dr. Anna Pauline "Pauli" Murray (November 20, 1910 – July 1, 1985), in honor and respect for Murray's life of trailblazing service in civil rights and the Episcopal Church, delayed recognition as an historic figure, and long overdue acknowledgement of the sexism and racism that Murray faced and fought throughout their life, including their time as a student at General Seminary.

Preaching at the Alumni Memorial Eucharist, the Rev. Dr. Anita Schell '83 asked "How can we by our actions bring hope and continue the witness of our own General alumna Pauli Murray? We have waited too long to acknowledge our profound gratitude to Pauli Murray's witness. Thank you, Pauli, for boldly bequeathing us a song of hope and love to lead us forward in these days."

Prologue: Before 1971

Maryhelen Clague (1954-1956) *Memories of Windham House*

From September 1954 to May 1956, I was a student at Union Theological Seminary and an associate of Windham House, a Training Center for women in the Episcopal Church. The Center focused on Episcopal women studying for a degree in Religious Education, but it also welcomed students of Social Work, the Missionary Field, Nursing and Teaching. It was a special place for women of Anglican Churches worldwide, especially in India. We all shared a warmth and comradeship in study, daily worship and communal living that came to mean a great deal to all of us.

I had never heard of Windham House, or even Union Seminary until the year before when I sat in my Florida church and realized that teaching public school music forever was not a happy prospect, and, if I had been a young man instead of a young woman, seminary and the Church was exactly what I would love to make my life's work. After one service I went to the sacristy and asked my Rector, "was there any vocation where women could serve and earn their living in the Episcopal Church?" He told me about Windham House and things fell out in an amazing way so that I did indeed walk through the door on 108th street in the fall of 1954.

Union was a multi-denominational Seminary. The Episcopal Church at that time did not ordain women so it was special that our own General Theological Seminary welcomed the women of Windham House and offered them an opportunity to study toward our DRE degree. It was a great blessing, and I was very grateful. I remember well Dr. Dawley's class in Church History; I had read his book back in Florida and was enchanted to be sitting there listening to the man himself. I recall a class in New Testament with Dr. Parker and one with Dr. Casserley, both eminent clergymen. As I recall we did not share these classes with most other seminarians, though there were usually a few with us.

I was surprised to learn in my early days at Windham House that the Seminarians at General did not look kindly on us because we were thought to be fighting for women's ordination. Such an idea had never occurred to me. I accepted that this was the way of my Church and was happy to discover another opportunity to serve and earn a living. Also, the women I knew and lived with never made a big issue of ordination, so I felt to do so was unfair. And as it turned out, most of the Seminarians at General whom I came to know didn't feel especially strong about the issue, although there was an underlying resentment we couldn't miss. After all, the question of women's ordination at that time meant such a huge change for the Episcopal Church that there were bound to be all kinds of indignant feelings floating around, from mild to outright hostile. Speaking for myself, I know that what I felt as a 'calling' to serve the Lord in the Church I loved would have meant



At Windham House I learned a whole new way of looking at children and relationships.

Seminary for a young man. As a young woman I was just delighted to find a way to answer my own calling.

At Windham House I learned a whole new way of looking at children and relationships. All the theories we learned in classes, our mentors at the House enlarged and widened for us. In the summer some of us had the great experience taking part in a program at Cass Lake, Minnesota, working with the Ojibwe Indians providing children's programs with an emphasis on rural application.

After the approval of ordination for women, Windham House was disbanded. At that time, however, the House, along with General and Union Seminaries, offered a safe, comfortable place to live, supervision in study and Field Work, opportunities for growth and worship, loving support, and helpful guidance. We made wonderful friends, worked with eminent clergy and Teachers (including even a Christian Psychiatrist!) and experienced a widening world of education and culture. Because of their help I went on to enjoy many years in the Diocese of New York, first at a Church in the City, then as a DRE and later as a Clergy wife in Westchester County--- years that were some of the happiest of my life.

Of course, it wasn't all study and hard work. There were a lot of fun times as well. When General put on a production of "The Mikado" my second year, some of the Windham gals sang in the chorus. Afterward we had a cast party at the House. For entertainment we wrote a parody about seminary life using some of the tunes from the Mikado (for example, "A is happy, B is not" became J, E, P and D). It was a hoot and we thought we were pretty clever. Then three of the guys from General got up and did a song and dance routine using "Three Little Maids" that blew us away. Part of it went:

"Three little blades who all unwary
Come from a high-church seminary
Three little bla-a-ades from school"

It was hilarious. That evening was such a laughter, fun-filled delight I still smile when I think of it.

Elizabeth Ann Campbell (1962-1965)

The 'Women of General' before 'Women at General'

I smile when I read about Women at GTS for 50 years! We all know what is meant in context, especially those of us who helped promote ordination of women! However, in our own ways, we were already there!

Tom and I arrived in Penn Station in the fall of 1962 with only a big old wooden trunk filled with our wedding gifts, and each with a medium size suitcase of clothing. At General, my husband went in to shake hands with the Dean, who welcomed him and suggested a nearby second-hand store where we could find used furniture. We were to live at 422 West 20th Street in the "three sisters" apartments for married students. These years would be some of the sweetest times of our life together. The Dean, Lawrence Rose, and our own Bishop of South Dakota, Conrad Gesner, had been classmates at GTS, so perhaps we felt we might have a bit of a special little place in the hearts of this couple who were such great role models for sharing life as a team. Caroline Rose strove to make sure the wives of students felt there was a place for each of us at General as well as for our husbands.

We all knew Dr. Dora Chaplain, the first woman faculty member, who had a background in Christian Education. Naturally a priority was to have Sunday School for the children on weekends, and sandboxes and playgrounds were also established on the Close. Everyone seemed to make a point to welcome us and learn the names of our children, and it felt as if we had stand-ins for the gran-



Caroline and Dean Rose.

Although women could not be ordained in the 1960s, Caroline Rose's unspoken message was that there was a fulfilling dignity and worth in lay ministry.

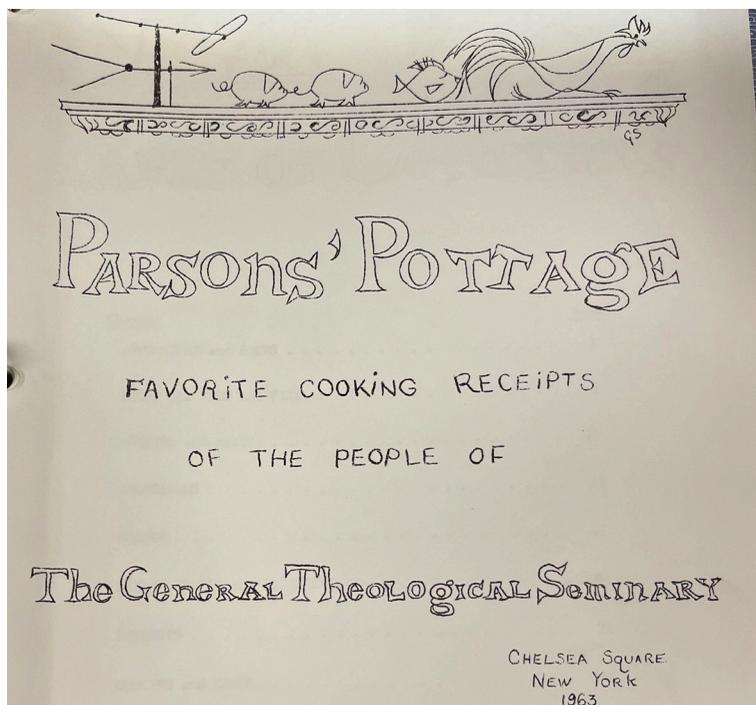
nies and aunts left behind. Our time there was not only pleasant but an opportunity to grow into our own niches and skills. For example, Mrs. Nils Sonne, wife of the Librarian and a librarian herself, encouraged book-reading groups; she also took us to Almy's showroom to select fabric and supplies for hand-sewn stoles and then shared her expertise as a seamstress in small

weekly work groups, which meant that some husbands would receive a beautiful set for ordination. Together we women had a loosely knit organization within a tightly knit group called the Women of General, lovingly (but with great irreverence on the part of the males) referred to as the WOGS.

The entire community had fun providing recipes for the great WOG Parson's Pottage Cookbook project. The seminarians responded by publishing The Parson's Pleasure for appetizers and drinks. In jest it was immediately dubbed 'The Potted Parson' by the women! These cookbooks were a natural outcome of the frequent invitations for treats or meals, regardless of limited resources, when we shared what we had. Neighbors became dear lifelong friends!

Although women could not be ordained in the 1960s, Caroline Rose's unspoken message was that there was a fulfilling dignity and worth in lay ministry ahead for each of us if we wanted it – perhaps a simple balance to the leadership our husbands were about to accept as priests. We could, but did not have to, be leaders – but as laywomen we were learning that we could be the "Jesus People" that our current Presiding Bishop Michael Curry is reminding us to be in our daily lives. I think Mrs. Rose and Bp. Curry would have loved discussing this concept – she lived it every day. She and Jean Weinhauer, wife of Professor (and later Bishop) William (Bill) Weinhauer, were our sponsors for WOGS. As student wives we organized regular meetings for fellowship, hospitality for special guests and new people, and encouraged invitations to single seminarians to join us as we sometimes entertained each other's households – anything to make our everyday lives feel as normal as in any other community. An example of a special event was the annual New Year's Eve party on West 20th Street. It had to be low budget, with food and baby-sitting. With three apartments on every floor of each building, a unit with children usually volunteered to take the sleeping babies and set-up food and drink; a second was for the older children to be entertained and supervised; and in the third everyone helped stack living-room furniture in bedrooms and provide recorded music; we had all signed up for our turn at babysitting. After the eating and dancing, the evening culminated by toasting the future and the newest baby (usually in a senior family) at midnight! Caroline could be counted on to be one of the first to arrive to welcome a new baby home, but only if invited. It meant so much to have the Dean and Chaplain and their wives join us in our home for dinner after our first child's baptism in the Chapel, as our own parents could not make the trip.





The cookbook created by the Women of General, circa 1963, a gift to the Christoph Keller, Jr. Library by Elizabeth Campbell.

We all, but especially the single men, loved Caroline's fresh bread! Some of us learned to bake bread after enjoying the warm braided bread rings which she served regularly with tea at open house at the Deanery on Tuesdays – perhaps the best-attended affair on campus. We tried to arrive right at 4 PM just to enjoy the aroma and taste while catching up on campus news. Often there was a visiting bishop, missionary, author. Caroline and the Dean would have everyone happily chatting and too soon the bells rang for Evensong, and we all shuffled over to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd for daily evening prayer. Single students ate in the refectory and married students settled in for dinner at home, to eat and get back to studying. Typewriters often tapped late into the night.

Caroline invited us to special Bible Study groups or cooking/baking get-togethers in the Deanery on Saturday mornings to accommodate working wives (like me) or student stay-at-home moms. We shared tips on entertaining and helping our husbands. Perhaps what I remember best was when she told us it is a great gift to be able to offer to pray with someone rather than say we will pray for them. She suggested that we could begin "the Jesus Prayer" by simply saying the name of Jesus, then pause for the Holy Spirit to lead us in the prayer with the other person. Another example of how she touched our lives personally.

I felt I could ask Mrs. Rose about anything. She sat in the back row in the guest section of the Chapel. Sometimes she did not wear the little lace head covering, nor did she always kneel during prayers, traditional at the time – sometimes she stood. So, I questioned her, and she told me that if she saw guests unfamiliar with Episcopal liturgy and practices, she would not want them to feel out-of-place or uncomfortable. Her forte was to simply introduce herself and welcome them. Later, with changes influenced by a newer prayer book, I realized that Caroline was indeed quite ahead of her time in many other

ways, as well. She was not afraid to step out of perceived norms to reach out to others in the name of Christ.

Women on campus were needed for the theater group to produce annual fall and spring plays. Gilbert and Sullivan were always standing favorites because of all the fine male voices. Edward Albee was well known at the time – he was invited, and he came to sit down with the student body to discuss theater. Deep in winter we had an annual semi-formal dinner; after dessert the floor was cleared, and a good musical group played lively music. The ladies dressed in gowns (maybe borrowed), gentlemen in suits, and everyone got to dance and make the rounds of all the tables to socialize. I still smile when I read in the Living Church about "The Rev. so and so" or "Bishop so and so" as I remember dancing with them. It was an evening of fun, so most of us tried to stay out until 10 or 11 PM – rare for married students who had to pay baby-sitters.

After graduation Mrs. Rose and I continued to exchange greetings and news at Christmas. My husband and I looked forward to her personal letter of sharing news of their family, progress on the restoration of their historic old home in Kent CT, the Dean's health – but I did not ever see her again after graduation. She died in 1993 at the age of 89.

Caroline's positive example was a lifetime gift to me - I feel so fortunate just to have known her, and I loved her as dearly as my own mother! I moved wholeheartedly into women's work and other church organizations wherever we lived, following Caroline's example of avoiding leadership roles but always ready to join in and help out when wanted or needed. Many wonderful and exciting things grew out of this. Needless to say – I often thank God for Caroline Rose and time at GTS!

Campbell served as a President of WOGS and practiced nursing at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital during the school year and at the Diocese of New Jersey's Eagle Nest Camp each summer, which her husband (Thomas Campbell '65) directed 1963-1965. She is a lifetime member and has served on the national board of Episcopal Church Women, as well as the United Thank Offering, and the Episcopal Women's History Project. Currently she is Secretary-Treasurer for ECW in Minnesota. The Campbells are retired in Northfield MN.

Our WOG's group allowed for friendships between faculty and student wives to continue beyond seminary days. I enjoyed a special friendship with Glenda Woollcombe, the wife of Professor Kenneth Woollcombe. As we were leaving General to return home to North Carolina, they were also leaving to return to their home in England and we had agreed to stay in touch. Over the coming years there was much exchange with Christmas greetings and special news in between. This included the exciting news of Professor Woollcombe becoming a bishop in his homeland and various activities related to this new ministry as it continued to unfold. Unfortunately, we never saw them again after they left for England. Some years later there was the very sad news of the devastating loss of Mrs. Woollcombe due to cancer. Not too many years later the bishop announced his early retirement as he said, "This job as bishop requires two pair of hands" and he could "not continue this alone." Surely this statement bore witness to the strong support Gwenda had offered him during his ministry, and certainly an example of what she taught us as young WOGs.

Lovingly submitted, Genelda Woggon, next door neighbor and still dear friend of Elizabeth Ann Campbell and wife of Henry Woggon '63

Adelene and Craig Burlington (1966-1969)

Women on the Outskirts 50+ Years Ago

Before Women at General, there were WOGS, Women OF General.

In our time 1966-69, women were literally on the outskirts of the Close, only welcomed in the Refectory in our Middler year. Formerly, women weren't allowed on the Close, but entered from the side streets traveling the basement passageways to get from one building to another. Seminarians could only marry before entering GTS or, in our years, finally allowed to marry in summers between semesters (as we did!)

We do remember, however, the vital presence of faculty wives whose personalities were extraordinary, beginning with Dealome Denton, wife of Robert C., our esteemed Scripture professor. "Dee" was advisor to the WOGS, and had us all (husbands included) laughing, with her vibrant sense of humor and humanness. We remember other wives of faculty very fondly: Mary Louise Carpenter, Dorothy Dawley, Jean Weinbauer, Susan Corney, Marilyn Barr, Jane Towler (and their three lovely daughters, Katie, Marie and Leila), and then our new dean's wife, Bea Wylie. There were also Mrs. Carper and Mrs. Parker, whose first names we did not know as they were older and more formal, but quite dear in their own way and present to our life on the Close. And of course, there was Grace Sonne, wife of our esteemed Librarian, Dr. Sonne. We came to know and love the Sonnes, even visiting them in their beloved summer residence in S. Harpswell, Maine. Another woman of ability and spirit we got to know, respect and love was Miss Helen Chapman, in charge of the Refectory, who was the only woman there until our Middle year.

The wives of seminarians, though on the official "outskirts," were obviously pillars of support earning the money that helped pay tuition and fees, along with scholarships and loans, which funded the students. Peggy Buchanan, wife of John, our next door neighbor and beloved classmate, was our model for working wife of seminarian, commuting uptown to the Children's Aid Society. Peggy remembers "John had to get permission to have me come to refectory dinner on a Friday night in our junior year."

In our case, Adelene commuted via subway and train to Scotch Plains, NJ, to teach Middle School English. I remember watching her from our fourth-floor window on W. 20th Street walking toward 9th Avenue heading for the subway in HIGH HEELS!! It was soon after, women began wearing sneakers carrying those high heels for the workplace.

Becoming pregnant with our first child, Jennifer, toward the end of our Middler year, Addie gave up the teaching/commuting position and joined Lydia Lo and Dr. Sonne in the Library. She remembers working especially hard for Dr. Wright (as he was known at that time when new to the faculty), who was

The wives of seminarians, though on the official "outskirts," were obviously pillars of support earning the money that helped pay tuition and fees, along with scholarships and loans, which funded the students.



Craig and Adelene Burlington (l) and Peggy and John Buchanan (r).

very specific about what he wanted on the reserve shelves for his students!

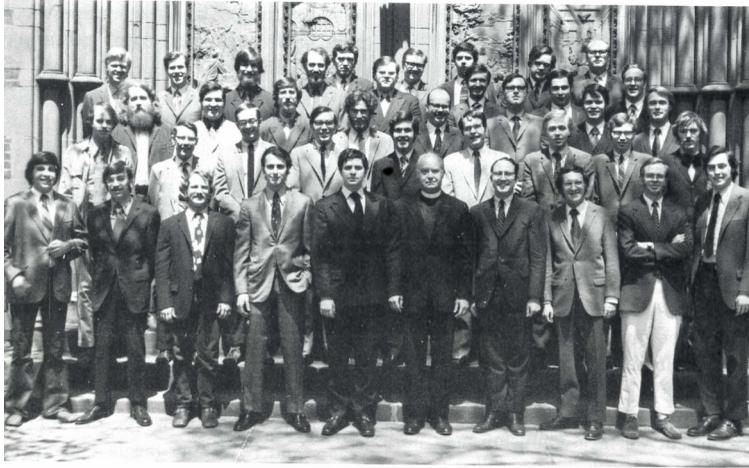
The advent of women as students came right on the heels of our graduation, with Page Bigelow being sponsored by our first parish at St. George's in Maplewood, NJ. It was a joy to witness the transition up close as Page began to commute in the other direction for her three years and then worked uptown at "815" in Overseas Missions until women's ordination was legal.

She was a wonder in many ways, paving the way, along with Peggy Muncie, for women to be no longer on the "outskirts," but more and more at the heart of General in the years to come. Dee Denton would be thrilled!

The 1970s

Tim Elliott (1968-1971)

It Was Just the Way it Was



CLASS OF 1971

There has been a lot of change in the last fifty years, and nothing highlights that more starkly than the Class of 1971 photo. There we are on the Chapel steps, forty-one men, a couple in clerical collars, Dean Sam Wylie in the middle, a few smiles, most looking very serious. When I came across it in the early 90's I remember realizing with a start how strange this was – there were no women! I vaguely knew this was not right at the time. It was just the way it was. What could I as one person do about this? That's a question I keep asking myself. It has become a wake-up call question for me.

That consciousness-raising moment with the photo in the '90s led to a series of sermons on the theme: 'What are we not seeing now and what are we doing about it?' The lectionary generously provided jumping off points: Jesus on the signs of the times, opening the eyes of the blind, Paul on being not conformed. If I didn't see this then, what am I not seeing now? Fifty years after that photo, I still ask myself that question. We actually do know the answers as we look to the future. We are responsible for what we know and what we've learned. What clarity and courage do we need to change the things that ought to be changed? We do know that one person, one voice, one idea, one conviction, with faith and trust, can move mountains.

Looking at that photo, my memories of GTS 1968-1971 are still very alive. It was a tumultuous time: Vietnam, protests, Kent State, Nixon, HAIR on Broadway, Woodstock. There were busloads of students and faculty travelling to Washington for peace marches. There were tie-dyed T-shirts, granny glasses, headbands, and bell-bottoms.

As a low-church-somewhat-evangelical Canadian, I joined an Episcopal liturgical community in September 1968. There was a daily rhythm of meals and chapel. Early that fall, the juniors chal-

lenged assigned chapel seating. We began to sit anywhere. The early Eucharist became optional. Leonard Raver the chapel organist introduced new music. On Sundays during my first year I toured around Connecticut, Long Island and New Jersey with Peter Rodgers ('69) leading congregations in the Rejoice Mass and Peter preaching with his guitar from the chancel steps. Phil Culbertson ('70) put together a Charlie Brown Mass. It was a time when the parish clergy were trying new things and the seminary was doing its best to adapt. I now realize that I was being grounded in centuries of vocational and theological understandings, while also living in an uncertain and changing world. The chapel was my holy place. There was mystery, community, and hope. The community changed every year, as did each of us. I remember genuflecting on 'hope' – the tile 'Spes' at the bottom of the altar steps.

As a Canadian, I thought I understood the U.S.A. After all, I grew up in Niagara, which is close to the border, and my family holidayed for years in Wells, Maine. It took me awhile to realize that GTS served the whole Episcopal Church and there were many regional differences. For example, I was chastised for playing 'Dixie' on the piano (to me just a rollicking American tune) in the residence of a faculty member whose wife was from Boston.

I'll be forever grateful for the solid academic and vocational foundation I was given while also being allowed to find myself through field education and living in New York City. Lew Towler encouraged us to find non-parish opportunities for Field Ed, so I spent three years working in broadcasting, something I'd begun in university. I took courses at the New School for Social Research. I was part of the outreach team at St. Peter's, Chelsea. I played the piano regularly (\$20 and a beer) at the Café London on 23rd St. and 9th Avenue. I often bought a ham and swiss cheese sandwich on rye with mayo and mustard at Mauro's Deli on my way home because I'd missed dinner in the refectory. I used the Liquour Store at 8th and 23rd as my bank. Funnily enough, when I returned to GTS for my 25th anniversary, one old time clerk recognized me, "You're the Canadian!" I felt home again in the neighbourhood.

It was a very important time I realize now. A lot happened. I remember the restless longing and anger that propelled so many to protest and challenge. Looking back, I wish I knew what I know now and try to live: inclusion, equality, and justice.

I look back with gratitude for the dedication of the teachers and what I learned from the people I went to school with. We know so much more about how ordained women have enriched our lives and our churches and God's call. By



their fruits you will know them. Much has changed. Much abides. Thanks be to God for the saints at General and those three very special years.

*The Rev. Canon Tim Elliott '71 served in parish ministry in the Diocese of Toronto. He now works as a transition coach and ministry development consultant. He is the author of *Clarity and Courage: Life as an Improvised Journey*. He and his wife now make their home in Stratford Ontario.*

Margaret A. (Peggy) Muncie (1971-1974)

Yes, I am The Woman

It was a rainy September afternoon when I arrived at 175 9th Avenue to embark on my path toward ordination. Where would I be housed? How would my classmates receive me? What would the professors think of me? So many questions I could not process them all.

One thing I do recall is a first encounter with a fellow student. My room was on 4th floor Eigenbrodt. Walking up the steps I met an individual sitting on the stairs. In a friendly tone he offered a greeting, "Hi, welcome, whose wife, are you?" My reply, "No one's." The conversation continued, "Oh is your fiancé or boyfriend a student?" "Ah, no!" Then it dawned on him...silence. "Oh, you are the woman."

I thought yes, my friend, I am the woman who will in time change the culture of this institution, to be more inclusive and help open the door for women to claim their place in the priestly succession.

Those first few days were strange; I was in an unknown land. A student much in need of formation. Chapel and its rituals were confusing. Girls were not acolytes. The texts and canticles of morning and evening prayer left my fingers fumbling.

My advisor was kind, understanding, a wise non-judgmental individual who offered help when I asked. Dr. Robert C. Dentan, holds a place in my heart as one who listened, encouraged and told the truth in love as needed.

Other professors were open, willing to give this 'different' student a chance to prove she belonged. I still have the blue book from Dr. Bennett's first OT exam. The comments read, "A clear and articulate understanding of the concept of covenant. Good Work." A little encouragement goes a long way.

There were lonely moments. Moments I would sit in the window of my 'apartment' overlooking the Close as the chapel bells rang and say to myself, "God if you want me here, please give me a sign. If this is not your will help me find my call." Each time the message was – be still – stay.

In second semester junior year two things happened. One, I was not alone as a women M.Div student. Page Bigelow joined me. Page was 25 years my senior, married, her family raised, a truly spiritual woman who loved the Church and had experienced nearly every dimension of Episcopal Church life. Page and I were very different. We became dear to each other. Our support for each other was unwavering.

The second thing happened the first morning of the semester. Walking out of Eigenbrodt to Chapel I encountered a man with children in tow and he asked, "Oh, are you the woman M.Div student?" "Yes." "Good, I look forward to getting to know you." The exchange began my lifelong friendship with Professor Dick Corney,

one of the true champions of women's ordination.

Toward the end of my junior year, I was offered the opportunity to join an archeological dig at Tel-El-Hesi. Thrilled, I jumped at the chance. Not only was it another vote of affirmation, but it would also allow me to immerse myself in the culture of ancient Israel, to walk the path of scripture.

Returning to the Close in September of 1972 I am not sure if the sun was shining or not that, but I felt it was in spirit. There were sister M.Div students on the Close! Women joining me on the journey to ordination, Columbia Gillis, Sandy Michaels, Mary Ann Bogle, and more the next year, my dear friend Susan P. Mills, Ellen Barrett, Martha Blacklock and the presence of the world-famous Jeannette Piccard and Pauli Murray.

Our fellow classmates realized our intentions were pure. Time allowed us to come to know each other as individuals sharing a common goal, one we arrived at via different paths.



Page S. Bigelow's daughter, Page E. Bigelow (l) joins Peggy Muncie (r) at the 50 Year kick-off during Matriculation 2021

Memories stand out in one's mind. For me one involves a prospective student visiting the Close. I was sitting in the choir stall I called 'mine'. She was in the 'Court of the Gentiles' casting an eye toward me. I nodded and beckoned her forward. Years later we came to know each other as priests and chaplains. She told me that moment of me calling her forward she knew it; she could be a priest.

The change of Canon Law took time. 1973 was a year of disappointment at the General Convention. The joy came three years later. Once the door to the order of

priests I helped open swung wide, many GTS women entered the priestly succession. April 25, 1977, St. Mark's Day, I entered the priesthood, a GTS graduate. Thanks be to God.

The Rev. Margaret A. Muncie received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2014 for her longtime service in Chaplaincy, first serving at Vassar College, later in long-term care in Greenwich, CT and Cincinnati, OH and as director of pastoral care and education at St. Luke's Roosevelt. She recently retired as Executive Director of Canterbury Counseling Center in Greenville, SC. Muncie is an Alumni rep to the GTS Board of Trustees.

Ellen Marie Barrett (1972-1975) *Small but Notable Moments of Great Unity*



I entered General in 1972 and except for Page and Peggy the previous year female seminarians might as well have been beings from another planet. We were older than our classmates and mostly had advanced degrees. The record-setting stratospheric balloonist Jeannette Piccard had been a consultant for NASA, Pauli Murray, who joined us the following year, was a brilliant law professor and civil rights activist as well as a poet. There were writers, teachers, a nurse, another

activist who would become the first openly gay or lesbian priest, and (to our amusement) one Sister Columba Gilliss in a religious community, one ex-Sister, Sandy Michaels, and one future Sister (me) none of whom were stereotypical nuns. All strong women ranging from late twenties to seventies, older and more experienced than our male counterparts, we must have been a bit threatening to the established order. Well, we were, but not exactly a regiment of Amazons. Others have named more of us—for which my thanks!!

The faculty were more welcoming than some male students, but there were inevitable awkward moments. One line we could not cross was Fr Wright's informal Mass class, since we were not to be priests. There were small but notable

moments of great unity, as when Jeanette confronted the Rector of Trinity Church and told him it was absurd to forbid women to attend the Trinity Institute Seminarians' Conference. Another was the Mass where all the women in attendance rose as one at the ump-teenth bidding to 'Pray, brethren, for...' and departed in dignified silence to lunch. There were opportunities to meet women from other seminaries at General Convention and various conferences.

In retrospect many of the obstacles are amusing including what seemed an alumni obsession with separate toilets. In the first two years women who could not commute were tucked away in rooms with their own plumbing. Commuters had access to one loo by the administrative offices and one whose anteroom former charladies had annexed as their own private sanctum for gossip and tea making. They no longer made beds and cleaned rooms for the 'young gentlemen' but were fiercely territorial and glowered at us interlopers. By my Middle year Edson (AKA the North Porch) was allotted to the female of the species. We moved in to discover the urinals modestly boarded over by a plywood confection with an uncanny resemblance to a gradine!

All in all, despite frustrations, swearing, and occasional tears I am glad for my years at General, and especially for the amazing women who were with me.

The Rev. Dr. Ellen Marie Barrett (Sr. Helena), Class of 1975, is an Assisting Priest at St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow, and co-founder of the Companions of Our Lady & St. Mungo.

Virginia M. Sheay (1974-1975) *The Divine Itch*



Call it what you want. But when the Holy Spirit presses you in a direction on an unknown journey and does not let up like an annoying itch that won't go away unless you do something about it – there is no way you can ignore the persistent work of the Holy Spirit. And what the Holy Spirit insisted upon revealing to me was that now, (1971) yes, now was the time for me to pursue seminary studies and that I should be thinking about ordination, when no one in my circle of friends was thinking about it, nor did I want to think about it. But the thought – that Divine

Itch- would not get out of my head.

Such is the foolishness of God, I thought. Wasn't God content that I was already serving God as organist-choir director? Besides, I was married and had three very young children. Now? In some incomprehensible way God just might know what God is doing. In fear and trembling I would say "yes" to God and set my feet on an unknown trajectory.

Living close to Princeton Theological Seminary, against my better wishes, I matriculated. No one in my Diocese knew I was there and if they did, they would have turned their heads away anyway. I was in my senior status when the Rev. Ronald Conner, a GTS grad and preceptor in a class I was taking, insisted that I transfer to General. He was once again that Divine Itch, pressing me to transfer. New York City wasn't twenty minutes away as Princeton Seminary was. This would be a huge commitment. How on earth could I do it? The commute alone was going to wear me out.

Dr. Richard Corney was my advisor. He carved out the course requirements, an arduous plan so that I could graduate in one year. I am ever grateful to Dr. Corney. So I came as a senior transfer in the fall semester of 1974. My year at General gave me exactly what was needed to shape my life should I become a priest. What a privilege it was to study, pray and immerse myself in the community of General Seminary. I soaked up the whole experience and was filled with a spiritual, sacramental reverence, wonder and awe. My year at General was truly the bedrock, the solid foundation that only General could wisely do for me. What a year! I was a full-time student. I was wife and mother of three young children. I was an organist-choir director with two choirs. Throughout both semes-

ters, I did CPE at Princeton Hospital. I remember once praying to God that I get pneumonia so I would have a very good reason for quitting. But I didn't get sick and I didn't quit.

Dr. Thomas Talley, Liturgics Professor, said he'd give me an "A" just for being an amazing juggler! For the January term, I was the only student who signed up for Anglicanism taught by Dr. James Carpenter. He took me anyway. I would go to his apartment on the Close and sit beside his Irish Setter. Once at Dr. J. Robert Wright's class, Eucharistic Celebration, I wrote my homily on note-cards while on the train going to New York. I apologized and wanted to get out of preaching. He said, "Give the homily anyway. There will be moments in your ministry when that's all the time you'll have to prepare." Wise man. God must have been laughing when I was ordained a Deacon in April 1975, a month before I knelt before Dean Foster to receive my degree.

Needless to say, General Seminary is dear to my heart. I am truly grateful for that rich experience. At eighty-two years old, I

still serve and am on the staff as Assisting Priest at Trinity Church, Solebury, PA. Where I summer in Maine, I also am active at All Saints-by-the-Sea, Southport. I have come to believe that you should never underestimate what the Divine Itch can do through you. All praise and glory to God who has blessed me with this ministry, of making something out of what I thought to be impossible possible and to worthily magnify the glorious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although partially retired, The Rev. Canon Dr. Sheay serves as Clergy Assistant at Trinity Episcopal Church, Solebury, PA and as Visiting Clergy at All Saints, Southport, ME. One of the first two women to be ordained in the Diocese of New Jersey, Sheay was the first woman in that diocese to be called rector of a parish. She has served the national church as a deputy to General Convention, was elected to the Executive Council, and has also had a career as organist/choir director.

Susan Mills (1973-1976) Now, We Really Have an Altar Guild

One of my most vivid memories are of my first day on the Close. I was moving luggage into my quarters at Edson Hall (later to be re-named "The North Porch," from Henry Adams' "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres").

As I walked from the Ninth Avenue entrance to Edson Hall, an older man who was working in the garden greeted me and welcomed me to the seminary. I thought he was the gardener (shades of Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb). Later, at Evensong, the gardener turned out to be the Rev. Dr. Pierson Parker, Professor of New Testament.

There were, as I recall, nineteen members of the Class of 1976, and that number included a few women: Martha Blacklock, Marianne Bogel, and Pauli Murray. Peggy Muncie and Page Bigelow were Seniors when I enrolled. Ellen Barrett, Annette Ruark, and Sandi Michels were Middlers. (Please forgive me if I have inadvertently omitted names of the women students.)

I became a member of the Guild of Precentors, directed by the Rev. David C. Walker. We were privileged to "premiere" some of David's compositions, including his beautiful setting of George Herbert's "King of Glory."

Martha Blacklock and I were the first two women to be elected to the Guild of Sacristans. Our election caused a stir from some of our more conservative classmates. "Now, we really have an Altar Guild," was a frequent comment.

Women students were not always accepted by some of our classmates and a few of our faculty members. I was lucky to be among the advisees of the Rev. Dr. J. Robert Wright, who was supportive and encouraging. I found support, too, among the other women students, as well as with the members of the newly-formed Episcopal Women's Caucus.

I spent the summer of 1973 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, with the New England Parish Training Program. Through that program, I

gained a good deal of experience in preaching and pastoral care, as well as learning more about my own vocation as a parish priest.

During the summer of 1974, I participated in the CPE program at the Holley Patterson Home for the Aged and Infirm on Long Island. During that summer, I was able to take the train from New York to Philadelphia to witness the ordination of eleven women deacons to the presbyterate. That event at the Church of the Advocate on a hot and steamy July 29th was, for me, a turning point, an affirmation of my own vocation, and an encouragement to persevere.

I am grateful for classmates who became life-long friends, for faculty members, like Pierson Parker, Jim Carpenter, Fred Shriver, Bob Wright, Boyce Bennett, Dick Corney, and David Walker, who were not befuddled by our presence, but were serious in their encouragement of women students. I'm grateful for the challenges we faced together, for companionship on the journey, for the rhythm of services in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, and for the seminary's participation in my formation as a still-active parish priest.

The Rev. Susan P. Mills is currently the Vicar of Christ Church, Blaine, WA. After ordination to the priesthood in 1977 she went on to serve parishes in the dioceses of New York, Delaware, Indianapolis, and Southern Ohio, and then lived in Southeastern Mexico for nine years and started an Anglican congregation in her home. After returning to the USA, she served parishes in the San Francisco Bay area, and as priest associate at Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis.



Diana MacVeagh (1977-1982)

Living with Mixed Feelings

I was hesitant about writing a reflection for the commemoration; I didn't want to be a "downer" in the midst of a celebration. My remembrances were not very pleasant. I wanted to express the challenges I remember facing as a woman who felt called to ministry, and the frustration and anger that inspired. Now, I can acknowledge that part of it was my fault for sure; I was difficult, irritable, and outspoken - which today still upsets me as I age, learn, and mellow. The bottom line was that I did very much want to serve the church. My hope was that study in pursuit of a deeper knowledge of my own faith and its traditions would allow me to ease the pains of the people I knew and would come to know and enrich my own faith as well, and I did find that at General.

As it happened, I loved everything I studied. I had heard there was uncertainty about allowing women to go to General (let alone be ordained) by the older professors but they tried to be supportive, and in fact, I found the professors to be welcoming and helpful. I studied both history and biblical studies which I found fascinating. The chance to learn about the formation of the New Testament opened a whole new world for me. It is the kind of thing never mentioned in a sermon. Most of my closest friends at General were the professors. We kept in touch even after I left for further study at Episcopal Divinity School when my husband got another job in New Hampshire.

I remember very few women while I was at General, and less who were planning on being ordained. I remember a note on the bulletin board saying something about how awful the women at General were; there might have been four of us by then. I was, I think, the only person who was married; I had three children and commuted in by subway from our apartment on the Upper East Side. Much as I would have liked to be ordained as a priest, I knew that my husband could not imagine my holding a job which would leave him making supper or my leaving and going out to people in need in the middle of the night. I felt like the students were wary and kept their distance, and I felt like people were threatened by the presence of a middle-aged female who could afford to go to General while not 'living in'.

After arriving in New Hampshire, I hoped to apply my ministry skills as a member of the laity. Fair to say, ordained women were still quite new and threatening to many, and we in the laity, ostensibly scholars, were merely peculiar. I thought foolishly that the local priests would be delighted when I offered them help. They were not. When I asked the Priest in a nearby Church how I might help, he replied "I don't think we'd have anything to interest you." I just could not get over the hostility I saw directed toward women and the assumptions made about women in the clergy, as if there was an underlying notion that women were just not appropriate for ministry. One friend who was an ordained woman told me that when she passed the Chalice a member of the congregation spat in it rather than drink the blood of Christ from the hand of a woman. I discovered that the Clergy seemed set against utilizing or encouraging anyone who was not ordained to a place in the ministry of the

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Church and didn't think the un-ordained should have many opinions either, which made me have far more than I probably should have in exasperation and the inability to do anything about it. All of it made me a bit "bolshy" (a word used in England to say someone is tough, aggressive, and difficult and is not following the expected norms of society. It is NOT what you want to be), which of course got me nowhere. I find that it is often my reaction to rejection, and I have learned it is never a good one. Of course, these are only my recollections and in hindsight I can't say for sure whether this marginalization was particularly due to my being a woman.

I wonder if the admission of women to the priesthood created a "rupture" in the church so that people don't seem, any longer, to need to go to Church and the pews are not filled... if even women can 'do this' it can't be that important. This is a new idea for me - just in telling you - but I do know that the pews aren't filled, the kids don't go to Sunday School and our Bishop is having a workshop for clergy to see if they can change that reality and how to change it. However, I also now see with the passage of time, the shortage of clergy, and the inability to offer adequate salaries for the care of souls in small, even tiny, elderly congregations, many of those concerns have slid away. Now, at 84, I am beginning to learn to 'cool it' - high time for a slow learner. How wonderful that I can look back on these feelings with the knowledge that there has been some significant change; and that it is now more accepted for women to be educated and formed for both lay and ordained ministry.

The 1980s

Ellen Tillotson (1980-1983) Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees *Finding Ourselves In Common Cause*



By the time I arrived on Chelsea Square in the fall of 1980, the “question” of women’s ordination in the Episcopal Church had been answered officially. I was standing on the shoulders not only of the Philadelphia Eleven and the Washington Four, but also of the scores of women who had been waiting, preparing, and helping the Church discern its mind and heart about its call to a more robust, inclusive ministry. My class, and the classes just ahead and behind, were nearly forty percent female. The loneliness of Peggy Muncie and Page Bigelow was not something we shared, though many of us came from Dioceses in which we were a new and singular experience to the hierarchy. It was such a blessed relief to find ourselves in company, different from one another though we were. Mid-career and just out of college, later vocations and those that had lain necessarily dormant while the Church argued over our vocations, we struggled with our variety and yet, over our time at General, found ourselves in common cause.

I had chosen General for three main reasons: as a postulant from the Diocese of North Dakota, I wanted to immerse myself in a wider experience and expression of Anglicanism than the one the twenty-three parishes of that small diocese could provide. Indeed, over my years at General, some of the preeminent figures in worldwide Anglicanism at the time passed through our gates, were invited to preach in the chapel and to reveal the robust witness of this worldwide Church. I chose it, too, because of the visionary leadership of James Fenhagen, who envisioned the Church as a body in which all must play a part; each person’s spirit be rekindled; each one’s gifts honored and allowed to flourish. Finally, in those years,

I chose General because of its stance accepting the ordination of women even while that was not the entire focus of its witness. It was neither full-throated in its stance on women’s ordination, nor was it hostile. I thought that was probably going to reflect the church I would be headed into as a priest, a Body providing a mix of affirmation and struggle. Forty-one years later, that still proves true. Oh, and a fourth reason for General: New York City: Intoxicating, enervating, indifferent, glorious New York.

Those three years at General remain the richest repository of the sources of my priestly identity; that means, of course, one of the richest sources of my personal experience of myself and my understanding of the world. So, it is impossible to reflect on what those years meant to me in a short reflection. The influence of our common life, the generosity of the faculty in helping to form us as ministers and leaders, the important colleagues and friends whose presence in my life over the years will have to be served with this small sentence. What I finally want to talk about here is the sisterhood I met at General.

At every level of our common life there were women who walked along side each other, witnessing, encouraging, challenging, nurturing the particular charism of women’s leadership and the variety of its expressions. Edson Hall and the top two floors of Eigenbrodt became refuges we could return to each evening and trade stories of what now might be called micro-aggressions but were a common part of the Church leaning into the implications of accepting women in formerly forbidden positions of leadership. Some of those friendships sustain me deeply to this very day. There were the married women students with whom we worked and talked at meals and around classes, working in the student Co-op program, in the library. There were talented and committed spouses who brought their energy and insights to the Christian walk. All these, our peers, helped to foment a deep conversation about what it meant to lead as women, as feminists (well, some of us), as followers of Jesus in our respective arenas. It helped us push at the easy clericalism of the church in those years, to push away at the notion that the privilege of the hegemony was all that faithful.

Then there were the women just in the generation ahead of us: women in curacies in and around New York, sometimes preaching in the Chapel, pursuing S.T.M. degrees, just walking around and wearing collars and engaging us in conversation. (Occasionally, for a weekday Eucharist, we might see one of them at the altar, but never as Celebrant at one of the two weekly Community Eucharists. That position was reserved only for faculty, and no ordained woman was among that body.) There was the indefatigable Barbara Crafton (my field education supervisor!) and the inexhaustible Minka Shura Sprague, dancing and thinking and daring us to go deeper, further. There were other women who appeared on the Close, engaging us in conversation, kindling our imaginations of a more whole Church emerging. I met the Rev. Pauli Murray by chance in the lobby one day.

Finally, there were three women members of the faculty: Dr. Barbara Hall, Dr. Fredrica Thompsett (adjunct) and, eventually,

the Rev. Dr. Patricia Wilson-Kastner. Barbara pushed us to open up the New Testament, to de-sentimentalize our notions of how it carried its truths, to hear the first-century voices more clearly, and to find congruence with our own faith honestly. Her presence was also a refuge not only for us as women, but for those still so vulnerable in the Church's slowly emerging understanding of human sexuality. Fredrica, while serving as the Director of the Board for Theological Education, lived on the Close and taught occasionally. Her seminar on Feminist Methodology gathered M.Div. students, Th.D. candidates and S.T.M. students in a rich exploration of how we might deepen the Church's scholarship. Pat Wilson-Kastner arrived for my senior year, to teach preaching. As the first ordained woman on the faculty, she finally took her place at the altar, ending

a long formational and emotional drought for us all.

There is so much more to tell, so many stories, so much struggle, so much gratitude and tears and laughter. What stories do you have to tell? How have they shaped the disciple and leader you are, I wonder?

Since ordination the Rev. Ellen Tillotson has served the Diocese of Connecticut, most recently as Supply Priest/Church Consultant and Interim Priest in Charge at Saint Luke's Parish, Darien. She previously served at St. John's, Bristol, Trinity Church on the Green, New Haven, and as Rector, Trinity Torrington from 1992-2011. She currently serves as Vice-Chair on General's Board of Trustees.

Lynn Carter-Edmands (1987-1990)

The Alpha and the Omega



In August of 1987, my husband, Frank, our dog, Gretchen, and I moved from Southern California onto the Close of General. I remember making my way to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, finding a place in the choir. I sat down and looked around, taking in my surroundings. My eyes caught sight of the Alpha and the Omega, symbols of beginning and ending, built into the brick flanking the stained-glass window above the reredos. The Greek letters could be seen faintly through layers of soot that had collected on the stones from years of burning candles and incense. I sat there and thought about beginnings and endings. We had quit our jobs and sold our home and cars to move east to study – both of us students. And I thought to myself, there are so many who would give their right arm to be here, and yet I am here. We are embarking on a new beginning.

We lived, worshipped and studied on the Close beginning Michaelmas term 1987 and ending our time at GTS with commencement in May of 1990. Our graduating class had a majority of women by one student that year – a first. It was a time of new beginnings. Barbara Harris was the first woman elected bishop in the Anglican Communion in 1989; a busload of GTS students traveled to

Boston for her ordination and consecration. Later, when she visited GTS, I would hear for the first time a student's son ask Bishop Harris if boys could be bishops too.

It was a time when many women at General, unsupported by their diocesan bishop, received help to find a bishop and a diocese that would validate them in their vocations to the priesthood. It was a time when what we knew as the Gay-Lesbian Caucus met in seclusion for fear of their bishops. Few women, both lay and ordained, were on the faculty back then, and we followed their lead at celebrations of the Eucharist or at Evensong. At times, other female priests from New York parishes were invited to preside at our eucharistic celebrations and officiate at Evensong as well. These women's voices and presence informed many of us who had few female models until then.

We tested prayers that would enrich our worship, capturing ancient texts for more expansive and inclusive language. What some of us called the Three Musketeer's "one for all and all for one" doxology, fortunately, did not make it into the approved supplemental texts! But some beautiful language was included. One of my favorites is "Canticle A": A Song of Wisdom Sapientia liberavit (Wisdom 10:15-19,20b-21)

...And then, Lord, the righteous sang hymns to your Name, *
and praised with one voice your protecting hand;
For Wisdom opened the mouths of the mute, *
and gave speech to the tongues of a new-born people.

Beginnings and endings in the Church punctuated our years at General with the attendant upheaval that comes with change. It took our class of 1990 until our senior year to agree on a traditional chapel prank. At times it seemed like our class was a mixture of poster children reflecting a diverse spectrum of resistance that accompanies the Alpha and the Omega and those who embrace it.

My time at General taught me to ask questions of Scripture and tradition: to ask what difference does the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus make? How does our tradition make sense to us today? What have we learned from the three-legged stool about the contribution of women? Where do all the children of God find ourselves within the Alpha and the Omega in a Church and a seminary steeped in rich tradition and the essentials of a lively faith?

Over the years, I have returned often to the image of the Alpha

and the Omega, the beginning and the end, knowing that with every ending there is a new beginning found consistently in the overwhelming love of God in Jesus Christ. It is a love that can handle the questions we ask faithfully and honestly. I am grateful to have studied at General back then. It was the right place for me at that time. As I look back, I like to think that we all found, and still find, ourselves in that right place, when, with the Spirit's help, we can open our eyes to see beneath the soot with open hearts and minds to ask our questions and hear God's loving response.

The Rev. Lynn Carter-Edmands has nearly 30 years of leadership experience as a priest in parish and diocesan ministry, including vocational discernment and mentoring, congregation and clergy transitions, formation and leadership development, and mediation and conflict transformation. She served eight years as a member of the Bishop's staff and as Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Southern Ohio as well as the rector of two parishes and as a chaplain and teacher at a boy's boarding preparatory school. Carter-Edmands is a member of IMN and appreciates the privilege of assisting with its supportive presence and influence in the life of our faith communities.

Elaine Silverstrim (1988-1991) *Father Elaine Goes to General*

It was a clear and sunny day in late August. A newly minted candidate for Holy Orders had just been moved into the basement apartment that she would affectionately refer to as "Corney's Bottom". Of course, the Rev. Dr. Richard Corney would never hesitate to remind her it used to house the servants to the main house. That would come later.

In that moment of waving her spouse good-bye on his way back home, she sat on a bench facing through the glass doors to the lobby and cried.

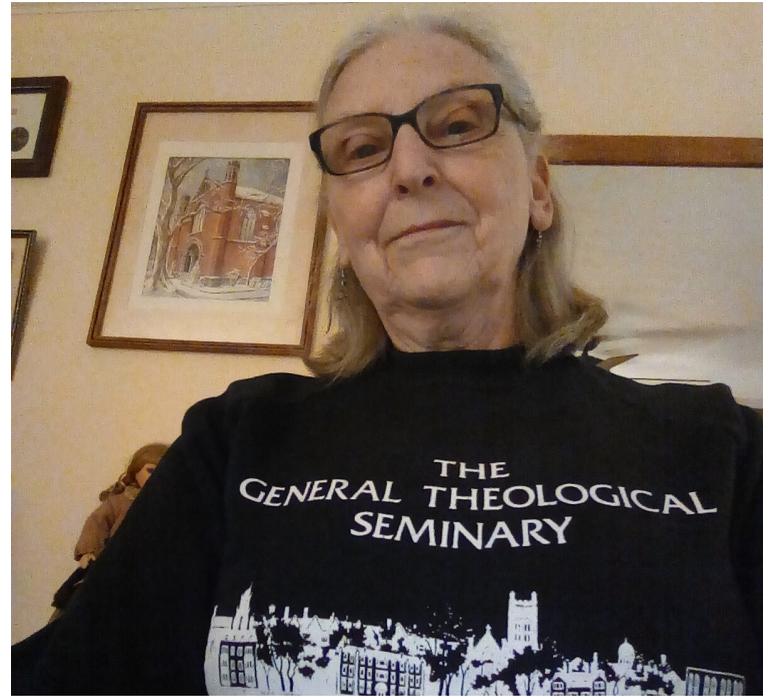
That was my first memory of arriving at General for orientation in August of 1988. Did I cry from a sense of abandonment? A bit like that first day of school for a kindergartener? Partly, I'm sure. But I was 42. I was a mother to five and already a grandmother three times over. No, I think I was simply overcome with emotion and in that precise moment all the efforts and prayers and dreams of seven and a half years of "process" crashed over me.

As with so many of the incredible people in my class, I was considered "second career". I came with a BA in Early Childhood Education from an HBCU, Albany State in Albany, GA, where I had also briefly taught. Other career paths led to that August day, in Data Processing at MetLife, Emery Airfreight and the USPS. During that time, I fed the other side of my brain with an MA in History from the University of Scranton. But my path to ordination was no more crooked than that of my contemporaries.

I always considered my journey to be a first career, long delayed, with a desire streaming back through my life to my teen years. The amazing men and women of my class of '91 were an odd lot of gay and lesbian men and women, a former surgeon, and several college professors, all of us representing a broad range of life experiences in business and education and caring fields. I rather thought of us as the flotsam and jetsam of the First Wave following the opening of the hallowed gates for "the later arriving laborers to the vineyard."

I was convener of the Women's Caucus, director of the after school for children of seminarians and, for a time, on the seminary basketball team. I really enjoyed my time off campus. I learned

I was 42. I was a mother to five and already a grandmother three times over. I was simply overcome with emotion and in that precise moment all the efforts and prayers and dreams of seven and a half years of "process" crashed over me.



how to write grants, but still left seminary nearly \$42,000 in debt.

Margaret Guenther helped me find a lovely spiritual director nearby. I often took the subway to friends on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, walking through the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens for green therapy. In my senior year I was able to get a one day/week job in the Interfaith Office at 815.

By far, the most memorable experience was my senior year internship at Brotherhood Synagogue in Gramercy Park. The junior Rabbi and co-mentor to my time there, Rabbi Daniel Alder, is now the Senior Rabbi. A singular benefit of COVID is being able to join them after all these years in zoom classes!

To borrow from a better writer than myself, "It was the best of times and worst of times."

I choose to remember the best. Without question the entire experience shaped and formed me in ways that are now fully

woven into the tapestry of my life, and I am grateful.

The Rev. Elaine Silverstrim retired as Rector, Christ Episcopal Church, Coudersport, PA in 2009. Her previous service includes Rector, All Saints, Brookland, PA.

The 1990s

Sonia Hinds (1992-1993) *Margaret Guenther Widens the Circle*



My story of General Theological Seminary is inextricably linked with a wonderful and wise woman named Margaret Guenther and her visit to Barbados in the late 1980s. She arrived at Codrington College, the oldest theological seminary, with her peers – the late Professor Robert Hood and Professor Deirdre Good – and ten seminarians. I was considered a theological student rather than a seminarian as I believed that God had called me to be a priest. As a result of that belief, I began full time studies in the BA program while employed full time as a social worker at a correctional institution for teenage girls. As the Church in the Province in the West Indies had not yet voted for women to be admitted to the Holy Orders, it turned out that the visit of Professor Margaret Guenther and the entourage of The General Theological Seminary was the opening of a new and exciting phase on my journey to being a priest in the Anglican Church.

One moment that stood out for me during the visit was a meeting between the two student bodies. Students and staff were asked to sit in a circle. Then I heard a voice. I believed that it was the voice of Margaret Guenther. It called me to come into the circle.

Apparently, I was sitting just outside the circular gathering. Later as I reflected on that moment, I cannot recall what was discussed at the meeting but that call from Margaret Guenther to join in the circle was significant. Not even aware that I was sitting outside and apart from the students, my location tells the story of how I was experiencing Codrington College at the time – I was an insider/ outside. Not treated as one of the seminarians who were all living in residence, I was a student of theology in a male-dominated culture that included both the seminary and the Anglican Church. I believe that the invitation to ‘come into the circle’ was a call from the Holy Spirit through Margaret that placed me more firmly to continue an often challenging journey at College that culminated on May 31, 1996.

Another important moment during the visit by General Theological Seminary to Codrington College was the invitation of Margaret Guenther to be part of a program called “Summers at General”. As my relatives lived in New York and I loved traveling there, I thought this was a great opportunity to visit them and study in Manhattan for three weeks. Therefore, I accepted this second invitation from Professor Margaret Guenther and began another phase of my journey. I attended two semesters during the summer and then took a leap of faith and resigned from my position in the Barbados Government service and travelled to New York to be a full-time student and to complete the Masters in Sacred Theology with a Certificate in Christian Spirituality.

I am extremely proud to be a graduate of the program. My thesis, *The Spiritual Care of the Sexually Abused Young Woman in the Caribbean*, continues to inform my spiritual journey as I am an advocate, counsellor and activist for women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence. I have founded the charity “The Women at the Well Centre” with the support of friends. We are in the process of registering this non-profit organization.

I have also made some valuable friends from being part of the program and are in contact with some of them. I thank God for all those at General Theological Seminary who made this possible, including Professor Guenther, Professor Good, Dean James Fenhagan and his wife, Jane Fenhagan.

As a result of being a student at GTS, I became an Episcopalian and joined the congregation of St. Ambrose in Manhattan. In that parish family, I was warmly welcomed and my leadership gifts in the Church were affirmed. In addition, I was an intern at the Church Center in Women and Ministry while at General, and was part of the planning team for the Anglican Encounter held in Brazil. In the Episcopal Church, I met more gifted women and men of God who encouraged me on what would have been a very lonely and difficult journey. My ordination created history and the journey was made less challenging because of the intervention of Margaret Guenther and The General Theological Seminary.

Since General and since ordination, I served and studied in the Diocese of Toronto and the Diocese of the Windward Islands but returned to my home Diocese – Barbados – in 2018 where I am now sharing in the Diocesan leadership team as Rural Dean in my home Diocese of Barbados. The circle widens as more women are ordained across the eight Dioceses that make up the Church in the Province of the West Indies.

Gayle Greene Watkins (1992-1994)

Days of Heaven

It was to be the first anniversary of our marriage. My husband Larry, a Kansan born and bred, was teaching at Kansas University and I, a transplant from the theatre world of New York City, was trying to figure out who I was in this new life.

Just around that date, a Diocesan retreat led by Bishop Smalley was announced, and so, having been nudged by something I couldn't explain, I talked Larry into spending our anniversary on a retreat at a religious community of nuns just over the Kansas border in Missouri. During one of the sessions, the bishop spoke about Spiritual Direction as a vocation. At those words, my heart leapt. I was being called to the vocation of spiritual direction!

Stunned by this summons, and trying not to shake, I asked the bishop, "Where does one receive such training?" "General Seminary," he said. And I blurted out inanely, "Where is that?" "In New York," he said. All I could think of at that moment was Union Seminary. "You mean on the upper west side?" He smiled, "Gayle, in Chelsea." And I knew exactly where the Seminary was: how I had looked wonderingly at its buildings with their solid strength. "Dear Lord, I'm going there."

And I did.

Dr. Margaret Guenther, Director of the Center for Christian Spirituality, told me some years later, that as she was standing in the little kitchen of the Center, with her assistant, Pamela Barnett, watching this 50 something year old woman coming up the walk of the Close, she said, "Well, she's come to the right place." How did she know? I don't remember ever having met her before that fatal day! I do remember that I was seeing "directees" by the end of that first year. I stayed on after graduation as her assistant, and then as Assistant Director of the Center.

The small miracle of my transformation happened day-by-day as I was blessed with classes taught by incomparable scholars; day-by-day with worship in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd to which I commuted every morning from our apartment on the Upper East Side.

One of the biggest surprises in my days at General was the ease in which I was able to bring together my earlier experiences with theatre and Christian Spirituality. With Margaret's help and blessing, I initiated a theatre workshop for students and families on the

close called "Acting from the Center" as a program of the Center for Christian Spirituality. We met in the Close at

Seabury Bottom, and on Friday night, "The Poetry Café," with members including faculty, dramatized poetic works along with scenes from plays to an invited public beyond the Seminary.

Amazingly this led to an evening called T.S. Eliot at the Poetry Cafe, and among the performers were Prof. Frederick Shriver, and Prof. Richard Corney!

I was, at his invitation, teaching a course with Prof. Shriver, my thesis adviser, which included the works of Eliot. This, in turn, led to his bestowing upon me the great honor of directing the magnificent Four Quartets, an event celebrating Fred's many years of teaching at General and his coming retirement, to which the whole community of General Seminary and the public was invited!

But it was the wise and loving influence of Margaret Guenther which made the greatest difference in shaping the person I was to become. It was her incredible "unflappability" which impressed me most as we worked together. No matter what the crisis, large or small, she dealt with it calmly, even at times with her wonderful sense of humor. She was a true diplomat in some very uncomfortable situations, many in which I was present as an equal. She would later call me her "partner in crime!" Without me consciously realizing it, she became the model for me of how to live and be with all kinds of people.

These beloved memories express some of the many "Days of Heaven" which made up my life at General Seminary. Writing this reflection has helped me to understand more than ever how important a role those short years continue to play in the sacred task of becoming the person God has created me to be!

Gayle Greene Watkins continues her vocation as a lifetime member of The Actors Studio and of its Playwright/Directors Workshop, while keeping her home in New Hampshire.



Joy Carol (1996-1998)

The Impact of GTS on My Amazing Journey of Life

As a woman, my journey of life has been deeply impacted by my studies and experiences at General.

Before I even dreamed of applying to the Seminary, I was an educator and development specialist on global women's and children's issues. I worked both internationally and nationally on these matters for nearly 35 years in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the USA for the Ford Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund, and numerous educational institutions. In 1966, the National Chamber of Commerce named me the Outstanding Young Educa-

tor of the USA.

Then one day, I sensed an almost indescribable tap on my heart – or maybe it was on my soul. It felt like God was asking me to make a major change that would completely transform my life. As exciting and fulfilling as my work had been, my wandering spirit and



my faith were being called to become spiritually grounded in all aspects of life.

As an active member of St. John the Divine in NYC, I was encouraged to apply to General. I knew I needed to integrate theology, faith, and spirituality with all my life experiences. On my first visit to the peaceful Close, I felt I had come home. After meeting Dr. Margaret Guenther, who became my mentor and advisor, I knew it was the right choice.

As an older woman, seminary was growth producing, spiritual-challenging, and faith expanding. I treasured the dialogues between accessible professors and students, the feeling of being part of a team. Halfway through my seminary courses, with the encouragement and support of Dr. Guenther, we created a rather unusual and special ministry for me that included preaching, spiritual formation, leading retreats and workshops, speaking, and writing.

So in 1998, I became a proud woman graduate of General Seminary.

After graduation, for 15 years my life was deeply meaningful doing just what Dr. Guenther and I had hoped I might do. Across the USA, I used the skills and learnings I had gained from my brilliant GTS professors who had nurtured and empowered me. My life was filled with speeches, sermons, workshops, retreats, and book events. I wrote and published eight books and wrote a spiritual blog (www.joycarol.com). I led Women's Pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

Then in the summer of 2013, my world suddenly changed. I started falling – on streets, subway stairs, everywhere. I couldn't stop falling. Finally, I was diagnosed with the rare, difficult to di-

agnose, impossible to cure, and usually fatal Paraneoplastic Syndrome. Today, according to Mayo Clinic, I may be the only person diagnosed with this Syndrome who has lived past three years. I'm on my ninth year and making medical history at Mayo Clinic.

As I look back at my life and close encounters with death, I realize how essential the teachings and guidance of my GTS professors and colleagues have been. They empowered me to overcome major bumps in my life helping me keep a spiritual and faith-based perspective on life – and on death. Although the Syndrome has limited my ability to walk, that has not stopped me. I still preach, do inspirational speeches, write books, lead workshops and retreats, and serve in many ways. I am living fully into my life, because I am not a diagnosis. I am a GTS graduate who has much to contribute.

Joy Carol has been an educator, an author, a psychological counselor, a women-in-development specialist, and a national speaker. She is the author of Towers of Hope, Finding Courage, Journeys of Courage, The Fabric of Friendship, Seasons of Joy, Stevie the Wonder Cat, and Nine Lives of Joy: the Journey of a Life. For nearly 35 years she developed and supervised educational programs in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the USA for such agencies as the Ford Foundation, UNDP, Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund, and Head Start. Trained and experienced in trauma, grief counseling and hospice work, she worked extensively with survivors and families of 9/11. She also preaches, teaches, leads workshops and retreats at Penney Farms and in other areas in the USA, and writes a spiritual blog at www.joycarol.com.

Lynne Washington (1994-1997) *Caring for Each Other*



On a cold, snowy, and icy night in January of 1994, my mother and Parish priest, the Rev. Dr. Colin V. Barrow arrived at GTS in a U-Haul truck with all my belongings. We struggled to get my belongings through the gates and up the steps through “the Close” and up the steps to Edson Dorm. I remember strangers at this point from the Close rescuing us in the snow and ice. My life changed at that moment, forever. I had always wanted to live in New York city; my dream was to be

the female version of Gordon Gekko from the movie Wall Street. I guess God had another plan. Those plans that God intended had curated friendships and relationships that will last a lifetime. God allowed me to be in New York City years later but not as the Wall Street mogul like I had imagined, thanks be to God.

As I reflect on my journey and the impact of the women who came into my life as a seminarian at General and on the Close, I will always be grateful. It was with them that we explored New York City late nights on Fifth Avenue, the filming of Round Midnight,

(story of jazz artist Dexter Gordon) and long challenging conversations of the time—this new liberation theory called Womanism. It was here that I met my former mother-in-law, Deacon Joyce Washington, and experienced Harlem through historic St. Philip's Harlem as a seminarian. As well, I had also developed many other life-long friendships, relationships, and experiences.

During my time at General Seminary, I became ill with an ovarian cyst and the pain was constricting my ability to move about freely. I made the decision to undertake surgery. My mother had to come from Southern Ohio to be with me. I worried about her stay on the Close and her not knowing anyone. It was this moment that the relationships on the Close took full formation. John Thompson Quartey, who years later eulogized mom, made sure every morning she had her morning cup of Joe and a bite to eat. Ed Payne and his family made sure my mom felt at home on the Close. Pat McCaughan would check on her daily like a big sister concerned for her younger sister. So many others reached out to my mom, and they knew that she was alone and afraid for her daughter recuperating at St. Vincent's hospital.

The relationships formed in the community are relationships that last a lifetime. The place where relationships were formed for me was the Refectory table and not the Chapel. The refectory table is where we learned to care for each other; in small acts of kindness, beginning with asking or simply just picking up your neighbor's tray after completing their meal. The hospitality shown to my mom began at the table where many of us learned the simple act of caring. The simple act of caring that checked on at GTS in a foreign venue called the Close. Thanks be to God!

The Rev. Lynne E. Washington is currently rector at Church of the Incarnation in Atlanta and has also served as Vicar and Rector, St. Peter's, Church Hill, VA. Other previous service includes Director of Healthy Communities for Bon Secours Health System and Executive Director of Peter Paul Development Center in Richmond, Virginia.

The 2000s

Anne Winchell Silver (1998-2002) *The Joy of Spiritual Welcome*



After years as an Adjunct and Consultant, Anne Silver has been Affiliated Professor of Ascetical Theology, Director of the Center of Christian Spirituality and Director of the Spiritual Direction Program since 2018.

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 experiential 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.

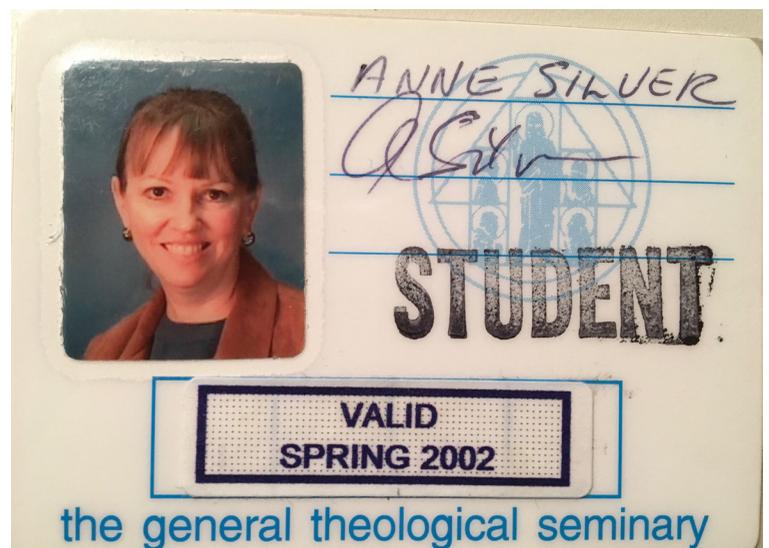
In my experience, it didn't seem difficult to be a woman at General in that program and in the company of my classmates and faculty mentors. The interpersonal challenge for me was the insider/outsider dynamic that so clearly valued residential, ordination-track students. On the Close there were innumerable 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.

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The 2010s

Christine Lee (2011-2012)

Something Began to Open Up in Me

When I was an M.Div. student back in the mid-90s, people would always ask me if I wanted to be ordained. At the time, I was at a conservative evangelical seminary that did not support women's ordination but allowed women to study in its programs. I felt deeply called to some kind of vocational ministry and wanted to be trained, but I had no desire to be an ordained minister. I would always respond the same way. "Women don't need to be ordained to do ministry. Plus, Rev. Christine Kim (my maiden name) sounds like MISTER Christine Kim to me!" Growing up in a Korean immigrant church in the 70s and 80s, I only ever saw male pastors. It didn't feel right for me to be a pastor, as though it went against the natural order of things. In my mind, a reverend is a man. I am not a man. Therefore, I should not be a reverend.

In 2002, I entered the Episcopal Church through marriage (I really didn't like it, but that is another story!). It was the first time I ever had a woman priest. As I got more involved, as these things go, eventually the rector sidled up to me one day and asked, "Would you ever consider going through discernment for the priesthood?" And the rest, as they say, is history.

Well, sort of. After I went through the parish discernment process, my committee said, "Christine, we want to recommend you to the bishop for ordination, but you don't seem like you want to do this." I did not. I just could not envision myself as an ordained priest. As a pastor's kid, my idea of what it meant to be a pastor was my father. His church members are in the thousands. He writes books. He's the guy the president of South Korea would call to speak at the national prayer breakfast. He had his own TV show for many years before he retired. That's not me.

I'll always remember Bob, one of my committee members saying, "Christine, being a priest is not about being exactly like your dad. Being a priest is about creating space for people to encounter the living God. You will do that in your own way, with who you are, and the gifts God has given you." That resonated with me deeply. But I still didn't want to do it!

So, I went to work for Habitat for Humanity NYC. And guess who I kept running into? Female Episcopal priests! In so many shapes and sizes. I never saw clergy like this. I was in awe of them. The Rev. Theodora Brooks (GTS 2000) from St. Margaret's in the Bronx with her prophetic boldness, hilarity and warmth, The Rev.

Maria Santaviego from San Juan Bautista with her big heart and creativity. As a priest in the zip code that held the record for highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the country, she began incorporating HIV testing into worship services and always went first. The Rev. Carol Anderson (GTS D.D. 2013), one of the first women ordained in the Episcopal Church who so graciously took me under her wing in her retirement. There were

many others, each one so spiritually powerful in their own unique and disarming way. And something began to open up in me. If they were "Revs," maybe I could be one too.

I entered General for my Anglican year in the fall of 2010. The last time I'd been in seminary, as one of the only women in the M.Div. program, I was clearly outnumbered. I always walked into class feeling conspicuous and out of place. I remember feeling an inner pressure to tamp down my femininity, to not doing anything that might draw attention to myself as a woman, at one point chopping off my long hair for a boy cut (which looked terrible). At General, I don't even recall any conversations about "women in ordained ministry." It just was. It was assumed. It was part of the air.

I will be forever grateful to General for creating space for me to take my first steps towards ordination to the priesthood. There are times when I think to myself, "How on earth did I get here?" And then I remember. It was a conversation. It was a connection with some-

one. It was walking through those black gates onto the Close for the first time.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Christine Lee was called to St. Peter's, Chelsea in October 2019 with a team of 20 members from All Angels' Church and Church of the Heavenly Rest to join the existing St. Peter's congregation in an experiment in revitalization, part of the Diocese of New York's larger vision for church renewal. She previously served as Vicar at All Angels' Church on the Upper West Side and Interim Minister at St. Mary's in Harlem. She has worked as a community organizer for Habitat for Humanity NYC and campus minister with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Chicago and Columbia University.



Betsy Smith Ivey (2012-2013)

What Attending General Meant to Me

When I decided to attend the General Theological Seminary in 2012 to complete my seminary study for an Anglican certificate I thought I knew why I chose General. I have always loved New York City, and being newly divorced, wanted to live there as a single woman. Even more, both my daughters were living there at the time, and I wanted to take advantage of an opportunity to live in the same city with them again. The day I moved into Dodge I received a diagnosis for breast cancer. My fourth grandchild was born the day before I had surgery, all within the first month of classes. Choosing to go to seminary in the same city where my daughters lived gave new meaning to my life, as well the support I needed to complete my seminary education. Matriculating at General in this one amazing year allowed me to learn about and experience our wonderful Church as a woman called to the priesthood.

I was richly fed by the theological academia offered by and through General. With an MDiv I was able to pursue a course of study under R. Bruce Mullin that enriched my knowledge of the history of the Episcopal Church's role in the development of American racism for which I was conferred an STM cum laude. I also studied Black Theology with the late eminent James Cone at Union; pursued an independent study of Rene Girard's mimetic theory with Clair McPherson; and, continued learning Koine Greek with Deirdre Good.

I learned to love our worship even more as a Sacristan in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, and relished my off-campus church adventures. Before I became the seminarian at St. Philip's in Harlem (the second oldest Black Episcopal Church), Sundays would find me any where from St. Mark's in the Bowery for Winnie Varghese's

outrageously good preaching to the liturgical drama of the mystery of the faith at the Church of St.

Mary the Virgin ("Smokey Mary's"). My field education work with the Rev. Chloe Breyer at the East Harlem Justice Center fed my pastoral compassion.

I met and studied with some of the most outstanding priests in TEC today. I work with many here in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, and encounter and hear about other classmates who are leading our Church in new directions.

General prepared me more fully than I could have imagined. It affirmed the divine feminine that called me to the priesthood as well affirmed the inner-strength needed to push through the glass ceiling the Church has yet fully broken. My General education helped me to become a well-rounded priest who has served as a Curate in a predominantly White church, an Interim in a historically Black church, and who now serves as a diocesan Canon leading churches into a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

I was blessed as a woman to have decided to attend General.

The Rev. Canon Betsy Ivey is Canon for Growth and Support in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. She previously served as Rector of St. Simon the Cyrenian in South Philadelphia, and also serves on the GCO Task Force for Church Planting and Church Redevelopment, Genesis II: Re-Vision and Re-New.



Deborah Lee (2014-2017)

Signing the Book with Joy, Pride, and Vindication

"Episcopal priest" was nowhere to be found on my "What do you want to be when you grow up?" list, but we all know that God makes different lists than we do. Although my mom is a deeply influential role model—and was ordained a deacon in 1992—ordained ministry still wasn't a calling I could discern for my own life in my young adult years. But not only does God make different lists than we do, God can mastermind a calling through roundabout ways and across surprising paths. In Isaiah 55: 8-9 (TLB) we hear God say, "This plan of mine is not what you would work out, neither are my thoughts the same as yours!" Indeed. The twists and turns of life that God accompanied me on led me to Chelsea Square and my first semester at General.

I looked toward my upcoming time at General Seminary as an adventure: What would I discover? What would scare me to the depths of my soul? What would elevate me to joyous heights? What would I risk? What would I sacrifice? How would I encounter pain and heartache? How would I be prepared for priesthood? Who would be my companions along the way? As one of three Black women in my incoming class, I felt joy, pride, and vindica-

tion as I signed my name in the matriculation book that first semester which has traditionally been signed by incoming seminarians at General since 1822. I was fully cognizant of the fact that a person of my skin tone and gender would not have been allowed to experience that same joy in the era when the tradition began, or have been permitted at that time to have the constitutional and legal right to be fully recognized as a human being, empowered with fundamental and inherent civil liberties. The act of signing that book was a pivotal, yet bittersweet moment for me in my seminary career; I carry it with me as I continue on in the holy work for justice and equity.

In addition to the classroom experience on the Close during my three years of study, my seminary education also arrived in differ-



ent formats. There was the two-month stint of parish ministry in Cape Town, South Africa through a SCOM grant; summer CPE training in Portland, Oregon; a mission trip to Cuba; opportunities to offer ministry at Rikers Island; taking a course through the seminary consortium with The Rev. Dr. James Cone; participating in field education parish placements in NYC; learning how to ring the chapel carillon bells that echoed with the sound of Spirit-filled hymns all around our Chelsea neighborhood. My education on the Close which formed me mightily through chapel life, community life, coursework and camaraderie was complemented by my education out in the city and in the world. General was the catalyst—the foundation—that allowed for me to take part in such well-rounded development and learning opportunities which I bring into my priesthood today. (In fact, I don't think I would have the confidence to sing the Sursum Corda at a Sunday Eucharist if I had not been a precentor leading the sung grace before meals in the refectory at General!)

General Seminary's indelible mark upon my priesthood and personhood helped to ground me as a woman in ministry and as a woman of God, and I am thankful that we can celebrate fifty years of the brilliance of women at GTS today. To paraphrase Isaiah, the plan to head to seminary was certainly not what I would have worked out on my own, but I am ever grateful that on God's list for me, "Episcopal priest" was right near the top of the page.

The Rev. Deborah A. Lee is a member of Spiritual Directors International and currently offers spiritual direction through the Center for Christian Spirituality at General as well as the Annand Program for Spiritual Formation at Berkeley Divinity School. She served as an associate rector at St. Bart's, Manhattan, priest-in-charge at St. Paul's in Chester, NY, and as assisting priest at Christ Church, Warwick, NY. She was formerly the Program Manager for Pastoral Care and Community at Trinity Wall Street.

Valerie Bailey Fischer (2011-2020)

To be a Scholar in the Service of the Church



I had always wanted to be a clergy-scholar. Numerous narratives in Medieval Church History speak of persons whose vocations were both spiritual and academic; including monk and Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). No surprise, what we describe as a scholar today is all about spiritual and intellectual practices that include reading, writing, studying, thinking, and teaching. However, people I knew seemed to be nervous about my desire to be a clergy-scholar. 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 community. I wanted to do these things well, which meant learning from others how to write, organize research interests, and have these intellectual pursuits inform community gathering and shepherding. I wanted to do this in the same way as scholars study science and philosophy, looking for the answers to the big questions. The call persisted and eventually I applied to doctoral programs.

General's program caught my attention because it was an opportunity to explore my calling as a clergy-scholar. My classmates and colleagues were priests and lay church leaders who were commit-

ted to the Episcopal 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.

General's program had a reputation for being very rigorous. Courtney Cowart (Th.D 1994) described her program in the mid 1990s as an opportunity to study 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. One of Cowart's classmates was Lucinda Allen Mosher (Th.D 2002). Mosher also spoke of the rigorous study, which for her, included opportunities to take classes at other seminaries. Mosher said what she remembers most is how she enjoyed studying in the midst of a community of faith. 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.

By the time I enrolled in the doctoral program, 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. The board of trustees and the senior administrators began to consider ways of extending theological education to people who were not on an ordination track. The academic rigor was still there, but many began to challenge whether or not academic rigor was necessary for church leader formation.

The Th.D program stopped admitting students around 2016, a few years shortly after a conflict between faculty and the Board of Trustees in 2014 led numerous faculty members to protest proposed changes. These protests led to temporary firings, then intervention by the Bishop of New York. This conflict happened just as I was starting my comprehensive exams. I 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. After the conflict, most of the advanced degree students left.

The work before the conflict was rigorous and challenging, but I did not have the advantage of living on the Close, for that was no longer an option since the space was being rented to non-seminarians. Instead of a cloistered environment, my halls of study includ-

ed Metro North, the subway and Starbucks. I missed being with students. My conversation partners were usually faculty and other scholars I would meet at conferences. When I hear about earlier versions of the program, I am envious of the cloistered atmosphere of being a scholar within a community of faith. The changes made me wonder whether or not the seminary would still exist by the time I finished. But this was not the first time I faced uncertainty at a seminary.

My first semester at Union was 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 seminary went broke, the love of learning continued. I read and wrote and had intense discussions about theology and history. Theology is forged in times of crisis, one of my professors said. In other words, uncertainty and crisis is a clergy/scholars' playing field. It is here that we are faced with the big problems that are so new that we are not sure how to even ask the question. Doctoral work is designed to form the student into someone who can find the new questions and to synthesize research that would help us find the answers.

So, I decided to approach post-conflict General in the same way, to continue studying and learning and to pay attention to the emerging questions. I also found ways of adapting to the new situations.

New situations often creep up on us without our permission. Exactly, when did the church begin to change, or when did we begin to question academically rigorous theological studies? What I learned in my doctoral studies is how to address situations that are so new that there is no name or language to describe them. Often, I would look for clues in the past, assuming that nothing is really new under the sun, as Solomon says.

And what describes "new?" A quote I often repeat addresses how new is described not because it has not been there before, but what has been there before has now changed in quality. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who led the team that built the first successful nuclear bombs, 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. What is new is new, not because it has never been there before, but because it has changed in quality."

Women had been a new aspect of seminary education more than 50 years ago. The issues surrounding women and theological education were numerous. Early women students were usually directed toward religious education. The possibility of priesthood came shortly after the first women matriculated at the seminary. And now, 50 years later, women have graduated and become, lay and ordained leaders in the church. Women are not so new anymore. In fact, while I was studying at General, being a woman was not an unusual aspect. Or so I thought. 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 this degree from General. Is it possible that women are still a new thing after all?

Or perhaps what is new is how rigorous theological education

might actually hold the keys to better understanding the Episcopal Church in this state of change and decreasing population.

What I was told is the problem with the declining numbers was the reality of the decline in persons of childbearing years. So, I thought, what would a strategy look like that addressed this problem?

My strategy of looking for solutions in the past historical narratives led me to look at the work of the abbesses, who, especially in the Middle Ages, led monastic communities, sometimes of men and women and sometimes communities of teaching and learning. In the 20th century, women in seminaries were considered new, but not so much during the medieval period. How did these women function as leaders and scholars? What could I take from their playbook of service to the church? And what did it look like to serve the church in the midst of the occasional chaos of the Middle Ages?

It's not so much that I thought a church school would solve the problems of the Episcopal Church. It's a matter of thinking about solutions that look beyond our present problems. It's about centering women's voices and ministry experiences as a source of possible solutions, rather than proof of the growth in gender equality and inclusion. What if the presence of women had more to do with recognizing that past women leaders have something to teach us today, rather than the mere presence of women being the solution?

What I enjoyed about the program at General was it focused on being a scholar, not just a woman scholar or a male scholar. The experience was both strangely liberating in terms of gender roles. However, the lack of women in the program – is this left over from the early days of women at General when women were considered new and rare? And the women graduates have taken on so many different roles; a sign that the program was far from a cookie-cutter experience. The program, for men and women, developed scholars for the church.

It has been wonderful serving the church as a clergy-scholar, but so often, this commitment has felt one-sided. The Episcopal Church says it values its scholars, but more often, there is not a place for them in the church. Many of the seminaries have shifted focus away from the academic toward the practical, assuming that what is needed is more pastors than scholars. 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 our unique gifts to face the challenges of our time. We need out-of-the box thinkers who are formed in similar ways to scholars who addressed the bigger questions such as nuclear science or cancer treatment. 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 inspiration and ideas to come up with an understanding of our present reality as we try to figure out what we are and who we are serving as the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Dr. Valerie Bailey Fischer is the Chaplain to the College at Williams College. Her dissertation is titled, "From Deacon to Priest: An Alternative Narrative of the Ordination of Women".

It's about centering women's voices and experiences as a source of possible solutions, not just proof of growth in gender equality and inclusion.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WOMEN AT GENERAL: THE EVENTS



Friday, October 1, 2021 (Hybrid)
Early Textual Changes to the Gospel of John: Suppressions of Mary Magdalene's Authority?
Elizabeth "Libbie" Schrader (MA '15, STM '16, doctoral candidate in Early Christianity at Duke University), presented new research on variations in Gospel manuscripts from study intersecting textual criticism and feminist theology. Her research is receiving critical acclaim as she advances new theories about the origins of Mary Magdalene.



Wednesday, October 27, 2021 (Webinar)
This Band of Sisterhood: A Conversation with the First Five Black Women Diocesan Bishops
moderated by Dr. Westina Matthews, Adjunct Prof. of Christian Spirituality. Bishops Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows (Indianapolis), Carlye J. Hughes (Newark), Kimberly Lucas (Colorado), Shannon MacVean-Brown (Vermont), and Phoebe A. Roaf (West Tennessee) share their honest wisdom and experiences relevant to this complex time in American life.

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 (Webinar)
Magnificent, Marxist, Mary: Textual Light on Advent's Brightest Star

The Rev. Dr. Julie Faith Parker, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Biblical Studies, replaced images of Mary as "meek" and "mild" with understandings of a brave, radical teenage girl. Textual exegesis combined with images, music, and video explored stories of Mary's spiritual sisters from the Hebrew Bible and engaged us in appreciation for Mary's courage and theology.



Tuesday & Wednesday February 15 and 16, 2022 (Hybrid)

The Paddock Lectures: In Memory of Them: Anamnesis for the Rest of Us
welcomed Diana Butler Bass, Ph.D., (D.D. Honoris Causa '09), award-winning author, popular speaker, inspiring preacher, and one of America's most trusted commentators on religion and contemporary spirituality. Dr. Bass drew from decades of work to reflect on the centrality of memory to Anglican identity and spiritual practice, the relationship between tradition and experience, and the urgent need to strengthen churches as communities of narrative memory.



Thursday, March 31, 2022 (Webinar)
Women, Woke and Wired: Solidarity and the Resurrection

Dr. Jee Hei Park reimagined the resurrection accounts in the Synoptic Gospels, in which women are presented as the first witnesses of the empty tomb and told as a story of solidarity among women disciples. Dr. Park was formerly Visiting Assistant Professor of New Testament/Louisville Postdoctoral Fellow at General Seminary and is currently Assistant Professor of New Testament at Seminary of the Southwest.



Tuesday, April 26, 2022 (Webinar)
Adding Women to the Story of the Early Church
V.K. McCarty '11, shared the fascinating adventures of female church leaders whose voice and wisdom are remembered in the New Testament, and whose faithful voices can be heard across the centuries as they pray, mentor, and collaborate in the early development of monasticism and the Church itself. McCarty served as Acquisitions Librarian at General Seminary 2000-2015. She lectures in Ascetical Theology at General and at St. Luke in the Fields. Her latest book is *From Their Lips: Voices of Early Christian Women*.

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 (Hybrid)
The Next 50 years: Beyond Women and Men

After a year honoring and celebrating the ministry and theological education of women, the Rev. Dr. April Stace was joined by the Rev. Evan Fischer '92 and Flourish Klink '24 in a discussion recognizing that if we stop at women and men, we are still excluding people. Stace is Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Leadership and Sr. Associate Dean for Hybrid Learning at General; Fischer is the first priest in the Anglican Communion to transition and remain at their parish; Klink identifies as non-binary, but is identified at General as Chief Sacristan!



Tuesday, May 17, 2022 (Hybrid)
Remembering and Honoring Pauli Murray

The Rev. Dr. Julie Faith Parker welcomed Pauli Murray's classmates, the Rev. Dr. Ellen Marie Barrett (Sr. Helena) '75 and the Rev. Jonathan Appleyard '76, the Rev. Dr. Valerie Bailey Fischer '20, and the Rev. Diane Shepard, Pauli's Chaplain during the last year of life, to remember and share who Pauli Murray was and what her legacy means to us. At Baccalaureate the Very Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas, D.D. '22 and Dorothy Thomas from the Pauli Murray Center challenged us to carry on and lift up Pauli's prophetic voice and legacy.

