

## Gettysburg Seminary's Report to Synod Assemblies 2016

**A NEW SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY:** Responding to the call of the churchwide network of theological education, Gettysburg Seminary concluded that “business as usual” could and would not continue much longer in governance and structure of stand-alone seminaries. In January, the boards of Gettysburg and Philadelphia seminaries declared intention to form a new school of theology, deployed across the two campuses. Following the decision, a Steering Cte and eight work groups have formed to plan and propose design, structure, budget and timelines for support the final decisions by the schools to move forward toward a 2017 start. Watch for up to date report at your synod assembly about the project to create the first mainstream new school of theology in more than a half century, the newest school with the deepest roots, and a more sustainable form for theological education.

**UNPRECEDENTED STUDENT SUPPORT—TUITION FREE:** In keeping with the spirit of the new school project, both Gettysburg and Philadelphia seminaries announced in February a full tuition offer to seminarians beginning fall 2016. This offer utilizes restricted scholarship funds drawn from the endowment, made available by lower enrollments and in faith that over time, increased support will sustain this unprecedented offer.

***God's Call; Your Path: MDivForward* Launched:** Continuing to keep the Gettysburg offer of theological education and leadership formation on the cutting edge among seminaries, the faculty launched a new Master of Divinity curriculum with multiple tracks, which beginning later in 2016 will include a “distributed learning” (with more online courses) option.

**Public Witness as Confederate Flag Banned:** As many in our nation reexamined the display of symbols associated with the slavery-demanding Confederacy, we banned the historic battle flag from “living history” summer encampments on our campus, incurring the ire of many on social media sites who deemed the move anti-historical. Most who responded applauded our seizing an opportunity for bold public witness to the Seminary's commitments and values.

**Faith & Science (AAAS Science & Faith Grants):** Led by Professors Mark Oldenburg and Leonard Hummel, the Seminary was one of only ten schools in the U.S. and Canada to receive a \$250,000 grant from the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. Efforts to equip students and church leaders for stronger engagement with questions of faith and science include the upcoming 2016 Spring Academy, and greater emphases in courses throughout the curriculum.



***Gettysburg: Quest for Meaning* Offers Unique Perspectives:** In still another scholarly endeavor, the Seminary Ridge Press published an anthology of theological and pastoral articles related in various ways to the great Civil War battle and the ongoing challenges of realizing Abraham Lincoln's vision of “increased devotion to a more humane, equitable, and just society.” Available through the Seminary bookstore: 717.338.3005.

### Other highlights of the year include:

- 50<sup>th</sup> Playing of the Lutherbowl flag football tournament;
- Expansion of The Weekend, a discernment event in spring and now fall as well;
- Recognition of Dean Largen's book “Finding God” by Pacific Coast Theological Society;
- Welcomed Vincent Evener to the faculty in Reformation History;
- Pamela and Michael Cooper-White's “Exploring Practices” cited among year's best by Christian Century.

Gettysburg Seminary gains its bold vision and courage from the support it receives from the Synods of Region 8 in the ELCA. Every gift, every student, every prayer and every encouraging word counts in the sustaining of graduate theological education. Thank you from us all!

Michael L. Cooper-White, President &  
Dr. James Lakso, Chair of the Board