



A message to the Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ
from The Rev. Dr. Heather Vacek,

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In preparing the 2022-23 academic year in review, I started by focusing only on what's new. There were new students who enrolled, new staff who joined us, new campus spaces that were improved and renovated, new books, articles, and presentations made by our nationally known faculty, new support in business systems, infrastructure and technology thanks to Moravian University, and new collaborations with our colleagues at Moravian Theological Seminary. All new things that make an impressive list of accomplishments that you would expect from a respected graduate school of theology such as ours.

There also is much that is intentionally not new. Teaching and learning and formation continue faithfully at LTS as it has for 198 years, now with expanded resources and new conversation partners.

Nearly 75 students were enrolled this year in **master's level, Doctor of Ministry, and certificate programs**, learning and worshiping and engaging in fellowship with dedicated faculty and staff who remain committed to student success. Our seminarians continue to offer thanks for the opportunities to learn and be shaped and reshaped. Here, as always, our seminarians are challenged and nurtured during their time with us. That hasn't changed.

In a world of change, suffering and injustice, there is as much need as ever for good, solid, faithful theological education. Our institutional connection has expanded over the past two years as Lancaster and Moravian have begun to work together, envisioning a future deeply rooted in our individual histories and shaped by our commitments and our collaboration. In this new partnership, the delights that always mark theological education remain: the nurturing of meaningful relationships, the discovery of students in the classroom, the privilege of hearing colleagues preach and lead worship, the sending forth of well-equipped graduates to "join in God's redemptive and liberating work so that all creation may flourish."

The first two years of partnership with Moravian have brought new structural support and efficiencies of operation and investments in capital improvements on campus to ensure the health of our facilities. **We now look forward to launching an exciting shared curriculum in Fall 2024**, crafted by our faculties, that will span both campuses and include, among other things, a commitment to an anti-racist pedagogy.

The new curriculum will equip students to interpret sacred and theological texts, artifacts, and practices from their own and other relevant traditions with sensitivity to literary, historical, and cultural contexts, and to the social and spiritual implications of interpretation. They also will be equipped to articulate and practice a theological and ethical understanding of authority, power, and accountability that recognizes, supports, and affirms the dignity and worth of all persons.

This is underway while we continue to hold fast to preserving the identity and witness of Lancaster Theological Seminary amid new partnerships. This is work filled with affirmation, grounded in the past and bold enough to trust leaps into the future.

We look forward to welcoming your members in discernment to our community of learners. We'd love to hear from you at admissions@lancasterseminary.edu. We look forward to our continuing journey with you, to continuing the work to which God calls us, and to celebrating with you what God is doing in our midst.