

SECTION F – REPORTS OF COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES

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MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

Greetings to the Members of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod,

I share below a list of activities and events of Muhlenberg College, one of the 26 ELCA affiliated colleges and a partner in ministry with the SEPA Synod. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at janelle Neubauer@muhlenberg.edu with any questions or hopes for collaboration.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Janelle Neubauer, Chaplain and Director of Religious & Spiritual Life

Report of Activities from March 2023-March 2024

- In April 2023, Muhlenberg College celebrated 175 years of preparing generations of students for lives of meaning and impact through a rigorous education grounded in the liberal arts. Read more about the weekend of celebrations [here](#) and watch the recap video [here](#). During this celebration, we officially dedicated our newest academic building on campus, [Fahy Commons for Public Engagement and Innovation](#). Not only is Fahy Commons a home to offices and departments focusing on community engagement, innovation and entrepreneurship, but it also stands as an architectural accomplishment as one of the most sustainable buildings in the world.

- We had a successful weekend of celebrations for our graduating class, including a student-focused Baccalaureate service led by the Religious & Spiritual Life team and an in-person commencement ceremony held at the PPL Center in Allentown. Watch the 2023 Commencement highlights [here](#).

- Over the summer, Varsity Field was renovated to a turf field leading up to the fall season for Men's and Women's Soccer. Varsity Field is also home to Women's Lacrosse in the spring.

- As part of continued efforts to support students' mental and emotional well-being, Muhlenberg is in its fourth and final year of its partnership with the Jed Foundation (JED) and its JED Campus Initiative. This strategic collaboration has increased our focus on accessibility and opportunity for students to access resources to support their mental and emotional health needs. As part of our work this year, we have continued to offer to our community members access to an innovative online training which helps us to recognize when our colleagues and/or students who may be struggling with mental health concerns to more confidently guide them to resources

and support. The modules train people on how to have conversations in those difficult moments, how to link them to appropriate support resources, etc. To date, approximately 60% of our student/staff/faculty members have been trained. In addition, we are now offering a substance free housing option to our students. Within this housing option, students will not only keep their areas free of substances and substance usage, but also provide educational opportunities about substance misuse. Increasing efforts have also been made to promote social connectedness amongst our students. Some of these areas include a commuter lounge and the Living Room Project. Finally, the second iteration of The Healthy Minds survey was conducted in October. The data from this survey will be presented to the college in the summer 2024. This data will assist in our programming efforts for the 2024-2025 school year. Lastly, The JED working group has joined efforts with the Health and Wellness Advisory board. This partnership will allow both groups to maintain their robust efforts to support students' health and wellness on campus.

- In the wake of October 7th, students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate in a practice known as Listening Circles in order to process the challenges of the attack on Israel and the ongoing war in Gaza. These circles continued in various forms throughout the Fall semester within affinity spaces, and students, faculty, and staff continued to organize events to offer support to communities impacted by the violence. In the spring semester, President Kathleen Haring initiated an Ad Hoc Committee on Education and Dialogue. Convened by Provost Laura Furge and Vice President for College Life and Dean of Students Allison Williams and led by the director of the Institute for Religious and Cultural Understanding (IRCU), this ad hoc committee was charged to create a structure for the development and communication of programs to promote further learning and dialogue. Upcoming programs include Campus Living Room Project listening and dialogue circles as well as presentations of the IRCU.

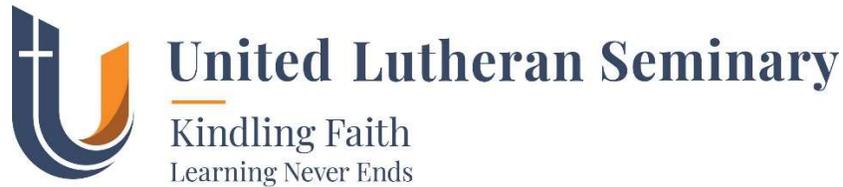
- Six members of the faculty were recently awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of President Haring and Provost Furge. You can find more information about each promoted faculty [here](#).

- The Boundless Campaign continues to secure funding for a comprehensive, carefully interconnected group of strategic priorities that will shape students' academic and residential experience for decades to come. Over the course of the last year, the goal was increased from \$111 million to \$125 million. To date \$106 million has been raised. The campaign is scheduled to conclude in Spring 2025.

- At this point in time, we are working towards Honors Convocation as well as commencement weekend programming including a student focused Baccalaureate service, a family day on campus, and commencement ceremony at the PPL Center in Allentown.

- Over the summer months, Seegers Student Union will enter into a phase of renovation and expansion.

UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY



Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and Peace be with you in your synod assembly. I pray that your work bears fruit that will give praise to God and service to neighbor in the broad context of ministries that you share.

United Lutheran Seminary continues to walk with you in this journey, asking for your prayers and support as we focus on four areas of accompaniment:

- 1) Providing a relevant education for students studying to be deacons and pastors through our recently revamped curriculum, which increases emphasis on the practice of ministry.
- 2) Seeking ways to decrease the costs of a seminary education so that our graduates will not be burdened with debt loads, and at the same time trying to bring as many students as possible into our classrooms.
- 3) Increasing the quantity and quality of continuing education options through initiatives like the Kindling Faith program so as to offer a lifelong community of learning for rostered and lay people. We also hope to be out among you in the synods more often than we have been since the pandemic.
- 4) Seeking your support to strengthen and sustain our relationship with your synod and the whole ELCA that responds to the needs of the church now and in the future.

I am happy to share that our enrollment numbers continue to be strong with just over 350 students across our degree programs: 116 studying to become deacons or pastors, 89 in the Doctor of Ministry program, and the remainder in other master's level or certificate programs. This fall we will be enrolling a new cohort of PhD students for the first time since before the consolidation of our predecessor schools. In addition, the Asian Theological Institute, Kindling Faith, and the Urban Theological Institute have received \$3 million in grants, collectively, to benefit their continued work.

We also welcome Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera and Dr. Andre Price to our faculty and the new CFO, Brandee Carrigan, to senior administration. We are grateful for those of you who serve on our Board of Trustees for the wisdom you bring to the table. Our Seminary Ridge Museum excels at sharing the complex narrative of the pivotal moment in the Civil War that continues to inform our theological discussion in these times of polarization and strife. Our Kindling Faith program is always expanding its programming and providing opportunities that are culturally relevant and spiritually fulfilling both online and in-person, and on both our physical campuses (type "Kindling Faith" in the search bar to learn more).

This being my fourth year as President of ULS, I can report with gratitude that the prospects for the seminary are very good as we approach the 200th anniversary of our founding. We hope you'll be able to celebrate with us at one of the many 2026 events we are planning to mark the occasion. Lastly, I wish you the peace that passes all understanding in the journey ahead—a journey we make together.

Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin