

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Unified Seminary - August 2016**

### **1. Is such dramatic change at two venerable institutions really warranted?**

Two major challenges prompt our commitment to launching a new venture in theological education and leadership formation. A growing shortage of trained leaders is the first, as the ELCA alone currently has 600 viable full time pastoral vacancies and expects that number to grow to 1000 by 2020. The unsustainable financial future of our seminaries is the second, as the network of ELCA seminaries lost \$70MM in operating deficits over the last decade. We believe that these challenges, as well as significant opportunities to proclaim the gospel with confidence and courage in an increasingly postmodern and post-Christian world, called for transformational, rather than incremental, change. It is our belief that this transformational change will allow a united seminary to address the ongoing leadership shortage by providing a strong, financially sustainable resource for the education and formation of the church's leaders long into the future.

### **2. Were other names for the new venture considered?**

At least a dozen names were suggested by students, alumni/ae and others. Each was assessed in terms of distinctiveness in capturing our mission and vision; durability; avoidance of confusion, particularly with other Lutheran seminaries; availability of domains for websites; and other factors. In the end, United Lutheran Seminary was adopted by unanimous votes of the Transition Team and boards.

### **3. Why was Gettysburg's corporate entity chosen to continue?**

On one level, either school could have supplied its corporate entity to provide legal continuity ensuring that state licensure and accreditation remain uninterrupted, and both schools prepared for that possibility by reviewing the proposed bylaws for adoption. With that in mind, the Transition Team and boards reviewed several factors that guided them in determining that using LTSG's corporate entity would give United Lutheran the best possible launch. Factors included the schools' current accreditation status, the complexity of the corporate structures at each school, the transferability of restricted endowments, and the desire to preserve the historical legacy of both schools by retaining the oldest charter.

### **4. With this decision, how can the LTSP community be assured this is truly a new venture carrying forward the heritage of both schools?**

While the continuing corporate continuity is necessary for state licensure and accreditation purposes (neither of which would have been in place during a probationary start-up period for a new corporate entity), the commitment is to truly form in essence a "new school" hosted on two distinct campuses and drawing on the strengths of two historic traditions. The name itself signals a uniting of these two schools and their rich heritages. United Lutheran will have new bylaws, a new president, and a new board. While continuity on the part of some board members is desirable, they will be joined by new trustees elected in equal numbers by the synods of Regions 7 and 8. A new curriculum will carry forward many traditional emphases from each school, but also charts a new and creative pathway forward specifically designed to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the day. While some of

the “mechanics” by which to achieve our goals have changed, the original vision of creating a new venture in theological education and leadership formation remains.

**5. Who will join Pastor Miller in forming the presidential search committee?**

Plans are for three board members from each existing school, together with a faculty member and student from each, and a synodical bishop. Many stakeholders’ will be invited to offer perspectives in shaping a “presidential leadership profile” and everyone will be encouraged to offer nominations.

**6. What will be the status of current faculty and staff?**

Stated from the outset has been the reality that to achieve economic sustainability, and to fund full scholarships for all full-time residential ELCA students and significantly increase aid to all students, United Lutheran is likely to have approximately 2/3 the number of employees as the predecessor schools. Care is being given in offering support for all current faculty and staff, including an extra measure of pastoral support. The two boards have reviewed and aligned personnel policies to provide as much severance support as can be offered for those who will not be given positions by United Lutheran Seminary (ULS).

**7. Who will make decisions regarding faculty and staff?**

The Transition Team will recommend faculty to the ULS board, which is expected to be constituted early in 2017; only that board can employ faculty and staff and elect a president. Faculty have requested to be notified this fall of the likelihood of being offered positions with United Lutheran, and the Transition Team’s recommendations to the ULS board will be communicated to them soon. Similarly, some key senior staff positions are critical for continuity and persons holding current positions will be notified shortly regarding recommendations from the current presidents and Transition Team. There will be a period of mutual discernment once a new president is named, to determine longer-term service by vice presidents and other senior staff. The goal is that by early 2017, all staff at both schools will have clarity about future positions. An Employee Transition Support work group welcomes suggestions on additional measures that can provide support during a time of uncertainty.

**8. A press release announcing the name and presidential search guarantees current students will not encounter major disruption in their progress; can you really make such a guarantee with all the changes?**

Absolutely, and we must! Even as a new curriculum is launched, courses and field education experiences outlined in the LTSG and LTSP catalogues for current enrollees will continue. Again, beyond our internal commitments to our students, accrediting agencies and the Pennsylvania Department of Education require submission of plans for seamless support of existing students.

**9. Will the LutherBowl continue?**

By no means the last or least important question! The annual flag football tournament held on the Gettysburg campus (which dates back over 5 decades) is entirely a student-sponsored event. Rumors are that nothing in all creation can stand in the way of its continuing, and that after another magnificent competition this fall, the 2017 LutherBowl will feature a United Lutheran Seminary team that will be unbeatable!

*This list may grow as more questions arise.*