Strategic Plan and New Mission Statement Adopted

Cultivating vital communities, vital conversations, and the public good are at the heart of a new strategic plan approved by the board of trustees. The plan builds upon PTS’s reputation for educating leaders for service in both congregations and the wider community and includes new statements and new programs to reach broader audiences.

The new identity statement reads: Phillips Theological Seminary offers theological education dedicated to learning the way of Jesus in order to cultivate vital communities, vital conversations, and the public good. PTS’s newly stated mission is to learn and teach how to be: attentive to God; responsible biblical and theological interpreters; faithful individuals and communities acting with God to transform the world.

When asked why the seminary made these changes, PTS President Gary Peluso-Verdend responded, “The world of graduate theological education for ministry is in the midst of a radical change. At PTS, we’re reimagining the seminary enterprise.”

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- Gary Peluso-Verdend, PTS President

designed to facilitate broad-ranging conversation among adherents of different religious traditions. PTS aims to prepare individuals for life and work in religiously diverse communities.

The FaithLife Connections (FLC) program is a topical, weekend lecture and workshop series where PTS faculty members will present Friday nights and Saturday mornings at a local congregation in each of 7 cities. FLC will be offered twice per year over a 3 year period. The PTS faculty has also opened selected courses in biblical languages and also biblical studies for non-degree students. In addition, a General Studies graduate certificate is available.

The new public statements and programs are the first fruits of a strategic planning cycle in which the seminary’s board has been engaged since February 2011. The new language for the statements was developed after input from faculty, staff, students, alums, clergy and seminary friends. Over the course of several months the statements and goals were then drafted and revised before being approved by the Board of Trustees on May 11, 2012.

The new mission and identity statements and strategic goals are available on the seminary website, as well as a question and answer session with President Peluso-Verdend. Visit www.ptstulsa.edu/definingidentity.
New Certificates & Diplomas Announced

The PTS faculty approved three new certificate and graduate diploma programs late in the spring semester. The new programs are in biblical studies, biblical languages (graduate diploma only), and general theological studies.

Certificate programs are for students who wish to attend class and do readings, but do not want to receive academic credit. Graduate diplomas are made up of courses from the PTS master’s curriculum and allow students to receive master’s credit in a specific area without completing a full degree program.

Alums who have completed a degree may have interest in gaining further training in biblical languages and may know of others, such as teachers in their church’s religious education programs, who would like to learn scholarly approaches to scripture to enhance their teaching.

The general theological studies certificate and diploma are flexible programs that enable interested students, with guidance from an advisor, to choose courses that will provide professional and personal enrichment.

All programs are 15 hours in length. More information on these programs can be found at www.ptstulsa.edu/CertificateandDiplomaPrograms or contact Linda Ford at 918-270-6463 or linda.ford@ptstulsa.edu.

New Interreligious Understanding Program

PTS announced the launch of a new and innovative certificate and graduate diploma program in Interreligious Understanding beginning this Fall. By facilitating a broad-ranging conversation among adherents of different religious traditions, PTS aims to prepare interreligious leaders for religiously diverse communities.

“We can’t love others whom we make no attempt to understand, and at the same time, we cannot understand others whom we do not first respect and love.”

- Don A. Pittman, PTS Dean and William Tabbernee Professor of the History of Religions

The courses begin in the Fall of 2012. The first course “Contemporary Native American Traditions,” will be offered on six Thursday evenings beginning August 23. The instructor will be Dr. Richard A. Grounds, a Yuchi/Seminole leader and scholar who received his Ph.D. in the History of Religions from Princeton Theological Seminary. The second course “Contemporary Christian Traditions,” will be offered on six Thursday evenings beginning on October 4. The instructor will be Dr. Ellen J. Blue, Mouzon Biggs, Jr. Associate Professor of the History of Christianity and United Methodist Studies at PTS. She received her Ph.D. in History from Tulane University.

Other courses in the 15 semester-hour program will include: Contemporary Jewish Traditions; Contemporary Islamic Traditions; Contemporary Hindu Traditions; Contemporary Buddhist Traditions; Perspectives on Religious Pluralism; Reading Scripture; Religion, Literature, and the Arts; and Religion, Politics, and Law.

Courses are scheduled so that a person can take two courses per semester. Field trips may augment the class sessions.

This program is designed for adults who recognize the need for greater interreligious understanding and cooperation. Individuals may enroll with or without a desire for academic credit. All are expected to read basic class-related materials for informed class participation. However, unless an individual enrolls for academic credit, there are no faculty-evaluated written assignments or tests. Costs for the program are as low as $120 per course. Interested individuals may contact Linda Ford, Director of Student Recruitment at linda.ford@ptstulsa.edu or 918-270-6463. For additional information, visit www.ptstulsa.edu/interreligious.
PTS Awards Degrees at Commencement

Commencement exercises were held on Saturday, May 12, at 11:00 a.m., at the First Christian Church of Tulsa. Dr. Bernard Brandon Scott, Darbeth Distinguished Professor of New Testament, gave the faculty reflection. Lori Marie Walke and Jared Vazquez, PTS graduating seniors, gave the student reflections. Dr. John M. Imbler, Stephen J. England Associate Professor of the History of Christianity and Disciples Studies and Special Assistant to the President, presided.

PTS awarded 24 degrees and certificates in three programs: Certificate in Graduate Theological Studies (2), Master of Theological Studies (3), and Master of Divinity (19).

Certificate in Graduate Theological Studies: Glenn Otis Gardner, Sr. and Joshua Alan Linton. Master of Theological Studies: Modesto Carlos Ramirez-Romero, John Taylor Randolph, and Danielle Suzanne Weaver. Master of Divinity: Lisa Lucile Anderson (honors), Robert John Barrett, Beth Ann Bell (high honors), Valerie Denise Black, Joey Hobart Lewis Crutcher, Jimmy Kenneth Doyle (honors), Zena Featherston (honors), Kelly Gindlesberger, William Burton Hemm, Elizabeth Smith Larkin, Yvonne Marlene Lewis, Cheryl Lynne Newton, Heather Willou Nygard-Scherer, John Christopher Onorato, George Milton Rowe (high honors), Paula Marie Daniel Steinbacher, Jared Vazquez (high honors), Lori Marie Walke (high honors), and Laura Ann West.

2nd Annual Spring Swing Golf Classic a Success

On Monday, April 30, PTS hosted the 2nd Annual Spring Swing Golf Classic at Forest Ridge Golf Club in Broken Arrow, OK. With 146 golfers participating, the event raised nearly $52,500 for student scholarships.

Due to the overwhelmingly positive response, this year’s tournament was expanded to a double shot-gun start. Teams had the choice of playing either in the morning or afternoon. Several individuals, along with local and national companies, sponsored the tournament: Leslie and Mike Moore as grand presenting sponsors; Pam and Terry Carter; Jerry Pittman; Senior Star Living; J & A Group, LLC; Bank of Oklahoma; Stava Building Corporation; Primeaux KIA; Donna and Russ Vanderslice; Pat and Tom Maxwell; Conners & Winters; Warburton Capital Management; Smolen Smolen Roytman Attorneys at Law; Sheridan Royal Properties; KSQ Architects; CMARK Resources, LLC; Tulsa Community Foundation; Mayflower Congregational UCC; Jackie Cooper Nissan; and the Meinders Foundation.

“We were delighted with the large and enthusiastic turnout for our second golfing event. The consensus was that it was great fun and everyone would be back.” said, Spring Swing Chairman, Russ Vanderslice. Other members of the planning committee were Greg Entwistle, Michael Johnson, Mike Moore, Daryl Southard, and Terry Carter.

We would like to say thank you to all the committee members, volunteers, and participants that made the Golf Classic such a great success this year! See you next year!
PTS Faculty & Staff Updates

- Ellen Blue, Mouzon Biggs, Jr. Associate Professor of the History of Christianity and United Methodist Studies, recently held a book signing in New Orleans for her recent publication, *St. Mark’s and the Social Gospel*; she also spoke at a fundraiser for the North Rampart Community Center. She will also present at the Xavier University Women’s Studies Conference “Gendered Perspectives: Recent Scholarship on Culture and Social Justice” this fall.

- Geoff Brewster, Stewardship Director, keynoted and served as camp chaplain for CYF Alpha Conference of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas.

- Belva Brown Jordan, Associate Dean of Student Services, was the keynote speaker at the CYF Conference for the Hi-Plains Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Southwest Region and Christian Youth Leadership Seminar 2012 Christian Church in the Southwest. She also directed Camp Anytown 2012, an event for high school juniors and seniors sponsored by the Oklahoma Center for Community & Justice (OCCJ).

- Sarah Morice Brubaker, Assistant Professor of Theology, joined the board of the Tulsa Interfaith Alliance at the group’s annual meeting on May 17, 2012. “For more than fifteen years, the Tulsa Interfaith Alliance has worked fearlessly for religious liberty, diversity, and mutual understanding in Tulsa.”

- Linda Ford, Director of Student Recruitment, will be a member of Leadership Tulsa’s class #48. Leadership Tulsa is designed to encourage personal and career growth as well as connect an individual to their community.

- Mindy McGrath Sharp, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ethics, helped Hillcrest Medical Center in Tulsa conceptualize, budget for, petition for, and then receive funding and institutional support for a newly organized ethics committee with a subcommittee clinical ethics consultation service. She serves on the committee as a "community member" and will be an educational consultant for both the committee and the consultation service.

- Gary Peluso-Verdend, PTS president and Associate Professor of Practical Theology, and his family, wife Cheri Peluso-Verdend and daughter Eliana, were honored with a Point of Light Award by Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry at its annual meeting in May. The award recognizes individuals for service in the community. The goal of the recognition is to honor a family that models care for the community and shares that vision with their children.