

# Wonder & Word

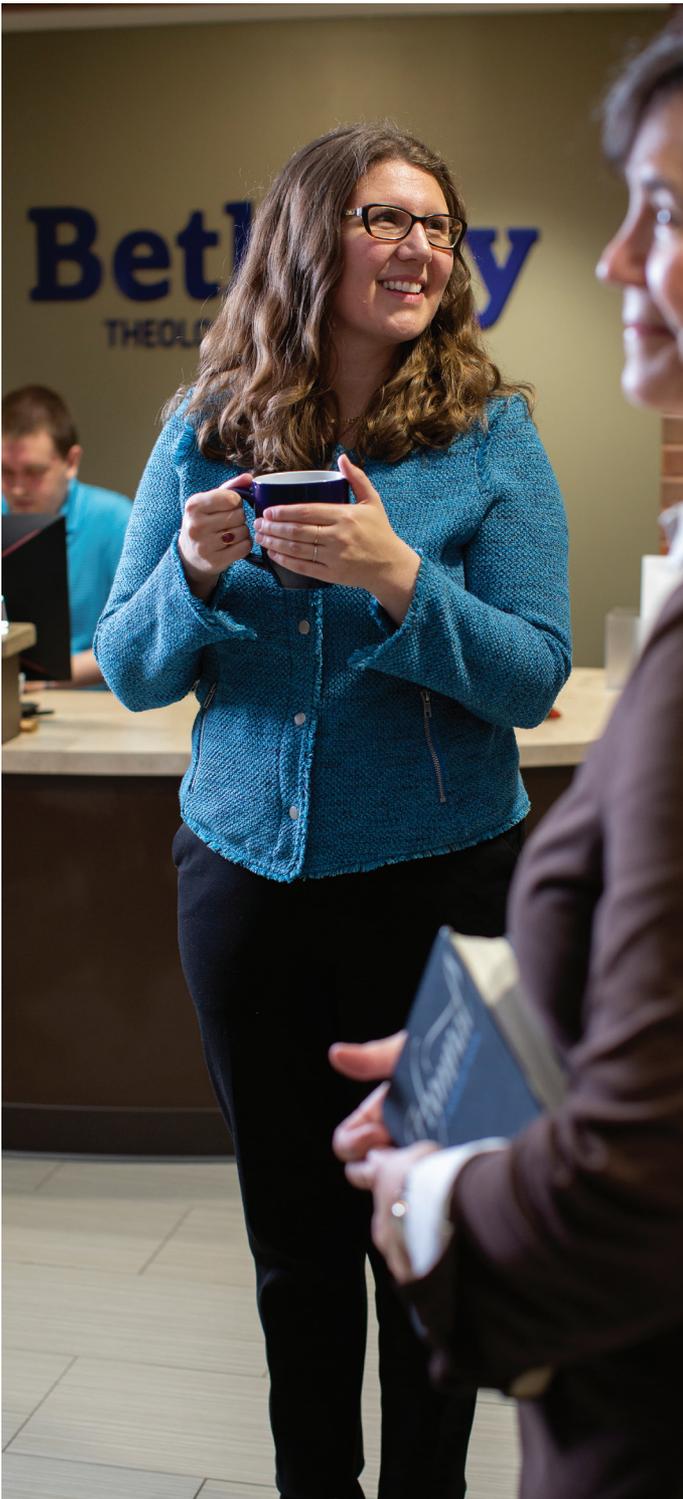
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**What's next for Theopoetics?**



# CONTENTS



- 1** Seeking Unity
- 2** The Evolution of Theopoetics  
BY JONATHAN GRAHAM
- 6** Finding His Path
- 8** Fall Events and Activities
- 9** Introducing Project BOLD
- 10** Meet Dr. Maggie Elwell
- 12** Honing her Voice
- 15** Bethany News
- 20** People and Passages

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY CANDICE HARTSOUGH

## From the President

# Seeking Unity

live by two theological assumptions — based in Ephesians 4. First, God is ever-present, therefore there is always a sense of hope and promise. Second, the gift of unity, again from Ephesians 4, is already present. Our task is to live into the gift God has already given us. This means there is God's hope present when we experience despair, unity where we experience division, life when we face death.



In my work with the World Council of Churches (WCC), I am reminded how essential and how challenging it can be to remain hopeful and to seek peace. This is especially true right now in light of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Working for peace and unity is both a command from God as well as a promise already present. We simply need to realize such a promise. During a meeting of the WCC last summer, what began as a difficult consensus process on a resolution against the war, moved in a surprising, and ultimately hopeful, direction. Through a number of twists and turns, we shifted from a paper resolution to face-to-face talks and negotiations between the WCC and Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch in Moscow and separately, between WCC and members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. From the ideas of peace to the work of peacemaking, it is God's presence and promise which offer hope and a way forward. It is not an idealistic journey but one of faith and faithfulness.

At Bethany, we always endeavor to live into God's promise of peace and unity. We remain grounded in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist

In my work with the World Council of Churches (WCC), I am reminded how essential and how challenging it can be to remain hopeful and to seek peace.

Witness, while offering welcome and hospitality to those who come from other backgrounds. Our theopoetics program — our most-ecumenical and fastest-growing academic offering — is a great example of how the Seminary lives into Ephesians 4. This issue of *Wonder & Word* highlights several examples of how that plays out for our faculty and students. May we all continue to live into the gifts of peace and unity that we have already received.

Blessings

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Carter'.

**Rev. Dr. Jeff Carter**  
*President*



# The Evolution of Theopoetics

With new faculty members contributing to a burgeoning catalog of courses, it is no wonder that students from a wide variety of places, traditions, and backgrounds are finding their way to Bethany's theopoetics program

By Jonathan Graham

**T**heopoetics is definitely a thing. Drawing dozens of students from across the country and a diverse collection of denominations, theopoetics at Bethany has quickly grown from a handful of courses to a robust and varied program in which students — most of whom live at a distance and join classes over Zoom — can take courses not only in poetry and writing but also those that explore theater, various genres of fiction, the visual arts, and various aspects of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the field.

Students from a wide variety of denominations and traditions are finding their way to Bethany Theological Seminary to explore intersections of faith and the arts. The Master of Arts in Theopoetics

and Writing and the Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination programs are now the Seminary's fastest-growing offerings. With the addition of new faculty — and the continued contributions of Professor Emeritus Scott Holland — the program is expanding its scope. Embracing many forms of expression and inquiry, Bethany's theopoetics program is expansive and varied.

Many who join the program are already accomplished writers, poets, visual artists, or performers. Others begin with a curiosity about a particular course, but find freedom and new possibilities in courses that give them the option of completing a creative project instead of an academic paper.

The students include adults who already have



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very full lives — teachers, non-profit leaders, pastors, and stay-at-home parents — who are willing to go to considerable lengths to sharpen their skills as writers and artists, create community with people who have similar interests, and engage challenging material.

The central focus of theo-poetics is on the importance of storytelling and narrative — in all its various forms — and how stories can enrich audiences’ understanding of the divine. As an added bonus, the courses in the program allow students to explore an astonishing variety of texts — from science fiction television shows to novels to the art and architecture found at cathedrals.

“I think students are often pleasantly surprised by how interesting and fun theo-poetics courses are,” says Joelle Hathaway, assistant professor of theological



Dr. Joelle Hathaway

studies and director of the theo-poetics program. “Our students are often already quite knowledgeable about literature and the arts, but the theo-poetics program provides them an opportunity to go deeper and consider material they find fascinating from different angles.”

Hathaway, who joined the Bethany faculty in the fall of 2020, teaches courses on such diverse topics as the poetry of Wendell Berry and the aesthetics of European cathedrals. She says that many students are initially intrigued by the unusual course topics or by the opportunity, in some classes, to hone creative skills while growing intellectually. But the success of the program runs much deeper than what can be gleaned from course descriptions.

“There is a deep investment in students at Bethany. Faculty give them a lot of feedback, and work closely with students to help them thrive. One of the joys of serving as director of this program is that I get to hear students gush about my colleagues and their classes.”

### THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Dr. Margaret “Maggie” Elwell, the Seminary’s newly hired assistant professor of peace studies, contributes to the theo-poetics program as well. As a scholar who studies narrative and the critical theories of violence, she sees the study of literary texts as an important part of theological education, and a place where theo-poetics and peace studies can intersect.

“Reading a novel allows the reader to think another person’s thoughts, and see the world from another’s perspective,” she says. “I think gaining a deeper understanding of the experience of violence is necessary before we can envision peace. And I think studying literature is important for students’ intellectual growth and helpful as they imagine putting their education to practical use.”

Elwell believes that studying fictional narratives can help students better understand the causes of violence, and that such study can encourage them to question societal norms and seek solutions to systemic problems. A fiction writer herself, Elwell also sees that students in theo-poetics benefit from the experience of completing creative projects, because artistic expression can help to build empathy and help

the creator imagine new realities.

“Creative projects help students to respond to problems they encounter,” she says. “We all know that there are violent events happening in our communities, but creating art can help us imagine a different reality.”

Students in Elwell’s classes sometimes encounter upsetting material, and some choose to create work that focuses on subjects related to trauma. Elwell believes that it is important to provide these students with support as they confront fictional narratives that may run parallel to their own experiences, and to push those students to engage as best they can with topics they find difficult.

“As a scholar of peace studies, I want students to take the causality of violence seriously, I want them to consider the roots of the problem, and to question the status quo,” she says. “Theo-poetics is helpful because students can see how theoretical ideas play out in narratives. Studying stories can help students understand the points of view of characters very different from themselves, and it can even help them to envision solutions to societal problems.”



Dr. Maggie Elwell



Dr. Tamisha Tyler

new expressions of faith and understanding of God.

Tyler offers a reminder, however, that the study of theo-poetics is unlikely to lead to certainty, and earning a degree doesn't mark the end of an individual's search for meaning.

"People go to school to know things, but theo-poetics is about things that are open to multiple interpretations," she says. "The best I can do is to articulate sensibilities, and hopefully that will help students discover how to make meaning for themselves."

### A BROADER UNDERSTANDING

As Bethany's theo-poetics program continues to grow, the Seminary attracts a wide range of students. Recent classes have included recent college graduates, those who are already serving in pastoral roles and want to enhance their creative skills, and those who already hold advanced degrees — including master's or doctoral degrees in creative fields — who want to deepen their theological understanding, as well as students who wish to link their artistic expressions more closely to faith.

Already a highly ecumenical program, the faculty members believe that the program has the potential to appeal to students from an even wider variety of traditions. And although writing remains central to the program, the professors are intrigued by the possibility of including more visual arts, theater, and music in the program. After all, the arts are already an integral part of worship in the Church of the Brethren and other denominations.

"It's interesting to me that theo-poetics is so often talked about as if it's a separate thing or a new thing at Bethany," notes Hathaway. "But actually, poetry and the arts have always been a part of the church. A pastor is a poet and a writer. A pastor is a public speaker and often a singer. Pastors engage with church architecture and visual art. So this is not entirely new, and it's not really a break with tradition. What we provide is a more expansive way of thinking and talking about creative expressions of faith." **w&w**

### A DIFFERENT LENS

Dr. Tamisha Tyler, visiting professor of theology and culture and theo-poetics, wrote her dissertation on theo-poetics methods. Tyler will be at Bethany for two years, thanks to a postdoctoral fellowship from the Louisville Institute. She is delighted that her first full-time faculty position allows her to teach advanced courses that draw directly on her passions and expertise — an opportunity that is often reserved for senior professors. And at Bethany her particular interests — which include the novels of Octavia Butler and Afrofuturism — are topics that many students are drawn to.

"At Bethany, I don't have to convince anyone that this subject matter is important and relevant," she says. "Students are excited to explore these texts and how they intersect with theology and faith. They are ready to go there."

The students in Tyler's classes are comfortable studying a novel that is not explicitly Christian and exploring how it can connect to their own traditions and ideas. The imagination in science fiction can encourage students to reexamine their own assumptions and biases, which can lead to



# FINDING HIS PATH

**L**ike many of our students, Nicky Gutierrez's path to Seminary was paved by Google. During his final semester at Capital University (Columbus, Ohio), he was discerning his next steps when a search for "creative writing + religion" hit on the Bethany website and the description of the Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing program. Up until then, Gutierrez had been planning to enter an MFA program in creative writing, even though those programs would not draw directly on his interests in religion and theology. Bethany immediately felt like a fit.

“Studying views of art and society can provide an entry point for people who do not consider themselves religious to enter into conversations about big questions.”

“I thought, ‘why wasn’t I considering this all along?’” he recalls, noting that Bethany’s program brings his creative and scholarly interests together in a way that many graduate programs would not. The MATW program allows students to develop their writing through workshop-style classes along with courses focused on connecting the arts with faith and theology. It has proven an excellent choice for Gutierrez.

“It was divine providence,” he says.

As a double major in creative writing and religious studies at Capital University, he earned the Adelaide Hinkle Undergraduate Prize in Creative Writing and the Outstanding Religion Thesis Award. His religion research paper explored religious pilgrimage, a topic that remains one of his enduring interests.

The summer after his sophomore year, he used an undergraduate research grant to walk 115 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago, which encompasses several routes in Spain, France, and Portugal. His thesis drew on his research into that pilgrimage, as well as the Kumano Kodo, a pilgrimage in the mountains of Japan that takes participants to Shinto and Buddhist sites, and the paper included interviews with pilgrims who had completed both journeys. He studied the demographics of those who had completed these pilgrimages, eventually presenting his research at the Twelfth International Conference on Religion & Spirituality in Society in Cordoba, Spain.

While studying at Bethany, Gutierrez took another pilgrimage — visiting holy and contested sites in Israel and Palestine including the Temple Mount, the Wailing Wall, and the River Jordan. He is interested in taking additional journeys of spiritual significance and studying the metaphors that others have used to describe their pilgrimages. As a Roman Catholic, he has Rome and some locations in Ireland on his list of future journeys.

Gutierrez is simultaneously exploring the theopoetic potential of the haiku form. This work also builds on work he completed as an undergraduate. He developed a particular penchant for haiku and the related forms of haibun (which pairs a brief prose

passage with the condensed form of the haiku) and senryu (which is structurally similar to haiku, but treats human nature ironically or satirically). His published poems in these forms have appeared in such journals and anthologies as *Akitsu Quarterly*, *Modern Haiku*, *AMP Digital Magazine*, *Cold Moon Journal*, *Ohio Haiku Anthology*, and many others. In all, Gutierrez says he has written enough haiku to fill multiple chapbooks.

These multiple modes of inquiry and exploration focus on beauty and the divine, which Gutierrez believes are at the heart of theopoetics, and provide a forward-looking approach to faith.

“As society becomes more secular, theologians need to focus on the connections between culture and the divine,” he says. “We need to look at the intersections between religion and literature, film, and art. Studying views of art and society can provide an entry point for people who do not consider themselves religious to enter into conversations about big questions.”

Gutierrez plans to remain focused on these questions and exploring possible answers to be the heart of his Bethany experience.

“I am still a little surprised this program exists,” he admits. “There are not a lot of graduate programs where students are encouraged to both examine the ways that religion intersects with literature, art, and culture, and also to improve their skills as creative artists.”

Professors and students at Bethany have encouraged Gutierrez to continue writing poetry and to keep developing his scholarship.

“I have had the chance to dip my toes into academia,” he says. “The professors here have been willing to help and support me, encouraging me to present my work at conferences, and talking with me about my next steps.”

After he graduates from Bethany this spring, Gutierrez plans to pursue a doctorate with an interdisciplinary focus, studying religion and literature, en route to an academic career.

“Bethany faculty and students have been so nice and encouraging,” he says. “Everyone here is rooting for me, but also pushing me to do better.” **w&w**

# Fall Events and Activities

The Seminary was able to safely host chapel worship and social gatherings this fall. The community returned to Nicarry Chapel for worship several times this fall, and shared Common Meal gatherings catered by local restaurants. Bethany employees (shown in the middle photograph) also donated canned goods for a food drive just before Thanksgiving, as well as presenting gift bags to residents of a nursing home. Faculty and staff also enjoyed several social gatherings during the semester. **w&w**



Chapel services included a Theopoetic worship service featuring storytelling and special music as well as gathering both indoors and out.

# Introducing Project BOLD

Bethany invites students to Build, Organize, Love, and Dare

**W**ith the support of a \$1M grant from the Lilly Endowment, Bethany Theological Seminary is launching Project BOLD, a new initiative that will prepare students to lead congregations through issues of diversity and division. The rigorous and demanding program will challenge Bethany's best and brightest students to apply their faith and education to address real-world problems, including poverty and racial injustice.

Students selected for Project BOLD will be required to engage in service in the Wayne County community, participate in educational activities (like lectures and training sessions) outside the seminary, and participate in purposeful reflection about their experiences in the program. Participants will receive full tuition scholarships, free housing, and a monthly living stipend.

"The world needs spiritual leaders who are ready to engage with the most pressing issues of the day with grit, faith, intelligence, and love," notes President Jeff Carter. "Project BOLD represents Bethany's commitment to prepare our students to lead others toward healing and unity — so the world flourishes."

"Project BOLD also underscores our commitment to the fundamental value of learning in community. Since 1905, Bethany students have not been content to confine their learning and growth to the four walls of a traditional classroom. That spirit continues today. Participants in this new initiative will forge strong relationships with one another and in the surrounding community as they answer God's call to ministry and service and develop their gifts and talents for leadership."

This competitive, immersive, residential program will require students to commit to academic excellence, community living, and no new debt. By offering opportunities to learn and grow beyond the classroom, the program will provide students with unparalleled opportunities to gain self awareness, develop deeper understanding of community structures, and engage in intensive service work. **w&w**

## Project BOLD

Build Organize Love Dare

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BOLD AT BETHANY?

- Students will **BUILD**. They will do the personal work needed to grow in capacity as a leader who is a capable adult, taking responsibility for their actions and cultivating self-respect.
- Students will **ORGANIZE**. They will make sense of the community they strive to lead by learning how structures and organizations work, developing a nuanced understanding of race and class.
- Students will **LOVE**. They will fully engage in serving as they live out their faith, joyfully offering their heart and whole self in hope of bettering the lives of others.
- Students will **DARE**. They will push and question, seeking the courage and grit to see this challenging project through, living into the uncertainty and ambiguity that accompanies difficult tasks, developing the deep resiliency that leaders rely on.

### PROGRAM ELEMENTS

#### I. Community Service

Students will engage in community service through ongoing assignments and one-time events. These assignments will address real-world problems, including volunteering with underserved and at-risk populations in schools, shelters, and community organizations. Issues of poverty and racial injustice are the focus of these work assignments.

#### II. Learning How Things Work

Students will grow to understand Wayne County, Indiana, by going to a wide variety of organizations and churches. They will also participate in a variety of educational opportunities like lectures and trainings.

#### III. Putting It All Together

There will be a variety of opportunities for students to put together what they are learning, such as coffee conversations with community leaders, weekly debriefing sessions, program leadership responsibilities, and journaling.

Assistant Professor Maggie Elwell has been named director of Project BOLD. Questions? [contactus@bethanyseminary.edu](mailto:contactus@bethanyseminary.edu)



# Meet Dr. Maggie Elwell

**D**r. Elwell arrived at Bethany in the fall from the University of Maryland, where she taught from 2019-2022. She earned her BA from Swarthmore College, her MA in teaching from Johns Hopkins University, and both her MDiv and PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. At Bethany, her courses are broadening the offerings in both Peace Studies and Theopoetics, and she is helping to administer the recent \$1M grant from the Lilly Endowment.

***Your CV already includes varied experiences as a teacher and scholar, teaching college students and middle schoolers, and investigating such varied topics as contemporary crime novels, Russian literature, and the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. In what ways do you see these varied interests and experiences informing your work at Bethany?***

I see being a teacher and scholar at Bethany as an opportunity to do meaningful work well. I'm delighted that my background of teaching in Baltimore City Schools, Princeton Seminary, and the University of Maryland finds resonance with our mission, since I have always loved the classroom as a place of joy and high expectations.

I am a critical theorist of violence, which means my teaching and scholarship involves synthesizing ideas and experiences of that concept with explanatory goals. I am also a narratologist, which means I do this explanatory work about violence through engagement with narratives and their structures and frames. Working via stories is a particularly useful method for Peace Studies because within the field, even outside of a seminary context, we already admit that we are not objective: we are happily, loudly, fully biased toward peace and justice. That is an ethical stance that defies the traditional academic values of objectivity and distance. Likewise, stories are never objective, never able to be held at arm's length; they are always embodied, emotionally and psychologically, with histories of people and places and other stories, with rhythm, with voice. I also like stories as a method because I want what I say and write to be understandable and memorable at many scales, to many kinds of audiences.

**“Each of us has a history of violence.”**

***Your teaching and scholarship appears to center the experiences and memories of people who have experienced violence. Can you talk about how that approach shapes your teaching in Peace Studies?***

Each of us has a history of violence: individually and culturally. I am talking about personal sufferings of violence and things done or left undone; and I am talking about issues of race and racism, gender and sexuality, wealth and poverty. My stance is that you have to start with these histories to get to where we want to go. Genuine peacebuilding -- the kind that makes sense and feels solid, the kind that walks with a firm gait and has both its eyes open -- requires a robust mental concept and a visceral engagement with those histories of violence. Understanding violence requires not just

information or propositional and theological arguments about it, but intellectual and visceral engagement in the tragic choices it forces and the moral quandaries it poses. Peacebuilding cannot happen, and it does not happen, without that reckoning.

***What are some new courses you are teaching or planning that you find particularly exciting?***

I'm excited about all my courses, but there's three I'll highlight. Race, Racism, and Religion: Bridging the Sunday Morning Divide, which will be offered for the first time in Fall 2023. We'll look to explore why Sunday morning is still the most segregated time in the U.S., discussing and experiencing the meeting of race and religion in America.

A course called Policing and Prison begins in Baltimore with the community responses to the 2015 death of Freddie Gray after his arrest. From there we will look at the history of the development of the police and the prison in order to understand the conversations and long-held beliefs of various stakeholders. The goal is understanding the topic's complexity for the purpose of successfully navigating congregational and community feelings and perceptions of policing and criminality for prophetic teaching, discussion, preaching, and other kinds of leadership.

Truth, Lies, and Trust in Storytelling explores memoir, fiction, and personal narratives when memories disagree, events are forgotten or misremembered, and generational memories morph over time. Where's the line between the true and the real?

***You will have the opportunity to shape Bethany's Peace Studies program. What are some of your interests and ideas in that area in particular?***

First is that understanding violence is a key component in seeking and working for peace. Students should be able to think about violence at different scales and tempos and to know the connections between physical violence and societal oppression.

Second, the Peace Studies program at Bethany will have a visible impact on students' approaches to the relationships in their lives in regards to issues of peace, violence, and justice at individual, close-relational, community, and societal levels.

***Almost as soon as you joined the faculty, you got involved in planning ways to get Bethany students more involved in community engagement. What connections do you see between that work and your teaching and scholarship?***

Peace Studies is an area of academic study that requires significant, sustained commitment to justice, so developing prospects for students in community engagement is necessary in order for me to do my work and to be a person of integrity. And, importantly, it gives me joy. **wow**

# Honing Her Voice

**K**elsi Folsom has been a part of just about any kind of church experience you can imagine — from Episcopalian to Pentecostal. Rather than encouraging her to pick a single expression of faith, these divergent experiences have driven her to keep exploring the many available expressions of faith and exploring her own experiences — including the painful ones — with honesty, eloquence, and a comfort with the unknowable.

“I am too curious, and God is too big, for just one form of expression,” she says.

Folsom has found many ways to explore creativity and faith. She earned a Bachelor of Music from Anderson University, and she has performed professionally in opera and musical theater. She has lived internationally — in Italy as a child and in the Caribbean as an adult — and participated in mission and service trips. More recently, she has focused on writing and has published three books of poetry, including *Breaking the Jar*, published in 2022 by Finishing Line Press.

Folsom wrote the poems in the collection in response to trauma she experienced as a child and young adult, and she hopes they can be especially helpful to other women who have had similar experiences and are working to rebuild their faith and sense of security. “The poems are exploring the question, ‘what does it mean to bring the inner child back to life?’”

Originally from Texas, Folsom now lives in Lima, Ohio, with her husband, a medical resident, and their four young children. She recently began work towards the Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing. She appreciates how the flexibility of the program, and the availability of financial aid, have made it possible for her to make time for her writing and explore theology more deeply.

“Entering the MATW program showed me there is a community of people like me! Since I am a mother and a person who has moved around a lot, it is not always easy to connect with others and find space for my creativity and theological

explorations. Getting to know my classmates has given me an awareness that there are others who value this work in the margins of their lives.”

Although she wasn’t familiar with theopoetics before she learned about Bethany, Folsom says that the courses and approach offered at the Seminary align with her interests and educational goals.

“As I started writing poetry more seriously, I found that the poets I was most drawn to are pastors, mystics, and theological thinkers,” she says. “I am the type of person who reads scriptural commentaries and theological books for fun! The courses I have taken at Bethany marry my various interests. I think this program is a perfect match for how I was created to inhabit the world.”

While studying at a distance, Folsom has formed relationships with fellow students through private messages, and through shared enthusiasm for, and engagement with, books and ideas. She finds it encouraging to know that, like her, her classmates have full lives, yet still seek out opportunities to engage with big ideas, discover creative expressions for their faith, and support one another.

“I sometimes wish I could be at Bethany in person. My classmates and I can’t meet at a coffee shop to talk about class, but there is still a strong connection,” she says. “This program is like an online monastery. It is challenging and life giving. It keeps me in contact with the work.”

Looking to the future, Folsom hopes that the MATW will bring an added degree of credibility and authority to future books that she writes, and to make her, “a more informed pastoral writer.” She looks forward to using her knowledge and talents to bring people together, perhaps hosting a meeting space where individuals who are interested in theology and arts might come together.

“I hope to help others find a safe space to explore their faith and grow in their understanding,” she says. [w&w](#)



“As I started writing poetry more seriously, I found that the poets I was most drawn to are pastors, mystics, and theological thinkers.”



# Stock Up on Bethany Gear!

Looking for new apparel to celebrate your favorite Seminary?  
The Bethany Merchandise store features shirts, hoodies, jackets, hats, and more!



**Bethany Grey Hoodie**  
\$35



**Bethany Baseball T**  
\$22



**Bethany T-shirt Green**  
\$20

Check out the latest Bethany styles at:

**[bethany-theological-seminary.square.site](http://bethany-theological-seminary.square.site)**

## \$1M GRANT TO BRIDGE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDES

Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded Bethany Theological Seminary a grant of \$1M in support of a new initiative focused on preparing pastors to help congregations embrace diversity and address divisive issues. The grant will enable Bethany to build bridges across differences in three areas — experiential learning, institutional partnerships and improved curriculum.

The grant is being made through Lilly Endowment’s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. It is a three-phase initiative designed to help theological schools across the United States and Canada to prioritize and respond to the most pressing challenges they face in preparing pastoral leaders for Christian congregations both now and into the future.

With the grant, the Seminary will hire a new employee to coordinate ministry formation and community engagement, develop new courses, expand partnerships with other seminaries, and provide additional opportunities for students, faculty members, and staff to thoughtfully engage with diversity in many forms.

The Seminary is one of 84 theological schools that are receiving a total of more than \$82 million in grants through the second phase of the Pathways initiative. Together, the schools represent evangelical, mainline Protestant, non denominational, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Black churches and historic peace church traditions (e.g., Church of the Brethren, Mennonite, Quakers). Many schools also serve students and pastors from Black, Latinx, Korean American, Chinese American and recent immigrant Christian communities.

The Seminary intends to use this new funding to better equip students to be “bridge builders” — helping congregations have fruitful conversations about difficult topics during a time of deep ideological and political divisions in the United States.

“We are grateful for the trust and generosity of Lilly Endowment,” says President Jeff Carter. “As we worked with our friends at Lilly to develop our grant proposal, it was clear they saw something special and out-of-the-ordinary in what we were proposing. It is an honor to have Lilly make a philanthropic investment in our mission and vision. This gift will be transformational.”

Among the new initiatives made possible by this grant are:

The hiring of a new Coordinator of Ministry Formation who will focus on developing new field education placements and assist residential students with securing community engagement opportunities.

The creation of several new courses, including an



introductory course for students living in the “Bethany Neighborhood.” (The “Neighborhood” is a group of houses where the Seminary provides affordable housing for students as part of an effort to help students earn degrees without additional debt.) The grant will also fund continuing education courses that will bring together Church of the Brethren pastors from other parts of the U.S. with ecumenical pastors from the Midwest.

New support for faculty members to create independent projects related to their teaching, focused either on introducing new content or new teaching techniques related to the goals of bridge building.

The expansion of a partnership between Bethany and New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey, to include new opportunities for cross-cultural education open to students from both institutions.

“This grant will provide us an opportunity to transform the educational experience we are offering to students,” notes Carter. “We ultimately want to see our students better prepared to lead congregations in communicating across divisions and forming community in diverse contexts. We seek to become better connected to congregations for the sake of sharing resources and fostering community. We want to empower professors to help students bridge ideological divisions and embrace various forms of diversity. We also seek to make Bethany more hospitable to diverse people, especially people of color, in its policies and communal life. We are excited to begin this exciting and crucial work.”



## NEW SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Erika Clary has joined the Institutional Advancement team in the newly created role of Social Media Coordinator. Clary is a 2020 graduate of Bridgewater College with a degree in mathematics. She served as National Youth Conference coordinator for the Church of the Brethren this year, and she previously worked with Discipleship Ministries for the denomination. In both roles, social media was part of her portfolio. She plans to begin the MDiv program at Bethany in January, with the eventual goal of becoming a college chaplain. “We are delighted that she will bring her intelligence, energy, and good ideas to her work with the Institutional Advancement team in this new, part-time role,” notes Jonathan Graham, director of marketing and communications.



## BILINGUAL JANUARY COURSE IN LOS ANGELES

In January, Bethany offered an intensive seminar in intercontextual biblical interpretation titled, “Prójimos Amados: Lecturas Intercontextuales de Santiago” / “Beloved Neighbors: Intercontextual Readings of James” in the Los Angeles area. Taught by Dr. Dan Ulrich, Wieand professor of New Testament studies, the course was bilingual, and included both English and Spanish-language speakers, and it included a bilingual bible study that was open to the public. The course included discussion of the relevance of James’s teachings for their respective communities. Seminary students also visited a variety of congregations and programs that model practical love for neighbors in southern California. The purpose of this mutual learning experience was to deepen the understanding and practice of Christian faith in ways that embody God’s just peace and that help neighbors and neighborhoods flourish.

The group from Bethany stayed for nine nights at the Lestonnac Retreat Center in Tustin, California. Students met at The Principe de Paz Iglesia de los Hermanos (Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren) in Santa Ana for class discussions as well as for a bilingual Bible study workshop on James on January 21-22. The workshop was open to the public and included members of the Principe de Paz congregation as well as other area churches. Participants had the opportunity to practice intercontextual interpretation of a biblical text that remains highly relevant for immigrant communities.

While in Los Angeles, Dr. Ulrich and students spent time getting to know the neighborhood, including visits to several local organizations involved with social services and community engagement.



## GIFT FROM FIRST BANK RICHMOND SUPPORTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

First Bank Richmond has made a gift of \$100,000 to Bethany Theological Seminary. The gift is designated to the Bethany Neighborhood, a program of the Seminary designed to foster a sense of connection between students and encourage engagement with the surrounding community. The gift signals a continued partnership between the Seminary and a leading financial institution in the region.

“We are humbled and honored by the generosity of First Bank Richmond,” says President Jeff Carter. “First Bank has been a key supporter and friend of the Seminary for many years, and we are grateful for their continued support of our mission. We are thrilled to work with them to support our students and to strengthen the Richmond and Wayne County communities.”

The gift will support student scholarships, student housing, and efforts to get students more deeply involved in community organizations. It underscores the Seminary’s commitment to a forward-looking graduate education that pushes students to minister, serve, and lead in a variety of contexts — in church settings and other organizations. The gift will also strengthen the Seminary’s ongoing efforts to provide a pathway to debt-free education to its students.

“Bethany Theological Seminary is truly a gem, and we are very happy to support their efforts to provide high quality graduate education and to produce graduates who are prepared to make contributions to this community and society as a whole,” notes Garry Kleer, president of First

Bank Richmond.

First Bank Richmond was founded in 1887. In addition to providing banking and lending services to businesses and individuals, it is also committed to supporting local organizations. In 2021, the Bank contributed more than \$500,000 to local nonprofit organizations and 60 percent of staff members served on a committee or board of a nonprofit.

Bethany Theological Seminary relocated to Richmond in 1994. Since then, many alumni have chosen to make Wayne County their long-term home. Locally, Bethany alumni have been active in education, ministry, and nonprofit leadership.

The gift from First Bank comes as the Seminary is expanding opportunities for students to engage with local nonprofit organizations as part of their educational programs, an effort that is funded, in part, by a recent grant from the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis. The First Bank gift will help the Seminary to welcome more residential students who will study, minister, and lead while living in Wayne County.

“For many years, our students have volunteered with local organizations,” notes Carter. “But we know that our students are capable of more. Our vision is that students bring energy and ideas that will allow them to lead change in these organizations. Generous benefactors like First Bank and Lilly are positioning us to make a real difference in the community!”



## INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR ON THE ROAD

Dr. Dauda Gava, international scholar-in-residence, has traveled extensively this fall, visiting the campuses of Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania), Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pennsylvania), and McPherson College (McPherson, Kansas) — as well as churches and retirement communities in those areas. Gava’s busy speaking schedule has included Sunday sermons, public lectures, college class visits, and presentations in adult Sunday school classes and at retirement homes. The focus of these talks has been peacemaking efforts in Nigeria.

Gava is a faculty member and former provost of Kulp Theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria. He has taught a January Intensive course (in collaboration with Dr. Dan Ulrich) on the Book of Romans and a semester-long class on Philipians. A Pauline Scholar, he has been writing a commentary on the book of Titus while at Bethany.

During his recent travels to Pennsylvania and Kansas, he was joined by Mark Lancaster, special assistant to the president for international partnerships, and Sam Locke, executive director of institutional advancement.

## HOLLENBERG-DUFFEY JOINS BRETHREN ACADEMY

The Rev. Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey will join the staff of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (BAML) as part-time Coordinator of English-Language Ministry Training Programs, with a start date of Dec. 1, 2022. Hollenberg-Duffey is co-pastor (with her husband, Tim) of the Oakton Church of the Brethren (Vienna, Virginia.). She will continue to serve that congregation on a part-time basis.

Hollenberg-Duffey is a 2011 graduate of Bridgewater College and earned her MDiv from Bethany Theology Seminary in 2014. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. She has served in leadership roles for the Church of the Brethren and its Mid-Atlantic District. For the past four years, she has been a member of Bethany’s Board of Trustees, including serving as Vice Chair.

For BAML, which has its offices at Bethany, Hollenberg-Duffey will take on a leadership role in planning and implementing non-graduate, certificate-level ministry training programs for English-speaking individuals who are seeking ordination in the Church of the Brethren. Central to these programs are Training in Ministry (TRIM) and Education for Shared Ministry (EFSM). Hollenberg-Duffey will remain based in Virginia, but she will travel as needed for orientations and program support.

“We are excited to welcome Audrey to the Brethren Academy team,” says Rev. Janet Ober Lambert, director of BAML. “Audrey has a deep love for the church —on the local, regional and national level — as well as a passion for lifelong learning. She will be an inspiration for ministry training students, an encourager for colleagues seeking continued education, and a thoughtful partner for those of us engaged in providing ministry education in the Church of the Brethren.”

At BAML, Hollenberg Duffey will join a team responsible for a variety of initiatives, including continuing education for clergy and laity alike as well as Strength for the Journey, a program which fosters small-group educational experiences for ministers in the Church of the Brethren.

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## PEOPLE AND PASSAGES



### FACULTY AND STAFF ACTIVITIES



President **Jeff Carter** recently became chair of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce. He is in his second year as president of the Richmond Symphony Orchestra board.



Director of Marketing and Communications **Jonathan Graham's** play *The Boy Who Loved Monsters and the Girl Who Loved Peas* received its tenth production in April 2022 at Toronto Youth Theatre.



During the summer Professor Emeritus **Dr. Scott Holland** gave a number of sermons and conference presentations based on a new publication, "A Theopoetic Anatheism for a Post-ecclesial, Post-secular Age?" *CrossCurrents Journal*, Volume 22, Number 2 (June 2022).



**Dr. Denise Kettering-Lane**, associate professor of Brethren Studies and director of the MA program, made several presentations during the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in July. She also gave a talk on the Brethren tradition at Manchester University this fall. An article, "Jesus Began to Weep," is forthcoming in *Brethren Life and Thought*.



**Terri Mitchell**, financial aid and student development assistant, was honored by the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce as HYPE (Helping Young Professionals Engage) Wayne County Committee Member of the Year.



In July, **Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm**, Brightbill professor of preaching and worship, presented the Wardlaw Lecture in Preaching at The University of Chicago, as part of the Association of Chicago Theological Seminaries doctoral program. She also traveled to Budapest for a biannual gathering of Societas Homeletica, serving as a member of the International Board. Other notable speaking engagements included presentations for the Central Pennsylvania and Missouri Arkansas districts of the Church of the Brethren.



**Dr. Dan Poole**, assistant professor of ministry formation, was a recent guest preacher at York Center Church of the Brethren and Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren. He also gave presentations about technology and the church for the Mid-Atlantic District and Brethren Academy.



Academic Dean **Dr. Steve Schweitzer** delivered a paper at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in November 2022, titled "Utopia and Dystopia from Jotham to Josiah in Chronicles: Questions and Possibilities," in a Joint Session of the Utopian Studies Consultation and the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section.



Schweitzer also co-taught an equipping Bible study session for the Northern Plains District (Church of the Brethren) with **Dr. Dan Ulrich**, Wieand professor of New Testament. The theme was "The Messiah's Birth in Matthew."

### ALUMNI IN MEMORIAM

**James Eberly Sr.**, Training in Ministry 1992, May 15, 2022.

**Thomas J. Clark**, Education for a shared ministry 1987, May 26, 2022.

**J. Ronald Mummert**, Doctor of Ministry 1989, June 28, 2022.

**Sylvus D. Flora**, Doctor of Ministry 1988, June 8, 2022.

**Peter J. Leddy Sr.**, MDiv 1977, passed away July 6, 2022.

**Madalyn Minehart**, student, September 27, 2022.

**Paul W. Hoffman**, MDiv 1957, September 20, 2022.

**Glen M. Faus**, October 4, 2022.

**Horace E. Huse**, BD 1965, October 14, 2022.

**H. Lamar Gibble**, BD 1956, October 29, 2022.

**Alan G. Kieffaber**, BD 1964, November 2, 2022.

**L. Dwight Farringer**, BD 1952, November 7, 2022.

### NEW ORDINATIONS AND LICENSURES

**Staci Peterson**, MA 2017, ordained October 2, 2022 by the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District.

**Mycal C. Gresh**, MDiv 2018, licensed October 22, 2022 by the Mid-Atlantic District.

#### Future students can request information at:

[bethanyseminary.edu/admissions/request-more-information](https://bethanyseminary.edu/admissions/request-more-information)

#### You can make a donation at:

[bethanyseminary.edu/donate](https://bethanyseminary.edu/donate)

#### Keep up to date with what's happening at Bethany:

[bethanyseminary.edu/category/news](https://bethanyseminary.edu/category/news)



## ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Master of Divinity

Master of Arts

Master of Arts: Theopoetics and Writing

Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation

Graduate Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies

Graduate Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking

Graduate Certificate in Intercultural Biblical Interpretation

Graduate Certificate in Just Peace and Conflict Resolution

Graduate Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination

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## Wonder & Word

is a magazine for alumni and friends of Bethany Theological Seminary, published biannually and free of charge by the Institutional Advancement Department.

## MORE ABOUT BETHANY

Bethany Theological Seminary has a history of adapting its program to meet the changing needs of the church and society. Now, in a religious and spiritual landscape characterized by uncertainty, Bethany will uphold its mission by embracing and articulating its Anabaptist-Pietist identity and reaching both within and beyond the church to serve a broader, more diverse constituency. Hallmarks of Bethany's education will be

1. an interdisciplinary approach to learning;
2. integration of theory and practice;
3. increasingly diverse programs of study.

- Anchored in its commitment to academic freedom, Bethany expresses a prophetic witness rooted in a deep theological understanding of scripture and the Anabaptist-Pietist traditions of disciple making, peace building, and advocacy for justice.

- Bethany claims a position as a center for the study and practice of emerging areas of religious interest across faith traditions.

- Blending academics with application and spiritual formation, Bethany exemplifies impactful learning, developing servant leaders with theological understanding, sensitivity, and skill to forge genuine change in church and community.

- Engaging people of diverse religious, geographic, and social backgrounds, the Bethany community nurtures respect for differences and sustains spiritual empowerment for students and alumni.

*Our mission and vision are enhanced by partnerships with the Earlham School of Religion and those that make educational opportunities accessible in other locations: graduate courses through the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and nongraduate study and continuing education through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.*

## EDITOR

Jonathan Graham

## DESIGN

Darren Hendricks

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The Bethany community enjoys gathering for fellowship and food from local restaurants during our regular Common Meals.

We are grateful for your prayers and support during this and every year. Please consider making a gift of support at [bethanyseminary.edu/donate](https://bethanyseminary.edu/donate). So that the world flourishes.