

# **United Theological Seminary Trotwood, Ohio**

## **“Questions and Answers in the Presidential Transition” April 2007**

### **Why is President Zeiders leaving UTS? Is there a problem?**

At the invitation of Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, Dr. Zeiders is returning to Central Pennsylvania Conference to serve as Senior Pastor of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, a large congregation located immediately adjacent to the campus of Penn State University at State College, PA.

In addition to Ed’s desire to complete his pastoral career within the Central PA Conference and its leadership team, he and Joan have frequently spoken enthusiastically about being closer to their children and grandchildren. Eddie, too, is looking forward to being closer to his sisters, nephews, and niece.

As we have heard again and again, the Zeiders family is thrilled to serve United Theological Seminary and with the school celebrates all that is being accomplished. Be assured there is no problem that has caused the Zeiders family to leave UTS in order to return to Pennsylvania.

### **Who decides how the school moves forward?**

The Board of Trustees of United Theological Seminary owns and operates the school in collaboration with the United Methodist Church and its many partners. The future of the seminary is determined by the Board of Trustees who will take into consideration the programs, partnerships, and countless opportunities ahead in discerning the very best and brightest future for the seminary, the community, and the larger church.

### **What is the timeline for the transition?**

Dr. Zeiders will be preaching at St. Paul’s Church on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, but his transition to Pennsylvania is being negotiated in order to capitalize on the current development conversations, program enhancements, and partnerships that are an essential part of United’s work at the moment. It is expected that Ed will be fully engaged in the life of St. Paul’s Church by November.

### **How will the Board of Trustees communicate with the school’s partners and constituents?**

Marjorie Putman, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees is sharing information through “town meetings” on campus, email updates, the seminary website, and various forms of correspondence to our community and constituency. For information about the transition, please contact JoAnn Wagner, Director of Communications at United. JoAnn can be reached by calling 937-529-2201 or [jwagner@united.edu](mailto:jwagner@united.edu).

### **How will Ed’s leaving impact the current strategic planning process?**

The Board of Trustees affirmed and adopted the strategic plan at its February 2007 meeting. As a result the Board intends to carry out the plan to its fullest potential beginning in July and continuing through the five-year plan period. While there may be amendments to the strategic plan as time unfolds, the Board sees no interruption in services or program development. Dr. Zeiders will continue to serve in a consulting role to assist the seminary alongside others on the school’s leadership team.

### **What is the condition of the school at this time?**

United Seminary is uniquely placed to continue its aggressive programs of clergy and laity training through degree programs, the Centers of the Institute for Applied Theology, and continuing education. The school has a premier academic plan and excellent faculty leading to a most impressive educational experience and professional development for our students. The school continues its commitment to preparing Christ-centered leaders for the church through vital piety, life-long learning, and the pursuit of justice.

Further, the Board is moving forward with the Master Plan for the development of the campus and the building of the new chapel. The Capital Fund Campaign, *A Legacy for Tomorrow*, is nearly half way toward the total goal of \$18 million in cash, pledges, and deferred gifts. The seminary has made a heavy investment in the relocation to the new Trotwood campus, requiring very careful cash flow analysis, a strong emphasis upon operating gifts, and growth in enrollment. In contrast to where the seminary had been a number of years ago, the Board believes the school is at an important juncture and looks forward to the ongoing growth and sustainability of the institution. The school is working diligently to balance this year's operating budget and deeply appreciates the financial support of its constituents.

### **What conversations are currently underway about United's future?**

The Board of Trustees of the seminary, along with the President, has been in conversation with various representatives of the United Methodist Church to assure the church of the seminary's commitment to continue its programs and the development of the new campus. The search for an interim and eventually a full time President at UTS has been undertaken with the full disclosure of the Board's intention to move forward. Responses thus far have been very positive and supportive.

Over the course of many years, since the EUB and Methodist merger in 1968, there have been several attempts to define or determine a different relationship between UTS and The Methodist Theological School in Ohio [MTSO]. Both schools are free standing seminaries owned and operated by their respective boards of trustees.

The most recent study in 2003, conducted by Auburn Seminary and funded by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville, encouraged the two schools to continue to explore collaboration in the most meaningful and beneficial way for both institutions and the church. Dr. Zeiders and President Jay Rundell at MTSO have been encouraged by the possibilities for collaboration and have affirmed that such collaboration may be very useful to the West Ohio Conferences and the United Methodist Church as well.

The Board of Trustees has made very clear statements about the future of UTS and our intentions to continue our collaborative work with MTSO and other seminaries and institutions to provide the best educational experiences possible for our students, and the most effective and useful utilization of the Ministerial Education Fund [MEF] distribution.