

## **Memphis Theological Seminary**

Rev. Dr. Jonathan L. Jeffords, Director Methodist House of Studies

For nearly four decades, Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) has been a leading institution in the Mid-South producing graduates who are commissioned as elders or deacons in The United Methodist Church. United Methodist students continue to be the largest denomination represented at our school. Earlier this year, the University Senate approved MTS for listing for the preparation of candidates for ordination without qualification. We are proud to have met this standard. We work with intentionality to maintain it.

Like institutions of theological education across the country, enrollment for Master of Divinity students has declined. We are evaluating how best to stem the tide through the utilization of innovative strategies and solutions to keep theological education within reach for all women and men seeking to live out their call to ministry. Our current modalities are: in person; “hyflex,” in which students are present both in the classroom and online; synchronous online; asynchronous online; and monthly hybrid, where students work online except for one day of the month when they come to campus. While we continue to evaluate and adapt, we maintain the value and import of the on-campus experience in community with other students, and are seeking creative ways to achieve it while offering more online options. As in previous years, our Doctor of Ministry programs remain robust.

### **Wesleyan Studies at the Seminary**

Memphis Theological Seminary is pleased to report that theological education for United Methodist students continues to remain vibrant and forward-looking. The seminary completed the endowment of the Hamilton and Varnell Chair in Wesleyan Studies in November 2019. This endowment was made possible by generous lead gifts from Mrs. Barbara Hamilton and the late Dr. Ralph Hamilton, as well as Mrs. Jeanne Varnell and the late Mr. Henry Varnell. The endowment ensures the future of Wesleyan theological formation at MTS and supports the Methodist House of Studies (MHOS) at MTS.

After a long hiatus due to the pandemic, the MHOS is relaunching its work with Dr. Jonathan L. Jeffords as director, following in the footsteps of previous directors, Dr. Lee Ramsey and Dr. Michael Turner, both of whom were instrumental in its founding. Among the most immediate tasks of MHOS is to reconnect with current students from the pan-Methodist traditions, as well as to resource and support them in their educational journeys while offering counsel to students in preparation for their work with Boards of Ordained Ministry. In the Spring 2023 semester, Dr. Jeffords taught the course “Dementia Through a Pastoral Theological Lens” in collaboration with former UMC Bishop Kenneth L. Carder. This course has attracted a wide range of students and auditors.

We are grateful for the support of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Annual Conference and for the alums from the conference who faithfully serve the church today. With this report we remember MTS alum, the Rev. Dr. Autura Eason-Williams, in whose memory and by whose example we seek to shape leaders centered in scholarship, piety, and justice.

We appreciate the confidence that the conference places in MTS for preparation of United Methodist women and men for Christian ministry, and we welcome your ongoing involvement and prayers for the seminary. For information about the Methodist House of Studies and Memphis Theological Seminary, we invite you to visit us at [www.MethodistHouse.org](http://www.MethodistHouse.org) and check [The Good News from MTS](#) for regular updates.