

**The Methodist House of Studies at Memphis Theological Seminary**  
**Rev. Jonathan L. Jeffords, D.Min., Director, The Methodist House of Studies**

On behalf of President Jody Hill and Interim Dean Carmichael Crutchfield, I bring greetings from Memphis Theological Seminary, an ecumenical mission of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church. For decades, Memphis Theological Seminary has been a leading institution in the Mid-South, producing graduates in preparation for ordination as deacons or elders in The United Methodist Church. MTS deeply values its listing as an approved non-United Methodist seminary. We are committed to academic rigor, spiritual formation, and vocational preparation for United Methodist students in their pursuit of ministry.

MTS has experienced numerous transitions in the last academic year. Dr. Mary Lin Hudson, our most senior faculty with almost 35 years of service, retired. Our Dean and professor of Christian ethics, Dr. Peter Gathje, moved on to embrace a new opportunity. Their contributions to MTS and pastoral leaders cannot be overstated. Across the country, theological education is undergoing a paradigm shift of some magnitude. Free-standing, independent seminaries and divinity schools must rethink how they offer education. MTS is no different. With the '23-24 academic year, the MDiv moved from 84 to 78 hours. The entire degree can be obtained online except for three one-week residencies and some courses requiring one in-person session per month. We continue to offer in-person classes for those who prefer them. For long-term sustainability, the MTS Board is seeking permission from The General Assembly of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church, to whom the institution is utterly amenable, to pursue a partnership with another institution. While in the very early stages, these conversations are meant to solidify MTS's presence for decades to come.

Transitions continue within The Methodist House of Studies and with the departure of Dr. Michael Turner at the end of the '22-'23 academic year. We are particularly grateful for Dr. Turner's significant contributions to MTS and MHoS. In the era of online learning, MHoS must rethink how it creates community among the UMC, AME, and CME families. In November of '23, MHoS hosted an online presentation by Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff. MHoS hosts meals to support community building and fellowship when students are on campus.

For the upcoming academic year, MHoS has proposed the establishment of an annual lecture named for Rev. Dr. Autura Eason Williams, an MTS alumna. We look forward to launching this with great celebration and meaning as it works to keep the things that framed her ministry before future generations of Methodists.

Our coursework for United Methodist students has undergone recent revisions. Our previous format had United Methodist History, Theology/Doctrine, and Polity occur over two three-hour courses. With the 23-'24 academic year, we established History and Theology/Doctrine courses for 3 hours each. Polity is also a 3-hour course and is now a two-week Summer intensive, giving students the opportunity to integrate their education with their participation in their respective annual conferences and to consider in real time the implications of any actions of The General Conference impacting the polity of the Church. We are blessed to have Dr. Thomas Hermans-Webster partner with MHoS to teach the Disciplinary required courses. Tom is a member of the North Alabama Conference and holds a Ph.D. from Boston University. Upon approval, MTS will establish an affiliate faculty relationship with him going forward.

We appreciate the confidence that the Conference places in MTS for preparing United Methodist women and men for Christian ministry, and we welcome your ongoing involvement and prayers for the Seminary. During these days of transition, MHoS welcomes your ideas and input.