



## NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

### WHAT IS YOUR VISION?

We envision a diverse community of scholars and practitioners at the forefront of the integration of biblical and theological competency and missional leadership. We seek to form pastor-theologians and send them out into the world with the ability to evangelize, educate, and disciple communities using Scripture as their guide. We also seek to lead and transform communities through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### WHAT KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS DID YOU ACHIEVE IN THE PAST YEAR?

We live and minister in exciting times at North Park Theological Seminary (NPTS) where we have recently launched several new, innovative programs that we plan to expand in the near future.

These programs are a major reason we welcomed 177 students last fall—one of the largest incoming classes in recent history. We have been blessed to continue to see new growth year after year in our diverse community at the seminary.

We also launched the School of Restorative Arts at the Stateville Correctional Center with a cohort of 38 students who learn alongside non-incarcerated students in working toward a master of arts in Christian ministry (MACM) degree with an emphasis on restorative justice. It is the only program of its kind in the country.

After years of effort, the School of Restorative Arts was launched, thanks to the tireless efforts of Dr. Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, director of the school. Students take courses part-time and can complete the MACM degree in four years. In a few short months, we have already seen this program transform students' lives as well as the culture inside the prison.

Additionally, in the fall of 2018 we launched our second cohort of students in the Ignite West program. The program makes it possible for people who already are serving a Pacific Southwest Conference congregation to complete a seminary degree while continuing to serve in their ministry position. We welcomed 37 additional students, bringing the total number to 75. Through a tuition-sharing partnership among the seminary, conference, local churches, and each student, we are able to keep student debt to a minimum.

Classes are offered through intensives taught at Mission Springs Camp and Conference Center in Scotts Valley, California, on-campus in Chicago, or at the Midwinter Conference each January. Classes also are offered online.



FIRST YEAR CLASS

**177**  
STUDENTS  
ENROLLED



**75**  
STUDENTS  
ENGAGED IN  
IGNITE WEST

## Agenda Item 33.b.



**\$3**  
MILLION  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
INVESTMENT



STATESVILLE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTER  
**2ND**  
COHORT  
SCHOOL OF  
RESTORATIVE ARTS

We continued to improve an already high-quality program in response to a 2017 extensive reaccreditation visit from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), which is required every 10 years. We received accreditation for an additional 10 years. Through the process ATS required NPTS to enhance the assessment policies for both our degree programs and as an institution overall. Following this visit, our staff and faculty have been working hard to implement a culture of assessment within the seminary. This past fall, we received a commendation from ATS for the tremendous amount of work that had been done in the area of Degree Program Assessment in the past year. We are grateful as a seminary community for the hard work of our Assessment Team and the rest of the faculty and staff who have transformed the culture of assessment.

We began extensive renovations in 2018 to Nyvall Hall, which has been the seminary's home since it was built in 1946. This past January, we celebrated the renovation of Isaacson Chapel and the Deans Lounge, Olsson Lounge, the kitchen, two classroom spaces, and several offices. This work was made possible through the generous gifts of many donors to the Renewing Nyvall Campaign as well as an allocation from the University's strategic fund. In all, the project cost just under \$3 million.

### WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR?

We are excited that in the fall we will launch a second cohort in the Stateville program and anticipate 40 new students. For the first time, residents at three other prisons in Illinois were allowed to apply to the program and will be transferred to Stateville if they are accepted.

We are in conversation to bring the Ignite model to two additional conferences in 2020 and are looking at other opportunities to expand, as well.

Several smaller renovation projects in Nyvall Hall will be completed this year.

We are grateful for the denomination's continued support as we seek to serve the whole church.

**DAVID KERSTEN**



*Vice President for Church Relations  
and Dean of the Seminary*

**Rev. Dr. Dennis Robert Edwards**  
Open to the call to serve as  
**NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**Associate Professor of New Testament**  
Faculty Member



Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Edwards is currently Associate Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary (Lisle, IL) and the author of *1 Peter in the Story of God Bible Commentary* series. Dennis has over thirty years of urban pastoral experience. He most recently served as senior pastor of The Sanctuary Covenant Church in Minneapolis, MN.

Prior to that, he was the founding pastor of Peace Fellowship Church in Washington, DC; associate and then lead pastor of Washington Community Fellowship on Capitol Hill; and founding pastor of New Community Church in Brooklyn, NY.

Dennis holds a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering (Cornell University) and has been a high school science and math teacher. He also earned a Master of Divinity degree in Urban Ministry (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) as well as Master of Arts and PhD degrees in Biblical Studies (Catholic University of America).

Dennis is married to Susan Steele Edwards and they are the parents of four adult children and have two grandsons. Dennis enjoys playing his flute and saxophone, as well as weightlifting, cycling, and playing racquetball as much as possible.

