

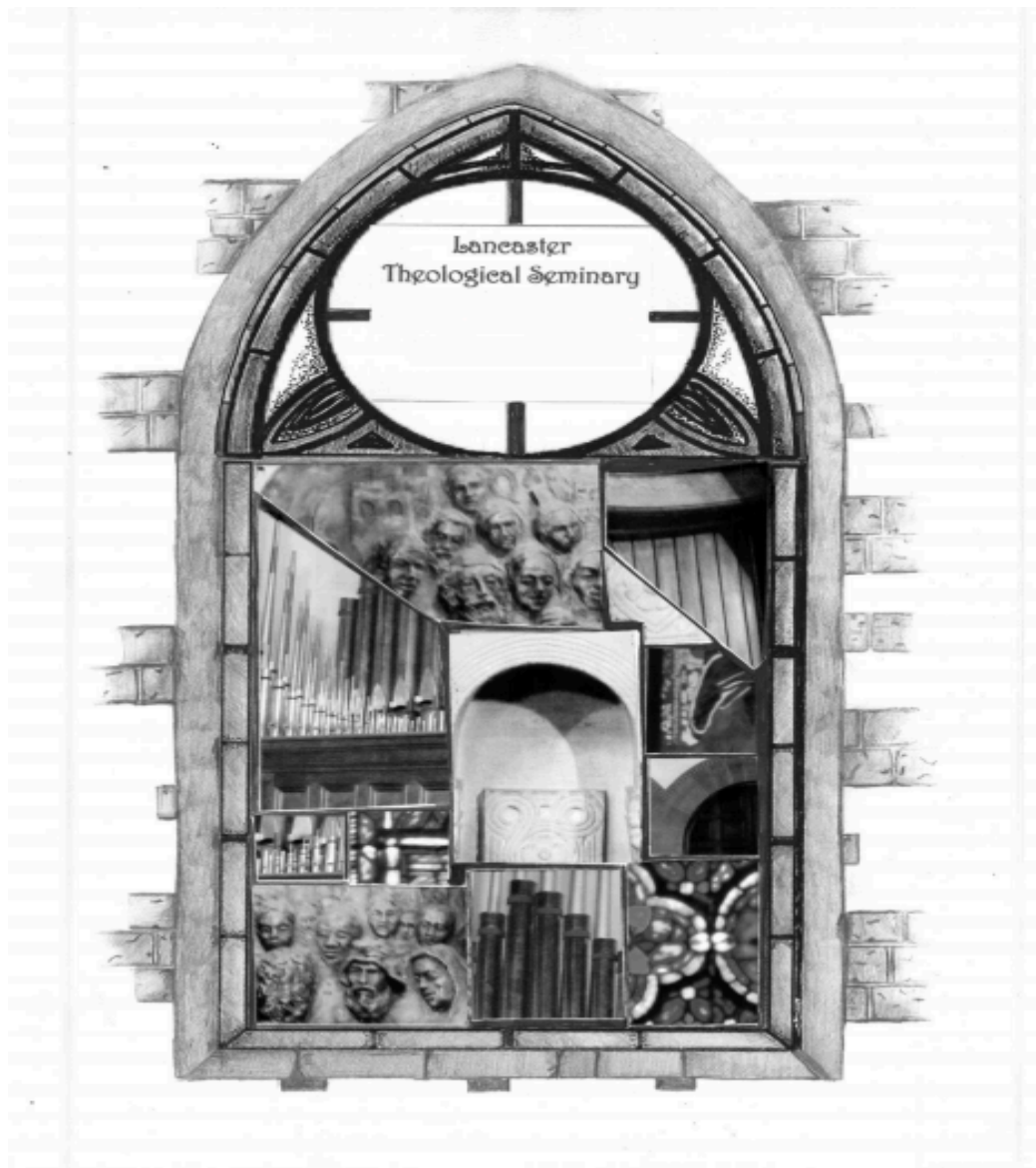
BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

MAY 4, 2024



You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all.

2 Corinthians 3:2



A composite rendering of several aspects of Santee Chapel at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

GATHERING AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

PRELUDE

“BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR”

ARR. CLAY CHRISTIANSEN

WORDS OF WELCOME

DEAN LOVELACE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

DEAN RAGSDALE

God of relentless surprises, you speak to those others have ostracized

Your love and wisdom knows no boundaries.

In our sorrows and joys, in the face of systems that bring oppression, and on the streets seeking justice

your presence is always close.

Your ways challenge our binary views of one another, unsettle us, and encourage us.

May we lean into your loving presence in this place in all the shapes that it takes form.

*OPENING HYMN “CALLED AS PARTNERS IN CHRIST’S SERVICE” vs. 1-3

NCH 495

*CONFESSION & WORDS OF ASSURANCE

[All are invited to turn toward the Baptismal Font.]

Divine Spirit of everlasting presence, you are always much closer to us and to all than we can fathom. Yet we forget that you dwell in others when we distance ourselves from the lives of others and your creation.

We treat others and this earth as if they are not sacred. We fall short in the pursuit of justice and bring harm to others when we haven't worked through our own issues.

[Time of Silent Confession]

And yet, again and again, Divine Spirit, you are there. Holding us in the mountains of your grace, through the light breeze of your presence, you speak to us and remind us that we are beloved.

Thank you God for your never ending grace and love. May we live lives transformed by your love so that others may do the same.

Sing! Shout! Rejoice! Do not be afraid. God is with you always. In the name of the risen Christ we are forgiven. **Amen.**

*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

You are invited to pass the peace to each other in a way comfortable to you and your neighbor.

Peace be with you!

And also with you!

Let us share this peace with one another through appropriate gestures and signs.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

POEM

“THE FIRST VERB”

ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

In this poem, St. Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th century German Benedictine nun, presents her view of the Spirit
“...as the Person of the Trinity who does and moves and soars and heals and makes all things happen.”

Student: David Yost

The Holy Spirit animates all,
moves all,
roots all,
forgives all,
cleanses all,
erases all
our past mistakes,
and then
puts medicine on our wounds.
We praise this Spirit of incandescence
for awakening
and reawakening
all
creation.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Great Spirit of all creation, may we lean into your presence even now. May you guide our hearts to receive your word - written, spoken, and unspoken. Amen.

A reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 1 through 6.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are qualified of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our qualification is from God, who has made us qualified to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Word of God, for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

SERMON

DR. ANNE THAYER

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

HYMN OF RESPONSE

“CALLED AS PARTNERS IN CHRIST’S SERVICE” vs. 4

NCH 495

BACCALAUREATE LITANY

Graduates, faculty, alumni/ae, and the whole assembly share in an act of reflection, self-offering, and prayer.

Dean Ragsdale Today is a gift from God. Gathered on the edge of a milestone, we offer to God what we have to give: ourselves and the stirrings of our hearts and minds. Let us bless God.

ALL Blessed be God!

Graduates Strange, surreal, like a high peak where we can look back over the way we've come and ahead to where we have not yet walked. Exciting! Scary! We're ready!

All Blessed be God!

Faculty We did our job- coaching, challenging, encouraging, risking our passion in hope that they would not only graduate, but believe in themselves as gifted, compassionate people who are contributors in a world that needs them.

All Blessed be God!

Alumni/ae Tradition and vision mean so much to us: God, love, justice, faith, hope, kindness, the Golden Rule, the Great Commandments, the Seven Principles, and so many life principles in which our faith traditions are grounded. May the holy and divine Life of the world be a pathway for you as you commence your journey and find your way.

All Blessed be God! How good it is to share this moment of anticipation: grateful, alive, feeling whole, and entering into the rest of our lives. Thank you, God, for this milestone. Amen!

SERVICE OF THE TABLE

OFFERTORY

INSTRUMENTAL

***THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

The Holy One be with you

And also with you

Dean L. Open your hearts to the One who is Love

We open our hearts to you, O God

Let us give thanks to God, our life-breath

To the One who sustains us, we rejoice in your presence!

With gratitude, O God, we remember that it is through you we are made truly alive. Every creature and creation – the tiny ones, the scaly ones, the human ones, the leafy ones – all that is has been shaped by you. There is nothing on this earth that has not been touched by your Sacred hand. In your love for us, you claim us – individually and as a whole – as your beloveds. You will for us life abundant and you invite us into co-working with you towards a world where harmony among all life is restored.

And yet, daily, we turn away from you and one another. Destructive and divisive powers lure us away from connection and relationship. We forget

that we need each other. We pretend that our lives are not deeply entangled. When injustice threatens our neighbors, we too easily cower or hide. Like those who turned on Jesus when things became too difficult, we too are tempted to desert those most vulnerable.

But you do not abandon us to our fear or sin. In the life of Jesus, Love enfleshed, we are shown that the invitation to join in your work of transforming and healing and restoring is always open. No matter our past. No matter our regrets. No matter the wrong done to us or the wrong we have done to others, you keep calling us back to you.

This relentless invitation of yours that entices with freedom and joy and forgiveness is such a threat to empire that it still attempts to crucify every incarnation of your love today. And so, we are reminded of the example given to us in the person of Jesus. On the night of his arrest, he gathered around table with his companions.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” He did the same with the cup after the supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out is the new covenant.”

And so in remembrance of the One who never gave up on love, we pray that the Spirit would make us one in our commitment to the liberation of all your creatures and creations.

Pour out your Spirit on this bread and this cup, that through these ordinary gifts, we might taste a glimpse of your Kingdom. May they be for us a reminder of what we are capable of becoming and what we are capable of accomplishing together. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

We have a few COVID related options for those who wish to partake. If you wish to receive from the ministers, take an empty cup from the stack on the aisle table and approach the minister, who will place a piece of bread in your open hand. All bread is gluten free. Or you may take one of the sealed celebration cups with the wafer on top and juice beneath; hold them out to the minister for a blessing. A minister will pour grape juice into your cup. Eat, drink, and dispose of the cup in the waste baskets at the side aisles as you return to your seat.

If you are unable to come forward, please signal the ministers, and we will come to you at your seat. Those who prefer not to partake in Communion are invited to a different

kind of divine encounter through an interfaith prayer of blessing. If this is your preference, we invite you to meet the minister at the baptismal font.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at this table where Christ is the host.

COMMUNION SONG

“AS WE GATHER AT YOUR TABLE”

NCH 332

GOING FORTH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

PRESIDER

God, we give you thanks for this meal that nourishes us, body and soul. May it sustain us as we confront evil that keeps us from living the lives you intended for us and for all your creatures and creations. Until every life can be lived abundantly, be our guide, be our hope, be our comforter. Amen.

***CLOSING SONG**

“SENT FORTH BY GOD’S BLESSING”

NCH 76

PARTING WORDS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEANS RAGSDALE & LOVELACE

BENEDICTION & CHARGE

DR. ANNE THAYER

POSTLUDE

“AND AGAIN I SAY REJOICE”

BRENDA PORTMAN

REV. SCOTT SICILIANO, ORGAN

*Go forth knowing that you have a Divine presence offering you
Protection, love, guidance, freedom, and so much more.
This is just the beginning.*

Thanks to today's musicians, Rev. Scott Siciliano '16, and Jenna Duranko '26.

CLASS OF 2024 GIFT

The paraments that adorn the chancel today are the gift presented to Lancaster Theological Seminary Santee Chapel by the class of 2024. These were made by Lancaster artisan Sarah Clarke with fabric purchased during the 2023 Ghana cross-cultural trip.

Cover Art: Composite rendering of several aspects of Santee Chapel, by Rev. Dr. Ronnette Comfort-Butler, '08, '20. Used with permission.

Poem: St. Hildegard of Bingen, "The First Verb," from *St. Hildegard of Bingen – Doctor of the Church: A Spiritual Reader*, by Carmen Acevedo Butcher, Brewster, MA:Paraclete Press, 2013., pg. 26 and 36.

Communion Liturgy: From <https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/ordinaryworshipsettings/#different>

**The worship planning team creates all other parts of the liturgy except where noted.*

LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WORSHIP TEAM

*Equilla Curry '24, Chynaah Maryoung-Cooke '21, Patricia Hall '24, Jack Kasander '24, Stephanie Oelrich '24, Cam Richesson '23, Rev. Dr. Kellie Turner '18., and DV Yost '24.
Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams, Advisor*

THE WORSHIP TEAM SEEKS:

*To serve the universal church of our Creator.
To minister to the unique and diverse needs of the seminary community.
To foster an expansive culture of worship that values difference and challenges the normative.*