

# COMMON THREAD



MORAVIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2020

## IN RECOGNITION OF OUR 2020 GRADUATES

Life as we knew it stopped very abruptly in March 2020. But what did not get derailed was the hard work and forward motion of our seniors. Classes went online, placements sites met virtually, theses were defended on Zoom, students became teachers to their children also learning online, and each of our seniors rose to the occasion and completed their degrees. At our senior's request, the May 2020 Commencement Ceremony was rescheduled to late August in order to gather in-person. We were fairly confident that life would return to normal by August 29th.

So on May 9th, 2020, President Grigsby conferred degrees and certificates all by himself for 25 MTS seniors. We took to Facebook and honored each of our graduates with an individual post and shared the winners of the graduate awards. As the summer unfolded and our understanding changed regarding the magnitude and length of time it would take to overcome a global pandemic, we recognized that our traditional in-person, Commencement Ceremony would not be possible in August, let alone at any date during this calendar year. We remain hopeful and continue to plan to honor our 2020 graduates at an in-person service in May 2021 in tandem with our 2021 graduates.

We are pleased to recognize those who completed their degrees during the unforgettable year of 2020 and share the positions they have accepted and their unfolding plans.

Two students earned the Master of Arts in Chaplaincy. In December 2019, **Colleen Smith** completed the degree and is planning for additional degree work in education.



The 2020 Graduates. Since 1994, Christmas City Studios has taken professional photos of our seniors and created framed senior composite. The final months of the spring semester were at the height of the quarantine in Pennsylvania, with no chance of a professional photographer coming to MTS or our seniors going to their studios. Christmas City Studios worked with us on an alternative plan and used the photos submitted by our seniors to create the 2020 composite, which hangs alongside ones from previous years in the hall of Bahnsen Center.

Earning her second degree from MTS, **Desna Henry Goulbourne '16 MATS** will continue to serve as pastor of the United Moravian Church in New York City.

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## 2020 COMMENCEMENT PRIZES

- The **Cora Doster Moses Memorial Homiletics Prize** is granted to a member of the graduating class of Moravian Theological Seminary for the best work done in preaching and practical pulpit work: **Linda Wisser MDiv**.
- The **Rev. Elmer Bender Memorial Award** recognizes a graduate preparing for ministry in the Moravian Church with exemplary qualities of leadership and integrity: **Desna Henry Goulbourne MACH**.
- The **Henry Gerdson Memorial Prize** recognizes intellectual, personal, and professional growth, as well as a commitment to involvement in the MTS community: **Jessica Morris MATS**.
- The **Faculty Academic Prize** recognizes high academic standing and superior creative scholarship: **Victoria Aitchison MATS**.
- The **J. Taylor Hamilton Biblical Language Prize** is awarded for the best work in Hebrew: **Charlie McDonald**.
- The **Barbara Martin Stout Counseling Prize** is awarded to a graduating MACC degree candidate who has shown outstanding academic achievement and professional development in the ministry of counseling. This year the award was granted to two outstanding students: **Ilia Morales** and **Jacqueline Ré**.
- The **Rochelle N. Pavlov Santiago MACC Prize** is awarded to an MACC candidate whose clinical practice led to the improvement of the mental health and well-being of the disenfranchised, the underserved, and the less privileged: **Diomarys Nunez MACC**.
- The **Herman T. Frueauff Memorial Prize in Moravian History** is awarded for outstanding class work and research in the field of Moravian history: **Scott Rainey**.



## Graduates Cont.

Four students completed the Master of Arts in Theological Studies. **Victoria Aitchison**, who completed the Certificate in Spiritual Direction in 2016, will continue to serve as Director of Development of the Parents Program of Lehigh University. **Lisa Johnson** added the Biblical Studies Certificate to her MATS degree and will continue her position in the Moravian College Registrar's Office as Student Transfer Credit & Articulation Analyst. **Jessica Morris** added the Spiritual Direction Certificate to her MATS degree and looks to develop a Spiritual Direction practice while continuing as Director of Prospect Research in the Advancement department at Albright University in Reading. **Paul Silwamba** returned to his home in Zambia and has plans for further studies.

**Linda Wisser** earned the Master of Divinity and in late September was installed as pastor of East Hills Moravian Church in Bethlehem. Two students completed their MDiv degrees in the summer. **Kris Geer** will return to Minnesota in November where she will serve three UCC congregations in the northern part of the state. **Jane Matsinger**, who added a Certificate in Biblical Studies to her MDiv, will remain local as her ministry with the UCC unfolds.

Eleven students graduated with the Master of Arts in Clinical Counseling degree. In April, **Jerome Bell** accepted a position at an agency near Portland, Oregon, serving as an Intensive Needs Service Coordinator working with people facing homelessness. Several MACC graduates began positions upon graduation, including **Berjanelle Budier** (clinician at CONCERN Behavioral Health Services), **Dio Nunez** (serving underserved populations), **Ali Scirrotto** (psychotherapist at Pinebrook Family Answers, Allentown), **Colleen Torrey** (therapist at The Harleysville Counseling Group), **Jackie Ré** (program director of Haley House, a transitional home for women coming out of addiction in Blairstown, NJ), **Ilia Morales** (therapist for Kids Peace Community Program at Sacred Heart Hospital in Allentown), **Christina Siewert** (family-based clinician for Holcomb Behavioral Health). **Angela York-Crane** was accepted at The Philadelphia Jung Seminar, a forum for advanced Jungian studies. After completing the MACC, **Angela Kelly** moved to Brooklyn where she is pursuing other vocational interests. **Charlie Gardner** earned the MACC to complement his volunteer work in retirement and meets with individuals referred to him by his pastor and also is becoming a Big Brother for the Big Brother Big Sister organization in the Lehigh Valley.

**Eight of our degree students graduated with Distinction, with a GPA of 3.9 or higher:** Victoria Aitchison (MATS), Jerome Bell (MACC), Charlie Gardner (MACC), Lisa Johnson (MATS), Ilia Morales (MACC), Jessica Morris (MATS), Jackie Ré (MACC), Christina Siewert (MACC).

International travel was very difficult at the height of the quarantine. After several cancelled flights by airlines and harsh restrictions in place for travelers from the US, Paul Silwamba '20 MATS, headed home to Zambia in July and sent a photo as proof that he made it.

Every other year a cohort of students in the Spiritual Direction Intensive program complete their graduate certificate. Five individuals completed the program and each of these individuals looks to begin a Spiritual Direction practice or incorporate Spiritual Direction into work they are already doing. In addition to working full time, **Miriam Martin** provides individual spiritual direction and has a radio broadcast out of NY that focuses on Spiritual Direction and fields questions from callers about spiritual issues. **Karen Sensenig** has developed a Spiritual Direction practice which compliments the oil lamps she creates at her pottery studio in Ephrata, PA. **Linda Unser** MATS '17 leads an online spiritual direction group and writes a spiritual direction column in her church newsletter. **Maggie Wellert** MATS '99, MDiv '00 has been empowered to share support, care, and love to individuals on their own conscious journey toward relying on God. **Jennika Borger** MDiv '01 infuses much of this experience into her work as Chaplain at Moravian College and Moravian Theological Seminary and in individual and group direction sessions.

**Congratulations to our 2020 graduates, who truly rose to the occasion as their last semester turned upside down.**

Acknowledgment needs to be given to our faculty also, who had to switch their lesson plans and course delivery from in-person to online within a window of 10 days. As new vocations and ministries unfold and as the pandemic continues to grip the world, may the lessons of the spring semester continue to benefit us all. Here are a few that have echoed in our halls. Change is constant. Remain hopeful, creative, and safe. Show grace. We will be able to hug again. Until that time, take good care and blessings to our newest alumni. Δ



When asked what your quarantine time looks like, Jennika Borger 'MDiv 01 and Spiritual Direction '20, shared a photo with her children. Jennika serves as the Chaplain at Moravian College and Moravian Theological Seminary.



Linda Wisser '20 MDiv, with her family at her installation ceremony at East Hills Moravian Church.



Jessica Morris '20 MATS always take the time to capture a photo on a special day. Here she was commemorating her "last first day" of class at MTS.



Karen Sensenig '20 Spiritual Direction Certificate, displays her clay work from her studio at [www.dancinglifelamps.com](http://www.dancinglifelamps.com)

# ENDURING LEGACY

## MTS Dean Emeritus William W. Matz

When news of the passing of the former MTS Dean, Rev. Dr. William W. Matz, rippled through the Moravian Seminary community in June, it was met with an outpouring of memories from alumni, faculty, and friends. Bill died at the age of 93 on Thursday, June 11, in Bethlehem. He had served as Dean of Moravian Theological Seminary for 17 years from 1971-88, and during that time championed many changes and innovations at the Seminary that we continue to benefit from today. Bill's family designated the Seminary as a one of the recipients of memorial gifts. As those gifts arrived, many included letters sharing an enduring memory of Bill. Notes affirmed him as kind, pastoral, and deeply caring. Memories recounted his guidance, fellowship, and words of wisdom he shared during particularly difficult times.

Craig Atwood, Interim Dean at the Seminary, was in the last graduating class under Dean Matz and adds to those memories of the former Dean:

Bill Matz was one of the few deans to come directly from the parish rather than from the faculty, and throughout his tenure he focused on making sure that MTS students were prepared for the practical realities of ministry. He was a visionary leader who helped create the Moravian Seminary we know today. When he arrived in 1971, the Seminary had a few classrooms and a residence hall on the main campus of Moravian College. In just a few years, he built Bahnsen Center, a modern integrated academic building housing faculty offices, classrooms, and common areas and purchased properties on Main Street to serve as student apartments.

Bill wanted to make sure that members of the Moravian Church, Seminary alumni, and local church leaders were aware of what was happening at the Seminary, so he created a newsletter, called *Accents*, and established the Alumni Association. He also instituted the Mobile Seminary program that sent Seminary faculty to offer courses for lay persons in many parts of North America. He played a key role in the Lay Academy, which was a precursor to the Crossroads program of lay leadership development.

Bill believed that ministry takes place in the world, not just in church buildings, and he was active in the local community, which included organizing a Business Ethics program with Bethlehem Steel. Working with the Seminary faculty, in 1981 Bill expanded our degree programs to include the Master of Arts in Theological Studies and the Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling (now MA in Clinical Counseling), which included increasing the size of the full-time faculty from four to six. He also set up a collaboration with Drew Theological Seminary to offer the Doctor of Ministry degree. Other notable achievements during his tenure included hosting the Moravian World Ministry Convocation in 1986 and the Rural Life and Ministry Conference in 1987.



A photo from the MTS 1984-87 Catalog. Dean Matz is second from the left with participants and presenters at a Mobile Seminary event in North Dakota.

A native of Bethlehem, Bill graduated from Moravian College in 1950 and Moravian Theological Seminary in 1955. That same year he married Mary (Dill), who was later a student at the Seminary and the first woman ordained in the Moravian Church, Northern Province. Bill was ordained a deacon and presbyter in the Moravian Church, Northern Province, and for his first pastorate he founded the Hilltop Community Moravian Church near Utica, NY. After serving sixteen years in four congregations in NY, OH, and PA, Bill answered the call to become Dean of Moravian Theological Seminary and Vice President of Moravian College. When he left the Seminary in 1988 he returned to the pastorate, serving the Edgeboro Moravian Church in Bethlehem.

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# TAKING A FEARLESS INVENTORY

Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch



**In May 2020, Frank Crouch completed his work as VP and Dean of Moravian Seminary and began year-long sabbatical before retiring next June. He took a one-week break between his duties as Dean before beginning a deep and passionate examination of slavery and racism in the Moravian Church. His research focuses on the theological underpinnings of white supremacy in the Moravian expression. He began with Zinzendorf and Spangenberg and continues to discover ways that white supremacist assumptions lie embedded in Moravian practices. He joins others in tracing those assumptions from the days of the 18th century global mission movement until now, in the predominantly white Moravian congregations of North America and the decision-making processes that govern their Synods.**

In 2016 while preparing lectures on Moravian use of scripture, Frank came across 18th century (white) Moravian "justifications" for enslaving black people. His dismay was intensified in the fall of 2019 while participating in the Southern Province Moravian Ministries retreat with Dr. David Hooker, Associate Professor of the Practice of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding from Notre Dame. Dr. Hooker led the group through an exercise in which they examined and built narratives around the "good parts" of the Moravian story, the parts of which they were not so proud, and the narrative the group would want Dr. Hooker (or anyone else) to tell others about Moravians. This exercise along with many other personal and professional experiences, has driven Frank to uncover racist elements within the Moravian story. As Dr. Hooker noted, "if there are racist elements in the beginning, the more embedded they are, the longer they are in your story, the harder it is to recognize them and transform them by adopting new practices at all levels of ministry."

In his research, Frank started examining the first Moravian missions in St. Thomas. Because Moravians were having trouble preaching to the slaves, they bought a plantation, a practice that continued in Suriname, America, and elsewhere. The often-proclaimed story celebrates Moravians' desire to "preach to the slaves," yet underneath that story lies the additional fact that black human beings were also enslaved by those same Moravians. "In reading about the mission in the Caribbean," shares Frank, "I came to realize the extent that slavery was a part of Moravian experience."

After five months of research, Frank has read thousands of pages of primary documents and taken over 700 pages of notes. Of particular importance to his research thus far are *The Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, which includes 13 volumes and spans from 1752–1876. In addition he has poured over the official Memorabilia written by Edward Rondthaler and J. Kenneth Pfohl, covering the years 1877-1961. "You learn a lot about the general sense of Moravians," he says, and notes

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## YEAR OF TRANSITION

With the announcement that Dean Frank Crouch he would be going on sabbatical until retirement in June 2021, President Grigsby invited tenured faculty member Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood, Charles D. Couch Chair of Moravian Theology and Director of the Center of Moravian Studies, to serve as Interim Dean while a search for a new Dean got underway. As a result of Craig's transition to Interim Dean, Rev. Dr. Riddick Weber took up the position of Director of Moravian Studies, leaving his position as Chaplain of the Seminary. Rev. Jennika Borger, who has been Chaplain of Moravian College since 2013, now serves as Chaplain of both the College and the Seminary.

A search committee for a new Dean for the Seminary has begun the work of carefully and thoughtfully identifying candidates to lead the Seminary into the next (hopefully post-Covid) time in the Seminary's life.

## Crouch Cont.

that it was “stunning” to see amongst everyday events decisions that had such life-altering impacts on other human beings: “the decision to start buying slaves; to start enslaving people; to watch how, after the Civil War is over, in the Salem area they changed the by-laws to take the words master and slave out. You can read the congregational diaries and board minutes. You can read them laying the groundwork for Jim Crow internally.”

Overall, “It’s been mind blowing,” says Frank, describing what this research has revealed to him. “As another Moravian minister said, it’s like Step 4 in a 12-step program: taking a fearless inventory. I’m joining others in looking at the good, the bad, and the ugly.”

Frank alternates between examining Moravian history with contemporary readings on race from authors such as Audre Lorde and Christina Sharpe. *In the Wake* by Christina Sharpe has been particularly helpful to him. Sharpe explores life in the aftermath or “wake” of slavery, using the image of a ship making a wake. Frank explains that Sharpe sees herself “in the wake,” and using her framework, he sees himself on the ship that’s making the wake. This image has given him different ways of looking at his role and position in racism today.

*The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* by Margaret Bendroth, which Heather Vacek, Vice-Chair of the MTS Trustees and Dean of the Faculty at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, recommended to him, has been very helpful in helping him frame his examination of the Moravian approach to slavery and racism. Bendroth argues out that it is not helpful to simply point out that our ancestors made mistakes or made the wrong choices. Remembering is not about wagging our fingers and thinking that we are better. “That’s not the point,” he says, “and we don’t have any ground to stand on. We can only criticize the mistakes as a way to help us know how not to repeat them.”

### What’s next

Frank expects to finish reading documents from the Southern Province and Northern Province through the fall and then go back to looking at documents from the missions, where he started the project. But he believes he will never be fully done with this research. He knows he wants to share what he’s been learning, but ultimately, “I don’t know how I want to disseminate this information yet” he shares. “This is not just ‘adding to the knowledge base.’ This is a rethinking, a re-examining of my life experiences.” Δ

### Resources Mentioned

*The Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, Vols. 1-13

<https://moravianarchives.org/records-of-the-moravians-in-north-carolina/>

*The Memorabilia of Fifty Years* by Rt. Rev. Edward Rondthaler

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039579910&view=1up&seq=12>

Bendroth, M. (2013). *The spiritual practice of remembering*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Sharpe, C. (2016). *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

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## Matz Cont.

On a personal note, I got to know Bill in my first year in seminary when we became “prayer partners” as part of the school’s spiritual direction program. He was a man of deep faith and genuine compassion who was always available to help students. I will always remember how kind he was to my daughter, Allyson, who was just two years old when I enrolled. It was not uncommon to see Dean Matz get down on his knees so he could look a child in the eye and let them know how important they were to him. He modeled pastoral care and gentleness in all aspects of his work.

We Moravians have a phrase we often use to describe the death of one of our brothers and sisters: “he has entered into the more immediate presences of his Savior.” I have no doubt that is true of Bill. All of us who have passed through the halls of Moravian Theological Seminary have been blessed by the work of Bill Matz, even if we never knew him personally. Our prayers are with his family, friends, and all who grieve his passing, and it is with love and gratitude that we remember him and his enduring legacy.

We understand from Bill's family that they hope to hold a memorial service celebrating Dean Matz' life when it is safe to gather again. We will share this with our community when a date is chosen in the future. Δ

# FACULTY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

While the stay-at-home order was in effect in Pennsylvania through the spring and much of the summer, Faculty and Staff continued to be engaged in scholarship and service.

## Teaching

**Beth Toler** opened her summer course, Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy, to continuing education students seeking NBCC-approved CE credits (CE credits required to maintain counseling licensure).

**Deborah Appler** participated on the education task force “Justice for George Floyd” that is creating community resources for anti-racism (UMC initiative).

**Riddick Weber** led a Zoom workshop series for the Board of Cooperative Ministries (MCSP) entitled “Voices from the Pandemic,” related to what we are learning from COVID-19 and our responses to it. He has also been a guest panelist for several provincial level Zoom meetings related to COVID and Black Lives Matter issues.

## Preaching

**Craig Atwood** and **Riddick Weber** led the online worship for Jan Hus Sunday (July 5) for Moravian Church Without Walls, a weekly online worship experience of the Office of the Moravian Church Northern Province.

**Dave DeRemer** delivered the sermon at the on-line UCC Ordination Service for Becky Sausser (MDiv '19).

**Deborah Appler** also participated in Becky Sausser's ordination service and preached at Grandview with Rev. Andrea Brown.

**Randy D'Angelo** preached at Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley (Bethlehem, PA) and provided instrumental accompaniment at both MCC Lehigh Valley and MCC of the Spirit (Harrisburg, PA).

## Publications

**Nelson Rivera's** essay “Darwin and Divinity” was published in *The Hinge: International theological Dialog for the Moravian Church*, which was released in early summer.

**Audrey West** authored four exegetical essays on passages in Matthew (Matt 18:21-35, Matt 18:15-20, Matt 16:21-28, Matt 16:13-20) for the online homiletical resource, WorkingPreacher.org, which were published in August and September 2020. In addition, she authored two interpretive essays and two blog posts for Christian Century's “Living by the Word” column, to be published this Fall.

**Rachel Starmer's** poems “Directions” and “Years Till Now” were published in separate issues of the *Journal for Pastoral Care and Counseling* (June 2020 and September 2020, respectively).

**Beth Toler** published chapters in two books: "Between the Ballot and the Bullet: Women's Suffrage, Liminality, and the Arc of the Moral Universe" in *Women with 2020 Vision* edited by Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner; and "A Model of Psychological Healing: Angela of Foligno and Contemporary Clinical Models of Religious and Spiritual Integration" in *Franciscan Women* edited by Lezlie Knox and David Courturier.

# SAVE THE DATE

Additional information and registration details can be found at [moravianseminary.edu/continuing-ed](http://moravianseminary.edu/continuing-ed)

All ContEd events are accessible online via Zoom

- LECTURES & COURSES
- CROSSROADS COURSES
- FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

## NOV. 20 WISDOM WAY OF KNOWING GATHERING

3:00-5:00pm, \$20 per session, Leader: Marcella Kraybill-Greggo

## NOV. 5 - DEC. 3 CULTURE & CHANGE

Mondays, 6:00-9:00pm, \$240, Instructor: Dr. Jill Peters

## NOV. 13 MACC PROFESSIONAL DAY LECTURE

LGBTQ Suicide and Care for the Souls of Queer Folk,  
Speaker: Cody Sanders

3:00-5:00pm, \$40 (+\$15 for NBCC-approved CEs)

Moravian Seminary encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the Seminary office at 610-861-1516 at least one week prior to the event.

# SEMINARY ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

There will not be a separate Common Thread Giving Report this year. All giving reports will be listed in the Fall Moravian College Magazine and online.

## Ways to Give

Check: 1200 Main Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018

Online: [moravianseminary.edu/makeagift](http://moravianseminary.edu/makeagift)

Text to Give: Text MTS to 41444 for options



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