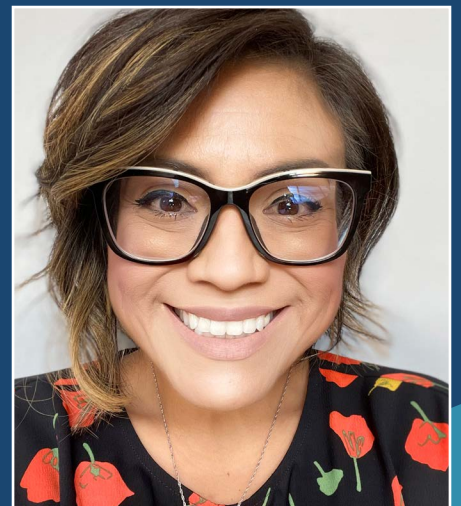




# Disciples Seminary Foundation

July 2021



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# Pandemic Inspiration *A Message from DSF's Interim President*



Dear DSF Family,

**The year 2020 will be one we will not forget.** It challenged and inspired us. We were challenged by the coronavirus pandemic that pushed us into lock down and “stay at home” restrictions. We were mandated to wear masks, maintain physical distance, and eventually encouraged to participate in receiving vaccines with emergency use authorization. Our academic way of life that called us to gather face-to-face in classrooms, church fellowship halls and basements was brought abruptly to an end.

**During the 2020-2021 academic year, we explored ways to keep our education going, virtually.** We found ways to connect with professors and classmates; to hear lectures, submit papers, defend graduate projects, and celebrate our educational accomplishments. Despite the challenges, Disciples Seminary Foundation is inspired to celebrate the many academic achievements of DSF graduates in this newsletter, through a second annual virtual graduation event and with five in-person CMS and DMS services.


**We began the 2020-2021 academic year with 67 seminarians and more than 100 CMS and DMS students.** This summer, we celebrate more than 65 graduates! Seventeen seminarians graduated from three of our five partner schools and one affiliate in a virtual event in late May. This included students from Claremont School of Theology, Pacific School of Religion, Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, and Berkeley School of Theology.

**The Certificate of Ministry Studies (CMS) program honors 35 graduates this year.** They have met virtually throughout the pandemic and represent four campus locations – Gardena, San Diego, San Fernando Valley, and Tijuana, Mexico.

**This summer marks the celebration of recognizing the first class of graduates from the Diploma of Ministry Studies (DMS) program.** Three years ago, DSF responded to a request from CMS graduates asking for more theological education that would allow them to go deeper. Out of that desire, the DMS program was created. This year, we celebrate this first class of 22 students in Fullerton and San Diego! CMS and DMS graduations will be our first round of events that will bring us face-to-face, practicing all of the gathering protocols.

In this 2021 graduation newsletter, you will see the faces of many of these incredible graduates and read “in their own words” what the completion of this educational season means to them. **We are so proud of all their accomplishments and deeply inspired.**

The 2020-2021 educational year has challenged and inspired us. We were challenged in ways we could not imagine. The inspiration? We knew that it would come from our DSF students! **Now graduates, go out to inspire your communities and the world.**

Much heart,  
  
 Rev. Belva Brown Jordan

## Julio Hernandez – DMS San Diego

When you finish the CMS program, you realize that the more you know, the more you feel like you don't know enough. I felt the need to ask what else there is to know, and that was when DSF started the Diploma of Ministry Studies (DMS) program in San Diego. It has helped me a lot to understand more in depth the word of God, and since it has been easier to understand, it has been easier to share the message with more confidence. In my church, I am part of the education ministry. My plan is to continue to educate the community, through simple and understandable teachings, so they can daily live out the biblical truths. My goal is the continued growth of lay leaders and the training of more discipleship teachers so that they can reach maturity in their spiritual life and be inspired to continue their growth in programs like CMS and DMS. I want to see the church understand the word of God so that it brings forth fruit in the form of spiritual and general growth. The church I serve is Casa de Oración (Disciples of Christ) in San Diego, CA. When I met the Lord, I felt the desire to continue knowing Him more. As I learned the truths of God's word, the more I knew Him, the more I realized that when a person is not educated in the word, their growth is slow,

they fall more frequently, and they are unable to discriminate between the literal and biblical principles. But, when they are educated, the process of personal growth and maturity is easier and more familiar. DMS took me even deeper in trying to know God more. I have learned that we will never stop learning, and how great, loving, and merciful our God is.

## Rev. Ma. Guadalupe Castillo – DMS San Diego

I am the pastor of Iglesia de Todas las Naciones (Discipulos de Cristo) in Tijuana, Mexico. First and foremost, I want to give thanks to our lord Jesus Christ, Disciples Seminary Foundation, and all the people who made it possible for these continuing education programs (CMS and DMS) to take place. Personally, I have been very blessed by both of these programs and through these programs, I have received tools that have helped me continue my pastoral work in a more effective way. They have also given me a foundation for the initiation of more formal theological studies. My desire and prayer is that these programs continue permanently because through them, we can continue preparing men and women for ministry in a responsible and effective way. Thank you very much for your great support.

**Acronyms used in this edition:**  
 Disciples Seminary Foundation (DSF)  
 Certificate of Ministry Studies (CMS)  
 Diploma of Ministry Studies (DMS)  
 Disciples of Christ (DOC)

**Theological Schools:**  
 Berkeley School of Theology (BST)  
 Claremont School of Theology (CST)  
 Iliff School of Theology (Iliff)  
 Pacific School of Religion (PSR)  
 San Francisco Theological Seminary at University of Redlands (SFTS)  
 Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry (SUSTM)

**Pictured on the cover:**  
 (Top L-R) Monica Cross  
 Jose Luis Figueroa Garcia  
 Silvia Vazquez  
 (Bottom L-R) Billy Strehlow  
 Eunhye "Grace" Lee  
 Yvette Hernandez-Becerra



## DMS SAN DIEGO



## DSF's 2021 DMS Graduates *In Their Own Words*

### DMS CLAREMONT



**Not Pictured:**  
 Claremont:  
 Delmy Amaya  
 San Diego:  
 Sofia Duenas,  
 Magda  
 Palacios Mauli

**Para leer las entrevistas en español visite:**  
[www.dsf.edu/dms](http://www.dsf.edu/dms)

**Learn about the DMS program and how to enroll at:**  
[www.dsf.edu/dms](http://www.dsf.edu/dms)

# DSF's 2021 CMS Graduates *In Their Own Words*

## Jose Luis Figueroa Garcia – CMS San Diego

I enrolled in CMS because I wanted to learn the Bible in depth and be better equipped to serve God. There were things that I thought I knew, but when they taught me in the CMS program, I was surprised to learn how they really were. I am part of the youth ministry at my church, Casa de Oración in San Diego, and my dream for this ministry is to see our church full of youth who are passionate about seeking God. It is my wish that these youth have a desire to grow in their relationship with God and seek more people for Christ. I believe that our church will be one of the largest in our community and state and that it will be filled with young people who love God. God has given me a love for youth, no matter where the youth live. Even if I have to drive 30 minutes or an hour to bring them to our service, I do it, and I hope one day I will watch them do the same. I desire for my church to always be filled with the Holy Spirit and the power of God, and that supernatural things happen there. I also wish that our church helps produce more churches like us and that people are healed, liberated, and restored. Whenever people hear about our church, I hope they will want to go there to experience God's power and mercy. I believe that God has called me to teach young people that the church is not a religion, it is a relationship with God. Today's young people want to be acknowledged and to participate in everything, and that's why I believe that if we unite our lives with theirs, great things can happen in our community and our church. If you reach a young man who uses drugs and you take him to church, and God transforms him, then through that young man you can reach his family and his friends. The CMS classes helped in my leadership, in knowing how to better reach people, and in knowing how to carry out a ministry.

## Miriam Becerra – CMS TJ

I enrolled in the CMS program to learn more about the Word of God, dive deeper into the Bible, to be able to understand it, and receive revelations through the Holy Spirit. Being able to now respond to those with doubts from a Biblical foundation and healthy doctrine is a blessing. CMS has helped me to be more self-taught and more responsible in my Christian

journey and to continue seeking the Christian education that is so lacking in many churches. I serve in the ministry of finance, teaching, and leading cell groups in my church. My desire is to do the work of the Lord as best as I can, to preach by example, and have a supernatural understanding of the Word of God so that I can understand it and know how to best share it with others. I want to see growth in the church, and there is an excellent team serving in God's work who are well prepared for Christian education. Taking the CMS classes was a blessing, and I am convinced that doing things with excellence is pleasing to God. We should all give Him our best.

## Leonardo Francisco Carmona Fernández – CMSTJ

The CMS program has been a great blessing both spiritually and in my daily life. The Wisdom Literature course helped me expand my knowledge and open my mind to the many teachings that are in the word of God. It is wonderful to be able to understand a little more of what God has embodied in the scriptures. My relationship with God has been strengthened due to the correct analysis and objective study that I have received thanks to this program and its great teachers who are full of God and therefore with wisdom.

## Erik Velazquez – CMSTJ

The CMS program has taught me so much. It has given me many tools for ministry and a better understanding of the gospel. I have learned methods, facts, and received revelations that have taught me to better serve the body of Christ. The teachers are first-rate and great servants of the Lord. I have learned ways to treat and understand new people better, and I have been discipled in ways that enable me to disciple others. Glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints who serve Him. Blessings to all and may God continue enabling more teaching in order to expand His kingdom to all places. In the same way, may God continue to instill a call to service, and may each one of you give your valuable time to be able to help us in everything. The love of our Lord be with you all.

Leer las entrevistas en español: [www.dsf.edu/cms](http://www.dsf.edu/cms)

## CMS GARDENA



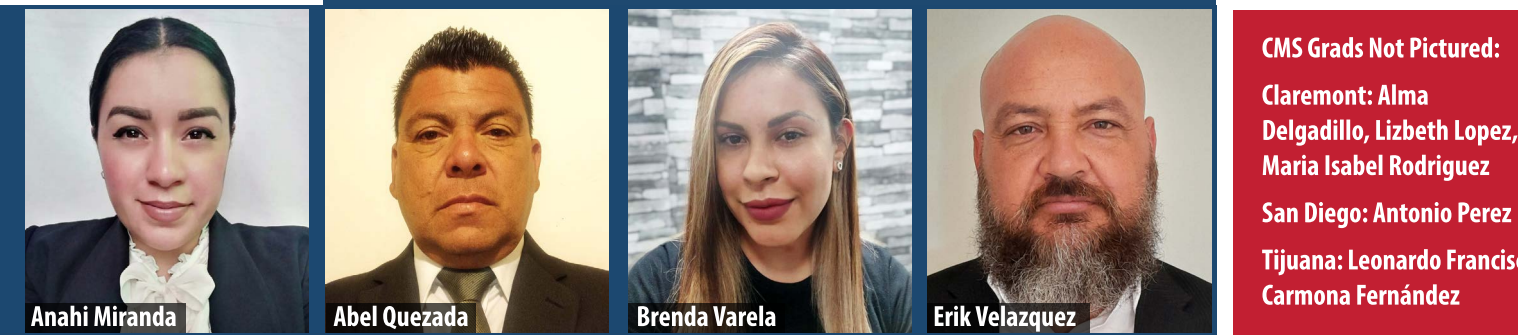
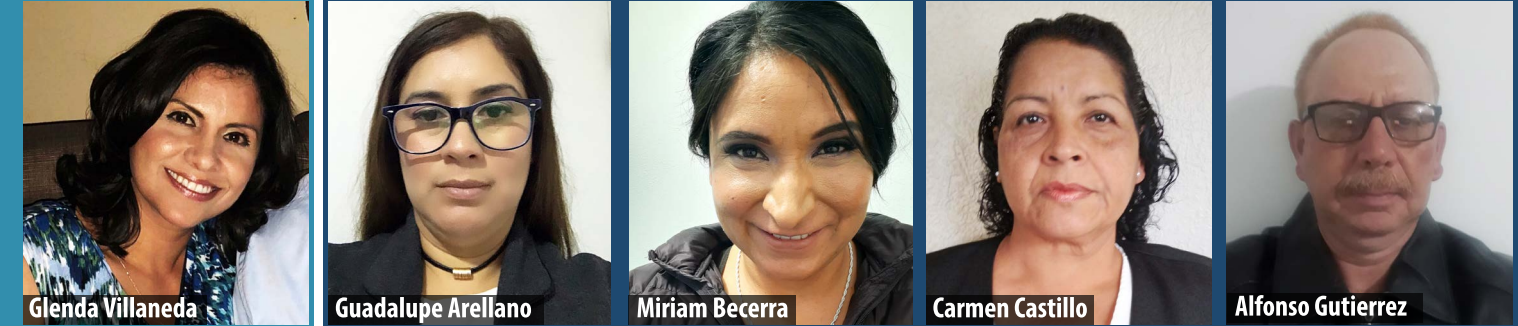
## CMS SAN DIEGO



## CMS SAN FERNANDO VALLEY



## CMS TIJUANA



**CMS Grads Not Pictured:**  
 Claremont: Alma Delgadillo, Lizbeth Lopez, Maria Isabel Rodriguez  
 San Diego: Antonio Perez  
 Tijuana: Leonardo Francisco Carmona Fernández

Download a copy of this spread in Spanish or find out about our English and Spanish-language CMS programs: [www.dsf.edu/cms](http://www.dsf.edu/cms) today!

# DSF's 2021 Seminary Graduates *In Their Own Words*



Moses Canales



Monica Cross

## Moses Canales M.Div./MTS, CST

The son of a Mexican Baptist minister, I was inspired to attend seminary because I wanted to use my law background to analyze New Testament scripture. I was particularly interested in the first line of the Gospel of John that says, "In the beginning was the Word..." which is actually an English translation of the ancient Greek term *logos*. According to ancient Greek thinking, *logos* is the "divine principle of reason that gives order to the universe." I wrote my master's thesis interpreting the prologue to the Gospel of John and am excited to continue writing, and hopefully publishing in theological journals, about the implications of the word *logos*. I recently moved to Santa Monica and am looking for a local church to serve in this area. I'm hoping to find a group of like-minded Christians in this rather liberal, progressive area to begin a revival of a higher, Christ-loving

service using popular secular music. I am seeking ordination in the PSWR because our denominational approach is love-based, open minded, and inclusive of all people. I am committed to a lifetime of service to promote our "Disciples" way of love-in-Christ with others – especially those not yet part of our Christ-sharing community.

## Rev. Dr. Monica Cross D.Min., PSR

The education I received at PSR cannot be separated from my experience as a black transgender woman. It cannot be sufficiently engaged without addressing the concerns of the transgender body and the black body, of which I am both, and their societal and religious experiences. Education is not for privilege but for liberation and survival; it is an expression of hope. In this sense, the seminary education I received meant the access of skills that enabled critical thinking to participate with God

in the gradual and steady transformation of Church and society for the well-being of a diverse sacred humanity and the sacredness of the trans community in particular. My vision is a Church focused on being the hope of a multi-racial inclusive society; a Church focused on radically inclusive hospitality as taught by Jesus of Nazareth. The church, both local and global, should be on the front lines addressing issues of homelessness, hunger, racism, etc. that emerge out of the fallenness of humanity. Thesis Title: *The Embodiment of Radically Inclusive Hospitality In Transitional Living Programs* (TLP). Because of the deep work TLPs are called to do, radically inclusive hospitality is a fundamental theological concept that should be embodied in the TLP. Radically inclusive hospitality is hospitality out of the ordinary. It is an invitation to experience life in a new and healthy way that leads the individual to new horizons of grace.

## Ryan Cullumber M.Div., CST

I was inspired to attend seminary by my wife, Rev. Sadie Mizisin-Cullumber, and my time serving with Global Ministries as a board member. In particular, a Global Ministries trip to the Dominican Republic was the final catalyst I needed to attend seminary. My plan is to work with my wife at

Harbor Christian Church. This will include leading an environmental justice ministry. I am also interested in helping to break down prejudices around white privilege and racism. White supremacy is a huge obstacle in building the kingdom of God and needs to be eradicated for true equality to be possible. My vision for ministry has been shaped by my education at CST and the events of 2020. Being at CST has opened up possibilities about God and faith that I did not think was possible. Seeing God as in relationship with each one of us instead of something to fear and obey has completely changed how I view spirituality and religion. There are a lot of spiritually damaged people that could benefit from healthy conversations around faith instead of the strict dogma they were taught as a child. In 2020, the protests over the killing of George Floyd, the isolation and despair of the pandemic, to the ugly aftermath of the presidential election that saw an attack on our capital impacted me greatly.

## Julie Davis M.Div., CST

I was inspired to attend seminary because, as an English teacher, what I craved most was having discussions with my students about identity and purpose, and I realized these were spiritual/soul issues not well served by educational "achievement culture." I wanted to transform



Ryan Cullumber



Julie Davis



Renae Earl



Malia Galindo

myself into a "soul" teacher so that I could help people of any age address questions of meaning and relatedness. When I started my Clinical Pastoral Education program, I was Minister of Outreach at The Little White Chapel (LWC) and offering spiritual care to LWC members and their families. I am serving as Interim Head Pastor at LWC until August. I love my local church and desire to serve in the local church. I am passionate to sustain its future by growing the congregation to include younger folks (folks under 60) and establishing it as something the community thinks of not just as a DOC church but as a place for the whole community to gather and receive spiritual care. My vision is establishing a "chaplaincy church" where everyone feels welcome, included, heard, and seen. I am also passionate about antiracism and inclusion and about changing people's impression of Christianity. CST gave me a good foundation in liberation theology, a group of peers to learn from, and affirmed me as I am. I am under care with the PSWR.

## Renae Earl M.Div. & Certificate in Public Theology, BST

I decided to attend seminary when I was finishing my term of service as the Northern California Nevada Regional (CCNCN) Women's Ministries Council Facilitator. I am deeply passionate about spreading the love of Jesus to those who feel they are unworthy, ashamed, or who would never walk into a church building. My education has given me a stronger foundation to build upon and has strengthened my resolve to do ministry out in the world. It has also shown me there is so much more to learn, that this is just the beginning, and God will guide the way. I took a certificate in Public Theology along with my M.Div. and was able to develop Red Rope Recovery and Resource Center, which services female identified sex trafficking survivors who may/may not have substance use issues. This year with my mentor, I am developing a recovery-based ministry that will be housed at this center and be able to resource out to churches that need this

particular support or educational resources. Also, in my internship year, I was able to organize a "Haircut 4 the Holidays" event where we serviced the unhoused and underserved folks in the Vallejo area. Being a licensed stylist, I am used to ministering to clients within the salon and knew this could be done within the church as well. It was a phenomenally rich experience and showed me that my call is real, valid, and needed in this community and beyond. I am under Training and Care in CCNCN region and plan to be ordained after my CPE training is completed.

## Malia Galindo M.Div., CST

I was inspired to attend seminary because I felt a deep call to explore what ministry would look like for me and to study at another school that my dad attended. (I received my bachelor's degree in Sociology from Chapman University.) I'll be taking sabbath in Hawaii with my family for a little while and then look for employment at churches or other non-profits in the Southern California

area. I have a deep passion for the spiritual well-being of people and inclusivity within the church. I hope to bring a sense of justice to the church that reminds me that what we are asked to do as Christians is not to be a part of a community of "the saved" but to be with those who have been deemed "the other." My vision for ministry is to eventually go back to Hawaii and bring a more progressive theology to an area that is in deep need of faith that is accepting of all who are seeking, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community there. Before then, I hope to gather more work experiences and knowledge from working in communities in the PSWR. Finding and befriending other women in ministry has been life changing for many reasons. I found people that thought and move about life differently than myself but were so loving and interested in my well-being and vice-versa. I was able to make forever relationships here that I hope to take with me into the next part of my life journey. I am under care for ordination in the PSWR.



Louise Sloan Goben



Yvette Hernandez-Becerra



Jess Kim



Eunhye (Grace) Lee



Tanya Lopez

**Rev. Dr. Louise Sloan Goben**

**D.Min., CST**

The title of my thesis is: *How We Serve: An Examination of Faith-Based Food Pantries During a Time of Pandemic*. The project discusses the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on a variety of local food pantries, most of which are located in the San Fernando Valley. Some pantries were able to respond easily, and some closed their doors as they were unable to adapt to significant changes. The pantries were assessed based on principles outlined by Ronald Heifetz and his model of Adaptive Leadership. The work of the interfaith food pantry is based on the common values of the dignity of each person served and the faith-based ethics of compassion. The hybrid D.Min. program at CST features compassion practices and community engagement and was a great fit for the work I do. Local faith-based food pantries have served those living on the edge of food insecurity for a long time. As the gap continues to grow between those of means and those

who struggle to make ends meet each day, these food pantries will continue to play a significant role in our communities. This is where I choose to serve in the name of the Church of Jesus Christ. I have just retired from ministry! However, I continue to teach at a local community college, and I serve as the Chair of the Executive Board for the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry.

**Yvette Hernandez-Becerra**  
**M.Div., CST**

I entered seminary as an opportunity to expand my learning. I approached seminary distanced from the idea of ministry; I wasn't sure if I was in the right place. I was hooked very quickly and found myself surrounded by people going through similar journeys. I found myself engaged in the material and realized that I was exactly where I needed to be. Having found a healing community at a time when I was ready to walk away from it all inspires me to want that for others and to fight for it with others. I was blessed

to have two very different places to engage in field education learning. One of them was at my home church, Iglesia Cristiana del Este de Whittier/East Whittier CC, where I engaged in worship leadership ministry. The other was at my alma mater, Chapman University, engaging in campus ministry. I am currently serving at my home church and have been blessed by the community there. I don't see myself leaving anytime soon. I am currently on orders with the Air National Guard for six months, which began in April. After graduation, I will be active in the Guard assisting the COVID-19 ongoing mission. I will be focusing my time working with the PSWR Regional Gathering planning team as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Moderator, and I will be working on getting my ordination requirements in order in the PSWR. My education has helped me learn how to guide people into tapping into their own ability and wholeness.

**Jess Kim**  
**M.Div., CST**

My embedded theology is pretty conservative. As

someone who identifies as queer, I grew up fearing the God of my youth. Suffering was seen as a punishment of sin, and my identity was a result of a deficiency in my being. As I got older, I refused to believe in this impassible God, one who is indifferent to suffering. I yearned for a deeper theological and spiritual connection, and this eventually led me to seminary. As someone who has been hurt by the church, I tend to be distrustful and wary of church leaders. I have less patience to work alongside pastors who preach a toxic theology. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus warns against false prophets and claims that they can be identified by their fruits. Just as grapes and figs cannot be found from thorns and thistles, good fruit cannot come from a bad tree. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Ultimately, I am looking to serve a local church that prioritizes the fruit of the Spirit, advocates for liberation/social justice, practices radical hospitality, and is not

limited by human expressions, such as cultural and societal norms. During my time at CST, I loved being in the classroom and learning how Christianity has been shaped, historically and culturally. I also cherish the wisdom and perspectives of my classmates and colleagues. I am incredibly grateful that my seminary experience has allowed me to discern how I want to live in this world and be of authentic service to my community. Currently, I don't have any plans for ordination. I strongly believe that the church needs educated lay leaders so that's where I see my role.

**Rev. Dr. Sewoo Kim**  
**(not pictured)**  
**D.Min., CST**

My vision for ministry is to integrate psychological and spiritual resources in pastoral care. In particular, during my time at CST, my vision for ministry was shaped by experiencing two theories: Internal Family Systems and Compassion Based Mindfulness Meditation

(CBMM). My doctoral thesis is: *Compassion-Based Mindfulness Meditation for Authentic Self With the "Third Age" Women*. My thesis is concerned with how the "Third Age" women, who are experiencing a sense of loss and depression due to aging and changing identity, can benefit by practicing the CBMM program, find their Authentic SELF, and achieve wholeness in their lives. The CBMM program is designed to help the Third Age women restore their identity and sense of self by discovering and connecting the authentic SELF within themselves. This program will guide them in their journey towards the exploration of their inner world. I plan to continue serving at Walking On Water (WOW) Christian Church.

**Rev. Eunhye (Grace) Lee**  
**MA, Concentration in Interdisciplinary/Comparative Studies, CST**

I was born in South Korea and came to the United States in 2015 to follow my husband, who was studying in Boston and later San Diego. Although I was familiar with CST's progressive theology and thought about attending CST for 13 years, I wasn't in a situation where I could study abroad. I was finally able to attend CST because my husband's school was also located in California. Currently, I am

looking for an internship in hospital/hospice chaplaincy. My vision for ministry in the church is to construct justice-oriented communities. The racism and other forms of discrimination that I experienced in the US have inspired my passion for social justice. Learning at CST opened my eyes and gave names to my experiences and wounds. Listening to the experiences of my peers was also very helpful. These relationships taught me about lived experiences, which I could not learn from textbooks alone. I was ordained on May 10, 2009 at Suwon Church of the Presbyterian Church of Republic Korea (PROK) and am a member of the Central Pacific Conference of the UCC.

**Tanya Lopez**  
**M.Div., CST**

I felt called to attend seminary because I have a passion for serving. I knew that seminary would give me the tools to faithfully step into my call. I completed my field education with East Whittier Christian Church/Iglesia Cristiana del Este de Whittier. I served as a pastor working with the children's ministry leadership team. I am currently serving as the Coordinating Minister for Disciples Women's Ministries in the Pacific Southwest Region and plan to continue serving the region. I am also in discernment as to what the future might bring. I look forward to letting the Spirit lead me

towards new opportunities. My vision is to create a spiritual care and mental health ministry model that provides support and resources to families and individuals at the local level. There is a huge need in this area, and I long to create a specialized ministry that provides educational resources, support groups, and offers ongoing support to those who find themselves in need of it. I have a passion for service and feel most connected to my call when I am helping others. My education has prepared me for ministry in that I have learned the value of lifelong learning. In order to nurture relationships and develop partnerships that enable us to make a lasting impact on the world, we need to keep learning about ourselves and others. In doing so, we are better able to connect across generations and cultures. If there is one take away I got from seminary it's that ministry is collaborative work and that we cannot go far alone. We are to deepen our ties to one another as we work towards building a more just and peaceful world. During my educational journey, I experienced a great deal of personal growth. I also learned how important self-care and community are to fostering continued balance and energy for our work and ministry in the world. I am on the ordination track and plan to be ordained with the Pacific Southwest Region.

**Make a donation to support our DSF scholars: [www.dsf.edu/donate](http://www.dsf.edu/donate) and select "Student Scholarships"**



RJ Lucchesi



Victor Luna



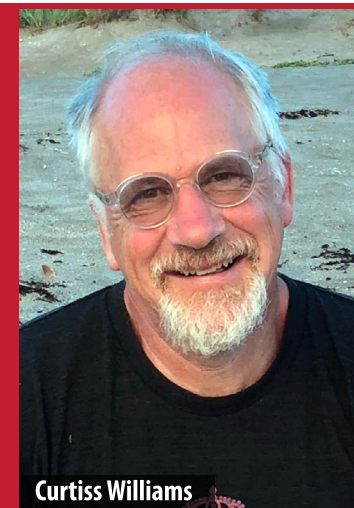
Nadia Tavera Medina



Robin Robinson



Billy Strehlow



Curtiss Williams

**RJ Lucchesi**  
M.Div./MTS, CST

My journey to attend seminary included getting more involved with my local congregation and working with the local houseless community. After listening and learning more about the challenges those on the streets regularly experienced, I was faced with painful questions that could only be explored via deep engagement with theology and critical social analyses. Since the summer of 2020, I, alongside ministry colleagues, have been building a 501(c)(4) organization committed to developing a collective consciousness of liberation via theological and political education, while collaborating with front line individuals, communities, and organizations in the spirit of mutual aid. Officially launching this organization, and helping run it, will be the bulk of my work in the next 1-2 years, and presumably beyond. There have been many significant experiences during my educational journey. Sitting with Rev. Dr. JoAnn Bynum, we watched the birth of Black Lives Matter during the Ferguson uprising, and

she gave me an opportunity, through DSF, to attend seminary. Being reminded by Rev. Dr. José Francisco Morales Torres, a key mentor, to agitate the spaces I occupy. Laying hands and praying prayers of healing over my now dear friend, comrade, and fellow minister Rev. Yani Davis in the halls of DSF. Standing with another friend, comrade, and minister Rev. PK Thompson on the Big Island, blocking a road from ecologically, spiritually, and culturally destructive transnational construction projects. The streets, the classroom, the pulpit, the support and love of my wife Andrea, and the long, consistent hours of reading, writing, praying, meditating, grieving, and growing, that have all added up to the work of these two degrees, and the journey itself.

**Victor Luna**  
M.Div., CST

I was inspired to attend seminary in order to become a chaplain in the United States Navy. I completed my field education at First Christian Church, Pomona as a Ministerial Intern. Although the phrase “think globally

and act locally” generally refers to environmental issues, I want to apply the phrase to religious communities. If we make changes locally, our religious networks will start connecting and making a greater impact in the world. I want to use my social work background and my theological education to bridge the gap between the spiritual world and mental health world. Now that I have the credentials in both disciplines, I feel like I can work more closely with religious communities on the importance of mental health. Having a social work degree, I feel like I can work alongside social workers and mental health workers and discuss the importance of spirituality and religious communities. I am in the process of seeking ordination with the Disciples of Christ in the PSWR, hopefully with First Christian Church, Pomona as the sponsoring church.

**Nadia Tavera Medina**  
M.Div., PSR

I was born in Mexico City, and I lived there until I started attending seminary. Since I was 14 years old, I have felt a strong desire to be a pastor,

and unfortunately, in my country, queer people are not welcome into Christian spaces. In 2018, I had the opportunity to attend PSR. I did my field education at Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, CA. My experience as a Queer-Latina working at Eden in a ministry focused on serving immigrant communities was very impactful. I plan to serve an additional year at Eden UCC as part of my Optional Practical Training as an international student. I have a passion for teaching. My strengths include community organizing, financial planning, and project management. I have solid biblical knowledge, contextual understanding of the US (like racism, white supremacy, homophobia, immigration), and I’m bilingual in Spanish and English. I feel well prepared to contribute to the theological dialogue about current situations and implement practical ministry according to the community's needs. My vision is to promote an Open & Affirming Ministry Program for Spanish-speaking congregations and provide cultural and theological resources to

ministers who are willing to build a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that welcomes persons of all gender expressions and sexual orientations to the table of Christ’s communion and the full life and leadership of the Christian Church. I am under care for ordination in the CCNCN Region.

**Rev. Robin Robinson**  
M.Div., CST

Before seminary, I was an active member in my church, but the stress of working, being a parent, and serving as a volunteer at church was too much so I decided to pursue a path where my career and faith were combined. I am currently serving as Minister of Social Media and Worship Arts at my home congregation, Eureka Christian Church. In addition, I am employed as a chaplain at Carle Eureka Hospital, a rural hospital close to my home. My vision is a church that is engaging and life-giving for people beyond the walls of the institutional church. While I love and appreciate Sunday worship and the “traditional” role of churches, the

COVID pandemic crisis has shown us just how inflexible the Church has become. It struggled to serve people in their deepest needs even before the pandemic, but those shortcomings were truly laid bare in the last year. I envision a more fluid, more accessible-to-all church in the future, although how that looks in practice will require a lot of discernment and courage. Moving beyond the customs we’ve inherited thus far will be no easy task. My time with CST/DSF has helped open my eyes to many different ways that this world is hurting and helped to give me some tools to help me offer solutions that will lead us closer to the vision of the world as it could be (and as I believe God would desire for us). I was ordained in the Illinois-Wisconsin region on July 25.

**Billy Strehlow**  
M.Div., CST

A lifelong desire to know more about God and ministry as well as encouragement from my regional ministers inspired me to pursue my calling into ministry. I did my field internship at First Christian Church, Salem

while also serving as the Praise Team Leader. I plan on continuing to serve on the praise team while beginning a period of discernment towards planting a church in the Willamette Valley in 2023. I’m passionate about tying my spirit to God’s will by listening to and telling stories with words and music. I also love to pray with and for others and really enjoy growing with others as fellow disciples. My education has given me an abundance of material toward this end. My visions/goals for ministry are to facilitate discipleship and deep spirituality by creating safe spaces to ask self-awakening questions and reflect theologically on them with an end result of asking, “Now, how am I/you going to respond to this?” The purpose is to encourage deep listening of both God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and neighbors to become fluent and immersive in what God is doing at any given moment. I am thankful for the continued encouragement by my professors to explore the Holy Spirit in papers, presentations, forums posts, and discussions. I am under care for ordination with the Oregon and Southwest Idaho Region.

**Curtiss Williams**  
M.Div., SUSTM

I was born in Boston and will most likely be ordained in the Northern Lights region. I was called to a second career as a chaplain after retiring as a union organizer. I have done CPE at a local trauma hospital and am working there per diem. I am creating

a synthesis of my learning at SUSTM this quarter, and I have yet to come up with a title. I am aiming towards the need for a new story and fresh narrative that helps us overcome the story of separation and competition that American culture can propagate. Our current story leads us to self-centeredness, comparison, and competition. These separations from spirit have resulted in a profound dislocation reflected in high addiction rates, recent political turmoil, and a dysfunctional response to the pandemic. White supremacy is also a significant contributor to this story. Rather than deconstructing this story of separation, my hope is to lift up the story of interconnection and interdependence starting with the need to grieve and lament what we leave behind. We need to lift up the grace of God, manifest in the gifts of the earth, the love of our neighbor, and the solidarity of our common cause of community wellbeing. I am starting a year-long chaplaincy residency at the Puget Sound Veterans Administration. It is hard to see SUSTM closing. As students, we resisted this change and mourn the loss of this community resource for graduate study of theology, spirituality, and ministry. STM was a beautiful testimony to ecumenism, started with over a dozen denominations and the Catholic diocese. The Disciples played an important role in providing resources, students, and professors in Dick Cunningham and Michael Kinnamon.



## Rev. Dr. Thomas R. McCormick

*Senior Lecturer Emeritus in Medical Ethics and formerly the Director of Counseling for the UW School of Medicine, University of Washington*

Disciples Seminary Foundation is honored to have been named the beneficiary of a \$100,000 grant for the purpose of establishing the Rev. Dr. Thomas R. McCormick Scholarship Fund. The grant originated as a gift from University Christian Church of Seattle. In 2008, the congregation sold their historic building that had housed their ministry for 130 years and joined with another congregation to form Journey Christian Church in the Lake City area. From the proceeds of the property sale, the congregation established a number of Legacy Gifts. A legacy gift of \$100,000 honoring Rev. Dr. McCormick was created by the church, and Rev. Dr. McCormick established an endowed scholarship with DSF.

Rev. Dr. McCormick is a native of Longview, WA. He did his undergraduate studies in Religion (B.Th.) at Northwest Christian University/University of Oregon. He earned his M.Div. in Counseling at the Divinity School, Drake University. He received his D.Min. degree in Ethics from Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. He was a Fellow in the Medical Ethics Program, Institute of

Religion and Human Development, at the Texas Medical Center in Houston.

Rev. Dr. McCormick served as settled pastor of the High Point Community Church in Seattle from 1960-1965. He also served as the Campus Minister at the University of Washington from 1966-1985. Rev. Dr. McCormick joined the faculty at the University of Washington's School of Medicine in 1974 to develop the medical school's first program in medical ethics. Since that time, he has taught a variety of elective courses in bioethics and was responsible for the early development of ethics in the medical school core curriculum at the Seattle campus and all of the UW sites region wide.

Over the years, Rev. Dr. McCormick has conducted ethics conferences in the NICU and in various Residency Training Programs including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Anesthesiology, Surgery, and Orthopedics. At the request of the Board of Trustees, Rev. Dr. McCormick organized and trained the initial Ethics Committee at Seattle Harborview Medical Center and continued as a consultant until his death in February 2021. He was also a stand-by consultant to Providence Hospice of Seattle and to the Fred Hutchinson Research Center. He served on the Medical Advisory Board for Cancer Lifeline. Rev. Dr. McCormick provided training for a number of hospital ethics committees in the Northwest.

Rev. Dr. McCormick served as Director of Counseling for all students at the UW School of Medicine from 1985-2001. He received the Margaret S. Anderson Award for Distinguished Service to Medical Students, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle. He was an adjunct professor in bioethics at the School of Medicine, Midwestern University, Glendale Branch, Glendale, AZ and each winter quarter offered an elective in medical ethics as a visiting professor on that campus.

Rev. Dr. McCormick lectured widely in the United States, and also in Canada, Italy, Japan, and Taiwan. He was a member of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. He published numerous articles on bioethics, contributed chapters to textbooks on the topic, and published teaching videotapes on issues related to dying patients.

Northwest Christian University in Eugene, OR awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree on May 5, 2007 in recognition of McCormick's contributions in the field of bioethics.

## Life and Family

Rev. Dr. McCormick passed away at the age of 86 on February 12, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Karen, his son, 2 daughters, 2 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren, 1 great great grandson, and many nieces and nephews. He loved many and was loved by many. His passions were teaching, fishing, woodworking, and golf.

## A word from Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont, Former Chair of DSF's Board of Trustees

"The McCormick Scholarship is an example of how impactful DSF has been throughout the years. This scholarship serves not only as a legacy to Rev. Dr. McCormick but demonstrates a significant degree of confidence in our ability to provide financial assistance for those pursuing ministerial education. We are honored and humbled to be entrusted with this gift."

## A word from Rev. Belva Brown Jordan, Interim President of DSF

"This legacy gift from University Christian Church, Seattle Legacy Foundation, which honors Rev. Dr. McCormick, is a blessing not only to DSF but to the wider church as well. Students preparing for ministry with the Master of Divinity degree, or retooling with the Doctor of Ministry studies, or digging deeper into Ph.D. degrees, will benefit from this new scholarship and step out to serve the wider church as pastors and professors. We are deeply grateful for this gift."

## Reflections on Dr. McCormick's life

"Tom was nurtured within a vibrant church community, which birthed a number of ministers. His call to pastoral ministry took shape with a Disciple congregation in West Settle, then in Ecumenical Campus Ministry at the University of Washington and flourished in groundbreaking international work in the field of bioethics at the University Medical School. Wherever he was, his deep and rich Christian faith showed itself in humble service. My treasure is to have been a clergy colleague for over 60 years."

- Rev. Marvin Eckfeldt

*Friend and Colleague for 60+ years*

"Tom mentored, guided, and counseled countless students, coworkers, and clinicians in his long tenure at UW. He was a cherished colleague and friend, and his presence, laughter, and light will be greatly missed. Tom's generosity, kindness, and optimism marked every interaction whether it be with a stranger or close friend. I have never met anyone like him, and the world, our department, and the SOM are better because of his indelible mark on us."

- Dr. Denise M. Dudzinski, PhD, HEC-C

*Professor & Chair, Department of Bioethics & Humanities at UW Medicine*

## McCormick Scholarship Selection Criteria

To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- Have demonstrated financial need
- Are enrolled in an M.Div., D.Min., or Ph.D. program at a DSF affiliated schools
- Are a student in good standing
- Have a cumulative GPA above 3.0

"Dr. Tom McCormick had many wonderful qualities. I would like to speak to two – his generosity and grace. Tom was well-known, respected, and truly beloved within the nursing community. He provided many, many presentations to nurses and nursing students both formally as a conference speaker or guest lecturer, and informally to groups of practicing nurses struggling with the bioethical issues they faced in practice. Tom was extraordinarily compassionate – pastoral – in his approach. He had a gift for helping clinicians look squarely at their foibles and find the grace to grow. Tom often delivered a needed bit of criticism with a good-natured laugh, twinkle in his eye, and gentle smile. I learned a teaching technique from him that I never forgot. Tom was skilled at maintaining a group as a 'moral community'. When someone in the group made a statement that revealed a bias, an ill-considered argument, or was otherwise flawed, Tom had a talent for re-stating that comment as a hypothesis that would take the core idea to its logical, but clearly unwanted outcome. In this way, he allowed people to revise their thinking, to grow, to remain in the conversation, and to stay within the group's moral community. Discussions, even on challenging bioethics topics, were safe for all involved with Tom at the helm. His generosity and grace will be sorely missed, but his impact on the many, many who had the good fortune to learn from him will be felt for a long time."

- Dr. Sarah Shannon, Ph.D., RN

*Colleague for 35 years*

To make a donation to the McCormick Scholarship Fund, visit:  
[www.dsf.edu/donate](http://www.dsf.edu/donate)

(Make sure to select "Student Scholarships" and write "McCormick Scholarship" in the comments.)

# DSF's Scholarship Programs *Living Out Our Mission*

## DSF's Mission Statement

*In covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and in cooperation with ecumenical and educational partners, Disciples Seminary Foundation serves God through the formation and support of emerging theological leaders for diverse Christian communities.*

## DSF's commitment to the church

For many years, DSF has fulfilled its commitment to support and prepare leaders for the church through its scholarship programs. DSF provides tuition-based scholarships to students engaged in theological studies at our partner and affiliate schools. At times, students with full tuition coverage are also supported with stipends for housing or other educational expenses.

## The DSF Award

In addition to the general scholarship practices that affords many students tuition support, DSF participates in Claremont School of Theology's academic awards given during graduation. The DSF Award is given to students who exemplify DSF's values of innovation, collaboration,

and integrity in ministry with the Christian Church (Disciple of Christ). In May 2021, the DSF Award was given to **Robin Robinson** (M.Div.), **Louise Sloan Goben** (D.Min.), and **RJ Lucchesi** (M.Div./MTS).

## McCormick Scholarship Fund

In October 2020, during our 60th Anniversary celebration, DSF announced a new student scholarship – the Thomas McCormick Scholarship Fund – which was created by the University Christian Church Legacy Foundation of Seattle, WA. It was a blessing to meet and work with Dr. McCormick before his passing and fulfill his dream of providing financial support for seminarians preparing for ministry. With this new \$100,000 investment, DSF will be able to draw on the earnings and select scholars in Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy degree programs attending DSF partner schools. Even though Dr. McCormick will not be present when we announce the first recipient of this scholarship that bears his name, his spirit and passion for ministry will be with us.

## DSF's Other Named Scholarships

Named Scholarships are not new to DSF. For several years, DSF has awarded five Named Scholarships to students who meet the donor's criteria. There are some years when we are unable to find a recipient who fit the donor's criteria. In this newsletter, you will find a brief description of each named scholarship, a photo, and the names of the 2021 recipients.

- **Don and Carol Bremer Scholarship** (Bremer Scholarship): **Alexis Benítez-Cruz** (CST, M.Div.) and **Courtney Stanton** (CST, M.Div.)
- **Janice Brown Scholarship** (not awarded this year): The Janis Brown Scholarship is given each year to a woman of color who is a DSF student at Claremont School of Theology and whose work specializes in chaplaincy.
- **Joseph D. Driskill Scholarship**: **Neddy Yong** (M.Div., SFTS/University of Redlands Graduate School of Theology)
- **Jon and Melba Lacey Scholarship**: **Julie Davis**, (CST, M.Div., 2021) and **Zade Evans** (CST, M.Div.)
- **Parsons Scholarship**: **Yvette Hernandez-Becerra**, (CST, M.Div., 2021)

**Tuition scholarships, stipends, and Named Scholarships are a few ways DSF seeks to live out its covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and fulfill its commitment to support the academic life of students.**

Learn more about our Named Scholarships and past scholarship recipients at: [www.dsf.edu/namedscholarships](http://www.dsf.edu/namedscholarships)

## DSF Award

Award given by the Disciples Seminary Foundation to CST students who exemplify DSF's values of innovation, collaboration, and integrity in ministry with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



Robin Robinson



Louise Sloan Goben



RJ Lucchesi

## Named Scholarships

### Bremer Scholarship

**Alexis Benitez-Cruz and Courtney Stanton**

The Don and Carol Bremer Scholarship is given each year to married DSF M.Div. students at Claremont School of Theology (CST) who are engaged in field education at a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).



Alexis Benitez-Cruz



Courtney Stanton

### Driskill Scholarship

**Neddy Yong**

The Joseph D. Driskill Scholarship is given each year to a DSF student in Northern California who best embodies Professor Driskill's commitment to spirituality and social justice.



Neddy Yong

### Lacey Scholarship

**Julie Davis and Zade Evans**

The Jon and Melba Lacey Scholarship is given each year to DSF students, whether LGBTQ persons or allies, who are most likely to make a strong witness for inclusion throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).



Julie Davis



Zade Evans

### Parsons Scholarship

**Yvette Hernandez-Becerra**

The Parsons Scholarship is intended for DSF M.Div. students at Claremont School of Theology with strength and interest in music, worship, or practical theology.



Yvette Hernandez-Becerra



## Disciples Seminary Foundation

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