



Disciples Seminary Foundation

July 2023



*Supporting the formation of
emerging theological leaders*

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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A Message from DSF's Interim Executive Director



REV. BELVA BROWN JORDAN
Interim Executive Director

Dear DSF Friends,

As I write my last introduction to the Disciples Seminary Foundation's annual Graduate Newsletter, my spirit is filled with gratitude for the time I have spent serving DSF, first as Dean (2015-2018) and then as Interim Executive Director (2020-present). I have caught the passion that deeply resides in the fabric of DSF – supporting the formation of emerging theological leaders. This passion has been fueled by the witness of the journey students take to fulfill their urges for theological knowledge and preparation for ministry – lay and ordained.

DSF began supporting emerging theological leaders in 1959. Since that time, students have completed one academic year after another, like clockwork. The seasons of study from fall through spring held students while they were burning the midnight oil to rehearse a class presentation, finish a research paper, and/or study for a final exam. Among such diligent students, there have been those who complete program requirements to earn a seminary degree or a program certificate. As we mark the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, we pause to celebrate those who have completed their studies and are leaning into what's next.

This issue of the DSF Graduate Newsletter will feature students who have graduated from Azusa Pacific University, Claremont School of Theology, the Graduate Theological Union, Pacific School of Religion, and San Francisco Theological Seminary at the University of Redlands. You will also meet students who have completed the Certificate of Ministry Studies and the Diploma of Ministry Studies programs. You will see their faces and read reflections about their journeys.

DSF is proud to showcase these students and our internal workings of living out our mission – to support the formation of emerging theological leaders. This mission, consistent since 1959, has also led us to reflect on our vision for the future, our identity as a theological organization in covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, and our core institutional values.

Our Vision – To be a leader in discovering innovative ways to support the development of theological leaders to serve in diverse ministries and communities.

Our Identity Statement – In cooperation with ecumenical and educational partners, Disciples Seminary Foundation provides financial and educational support to Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ students in obtaining theological education in preparation for a variety of ministries.

Our Core Institutional Values – Diversity. Inclusion. Integrity. Innovation. Generosity.

As we continue to seek out and support the formation of emerging theological leaders for the church, the diverse communities we live in and the world, time will be our witness to our commitment to faithfully live out this call from God.

Rev. Belva Brown Jordan will complete her call as Interim Executive Director of DSF on September 29, 2023.

Much heart,



Rev. Belva Brown Jordan

DSF Board of Trustees Names a New Executive Director



REV. DR. CHRISTY NEWTON

On June 20, the Board of Directors of Disciples Seminary Foundation (DSF) announced Rev. Dr. Christy Newton as the newly appointed Executive Director of DSF. Rev. Dr. Newton will begin her ministry on August 1, replacing Rev. Belva Brown Jordan who has served as Interim Executive Director since January 2020.

Since 2013, Rev. Dr. Newton has served as the Senior Pastor at First Christian Church of Vallejo where her achievements include the mentorship of five student ministers as well as her work as a committed member of a Clergy Women's Circle of Trust for over 16 years.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, please join me in welcoming the Rev. Dr. Christy Newton as the new Executive Director of DSF!" said

Dr. Thomas Perring, DSF Board Chair. "She brings a perfect balance to this position by her depth of experiences as an educator, mentor, and local pastor. She understands the changing church and knows the challenges facing theological education today. Given this, Christy is committed to making DSF an organization that will 'widen the table' for those who are discerning careers in ministry and following those career choices in seminary. The future of DSF is bright, and Christy's leadership will make us shine!"

"DSF has been building courageous connections that empower diverse theological leaders since the 1960s," said Rev. Dr. Newton. "These connections inspire myriad bold ministries committed to justice, hospitality, spiritual exploration, and deep spaces of grace. I am delighted to step into this leadership role and guide DSF into the next stages of its vital and innovative mission. In collaboration with all of DSF's stakeholders and partners, I believe we can continue to expand the welcome of God's Table by investing in transformative and creative leadership for a variety of ministries and contexts."

Rev. Dr. Newton has been a firm supporter of DSF for many years, having not only been a recipient of its scholarship program but also serving on the Board of Trustees as a member and an officer from 2008-2014. "The DSF Board of Trustees and staff are excited to begin this new journey with Rev. Dr. Newton and ask that you lift us up in prayer as DSF continues to support the formation of emerging theological leaders," said Dr. Perring.

PHOTOS FROM OUR 2023 SEMINARY GRADUATIONS (more photos on page 15)



CMS & DMS GRADUATES

In Their Own Words

JOSUÉ AVENDAÑO

DMS San Diego

Why did you want to attend the DMS program? I decided to attend to expand my knowledge and understand ministry and God.

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? One of the experiences of my educational journey that has impacted me greatly is the Pauline Letter's class. I have always loved Paul and his approach to ministry. The fact that I was able to dive deep into his journey helped reignite the passion to share the gospel and everything that God has equipped me with.

What passions do you bring to ministry? One of the passions I bring to ministry is to guide people towards God's calling. It does take time, love, and discernment but when people understand their calling better, we can clearly see God's fruits in their life and that is very enjoyable.

Another passion I bring to ministry is the heart to lead the new generations. I have found that a lot of young individuals have a lot of amazing capabilities to lead the church to the next level, but for some reason, they don't connect with the church culture. Being a bridge between the older and younger generations is part of my plan to impact young individuals.



CMS & DMS SAN DIEGO GRADUATES

What does the future of your ministry look like? The future of the youth ministry I am leading looks very bright with a lot of new leaders serving God with all their hearts. DMS has provided me with skills and wisdom that I want to impart to the youth. I know that these young people will grow to impact their generations.

YUMI CASANOVA &

JOSÉ CASANOVA

DMS San Diego

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? *¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio?* We thank God for being in a church where we are instructed and encouraged to continue growing to be better servants of God. Having studied CMS and DMS gave us the opportunity to learn and get to know different perspectives on how to serve and, above all, to be able to carry out the work of the Lord with vision, passion, intentionality, and in constant

evolution. *Le damos gracias a Dios por estar en una iglesia donde se nos instruye, y se nos anima a seguir creciendo para ser mejores siervos de Dios. El haber cursado CMS y DMS nos dio la oportunidad de aprender y conocer diferentes perspectivas de cómo servir y sobretodo el poder llevar a cabo la obra del Señor con visión, pasión, intencionalidad y en constante evolución.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? *¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio?* Serving with dedication, love, and passion. May everything you do always be for the Lord. If He has called us, He will use and support us for His Glory and Honor. *El Servir con entrega, amor y pasión Que todo lo que haga siempre sea como para El Señor., si El nos a llamado, El nos usara y respaldara para su Gloria y su Honra.*

What does the future of your ministry look like? *¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio?* A church with servants who love God and love and serve their church. *Una iglesia con siervos que Aman a Dios aman y sirven a su iglesia.*

NYDIA SELENE FLORES
CMS San Diego

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? *¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio?* There are many, but one in particular is to keep in mind that when you minister to a person, it is not about you. It's about that person and their feelings, not about how you would react to difficult situations. I learned this in our Grief Ministry class. *Hay muchas, pero una en particular es tener en mente que cuando se ministra a una persona, no se trata de ti, si no de esa persona y sus sentimientos, no de como tu reaccionaria ante situaciones difíciles. Esto lo aprendí en la Clase de Duelo.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? *¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio?* I serve in Camera and Christian Film. My interest is that people receive God's message in all possible ways and that their hearts are reached. *Sirvo en los ministerios de Cámara y de Cine Cristiano, mi interés es que las personas reciban el mensaje de Dios de todas las maneras posibles, y que sus corazones sean alcanzados.*

What does the future of your ministry look like? *¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio?* Always advancing to the next level. That is the goal. *Avanzando siempre al siguiente nivel, esa es la meta.*

BEATRIZ GONZÁLEZ
CMS San Diego

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? *¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su via-*

je educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio? Yes, to better serve within ministry, getting to know each person, and learning to listen to them. I realized that every time I took a class, I really didn't know anything. It leads me to push myself to keep going, to keep preparing, because there is a lot ahead. *Si, dar un mejor servicio dentro del ministerio, conocer a cada persona y aprender a escucharlos, el darme cuenta que cada vez que tomaba una clase y darme cuenta que en realidad no se nada. Me lleva a esforzarme a seguir adelante, seguirme preparando, porque hay mucho por delante.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? *¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio?* I am passionate about raising leaders, teaching, growing as a ministry, carrying out the great commission, and going out and making more disciples. *Levantar líderes, enseñar, crecer como ministerio, apasionados por llevar a cabo la gran comisión e ir y hacer más discípulos.*

What does the future of your ministry look like? *¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio?* A church of thousands, as I mentioned before, passionate about continuing to carry out the work of God. *Una iglesia de miles, como ya la mencione antes,*

apasionados por seguir llevando a cabo la obra de Dios.

GIOVANNI GONZÁLEZ
CMS San Diego

Why did you want to attend the CMS program? I wanted to attend CMS because for me it is not that I wanted to question God but know more about God and His will. Even to test my knowledge critically so I can know for myself and even help guide others to a better understanding of theology.

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? Most definitely. When family members, friends, or co-workers ask me of my studies, I mention my beginners class of theological studies, and it most definitely catches their attention. Curious of what it is but also wanting to know the reasoning behind it. Helping me share my testimony of how it came to be and it shaping me of how to approach certain discussions and simplifying for the people that may not understand it.

What passions do you bring to ministry? Passions I bring are photography/videography and even listening. The art of capturing moments in time and using it to display the beauty of



CMS SUN VALLEY GRADUATES

special moments, even a way to share the gospel since so many people need a visual guide to understand certain things. The desire to listen to people and not always having to speak but giving them the time to let out things they've held in.

What does the future of your ministry look like? Passionate and wanting to explore the creative side. Using gifts in a godly way and applying it in life especially in an artistic form to share/inspire others.

ANA KARINA IBARRA
CMS San Diego

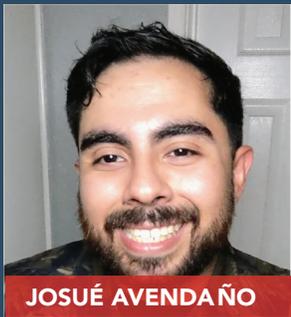
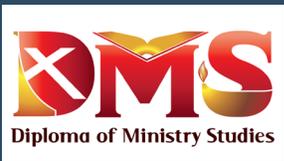
Why did you want to attend the CMS program? ¿Por que deseas asistir al programa de CMS? I decided to attend the CMS program because I wanted to continue learning about God, the Bible, and my church. I appreciate the opportunity to have spent these last two years in

continuous learning with a diversity of teachers with a high knowledge of the word of God. *Decidí asistir al programa de CMS, debido a que tenía el deseo de seguir aprendiendo sobre Dios, la Biblia y mi iglesia. Agradezco la oportunidad de haber pasado estos dos últimos años en continuo aprendizaje con diversidad de maestros con alto conocimiento de la palabra de Dios.*

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? ¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio? Currently, I serve with young adolescents. Being part of this program helps me realize that it is necessary for me to continue studying and preparing myself to be able to teach them what I learned, and they can

grow together with me. *Actualmente sirvo con jóvenes adolescentes, el ser parte de este programa, me pudo ayudar a darme cuenta que es necesario que yo pueda seguir estudiando y preparándome a mi misma para poder enseñarles lo que aprendí y puedan crecer junto conmigo.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? ¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio? As a servant of God, I am determined to put into action the gifts God has given me for the edification of my church. I have the power to bring new ministries that can connect with people of all ages who have not yet known the gospel and can see that life is better with God. *Como sierva de Dios estoy decidida a poner en acción los dones que Dios me ha dado para la edificación de mi iglesia. El poder traer nuevos ministerios que puedan conectar con las personas de todas las edades que aún no han con-*



JOSUÉ AVENDAÑO



YUMI & JOSÉ CASANOVA



MELISSA SÁNCHEZ



ELIEZER SANDOVAL



YESSENIA AVALOS



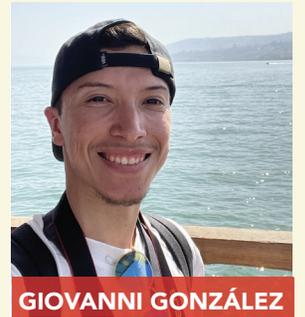
NYDIA SELENE FLORES



MARÍA DEL CARMEN GARCÍA



BEATRIZ GONZÁLEZ



GIOVANNI GONZÁLEZ



SUGEY GUTIÉRREZ



ANA KARINA IBARRA



BRENDA LOPEZ



VALENTINA MÁRQUEZ



CLAUDIA MAYA

ocido del evangelio y puedan ver que la vida es mejor con Dios.

What does the future of your ministry look like? ¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio? I was surprised at how much more there is to learn. Because of this, I look forward to continuing with the DMS program and continue studying without stopping. *Algo que realmente me sorprendió, fue como es solo una pequeña introducción a todo la riqueza que se puede seguir aprendiendo. Debido a esto, anhelo seguir continuando con el próximo programa de DMS. Y seguir estudiando sin parar.*

BRENDA LOPEZ
CMS San Diego

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? ¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio? By taking the CMS course, I was able to realize that no matter how many years one has been studying the gospel, there is always something new to learn. And even if you think you know something, by taking these

classes, I was able to go deeper into the teachings thanks to the instructors who were able to take us to another level of understanding and to be able to apply these lessons in ministry. *Al tomar este curso de CMS pude darme cuenta que no importa los años que uno lleve en el evangelio siempre hay algo nuevo que aprender, e incluso piensas saber algo pero al tomar estas clases pude entrar a más profundidad en la enseñanza. Gracias a los instructores que pudieron llevarnos a otro nivel de entendimiento y poder aplicar en el ministerio.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? ¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio? Through my testimony and talking about what God did and continues to do in my life, I can teach, raise leaders, and be motivated to move forward in God's ways. *A través de mi testimonio y hablar sobre lo que Dios hizo y sigue haciendo en mi vida puedo enseñar, levantar líderes y motivar a seguir adelante en los caminos de Dios.*

What does the future of your ministry look like? ¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio? New leaders

and passionate believers for the word of God. As a ministry, we continue to learn and take ministry to the next level of learning and teaching. *Nuevos líderes, creyentes apasionados por la palabra de Dios. Que como ministerio sigamos aprendiendo y llevar el ministerio a un siguiente nivel de aprendizaje y enseñanza.*

JOEL MIZA
CMS Sun Valley

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? Yes, I was able to understand and learn how to become a better leader in my ministry.

What passions do you bring to ministry? God has given me the gift of singing. This has allowed me to use this gift to worship at my church and at different churches. It has also given me the opportunity to help others in worship ministry.

What does the future of your ministry look like? As a worship leader, I want our ministry to grow in all aspects, from getting new singers and musicians.



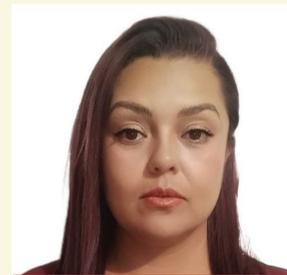
JOEL MIZA



EDNA MURO



ISMAEL PÉREZ



KAREN L. PÉREZ R.



ROCIÓ RODRÍGUEZ



NORMA ROSALES



MARINA IVETH TAPIA



DULCE VARGAS



ELIZABETH VALDERRAMA



2023 GRADUATES

CMS SUN VALLEY

Marina Chagolla
Brenda Espinoza
Claudia Espinoza
Nolvertha Leyva
Joel Miza
Edna Muro
Roció Rodríguez
Norma Rosales
Irene Salazar
Salomón Salazar

CMS SAN DIEGO

Jesús Cortez
Arnulfo Flores
Erika Flores
Juan Pablo Flores
Nydia Selene Flores
Beatriz González
Giovanni González
Ana Karina Ibarra
Brenda Lopez
Catalina Militello
Elizabeth Valderrama

DMS

Josué Avendaño
José Casanova
Yumi Casanova
Daniel Gómez
Héctor Islas
Judith Islas
Melissa Sánchez
Eliezer Sandoval

CMS MEXICO

Yessenia Avalos
María Del Carmen García
Sugey Gutiérrez
Norma Karina Herrera
Valentina Márquez
Claudia Maya
Ismael Pérez
Karen L. Pérez R.
Marina Iveth Tapia
Dulce Vargas

ISMAEL PÉREZ

CMS Mexico

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? *¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio?* Definitely a journey through Christian education with prepared theologian teachers opened my understanding of God even more to be able to exercise a healthy and relevant ministry. *Definitivamente si un viaje por la educación Cristiana con maestros teólogos preparados a abierto mi entendimiento de Dios aún más para poder ejercer un ministerio sano y relevante.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? *¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio?* Preach the good news of salvation to youth with a new approach but always focusing and exalting the name of Jesus Christ. *Predicar las buenas nuevas de salvación a la juventud con un enfoque nuevo pero siempre enfocando y exaltando el nombre de Jesucristo.*

What does the future of your ministry look like? *¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio?*

Growing and stoked. *Creciente y avivado.*

NORMA ROSALES

CMS Sun Valley

Why did you want to attend the CMS program? I joined CMS because I am passionate about better serving the Lord in everything I do. By joining CMS, I would be better skilled and knowledgeable to help those around me.

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? The CMS cours-

es were well-prepared and educational. My passion for serving the Lord has increased, and my love for those in need of God has intensified. Also, I have a deeper understanding of different eras of ministry.

What passions do you bring to ministry? My calling is in counseling. I am passionate about serving and walking with people who are hurt, who need love, kindness, and support.

What does the future of your ministry look like? I rejoice in the Lord, knowing he has given me the tools and knowledge to serve in ministry and share what I learn with others.

MELISSA SÁNCHEZ

DMS San Diego

Why did you want to attend the DMS program? *¿Por que deseas asistir al programa de DMS?* Upon completion of the CMS program, I had the need to learn more about the nature of God, his attributes, his purposes for humanity, and everything related to this. I convinced myself that enrolling in this program would be the best option and a way to understand these themes. *Al concluir el programa de Certificado de Estudios Ministeriales (CMS), surgió en mi la necesidad de aprender más sobre la naturaleza de Dios, sus atributos, sus propósitos para la humanidad y todo lo relacionado con esto. Por lo que me convencí, que tomar este programa educativo sería la mejor opción y forma para comprender estos temas.*

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? *¿Hay alguna experiencia particular de su viaje educativo que lo haya moldeado significativamente a usted y su ministerio?* This program has been a key



and an important tool for my personal development, educational, and ministerial growth. Through the knowledge acquired in this program, I have been able to strengthen my study and analysis in the word of God. From what I can tell, my understanding of the scriptures is objective and responsible. *Este programa ha sido herramienta clave e importante para mí desarrollo y crecimiento personal, educativo y ministerial. A través de los conocimientos adquiridos en este programa, he podido fortalecer mi estudio y análisis en la palabra de Dios. Por lo que puedo decir que ahora mi comprensión por las escrituras es objetiva y responsable.*

What passions do you bring to ministry? ¿Que pasiones traes al Ministerio? I am currently serving in Christian worship and education. My wish is that through my testimony and service to the community, my ministry can be a channel of blessing and inspiration to all those with a need to know more about God and his purposes. Likewise, I hope to encourage them to exercise and practice biblical principles and lead them to be people of conviction and spiritual maturity. *En la actualidad sirvo en el ministerio de adoración y educación cristiana. Mi deseo es que, a través de mi testimonio y servicio a la comunidad, pueda ser ese canal de bendición e inspiración a todos aquellos con la*

necesidad de conocer más sobre la persona de Dios y sus propósitos; así mismo animándolos a ejercer y practicar principios bíblicos; llevándolos a ser personas de convicción y con madurez espiritual.

What does the future of your ministry look like? ¿Como se ve el futuro de su Ministerio? My aspiration is that the kingdom of God be expanded, that there is a qualitative and quantitative growth for my church, and that we be a place where people can find and experience the love of God through worship, prayer, teaching, and discipleship. *Mi aspiración es que el reino de Dios sea expandido. Al igual, que exista un crecimiento cualitativo y cuantitativo para mi iglesia. Que seamos un lugar donde las personas puedan encontrar y experimentar el amor de Dios a través de la adoración, oración, enseñanza y discipulado.*

ELIEZER SANDOVAL
DMS San Diego

Why did you want to attend the DMS program? My commitment to biblical studies surges from within as a response to the “new now” that lives within. Intriguing questions and determination to find the answers with a biblical foundation, striving to remain Gospel minded, focused on God’s walk for all humankind that gives responses that captivates and

attracts the hearts and souls of my daily surroundings and encounters.

Are there any particular experiences from your educational journey that have significantly shaped you and your ministry? Understanding and relating with others’ beliefs and walks of life that have led them to interpret the Bible in a particular way. Being open to listen but not wavering on the sound doctrine of the Gospel. Knowing the limits but not limiting my own mind of reasoning.

What passions do you bring to ministry? Building and empowering, motivating, and inspiring others to live out God’s assignment for their lives.

What does the future of your ministry look like? Daily awakening and daily revival. Constant accountability to live out the “great commission” and leading people to search and accept spiritual maturity and growth!

CMS is designed for adults who serve their local church ministry and are interested in deepening their knowledge in theology, the Bible, and the practice of ministry. DMS is designed for people who are interested in seminary-level studies of the Bible, theology, and ministry and have completed the CMS program.



PLEASE VISIT DSF.EDU FOR MORE PHOTOS FROM OUR CMS & DMS GRADUATION CEREMONIES.

DSF'S CLASS OF 2023 SEMINARY GRADUATES

In Their Own Words



JILLIAN CRISCI *Claremont School of Theology* **M.Div.**

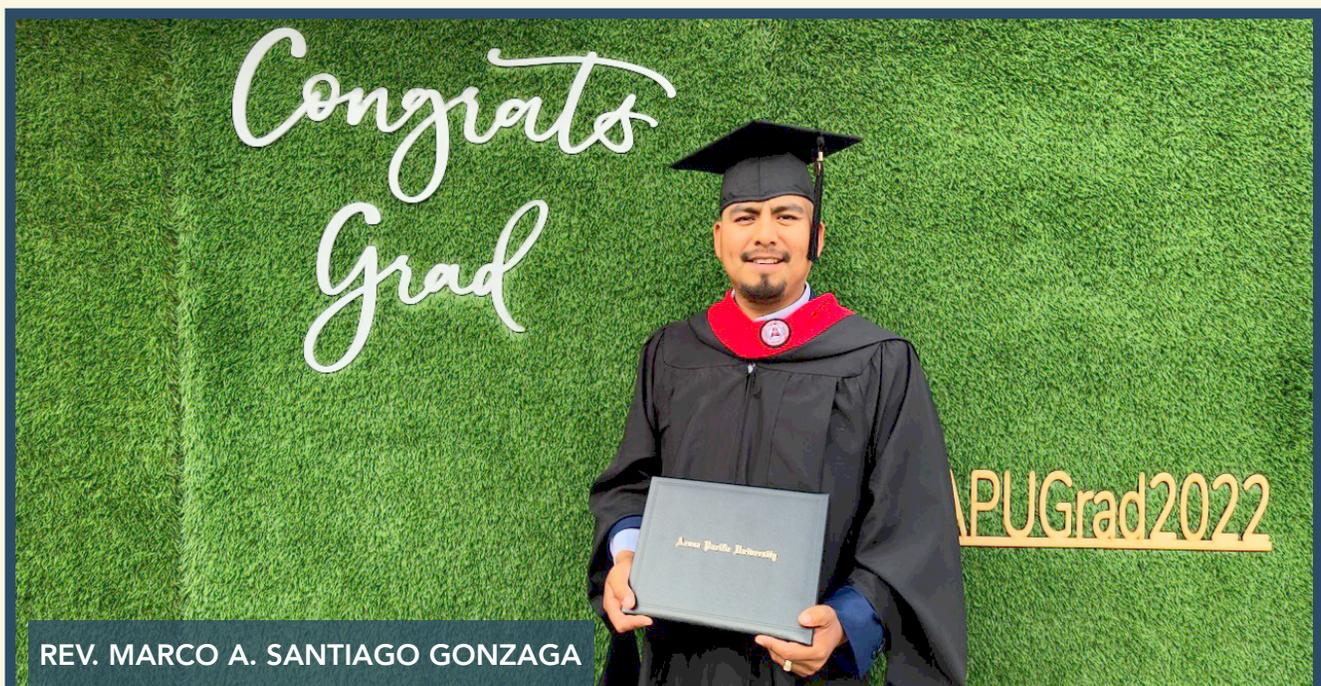
Jillian Crisci is a teacher and a Minister to the Mystery in all its forms, working towards transformation and healing in uncertain times – personally and communally. She is from apple trees and Sunday dinners with family, hot peppers, and a Love that never quits. The Earth and Love sustain and nurture her, as does a good belly laugh with friends and family. She is queer, sometimes Christian, and always a student of Jesus and the Divine.

REV. MARCO A. SANTIAGO GONZAGA *Azusa Pacific University* **M.Div.**

I was born in Baja California, Mexico and for the last 19 years have lived in Vista, CA. I was inspired to go to seminary by God's call to ministry and the need to prepare myself to be a minister of God, since ministry is about serving the people of God. My education gave me more passion, courage, security, love, and peace. Education is always necessary to effectively carry out the call of the ministry of God. I was ordained in the PSWR on January 21, 2023 and currently serve at Casa de Re-

fugio Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Covina, CA. Additionally, together with my wife and my pastors, we have a family group in San Marcos, CA, where an average of 50 to 60 people attend services. My goal for ministry is to reach more people and for the Church to become more relevant in society.

Nací en San Quintín, Baja California, México, durante los últimos 19 años he vivido en Vista, CA. Fui inspirado a ir a seminario por el llamado de Dios al ministerio y la necesidad de Educarme para ser un ministro de Dios Preparado, ya que el ministerio se trata de servir al pueblo de Dios. En los 5 Años de preparación en el



REV. MARCO A. SANTIAGO GONZAGA



JILLIAN CRISCI



REV. GYUSEON MIN

seminario, adquirí más Pasión para servir al señor, Consagración, Seguridad en El, Amor y Paz. La educación siempre es necesaria para llevar a cabo con eficacia el llamado de Dios al Santo Ministerio. Sin Duda alguna es necesario Estudiar para servir mucho mejor. Mi meta para el ministerio es llegar a más personas y que la Iglesia sea más relevante en la sociedad. Como Iglesia tenemos la necesidad de tener Comunión con Dios, Alcanzar a Otros para Cristo, Servir al Señor y Adiestrarnos en la Palabra, para Poder llevar a cabo la Encomienda de Pastorear, Guiar, Cuidar, y Alimentar Espiritualmente de la mejor manera posible al pueblo de Dios y mis hermanos en cristo y a toda persona que lo necesite. Servir es mi llamado, y así lo hare mientras tenga Vida.

Fui ordenado en La Región Suroeste del Pacifico, (PSWR) Discípulos de Cristo, el 21 de enero de 2023 y actualmente sirvo en la Iglesia Cristiana, Casa de Refugio (Discípulos de Cristo) en Covina, CA. Además, junto con mi Esposa Norma Ramírez, Mis hermanos en Cristo y mis Pastores, Los Reverendos Francisco Ramos y Soriliz Rodríguez Servimos en un grupo familiar en la Ciudad de San Marcos, CA. Todos los viernes tenemos Reuniones y asisten a los servicios un promedio de 50 a 60 personas.

REV. GYUSEON MIN
Claremont School of Theology
MTS

I have worked with people with developmental disabilities and their families, and I wanted to better understand their inner world and naturally became interested in their spiritual formation. This is what drew me to seminary. My seminary education has given me a deeper understanding of what I need to do and helped me realize what I have in my heart for my congregation. I also learned two things that will contribute to the spiritual formation of the people I serve and further my ministry.

One is that by experimenting and trying out different possible worship forms for people with developmental disabilities, I had the opportunity to study and implement in depth the use of the body to participate in worship for people who have limited use of language. I think this worship model is very appropriate for people with developmental disabilities and is a good attempt to allow them to express themselves to God. For people with disabilities, they are often controlled in worship due to their disability and are put in a very passive position. But my congregation, Wow Worship, interacts with them and reveals to them that they are persons who exist in God. This expression of self will help them see themselves as living spiritual beings in relationship with God.

The other is the ability to provide pastoral counseling to the immigrant Korean community. The creation of Wow Counseling Center as a means of financial sustainability for Wow Church has allowed me to transform my personal counseling ministry into an organizational structure that can train pastoral counselors and help many people suffering from mental health challenges in the immigrant community. Understanding and discerning psychological suffering is crucial to everyone's spiritual formation. I was interested in a small ministry called Spiritual Formation of People with Developmental Disabilities. However, it was another experience to witness how God is leading the ministry. All we have to do is be present and be there in the field. The invisible work is done by the invisible God. After graduation, WOW ministry will continue to develop worship services for people with developmental disabilities and mental health care for people in the world.

나는 발달장애를 가진 사람들과 그 가족들을 위한 사역을 해 왔고, 그들의 내면 세계를 더욱 이해하기를 원했고 자연스럽게 그들의 영적 형성에 관심을 가지게 되었다. 이것이 내가 다시 신학교에서 공부하도록 만든 이유이다. 신학교에서의 교육은 내가 마음에 품고 있는 것을 성도들과 함께 실현해내기 위해 무엇을 해야 하는지에 대해 더 깊이 이해하게 도와주었다. 이번 교육과정에서 이들의 영적 형성에 기여할 두가지를



SANDY ROBERTS



REV. DR. LAURA JEAN TORGERSON

배웠다. 하나는 발달장애를 가진 사람들을 위해 가능한 예배형태를 실험하고 다양하게 시도함으로써, 언어사용이 제한적인 이 사람들이 몸을 사용하여 예배에 참여하는 것을 심도깊게 연구하고 구현해 보는 기회를 가진 것이었다. 나는 이 예배모델이 발달장애를 가진 사람들에게 매우 적절하며, 그들이 예배에서 자신의 마음을 하나님께 표현할 수 있다는 점에서 좋은 시도였다고 생각한다. 장애를 가진 사람들의 경우, 장애로 인해 예배속에서 통제되는 경우가 허다하고 이들은 매우 수동적 위치에 있게 된다. 그러나 와우예배는 이들과 상호작용하며, 그들이 하나님안에 존재하는 사람으로서 자신을 드러낸다. 이렇게 표현되는 자기는 하나님과의 관계에서도 살아있는 영적존재로 자신을 경험하게 만들 것이다. 다른 하나는 이민사회에 목회상담을 제공할 수 있게 되었다는 것이다. 와우교회의 재정적 독립을 위해 와우상담센터를 만들게 되면서, 개인적으로 해 오던 상담사역이 상담기관으로서의 조직적 기반을 갖추고 목회상담사들을 훈련하는 동시에 이민사회의 사각지대에서 정신건강의 어려움으로 고통받는 많은 분들을 도울 수 있게 되었다. 심리적 고통을 이해하고 분별하는 것은 모든 사람의 영적 형성에 매우 중요하다. 나는 발달장애인들의 영적형성이라는 작은 사역에 관심을 가졌는데 하나님이 어떻게 사역을 이끌어 가시는지 또 한번 목격하게 된 경험이다. 보이는 우리는 그 자리에 있지만 하면 된다. 보이지 않는 일은 보이지 않는 하나님이 다 하신다. 졸업후에도 발달장애를 가진 사람들을 위한 예배의 발전과 정신건강 돌봄 사역은 계속 될 것이다.

SANDY ROBERTS
Claremont School of Theology
M.Div.

I was inspired to attend seminary by a ministerial intern at my church, Rev. Dr. Nancy Fowler, then a student at CST. I wanted to learn more, but seminary didn't enter into it. Then Nancy, in a sermon, mentioned "needing to do more" and it clicked for me! I needed to go to seminary. It took over a decade, but I made it to CST! During seminary, I found a renewed passion for teaching and research. I also worked with children's and adult Christian education. That time crossed with great social and political upheaval here in the US and worldwide, including the start of the war in Ukraine, and I found that my students asked questions of all kinds. My teaching skills stretched and gained greater depth in this time, and CST gave me the confidence to share from a Christian perspective. My Cultural Competencies class and my theology classes happened at the exact right times, and I was able to bring that knowledge to my students in age-appropriate ways as we navigated some touchy and horrific subjects. Another main influence was learning Biblical Hebrew with Professor Soo J. Kim Sweeney.

“**CST gave me the confidence to share from a Christian perspective.**”

SANDY ROBERTS

She helped me open up context and meanings in Hebrew Bible texts, and I've had the joy of sharing some of this with my students. This has also led to an interest in Ancient Near Eastern literature.

I'll take time off after graduation. However, I'm also looking into a research project on Christian evangelism as presented in 19th century American girls' literature, which will fuse my seminary education with my earlier English degree! For now, I'll probably teach at my local church and will continue to serve on the PSWR's Church in Society committee. I'm still in the ordination process with the PSWR. The date is yet to be determined.

REV. DR. LAURA JEAN TORGERSON
Graduate Theological Union
Ph.D. - Interdisciplinary Studies in Biblical Interpretation and Culture

Dissertation: *Crossing Contexts: Nicaraguan Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation in Church and Seminary*
I was inspired to attend seminary



SAFUE L. ULUFALEILUPE



REV. DR. MARVIN LANCE WISER

while I was serving with Global Ministries in Nicaragua. There, I fell in love with teaching theology. I also noticed that my Pentecostal students, both in our partner church and in the seminary, had unique perspectives on biblical interpretation – and I wanted to learn more. Getting to study in-depth the interpretive practices of Pentecostal students in church and seminary has broadened my understanding of the ways that Christians interpret the Bible and sharpened my analytical “tools” for understanding how interpretation interacts with culture, power, and justice. My dissertation, an ethnographic study of biblical interpretation among Nicaraguan Pentecostals, considers both church and academic interpretation as cultural practices, forms of literacy embedded in social, historical, political, and theological contexts. As students move between these interpretive communities, they navigate differing textual practices connected to divergent understandings of what the Bible is and how to use it.

“I dream of churches that are deeply engaged in their local communities and connected to the global church.”

REV. DR. LAURA JEAN TORGERSON

I was ordained in 2005 at University Christian Church in Hyattsville, MD. I dream of churches that are

deeply engaged in their local communities and connected to the global church, always with eyes, ears, and hearts open to love God and neighbor (whether near or far). On July 1, 2022, I began as Assistant Professor of New Testament and Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow at Berkeley School of Theology.

SAFUE L. ULUFALEILUPE
Pacific School of Religion
D.Min.

Dissertation: *The Next Generation of the Samoan Church*

I was born in Oakland, CA at a Naval Base that closed down. I lived in American Samoa before attending Pacific School of Religion. I was inspired to attend seminary by my Samoan community. My experience in seeing the Samoan community fall under the theological and cultural views of Western culture made me think of going to seminary for the sake of developing a theological view that can inspire both new and older generations. My dissertation examined the theological-psychological view of Samoan youth/adolescents who grow up in the US and have adapted to

Western culture. I believe that Western culture is dominant, and with that, the theological views of the Samoan community shifts. I value the identity of the Samoan people and believe that decolonization needs to happen in order for the Samoan people to recapture their identity. My passion is to educate people on theology. I believe that theology is developed by past experiences. Your story has value, and it explains the struggle and the difficulties of your journey in life. Therefore, postcolonial theology has to be explained from an individual/community perspective.

My plan is to inspire and lift my community. In doing so, I have been accepted to teach at Kanana Theological Seminary in American Samoa in Fall 2023, with the hopes of mentoring students within spiritual growth. I am also in Training and Care in the CCNC-N region and hope to be ordained sometime this year.

REV. DR. MARVIN LANCE WISER
Graduate Theological Union
Ph.D.

Dissertation: *Belonging to Work and Working to Belong: Dissimilation and Differentiation Among Deportables Beyond the River*

I was inspired to attend seminary while attending a house church network in Mexico City, when I was living and working there as an ESL



NEREYDA (NEDDY) YONG

instructor. My education has given me new lenses, tools, and a network to better understand labor, migration, and ethnicity that greatly inform my praxis. In my dissertation, I employ Latinx studies framed by postcolonial anthropological and sociological understandings of theories of labor, migration, and ethnicity, like *mestizaje* and hybridity, to derive a nuanced understanding of representations of Judean ethnicity during the Persian period as found in the biblical books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Ruth.

I currently serve as the bilingual Associate Pastor and Director of Community Resiliency Programs at Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, CA. I aspire to continue bridging direct service with systems change work via partnerships with public

agencies and community change-makers. I plan to continue solidarity work with our Newcomer Navigation Center serving asylum-seekers and continue to serve as a seminary field education site mentor. I hope to also have more time for adjunct teaching and building out more contextual/experiential learning opportunities and partnerships. What excites me most about ministry is the transfor-

mative opportunity to transition from a ministry based in hospitality to one based in belonging, which decenters the host and challenges the “us/them” mentality in regards to the boundaries of both church and community building, converting charity to solidarity.

NEREYDA (NEDDY) YONG
San Francisco Theological Seminary at the University of Redlands
M.Div.

In the spring of 2019, I felt a spontaneous nudge from the Holy Spirit to pursue theological education. I had been serving for three years prior as an apartment community missionary (alongside my partner Aizaiah) in Anaheim, CA, committed to building a sense of unity, care, and hospi-

tality through the love of Christ. Living and serving in this diverse apartment community greatly expanded my perspective on the powerful and radical love of God, and I felt the Spirit leading me to pursue seminary so that I could deepen my theological understanding and better support my community and the world towards healing, wholeness, and justice. During seminary, I gave birth to my third and

fourth children, and my experience as a mother was a primary influence on the way I integrated my theological learning with my daily life. Because I experienced sheltering in place during the COVID-19 pandemic with my children, I was invited to deeply reflect on the intersection of theology, parenting, social healing, and justice. My vision for the Church is that we would center the spiritual vitality and formation of the next generation, especially children ages 0-12. As a mother of four young children under 7, I feel inspired to pour my energy into how the church can better support parents and caregivers of children in leading spirituality in their household context. Church is not somewhere we go, but something we participate in as we open ourselves to the Spirit of Christ in each moment. My conviction is that when we collectively support our children in feeling seen, valued, and respected it will create a world with connection, beauty, healing, and joy.

After graduation, my family will be moving to Ontario, CA to live closer to our extended family and to establish roots and build greater connection among the DOC in the PSWR. I was also invited to submit a grant application to the Lilly Endowment, which focuses on empowering Christian parents and caregivers towards radically inclusive contemplative practices in the home. I hope to hear back from them during the summer of 2023. My anticipated ordination will be in the fall of 2023 at my sponsoring congregation, the First Christian Church of Pomona. I am so grateful for all their support these last few years as a seminarian!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 GRADUATES!

Honoring a Lifetime of Service

Ann Willard always knew that she never wanted to be a pastor. Born and raised as a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), she admired those who had the calling but knew that it wasn't for her. "Being involved in church has always been really important to me," she said. "I liked the idea of helping people who wanted to go into ministry. I didn't. When I thought about having to preach a sermon every week that was not on my agenda, but I wanted to help those that did."



Breaking ground on the Claremont building in 1997

Ann met Don Reisinger "many many years" ago at a regional meeting in Northern California. It was not long after that he asked her to serve

on the DSF Board. "We became good friends right away. I would stay with him and his wife, Marjorie, whenever I had to travel down to Southern California for a meeting. I really enjoyed those times," she said. "I was happy to be doing something that I believed in, helping those who wanted to go to seminary, and to be doing it with people that became life-long friends."

Ann's time with DSF included many pinnacle moments with the organization. One of her favorite highlights was when they broke ground on the Claremont building in 1997. "That was an exciting moment for us," she remembered.

Through her time with DSF, Ann was also able to further her own life experience by attending

San Francisco Theological Seminary and receiving a Master in Art and Values, which included writing a 217-page thesis on the ecumenical



ANN WILLARD

partnership between the DOC and UCC. "That is work I'm very proud of to this day."

"Every time I come and visit and see a group of students, I'm just glad they're there," Ann shared. "What I want most for everybody in the church is to stay alive, stay active, keep growing, keep changing, keep adjusting to these changing situations. I really feel that DSF has been good about doing and supporting all of that. I'm so pleased with how everything has grown and developed and gone on through all that we have faced."

Ann concluded her tenure on the DSF Board in May 2023. We give thanks to Ann for her years of dedication and service.



GRADUATE AWARDS

DISCIPLES SEMINARY FOUNDATION AWARD

Recipients: Rev. Gyuseon Min and Sandy Roberts

Award given by the Disciples Seminary Foundation to a student at Claremont School of Theology who exemplifies DSF's values of innovation, collaboration, and integrity in ministry with the Christian Church Disciples of Christ).

HOYT HICKMAN AWARD

Recipient: Jillian Crisci

The Hoyt Hickman Award for Outstanding Liturgical Scholarship and Practice is given to a graduating student at Claremont School of Theology who has shown evidence of a high quality of scholarship in study of liturgy and is an effective leader of Christian worship.

SFTS COMMUNITY LIFE AWARD

Recipient: Nereyda Yong

The SFTS faculty awards two graduating M.Div. students who have maintained a high standard of achievement at SFTS, and who show outstanding potential for leadership in the church and in the world. The Community Life Award continues a tradition established by the Seminary's Alumni Association in 1906. With this award, the faculty recognizes an outstanding Master of Divinity student who has also made an outstanding contribution to the life of our community.

2022-2023 NAMED SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

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Awardee: Sandy Roberts

BREMER SCHOLARSHIP

Awardee: Zade Evans

BROWN SCHOLARSHIP

Awardee: Gloria Carr

DRISKILL SCHOLARSHIP

Awardee: Rev. Dr. Marvin Lance Wiser

LACEY SCHOLARSHIP

Awardees: Mel Cobb & Seven Alexander Gardner

PARSONS SCHOLARSHIP

Awardee: Connie Miroslaw

For more information about DSF's Named Scholarships, please visit dsf.edu/namedscholarships



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