



McCormick
Theological Seminary

20
25

ANNUAL
REPORT



AWAKENING POSSIBILITY

CARRYING LEGACY & INSPIRING HOPE AT MCCORMICK





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**“I BELIEVE
POSSIBILITY
IS HOLY.”**

Dr. Maisha Handy

S.T.O.R.Y. in Practice

I believe possibility is holy.

Not the vague, wishful kind. I mean the kind of possibility you can touch, the kind that shows up when people who've been told "not you" and "not now" decide to answer God and live into their purpose anyway. The kind that rises in communities who have carried too much for too long, yet still find the courage to build, to heal, to lead, to imagine again.

That is the work McCormick Theological Seminary is called to do. And this year, as we share stories of impact across our community, our annual report theme — Awakening the Possibilities — feels less like a tagline and more like a testimony.

Awakening is what happens when we exercise agency and choose collaborative engagement and responsiveness. It rises when we refuse to numb ourselves to the pain of the world or to the promise of God. Awakening is what happens when we tell the speak our truths, hold one another close, and still dare to dream bigger than the headlines.

As a womanist theologian and leader, I am formed by a tradition that insists faith must be embodied, communal, and liberating. Womanist wisdom teaches us to pay attention to lived experience and to measure theology by its ability to sustain life, expand dignity, and cultivate flourishing. It calls us to love fiercely, resist boldly, and build wisely. That lens shapes how I see McCormick: not simply as an institution, but as a community of formation committed to a world where all can thrive.

A Plan for the Future We Are Responsible to Build

As we move toward McCormick's 200-year anniversary, we are developing S.T.O.R.Y. Awakening the Possibilities — a three-year strategic plan that will culminate in that bicentennial moment and guide us with clarity, courage, and shared direction.

S.T.O.R.Y. stands for Strategic, Timeless, Operational, Revitalized, Yearnings — a framework developed and informed by our trustees, students, staff, alumni, and faculty, that helps us honor the legacy we have inherited while responding to what this moment is asking of us now. It is not branding. It's not a clever acronym looking for a home. It is a commitment to faithful practice: how we will steward this institution with integrity so that our mission continues to move... stronger, wider, and deeper.

At its heart, S.T.O.R.Y. names five institutional priorities, each one designed to awaken possibility not just in our plans, but in our daily life together:

1) Student-Centered Wrap Around Design

We are cultivating an integrated ecosystem that supports the ongoing formation of lifelong learners. That means building a student experience where support is connected, so students can thrive academically, spiritually, emotionally, and vocationally.



2) Accessible Theological Education

We are positioning McCormick as a community-facing hub for theological education and formation that engages, supports, and equips congregations and communities. Accessibility is not a convenience; it is a justice commitment. We are widening the circle so that formation can reach the places where life is happening.

3) Fiscal Viability and Growth

We are curating financial resources that strengthen long-term sustainability. This is about stewardship with vision — building the capacity that allows us to serve future generations with courage rather than constraint.

4) Institution and Community-Wide Collaboration

We are developing a shared communication framework across departments and strengthening partnerships with external institutions through collaborative initiatives and strategic communication. In this new era, no seminary thrives alone. Collaboration is not optional; it is how we multiply impact.

5) Increased Employee Investment

We are enhancing systems, practices, and procedures that support employees and building capacity across departments. Possibility does

not awaken when people are depleted. It awakens when people are equipped, valued, and supported to do excellent work with integrity

S.T.O.R.Y. helps us to keep asking the questions that matter: Where is God already stirring possibility among us? What must we strengthen so our students can thrive? What must we release so we can lead with agility and integrity? Who must we partner with to deepen our impact — here in Chicago and across the globe?

Most important, S.T.O.R.Y. is about outcomes. Not activity. Not aspiration. Because awakening possibility is not theoretical. It looks like students who stay the course because the community holds them up. It looks like scholarship that doesn't hide behind paywalls or jargon but shows up in public life, bringing moral clarity to complex issues. It looks like learning that travels into congregations, community organizations, hospitals, schools, and justice-seeking movements.

Bringing McCormick To The Places Life Is Happening

McCormick is rooted in Chicago — and that matters. Our city teaches us every day that theology cannot be detached from public life. Here, faith is tested in the real conditions of people's lives: housing insecurity, violence,



migration, racism, economic strain, and the quiet grief so many carry. Chicago is not just our address; it is part of our calling.

And at the same time, we know the McCormick experience cannot be confined to one zip code. Today's learners are busy ministry professionals and emerging leaders balancing jobs, families, and communities that need them right now. That reality is not a problem to solve; it is a truth to honor. So, we will continue bringing McCormick to the Chicagoland area and around the globe through innovative learning models, deeper partnerships, and forms of formation that meet people where they are — without compromising theological depth.

Womanist wisdom reminds us: if a thing is not accessible to the people, it is not truly good news. That means our work is to widen the circle — expanding access, strengthening support, and forming leaders who can build communities of care and justice wherever they are planted.

As we innovate into the future with seminary and congregational partners, our community impact will enable the flourishing of generations to come. I believe that with my whole heart. We are not simply preserving a legacy, we are extending it, evolving it, and placing it in the hands of leaders who will carry it farther than we can imagine.

Many more deeply meaningful and life-changing outcomes are on the way. If we do this well — if we speak our truths, stay rooted in our mission, and build with courage — our 200-year anniversary, in the spirit of Sankofa, will be both a look back with joy and appreciation and a launch forward.

Thank you for being part of this community — students, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, donors, and partners. Thank you for your belief, your labor, and your love. Thank you for helping us awaken possibility — again and again — until it becomes a more just, more hopeful, more flourishing world.

With gratitude and resolve,



Rev. Dr. Maisha Handy
President, McCormick Theological Seminary

AWAKENING POSSIBILITY TOGETHER

S.T.O.R.Y. is a shared practice — not a private plan. You can help awaken possibility by:

- **Investing in student formation** through scholarships and emergency support
- **Partnering with us** in community-rooted learning and public scholarship
- **Mentoring and hiring our graduates**, placing well-formed leaders where they are needed most
- **Praying for McCormick**, that we would lead with courage, clarity, and compassion

When you support McCormick, you are not only sustaining a seminary — you are fueling the leaders and communities who are building a future where all can thrive.



Faith in the Public Square

Across Chicago's South Side, construction sites and infrastructure improvements signal that the 95th Street Corridor is beginning to replace decades of disinvestment with renewed investment. In Jefferson Park, on the city's far North Side, Friendship Community Place's warming center hums with conversation as housing-insecure neighbors find a place to rest — and a listening ear ready to respond to their most immediate needs. On Washington Boulevard, affordable homes line the block as young men born and raised in the Austin neighborhood gather to imagine how historic disinvestment might give way to opportunity and growth. Across the city, young Latinx ministers continue to tell their stories, bearing witness to hope that persists even amid systemic oppression and violence.

Throughout Chicago, leaders are advocating for communities too often left behind. They are restoring neighborhoods, cultivating dignity, and enacting social justice. These leaders — including many McCormick Theological Seminary graduates — offer a powerful testament to the seminary's mission to prepare ministers, organizers, and advocates for lives of faithful impact. Their stories represent just a few of the many

ways seminary formation ignites a lifelong pursuit of purpose, and we celebrate them as we round another year of impact at McCormick Theological Seminary.

Each day in Jefferson Park, neighbors walk through the doors of Friendship Community Place with eyes marked by pain and longing. The **Rev. Shawna**

Bowman (MDiv) has shaped a ministry that meets their gaze with compassion, listens deeply, and responds to expressed needs. Since relocating the center and its connected

church to Jefferson Park — at the base of an affordable housing complex — Bowman and her congregation have embodied a theology of radical hospitality through everyday acts of care. Their witness has drawn recognition from local news outlets, nonprofit partners, and civic leaders alike. For Bowman, becoming an indispensable presence in the neighborhood is a living expression of faith put into practice, one that nurtures hope and fosters lasting change.

A similar story unfolds on Washington Boulevard in the West Garfield Park neighborhood. There, the **Rev. Dr. Marshall Hatch Sr. (MDiv, DMin)** has shepherded transformative community development during his tenure as pastor of New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, the largest congregation in the area. What Hatch proclaims from the pulpit is made visible in the life of the surrounding community. His leadership has helped bring more than 200 units of affordable housing to the West Side, offering stability and permanence to those most vulnerable.

Through youth engagement and leadership within organizations committed to cultivating the next generation, Hatch has been central to reshaping the narrative of the West Side — a work of redemption and re-storying grounded in faith.

That legacy continues through the MAAFA Redemption Project, which Hatch co-founded with his son, the Rev. Marshall Hatch Jr., now Executive Director of the organization. Originally emerging as a ministry of the church, MAAFA has grown into a nationally recognized model of community transformation. In 2025, TIME named Rev. Hatch Jr. one of the 100 Most Influential Rising Stars for his work. For Hatch Sr., watching this next chapter unfold is a testament to perseverance, faith, and the long arc of justice-driven ministry.





Challenging environments are also familiar terrain for the **Rev. Veronica Johnson (MDiv)**, Executive Director of the Endealeo Institute. After the organization's community-led vision for the 95th Street Corridor was approved by the Chicago Planning Commission, progress did not come quickly or easily. Johnson remained grounded in the conviction

that this bold vision – shaped by and for the community – was her calling. Saying no to a faceless chain gas station or fast-food outlet in pursuit of locally owned businesses, even if they remain years away, became an act of faithful resistance. Her work blends vision with practicality: securing more than \$4 million in grants is not an abstract dream, but a pathway toward development that belongs to the people who live there. This is practical theology in action, reclaiming agency, dignity, and the sacredness of community space in ways deeply resonant with McCormick's formation.

This same commitment to healing and justice is evident in the work of **Pastora Gary E. Vazquez, (MAM)**. The congregation that she shepherds is healing and creating safe spaces for their local community – growth wrought from trauma-informed practices that recognizes the effects of immigration stress, addiction, violence, and systematic injustice. Vazquez, currently working on her DMin at MTS, is also Presbyter of Chicago Metro District for Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal, M.I. - RMO (Pentecostal Church of God, I.M. - Midwest Region). Through prioritizing relationships and recognizing the present effects of past trauma, Vazquez has cultivated ministers who lead with spirit-enacted clarity and unity.



“Theological education that mirrors and engages trauma-informed practices forms leaders who are theologically competent, spiritually mature and emotionally aware to participate in God’s work of lasting restoration,” Vazquez says of her leadership. Across the city, congregations are thriving and individuals are healing because of a commitment to acknowledging trauma and understanding the intersection of theology and real-world contexts - a practice core to all programs at McCormick.

Over the past year, McCormick has shared stories of hope like these — stories of leaders whose lives, shaped by seminary formation, are transforming the lives of others. Seminary preparation equips leaders who challenge injustice, nurture community, and love deeply. We are grateful for the witness of this past year and look ahead with hope and anticipation to another year of faithful impact.



Back Talk: Audacious Faith. Bold Voices. Real Conversations.

McCormick's Back Talk web series launched in 2025, inviting audiences into bold, timely conversations at the intersection of faith and justice. Hosted by President Handy, the monthly 30-minute(ish) program convenes theologians, scholars, and changemakers to explore pressing issues shaping church and society — from migration and culture to leadership and liberation.

With candor, courage, and theological depth, Back Talk embodies McCormick's commitment to faith that speaks truth, challenges systems, and helps build a more just world. You're invited to pull up a seat.



Catch up on the conversations.



Meeting the Moment

Ministry doesn't happen in neat semesters. It happens between hospital visits and board meetings, in late-night calls after a crisis, in the quiet labor of showing up again and again for a community that needs steady leadership. Today's ministry professionals are balancing congregational care, work, family systems, and the accelerating complexity of public life—and they need learning that honors that reality.

That's why McCormick Theological Seminary's micro-credential programs are more than an academic offering. They are a strategic commitment: formation that is focused, accessible, and immediately applicable, without sacrificing depth, theological rigor, or justice-centered grounding. These short-form, high-

impact programs meet leaders where they are, equip them for what they're carrying, and strengthen the communities they serve.

Micro-credentials at McCormick are designed for working practitioners—targeted learning experiences that address urgent pastoral and community needs, develop practical competencies, and invite leaders into reflective, spiritually grounded practice. In doing so, McCormick aligns theological education with real life: not theory detached from context, but formation embedded in the places leaders are called to serve.

Three signature initiatives demonstrate the power of this approach:



Sacred Memory Project: Restoring Narrative, Expanding the Pulpit

Led by **Dr. Itihari Touré**, the Sacred Memory Project restores the power of sacred stories too often silenced, flattened, or distorted — because

communities cannot move toward repair when their truth has been edited or erased. Sacred Memory engages this work with theological imagination and moral clarity, developing models for healing and repair that strengthen belonging, identity, and justice.

This work also broadens what “preaching” can mean. The Sacred Memory Project expands proclamation beyond traditional settings and titles, embracing voices from faith leaders to artists and digital storytellers who shape public meaning every day. This is formation for the world as it is now — where truth-telling travels through many channels, and communities hunger for voices that speak with integrity, courage, and hope.

In 2025, these ideas traveled through a layered communications ecosystem: social platforms as invitation, a dedicated micro-site as a central hub, webcasts as communal practice, and storytelling as public witness. Live digital gatherings drew strong participation (including 70 registrations for Curating the Comments, 120 for Nommo & African Concepts, and 280 for the Baobab Tree Elder Listening Session).

By equipping leaders to reclaim, honor, and responsibly carry sacred stories, across congregations, classrooms, and digital spaces, the Sacred Memory Project strengthens the church’s capacity to be a place of truth, repair, and possibility, helping build a more just and equitable future grounded in memory that is honest and healing.



Scholars Within: Sacred Community in a Place Built to Punish

Guided by **Academic Program Manager Juah Washington**,

Scholars Within — a Solidarity Building Initiative (SBI) program formerly known as Seminary in Jail — re-launched at the Cook County Department of Corrections in 2025 with a simple but radical conviction: every person is made in the image of God, and that image endures even behind bars.

This is not education as charity. It is education as solidarity, as sacred encounter, and a direct challenge to systems that deny dignity. In the fall, Scholars Within gathered in Division 3AX, a residential all-female unit, for a new five-week workshop, Made in God’s Image: A Front Row Seat. Eleven women entered carrying stories, questions, and a longing “to connect being with doing.” Together, the circle was grounded in core values — Safety, Access, Opportunity, Dignity, Freedom, Redemption, and Community — and practiced a “small but holy act”: laying down labels so personhood could come fully into view.



Week by week, learning became a sacred pause inside a hostile space — two hours each Monday evening where people could breathe, ask honest questions, and stretch hope. Guided by texts like bell hooks’ All About Love and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Strength to Love, participants studied, reflected, and wrote personal action plans, “brave, raw, and deeply honest,” that named new possibilities: redefining love, choosing truth-telling, setting boundaries with tenderness, and rooting next steps in a God who still calls them beloved.

The impact can’t be measured only in lesson plans. It lives in moments like the one a Scholar

shared through tears: “Even though I am in jail, I can sense the Holy Spirit.” And it showed up when participants received certificates of participation — a visible sign, in a place that often strips recognition away, that their thinking, courage, and theology count.

Looking ahead to 2026, Scholars Within is preparing to expand its reach for men and women at CCDOC — continuing to build sacred learning communities where theological reflection meets lived experience, education becomes a pathway to healing and imagination, and no one’s story is treated as finished.



Trauma Healing Initiative: Equipping Leaders for Healing-Centered Ministry

Led by **Dr. Stephanie Crumpton**, the Trauma Healing

Initiative (THI) equips pastors, educators, and community leaders to respond wisely when trauma becomes public — recognizing that many faith leaders serve as first responders not because they are clinically trained, but because they are trusted guides in moments of crisis.

In 2025, THI expanded its reach by building new pathways for accessible formation. In April, THI launched a dedicated microsite (mccormick.edu/traumahealinginitiative) as a central hub for leaders seeking to cultivate resilience. The site helps learners move from awareness to practice, including details for THI’s Micro-Credential in Community Healing Practices (MCHP), an expanding resource library of guides, podcasts, and videos, and an approachable trauma guide that strengthens shared understanding across contexts.

THI also strengthened teaching and leadership formation through a new monthly webinar series, Trauma-Informed Teaching: Learning as Care and Justice, launched in Fall 2025. Each 60-minute session features Dr. Crumpton in conversation with leading voices in theological education, offering practical tools for creating healing-centered learning environments. The series debuted with three conversations and will continue with additional webinars in Spring 2026 and beyond. Each gathering includes interactive discussions, and a take-home, one-page teaching strategy participants can apply immediately in

their own classrooms and ministry settings. Across these offerings, THI models a core conviction of healing-centered ministry: the well-being of caregivers is not secondary — it is integral. In a season when communities are carrying layered grief and chronic stress, this learning is not optional. It is essential.



The Difference Micro-Credentials Make

Taken together, these programs embody what is distinct about McCormick’s approach to micro-credentials: they are not narrow skill-builders detached from formation. They are targeted pathways into deeper capacity — spiritual, communal, and vocational. They build leaders who can respond to trauma with wisdom, steward stories with integrity, and cultivate sacred community in the very spaces society overlooks.

In a time when ministry leaders need learning that respects their constraints and strengthens their calling, McCormick’s micro-credentials offer something rare: education that moves at the speed of real life, without losing the depth of theological grounding. This is formation built for today’s busy ministry professionals — and for the communities who are counting on them.



Healing-centered learning — wherever you are.

In a world marked by division, disruption, and deep emotional and spiritual fatigue, the Trauma Healing Initiative launched The BE WELL Podcast as a space to breathe, reflect, and keep showing up with purpose and hope. Hosted by Rev. Dr. Stephanie Crumpton with co-host Adriana “Dri” Rivera (MDiv '21), the podcast gathers theologians, practitioners, educators, and artists for dynamic conversations on trauma-informed approaches to teaching, learning, leading, and living with greater wholeness.

Season One launched in December 2025 with nine episodes under the theme “Teaching, Learning & Living in These Times,” designed for pastors, teachers, healers, and seekers navigating change, doubt, or disruption — and looking for practices that make room for both grief and becoming.

Listen, share, and subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever podcasts are heard... because we believe we can be well.

**“THIS IS NOT
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Learning That Sticks

At McCormick Theological Seminary, we've never believed learning should live only on a page. The point of theological education isn't simply to accumulate knowledge — it's to form leaders whose learning travels with them into real ministry, real communities, and real public life. That conviction is shaping McCormick's learning model and driving curricular innovations designed to strengthen outcomes that matter: deeper formation, clearer competencies, and learning that actually sticks.

What makes learning “stick” isn't more content. It's a structure that helps students integrate what they're learning with who they're becoming — and with what their communities need. Over the past year, McCormick has continued to advance a learning model built around two reinforcing practices: cohort-based learning (piloted in the Master of Theological Studies program beginning in 2023) and public scholarship. Together, they create a formation environment where students are known, challenged, supported, and equipped to apply theological insight beyond the classroom.

We've strengthened the how of learning, too. As we continue shifting to hybrid course delivery — expanding access while protecting the depth and relational quality of formation — we were honored to receive two grants from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. These grants are supporting stronger course design, faculty development, and teaching practices that translate the McCormick experience across modalities, so learning remains rigorous, relational, and built to travel wherever students are called to lead.

Faculty formation has also been deepened through ongoing workshops facilitated by McCormick's Trauma Healing Initiative (THI), helping faculty integrate trauma-informed, healing-centered pedagogy into the classroom. THI is expanding learning beyond traditional formats as well through The Be Well Podcast, which brings together theologians, practitioners, educators, and

artists to explore trauma-informed approaches to teaching, learning, leading, and living with greater wholeness. In addition, THI's Trauma-Informed Teaching webinar series is extending this work through accessible, public-facing learning that supports leaders and educators in a variety of contexts.

Cohorts That Create Momentum

Cohort learning is not just a scheduling decision — it's a strategy for deeper formation and stronger outcomes. When students move through key portions of their program with a consistent group, learning becomes communal, accountable, and cumulative. Conversations don't reset every term. Trust builds. Peer mentoring emerges naturally. And students gain the kind of relational support that makes it easier to persist through the pressures of work, family, ministry, and life.

Early insights from the MTS cohort pilot suggest that this approach also strengthens learning outcomes by enabling faculty to design experiences that build over time — reinforcing core skills, returning to key





theological questions with greater depth, and connecting classroom learning to lived ministry contexts. As we continue evaluating impact, we are exploring ways to integrate

cohort-based approaches into additional pathways, including certificate programs, master's programs, and the Doctor of Ministry.

Public Scholarship That Expands Impact

McCormick's commitment to public scholarship takes academic rigor and turns it outward — toward communities, institutions, and public conversations that need theological grounding and moral clarity. This is where classroom learning becomes public witness: applied research, community-rooted reflection, preaching and teaching that engages contemporary issues, and scholarship that serves the church and the world.

Public scholarship also improves learning outcomes because it requires integration. Students move beyond “knowing” to “doing”: articulating their theological framework, testing it in real contexts, receiving feedback, and refining their voice. It's the kind of practice that prepares leaders not only to interpret the world, but to serve it, and to transform it.

Innovation with Measurable Results

These practices aren't theoretical. They are translating into curricular innovations that strengthen learning, improve the student experience, and support persistence. The impact shows up in the outcomes seminaries watch closely: enrollment trends, progression, and retention.

McCormick's enrollment is in a stabilized trend, a meaningful signal in a higher education landscape where volatility has become normal. And the composition of the Fall 2025 student body told an important story about what's resonating right now: formation that is coherent, applied, and built for working leaders.

- **Doctor of Ministry (DMin):** 81 students — reflecting a 19% increase in DMin enrollment for Fall 2025 and signaling strong demand for advanced, practice-rooted theological education.
- **Master's level programs:** 47 students — a smaller cohort than in past seasons, yet one that continues to experience the benefits of cohort learning and outcomes-focused curriculum design.
- **Certificates:** 14 students — demonstrating that leaders are seeking focused, stackable learning that strengthens their ministry toolkit.
- **Microcredentials:** 17 students — further proof that McCormick's flexible, targeted offerings are meeting today's learners where they are, especially those balancing ministry, work, and family responsibilities.

Notably, most learners across the DMin program are Presbyterian, including students from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. That's a strong affirmation of McCormick's ability to serve leaders across contexts and geographies, rooted in Reformed tradition while engaging the realities of ministry today.

Formation That Holds

“Learning that sticks” is learning that holds under pressure — learning that shapes decisions, strengthens leadership, and equips students to serve with wisdom in complicated spaces. McCormick's learning model is designed for exactly that: a formation journey that is communal, applied, and publicly engaged.

In a time when ministry leaders are carrying more than ever, McCormick is building the kind of education that doesn't fade after graduation. It stays with students. It travels with them. And it moves the needle, not only in enrollment and retention, but in the lives and communities those students are called to serve.



**“THE
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Funding the Future

The future of the church won't be built by accident.

It will be shaped — day by day — by leaders who can preach with integrity and organize with courage, who can hold grief in one hand and hope in the other, who can walk into boardrooms and hospital rooms, community meetings and jail classrooms, and still speak the language of grace with their whole life.

That's the kind of leader McCormick Theological Seminary exists to form.

And in a world that feels louder, faster, and more fractured by the week, that formation isn't just "nice to have." It's urgent. It's public. It's deeply practical. Modern seminarians aren't preparing for ministry in one narrow lane. They are carrying their learning into ministries and nonprofit leadership, chaplaincy and advocacy, public theology and community organizing — into the real places where spiritual grounding meets human need.

But here's the truth we rarely say plainly enough: formation takes fuel.

Scholarships aren't simply financial support. Emergency funds aren't merely safety nets. They are tangible ways to say, We believe your calling matters. They are how we collectively invest in the leaders our communities will rely on next — especially those who are prepared to lead with justice, compassion, and courage.

Two opportunities stand out as powerful examples of how giving at McCormick directly funds the future.



The Rev. Dr. David D. Daniels III Endowed Scholarship: A Legacy That Keeps Teaching

More than a simply a way to remember a beloved professor — the Rev. Dr. David D. Daniels III Endowed Scholarship is a way to keep his impact active in the world.

For more than 35 years, the late Rev. Dr. David D. Daniels III — Henry Winters Luce Professor of World Christianity and Professor of Church History — formed McCormick students

with wisdom, compassion, and a relentless commitment to racial justice. His classroom was never just about what happened then. It was about what faith demands now. He helped students see that the story of the church is inseparable from the struggle for dignity, liberation, and truth, and that discipleship has real-world consequences.

That's what makes this scholarship a legacy instrument, not a memorial. It extends Dr. Daniels' witness by removing barriers for the next generation of leaders who will carry that same moral clarity into pulpits, classrooms, community organizations, and public spaces. It makes it possible for students to pursue formation with focus and freedom — less burdened by financial pressure, more able to lean fully into the work of becoming.

And the impact multiplies. Every recipient becomes a living continuation of what Dr. Daniels poured into McCormick: leaders who can name injustice without losing their humanity, who can love the church while still insisting it become more faithful, who can turn deep theological grounding into public courage.

This is how legacy works at its best, not as a statue, but as motion. Not as remembrance alone, but as a future funded — so Dr. Daniels' life continues to shape lives, and those lives go on to shape the world.

Scan here to honor the legacy and equip the next generation.



The Rev. Jesús Márquez Student Emergency Fund: Immediate Help, Lasting Impact

If scholarships help students begin the journey, emergency funds are often what help them stay on the path when life hits hard.

The Rev. Jesús Márquez Student Emergency Fund exists for the moments no syllabus can predict — when a car breaks down, when rent comes due at the worst possible time, when a family crisis pulls a student across the world, when a sudden hardship threatens to derail formation entirely.

MDiv '26 student Robert experienced that reality firsthand. He shared:

“Recently, I had to travel to Ghana to care for my mother. The emergency fund was quite helpful, as it supported part of the expenses, and I truly appreciate the assistance it provided. This fund is more than financial assistance; it is a tangible expression of care, solidarity, and faith in the call God has placed on students preparing for ministry.

Because of this support, students can remain focused on their formation rather than being overwhelmed by unexpected hardship. I highly recommend this fund to anyone seeking to invest in the lives of future church leaders and to make an immediate, life-giving impact. I know that your generosity truly sustains vocations and strengthens the church's future.”

That's the difference emergency support makes. It doesn't just solve a short-term problem — it

protects a long-term calling. It tells students: You're not alone. This community will not let an unexpected crisis steal what God is growing in you.

And it does something else, too. It models the very kind of church and community leadership we hope students will embody: responsive, compassionate, grounded in solidarity, and unwilling to look away when someone needs help.



Scan here to help students in times of need.

Giving That Becomes Formation

When you give to McCormick, you're not funding an abstract institution. You're funding people — future pastors, chaplains, organizers, educators, nonprofit leaders, and public theologians who will carry formation into the world's most complex spaces.

You're investing in leaders who will sit with the grieving. Challenge injustice. Build belonging. Tell the truth. Create new ministries for new realities. And do it all with theological depth and spiritual steadiness.

This is what "Funding the Future" looks like: tangible support that becomes lived impact. Powerful. Practical. Deeply aligned with McCormick's calling to form leaders who serve beyond the walls of the church — into public spaces, community settings, and the places where hope is needed most.

The future is being formed right now.

Let's fund it... together.



Through Generosity



At McCormick Theological Seminary, advancement is not simply about raising funds—it's about resourcing formation that changes lives, strengthens communities, and renews public witness. Every scholarship, program investment, and annual gift helps ensure that leaders called to ministry and justice work can learn, serve, and thrive.

This work is unfolding in a rapidly changing landscape. As our **Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Kurt Peterson**, often reminds us, the institutions that once reliably supported theological

education are under real pressure. Mainline churches are declining, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—which counted 3.1 million members in 1983—has fallen to just over 1 million by 2024. That reality doesn't diminish McCormick's mission; it clarifies it.

We are leaning into our Presbyterian heritage and embracing our cross cultural, urban reformed, and ecumenical context as we continue to grow as a destination where seminarians across traditions can pursue formation in a diverse, inclusive context.

FY25: A strong foundation to build on

In FY25, McCormick received \$931,300 in gifts and pledges from 302 donors (including restricted gifts dated before July 1). While the number of donors has decreased over the last decade, annual fundraising remains strong when factoring out large and one-time grants of \$1M or more — signaling steady belief in McCormick's mission and impact. McCormick's long-term foundation also



includes an endowment with more than \$35M dedicated to student scholarships and recognition, strengthening access to theological education and supporting leaders for generations to come.

The invitation

When you support McCormick, you are investing in future pastors, chaplains, organizers, educators, nonprofit leaders, and public theologians — leaders who carry faith into congregations and into the public spaces where communities are shaped. This is what it looks like to awaken possibility: not only to imagine a future where all can thrive,

but to resource it... together.



Scan here to join us through your gift.



Mitzi Gebhard Henderson Endowed Chair

ENDOWING A MORE JUST FUTURE

Sometimes we receive a gift that doesn't just add to McCormick — it changes what becomes possible. At the end of 2025, McCormick received a transformational \$1 million dollar gift to establish the **Mitzi Gebhard Henderson Endowed Chair** — a living investment in the kind of theological education the church and world need next: justice-rooted, intellectually serious, and courageously inclusive. Designed with intentional flexibility, the chair will allow McCormick to appoint a scholar where formation most urgently needs depth, creating an enduring capacity to respond to new questions, new needs, and new calls without losing theological grounding.

Mitzi's life helps explain why this matters. Her witness braided faith, learning, and public courage — especially as she became a national leader for LGBTQIA inclusion and worked to widen the table inside the church and beyond it. Now her legacy becomes a formation engine: strengthening McCormick's faculty, seeding new teaching and research at the intersection of justice and pastoral practice, and deepening partnerships committed to inclusion and community repair. This is the kind of philanthropy that doesn't fade — it keeps teaching, keeps opening doors, and keeps equipping leaders to preach with clarity, organize with wisdom, and serve with courageous love. This is what it looks like to awaken possibility: not only to imagine a more just future, but to endow it, so it can be lived for generations.



Where Faith Becomes Future: **Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks**

Turning faith into public witness — and public witness into real, neighbor-by-neighbor change — is one of the reasons we honored Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks (MDiv '97) with the 2025 Distinguished Alumna Award during McCormick Days in October 2025. Dr. Pagán-Banks doesn't just believe in possibility. She lives as someone awakened to it, seeing people not as problems to be managed, but as beloved, worthy of dignity, voice, and a future.

For Dr. Pagán-Banks, “awakening possibility” isn't optimism. It's a spiritual discipline: the choice to tell the truth about what's broken without surrendering to it.

Awakening possibility through community justice

In Chicago, that conviction has become practice through her leadership with A Just Harvest, where she has helped shape an approach to poverty and hunger that extends far beyond a meal line. Under her leadership, the work widened into a holistic model, addressing root causes through policy advocacy, economic development, urban agriculture, violence prevention, and deep community partnership.

What makes her leadership distinctive is the way she holds two truths together: people need help right now, and the conditions that keep people hungry must change for good. That same justice-centered commitment showed up in her leadership with the Coalition to End Money Bond, helping advance Illinois' historic move to abolish cash bail. And when the pandemic disrupted everything, she helped keep urgent support flowing at Cook County Jail while still pushing toward long-term liberation — refusing to let crisis cancel calling.

Pastor and teacher: beloved community in practice

Dr. Pagán-Banks also awakens possibility through the way she pastors and teaches — creating spaces where people can exhale, be seen, and be strengthened. As the former pastor of San Lucas United Church of Christ in Humboldt Park, a bilingual African-Caribbean Diaspora congregation rooted in hospitality, healing, and freedom, she helped embody what church can be in a neighborhood facing gentrification and displacement: a spiritual home that feeds neighbors, partners with local agencies, and organizes for community well-being.



At McCormick, she brings that same grounded wisdom to the classroom as an Adjunct Professor, guiding students through courses like Accompaniment: Love Matters in the Work of Justice and Leadership Across Difference. She also co-learned with students at Cook County Jail through McCormick's Solidarity Building Initiative, carrying formation into spaces too often overlooked, and affirming, by her presence, that possibility belongs there too.

A womanist witness that opens the future

Dr. Pagán-Banks embodies Awakening Possibilities because she treats justice as love with a backbone. She awakens possibility by feeding neighbors while challenging the systems that keep communities hungry. She awakens possibility by forming leaders who understand that ministry is public, and that theology must translate into liberation. And she awakens possibility by building beloved community with a faith that insists another future is not only imaginable, but already underway.

**Scan here to
nominate a
Distinguished
Alumni.**



**“MINISTRY IS
PUBLIC—AND
THEOLOGY MUST
TRANSLATE INTO
LIBERATION.”**



STAR
AWARD
William Garcia Rodriguez
DIV Class of 2021
for being a community changemaker
and world-class faith leader
October 16th, 2025

McCormick
Theological Seminary

Rising Stars, Awake to Possibility:

Rev. Jonathan García Rodríguez and Rev. Melanie Quiñones

Possibility has a particular sound when it's real. It sounds like a community finding its footing again. It sounds like young leaders discovering their voice. It sounds like the gospel taking root in hard soil and still growing.

That is why McCormick's Alumni Council selected Rev. Jonathan García Rodríguez and Rev. Melanie Quiñones for nomination as recipients of the 2025–26 Rising Star Award. Since graduating from McCormick in 2021, this pastoral team has lived what it means to be awake to possibility — not as a motivational idea, but as faithful practice shaped by context, humility, and Spirit-led courage.

Rooted in Puerto Rico, reaching beyond it

Today, Jonathan and Melanie co-pastor Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal in Rivas de Cupey, Puerto Rico, serving a congregation and community navigating profound social and economic challenges. Their ministry is marked by resilience and creativity, grounded in the conviction that theology belongs in the real world — where people are trying to make rent, raise children, survive grief, and still find hope.

They lead with a steady insistence that hardship does not get the final word. Instead, they help their community imagine what can be rebuilt — spiritually, materially, relationally — and they do it with the kind of pastoral presence that feels like accompaniment, not performance.

Multiplying leaders, not just programs

One of the clearest ways Jonathan and Melanie awaken possibility is through the leaders they form. They are not only pastors—they are multipliers, mentoring children, young adults, and emerging leaders through both formal and informal spaces of theological reflection, leadership training, and ministry discernment. Many of those they have mentored are now pastoring churches, serving in mission fields, and pursuing theological studies of their own.

As Dr. Leslie Díaz-Pérez, Senior Director of Enrollment and Director of El Centro, notes, their work is equipping leaders and resourcing communities with courage, clarity, and cultural competence — bearing the unmistakable mark of the Holy Spirit in and through their lives.

A global vision held with local love

Jonathan and Melanie's influence reaches beyond Puerto Rico through their continued work as co-founders of Agencia Misionera Aliento a las Naciones, a missionary agency launched in 2014. Through this work, they equip and send missionaries across the globe—grounding mission in theological reflection, sustainability, and leadership development.

Yet what makes their global reach credible is that it never comes at the expense of local faithfulness. They remain deeply embedded in their Puerto Rican community, partnering with local organizations to provide food, training, and spiritual support—showing that mission is not just “out there,” but also right here.

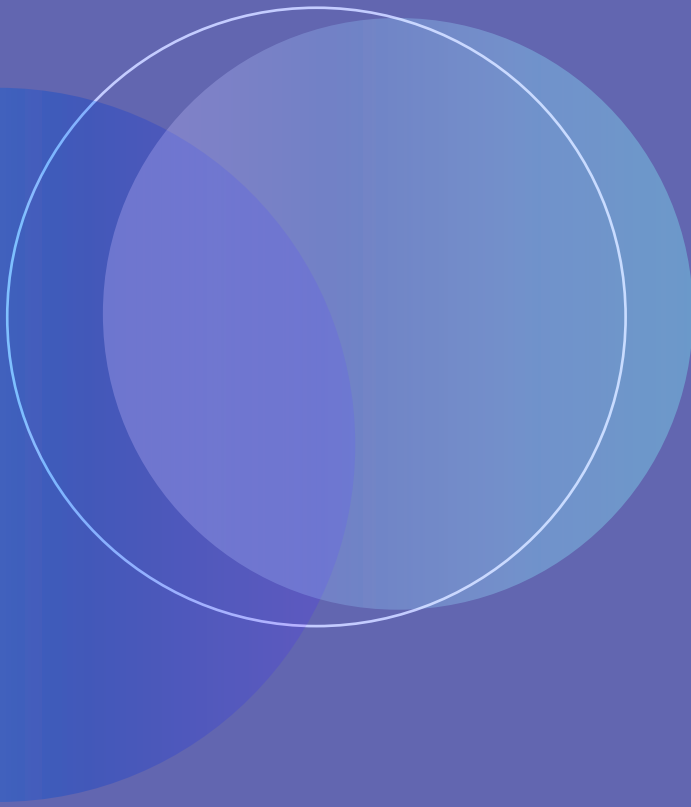
Honoring tomorrow's leaders today

The Rising Star Award celebrates alumni who embody vision, courage, and faithful service. Rev. Jonathan García Rodríguez and Rev. Melanie Quiñones were honored because their ministry makes the theme real: Awakening Possibilities looks like leadership that stays close to people, listens for the Spirit, and invests deeply in who comes next.

And in that quiet, consistent faithfulness, the future of the church starts to take shape.



**Scan here to
nominate a
Rising Star.**



IN SACRED MEMORY, WE NAME THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED AND BLESS THE GIFTS THEY LEFT IN OUR HANDS.

God is our dwelling place “from generation to generation” (Psalm 90:1), and in that promise we grieve with hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

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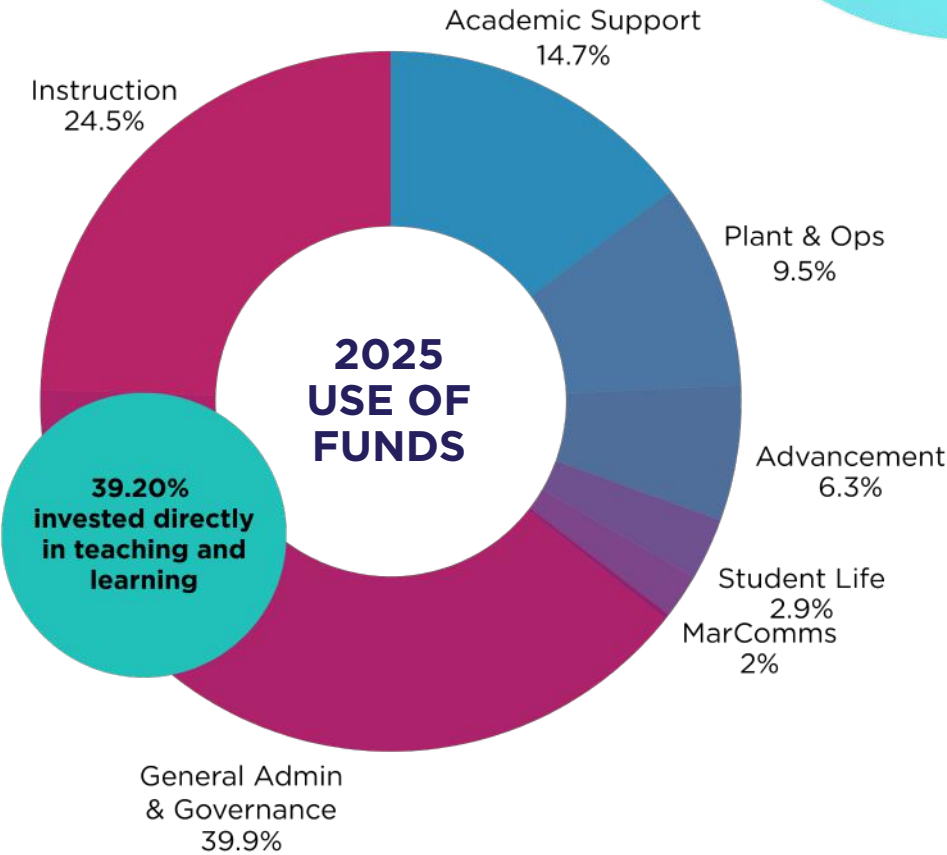
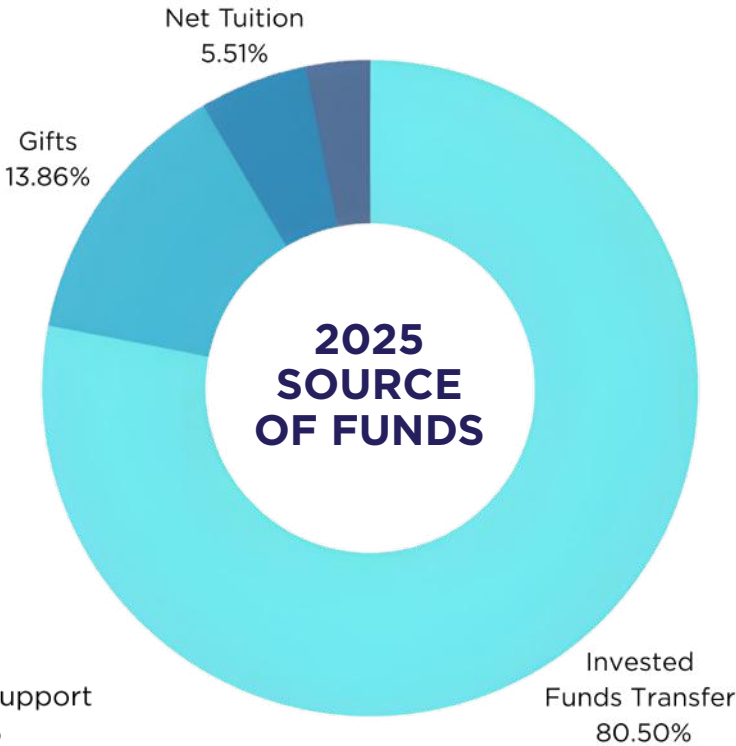
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Natasha Robinson

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**McCormick's endowment reached \$80.6 million as of June 30, 2025,
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