



A message to the Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ
from **The Very Rev. Dr. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale**
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As we enter the third anniversary of the announcement that Lancaster Theological Seminary would join with Moravian Theological Seminary as part of Moravian University, I am delighted to share with you, our partners in faith, some good news. We are enrolling graduate students this fall into our new, joint curricula. The new and updated degree programs are ready and accredited for the fall term. The two faculties worked together for two years to create everything necessary to continue to provide solid graduate theological education on both the Bethlehem and Lancaster campuses and online.

We are delighted to offer a renewed Master of Divinity, a new Master of Ministry degree, and an updated Master of Arts in Theological Studies. Our popular, cohort-based Doctor of Ministry degree continues along with our existing and new (to us) certificate programs including the Moravian Seminary's graduate certificates in Spiritual Direction.

We made sure to design our degree programs to be flexible and innovative, designed to fit students' busy schedules and educational goals. There are full-time and part-time options, as well as the option to take courses online or in person on either campus in Bethlehem and Lancaster. And we offer a weekend schedule with classes held on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings that is ideal for working adults, a schedule that has proven to be popular with our master's degree students who are employed.

Education and formation, of course, are why we exist, and these pieces are in place. We had planned to have all of the consolidation elements in place by the end of June. We were going to announce a School of Theology at Moravian University that would have a Moravian Theological Seminary that carries on its traditions and house a center for Moravian studies, and a Lancaster Theological Seminary that carries on the traditions of Lancaster. That was the plan. Then the lawyers advised us that the regulatory rules changed and that there needs to be a second stage after the first. It is up in the air when the regulatory work can be completed. The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the federal Department of Education tell us different things that sometimes are contradictory. We'll adapt. We'll manage. These are legal headaches. They do not affect the quality of our education.

Bottom line: the state of the seminary? Educationally, it's great! We are figuring out the administration structure, the website, the signage. I want to be clear that our consolidation is not just a survival issue. It's also an opportunity. An opportunity to offer continuing education, certificate programs, other learning opportunities in cooperation with the other schools of the university. There are opportunities here for us at the seminary—plus opportunities to make the university successful—and allow us to remain on this beautiful, historic campus.

One last word. I believe that our God is a God of resurrection and redemption. We don't get to the resurrection by closing our eyes and praying that by the time you open them, the cup will have passed you by. We get there by facing right into the challenge and walking through to the other side. And on the other side, I believe that we will find new life that we can't yet imagine. This changing of a chapter in the life of Lancaster Theological Seminary is tough. It's a source of grief. It's a challenge. And I absolutely believe that there are blessings beyond our imagining on the other side if we walk faithfully and steadfastly through those challenges, expecting-counting on-resurrection and redemption. Thank you for allowing me to join you for a little bit of this journey. I am eager to see what that new life brings!