

Asbury Theological Seminary Announces Dr. David F. Watson as the Seminary's Next President

WILMORE, KY, UNITED STATES, March 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Board of Trustees of Asbury Theological Seminary is pleased to announce the unanimous election of Dr. David F. Watson as the Seminary's next president. The Seminary has been engaged in a vigorous nationwide presidential search over the past year.

Dr. Watson will take up his new duties at Asbury Seminary on July 1. He succeeds Dr. Timothy C. Tennent, who served as president for 15 years, and Dr. David J. Gyertson, who is currently serving as Interim President.



Dr. David F. Watson, Asbury Seminary's next president

“The Board of Trustees is delighted to welcome Dr. David Watson as our new president,” said Mrs. Helen Rhea Stumbo, Chair of the Board of Trustees. “We are confident that the Lord brought him to us, and we look forward to working with him as the Seminary stands at the beginning of our second century.”

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*Mrs. Helen Rhea Stumbo,
Chair of the Board of Trustees*

Dr. Tammy Cessna, an alumna of the Seminary and a member of the Search Committee, remarked, “In our search for the next president of Asbury Theological Seminary, it was essential to find a leader who not only embodies the Seminary's ethos but also deeply believes in and lives out the call to scriptural holiness. David Watson is not only a leading scholar of Wesleyan theology but someone who embraces it with conviction and models it

with integrity. As we move into the future, we can look forward to Spirit-filled, collaborative, visionary leadership that will advance our mission of preparing men and women to go into all the world as faithful and effective servants of Christ.”

Dr. Steve Moore, an alumnus and Chair of the Search Committee, said, “Dr. Watson is a distinguished scholar, seasoned academic leader, and a deeply committed servant of Christ. His academic credentials, combined with his extensive teaching experience in New Testament studies, provide a solid foundation for leading Asbury’s faculty and students with intellectual rigor and spiritual depth. Furthermore, his global perspective aligns with Asbury’s vision to serve the worldwide Church. We firmly believe that Dr. Watson embodies the qualities, character, and leadership necessary to guide Asbury Theological Seminary into its next chapter.”

“Dr. David F. Watson brings a unique combination of gifts, training, and experience to the office,” noted Dr. Bill Arnold, alumnus, the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, and member of the Search Committee. “He is an accomplished Christian scholar, who has made significant contributions to the Wesleyan movement. His fourteen years of experience in academic administration position him beautifully to lead Asbury Seminary into our second century. Dr. Watson also has an international profile in pan-Methodism as a thought-leader, fearless innovator, and inspirational visionary. Asbury Theological Seminary is fortunate to have him joining us in this ministry.”

Dr. Sue Russell, Chair of Asbury Seminary’s Faculty Committee, Professor of Mission and Contextual Studies, and member of the Search Committee, said, “In today’s academic environment we have a real need for one who has the vision to lead us into our future. While interviewing Dr. Watson, it became clear that he is what Jim Collins in his book “Good to Great” calls a ‘level 5 leader.’ Level 5 leaders display personal humility yet have an indomitable will, always working for the good of the institution rather than for themselves. Dr. Watson is a collaborative leader who will guide Asbury Seminary into a productive, fruitful, and joyful next century.”

Dr. David Watson said, “It is a great honor to have been selected as the next President of Asbury Theological Seminary. I give thanks to God for this opportunity, and I am grateful to the Search Committee and the Board of Trustees for entrusting me with this sacred responsibility. Asbury has long been a guiding light in the Wesleyan world. It embodies the best of theological education through its commitment to academic rigor, scriptural holiness, and communal formation. My wife, Harriet, and I look forward to getting to know the community and serving alongside the many faithful servants of Christ who are already engaged in this important work of theological education.”

Dr. Watson has most recently been serving as Senior Vice President of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, as well as Professor of New Testament, Academic Dean, and Vice President for Academic Affairs. During his years at United, he has helped to develop the seminary’s emphasis on church renewal, supported the development of multi-lingual programs,

initiated the development of a ThD program, and helped with early advances in online theological education.

Dr. Watson earned his B.A. degree from Texas Tech University, his Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, and his PhD, also from Southern Methodist University. He was ordained in the United Methodist Church and served in the local church and on the staff of a United Methodist campus ministry before beginning his academic career. He now holds ordination as an elder in the Global Methodist Church. He served on the Global Methodist Church's Transitional Leadership Council and as a delegate to its convening General Conference in 2024.

In other aspects of his professional life, Dr. Watson is Lead Editor of Firebrand, an online magazine "intended to promote theological reflection in various related traditions, including Methodist, Arminian, Holiness, Pentecostal, and others." He also writes a Substack and serves as one of the hosts of the Firebrand Podcast.

Dr. Watson has been published extensively in Christian journals and magazines and has contributed numerous chapters in books and commentaries. His latest book is "Scripture and the Life of God: Why the Bible Matters Today More than Ever" (Seedbed, 2017).

David Watson and his wife, Harriet, have three children: Luke, Sean, and Ciara.

To view Asbury Seminary's presidential introduction, video message, and other information, visit, asbury.to/pres-intro

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About Asbury Theological Seminary

Asbury Theological Seminary was founded in 1923 to prepare and send forth well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministers to spread scriptural holiness around the world. Today, thousands of Asbury Theological Seminary graduates flourish in every state, on every continent, and in every time zone, reaching the world through evangelism, missions, church planting, preaching, teaching, and counseling. The sun never sets on its graduates. Asbury Theological Seminary continues its mission in providing holistic ministerial preparation as an interdenominational institution with a flagship campus in Wilmore, Ky. and extension sites in Colorado Springs, Memphis, Orlando, Tampa, and Tulsa, and fully online degree programs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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