

# Polaris Young Adult Leadership Network Announces 2025 Fellows: Young Adults Leading with Faith, Imagination, & Community

*A program of Princeton Theological Seminary Polaris amplifies and supports young Christian leaders across the United States.*

PRINCETON, NJ, UNITED STATES, October 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Polaris Young Adult Leadership Network](#) at [Princeton Theological Seminary](#) has named its 2025 Fellows: twenty-three exceptional young leaders whose vocations span congregations, public service, healthcare, education, entrepreneurship, and the arts.

Now welcoming its third cohort, Polaris was created to amplify and support the leadership of Christian young adults across the United States. Through fellowships, gatherings, and intentional community, the network nurtures belonging and cultivates leadership marked by courage and imagination. In a cultural moment often defined by stories of religious decline amidst a larger epidemic of loneliness, Polaris offers both a community and a counter-narrative: many young adults are not leaving — they are leading.

## Faith and Flourishing: Why Polaris Matters Now

Recent reports from the former U.S. Surgeon General warn of an “epidemic of loneliness and isolation,” especially among younger generations. At the same time, new data from Pew, Barna, and the [Global Flourishing Study](#) complicate the familiar narrative of religious decline. Religious disaffiliation may be stabilizing, with Millennials and Gen Z actively reshaping what vibrant faith communities look like, and, in many cases, driving renewed participation.



The Polaris Young Adult Leadership Network at Princeton Theological Seminary's 2025 Fellows

The Global Flourishing Study highlights the strong link between religious community and human wellbeing. Across 21 of 23 countries surveyed, weekly participation in religious services is more consistently associated with higher flourishing than civic engagement alone. This finding underscores the unique role faith communities can play in countering isolation and nurturing human thriving.



The Polaris Fellowship includes two in-person retreats at Princeton Seminary

Polaris meets this moment by equipping Fellows with the practices and relationships that sustain lasting impact. Retreats, monthly gatherings, and mentoring provide practical tools alongside enduring friendships. Together, these form a foundation for young leaders to flourish personally and to serve church and society with resilience and creativity.

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*Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean,  
Princeton Seminary*

“Polaris gets to celebrate what God is already doing through young adult leaders,” said Shari Oosting, Director. “These Fellows are called by and committed to God and their neighbors, and they have remarkable vision, courage, and creativity. Along with tangible resources, what they gain in Polaris is the experience of being deeply seen, encouraged, and challenged by others who walk alongside them. This kind of belonging changes how they lead and creates ripple effects in the places and spaces where they have influence.”

## Building a Growing Network of Leaders

Earlier this year, the Polaris Leadership Summit gathered 28 young adult Christian leaders from around the country at Princeton Seminary for three days of fellowship, storytelling, prayer, and exploration. Participants represented fields as diverse as tech and AI, the arts, finance, nonprofit leadership, ministry, and education.

The summit modeled how community can become a wellspring for Christian imagination. A highlight was the Storytelling Festival, where participants shared moments that challenged and deepened their faith journeys with the wider Seminary community. In its reporting on the event, Religion News Service noted it as one unique way young adult Christians are “leading with their

faith outside of classrooms and churches.” Highlights from the festival have been curated into a digital series, “Polaris Stories: Illuminating Faith and Leadership,” further amplifying the reach and impact of these burgeoning Christian leaders.

“Young adults today are reshaping the church in real time,” said Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean, Mary D. Synnott Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture at Princeton Seminary. “For a generation often described in terms of what they’ve lost, Polaris Fellows are showing us what they are building: communities of faith that are relational, imaginative, and deeply committed to God’s call in the world.”



Founded in 1812, Princeton Theological Seminary equips women and men for faithful, compassionate, and competent leadership in ministry, academia, and public life — preparing them to serve Christ with integrity, scholarship and joy.

Together with the two prior cohorts of Fellows, the Leadership Summit demonstrates how Polaris is becoming a sustained national network of young leaders whose faith and vision are already reshaping church and society.

## Meet the 2025 Polaris Fellows

The 2025 cohort includes:

Henri Shemar Abrams (Austin, TX)  
Abby Butler-Cefalo (Baltimore, MD)  
Israel David Carranza (Chicago, IL)  
Owen Copps (Austin, TX)  
Joseph Cruz Menchaca (Tucson, AZ)  
Caleb Encinas Cortés (Federal Way, WA)  
Antionna Fuller (Columbia, SC)  
Anna G. Guerrero (Decatur, GA)  
Julianne Hall Ross (Denver, CO)  
Marina Elizabeth Hanna (Warren, NJ)  
Jewel Koshy (Lakeland, FL)  
Jordan Lopez (Charlotte, NC)  
Christoph’ McFadden (New Haven, CT)  
Sabina Pappu (Dallas, TX)  
Jerica Robinson (St. Louis, MO)  
Lindsay “Lulu” Sapigao (Hayward, CA)

Viveka Starr Hall-Holt (Seattle, WA)  
Taylor Negrete (Incline Village, NV)  
Ihsan Walker (Cincinnati, OH)  
Mary Joy Wytsma (Washington, DC)  
Thomas Benton (Collier, TN)  
Austin Winter (Littleton, CO)  
Liana Forss (New York, NY)

(Full bios available at [polaris.ptsem.edu](http://polaris.ptsem.edu))

“The Fellows come with diverse experiences, deep faith, and bold ideas of how communities can thrive when they are intentionally shaped by the next generation of faith leaders,” said Abigail Rusert, Associate Dean for Continuing Education. “Polaris exists to honor and support these gifts, reflecting Princeton Seminary’s belief that leadership is not formed in isolation but in relationship. Together, these young leaders are strengthening the future of the church and society.”

### About the Fellowship

Polaris Fellows commit to a 12-month program that includes:

- A \$2,000 participation stipend
- In-person retreats at Princeton Seminary
- Monthly online gatherings with their cohort
- Coaching and spiritual direction tailored to their faith and leadership growth
- Opportunities to visit inspiring leaders or organizations in their field
- Seed funding for a project in the community they are called to lead and serve

Polaris advances Princeton Theological Seminary’s mission of preparing leaders for the church and the world. The initiative invites young adults to cultivate bold visions of Christian community and leadership suited to the challenges of a changing world.

For more information, visit [polaris.ptsem.edu](http://polaris.ptsem.edu).

### About Polaris

Supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., the Polaris Young Adult Leadership Network amplifies and supports the leadership of Christian young adults across the United States. The network cultivates community among young adults through holy friendship. It also creates opportunities to further the impact of their work and support fresh ideas.

### About Princeton Theological Seminary

Founded in 1812, Princeton Theological Seminary equips women and men for faithful, compassionate, and competent leadership in ministry, academia, and public life — preparing them to serve Christ with integrity, scholarship and joy.

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