

Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall, President of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, to Retire in 2027

Marshall's Vision and Leadership Have Transformed United

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Following six historic and transformative years as President of [United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities](#), Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall will retire on June 30, 2027, upon completion of the seminary's 65th academic year. President Marshall secured United's financial standing, advanced institutional objectives toward long-term sustainability, and catalyzed historic growth in institutional fundraising and student enrollment.

Rev. Dr. Marshall assumed her role as Interim President in March 2021 following thorough vetting by a search

committee and the Board of Trustees' unanimous vote. Having served in theological education for more than 40 years, she had a reputation that preceded her. She made headlines as the first woman appointed to the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention. Ordained as a Southern Baptist, she later received the privilege of call by the American Baptist Church.

In 1997, she joined the faculty of Central Baptist Theological Seminary as professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation, thereafter stabilizing and revitalizing the school as President from 2004 to 2020, becoming the first woman ever to lead a Baptist seminary or divinity school. President Marshall's respect and renown culminated in her executive report on effective seminary leadership, written for The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) before she arrived at United.



Rev. Molly T. Marshall, PhD



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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE TWIN CITIES
Education for Transformation

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Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson

Her experiences as a congregational minister, feminist theologian, prodigious academician, and her achievements as an administrator in theological education augured well for the seminary’s future in her care. Less than a year later, her position was made permanent, formally making her United’s tenth president, and, desiring to honor United’s legacy, she pursued and received clergy standing with the MN United Church of Christ.

United trustees outlined a set of priorities at the beginning of President Marshall’s tenure, on which she began immediate work. She invested much of her first several months in office in forming connections with alums, donors, and faculty. She concentrated her relational acumen on Advancement, and donors responded enthusiastically.

In September 2021, United announced the Johnson-Fry Chair in World Religions and Intercultural Studies, endowed by Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson (’17, ’23) and David Fry. Cultivating “respect for the lived religion of others,” as President Marshall often asserts, is a pillar of her scholarship and the seminary’s academic ethos. The Sophia Chair in Religious and Theological Studies, funded by a generous gift from Dr. Mary Farrell Bednarowski—Professor Emerita of Religious Studies (1976–2004)—and her husband and former trustee, Keith Bednarowski, followed in 2024. Finally, in 2025, a cadre of friends, alums, and former faculty established the Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts.

These chairs, paired with substantial growth in endowed scholarships, feature prominently in President Marshall’s legacy and will endure as a witness to her faithful stewardship of alum and donor relations. Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson, Vice President for Advancement, reflects, “President Marshall’s enthusiasm, attention, and engagement with our donors have been important components of her leadership. She has honored our alums and delighted in our students. Molly has valued United’s history even as she has led us into new ways of being. She has built a culture that reflects her dedication, vision, and generosity. She has been a bright light in the broader community, embodying her passion for and dedication to United. Molly arrived with both expertise and heart, and she has shared them generously. She leaves a lasting imprint, and we are better for that. On a personal note, it has been a great gift to be her colleague.”

Historic enrollment has been a fixture of President Marshall’s tenure. Between fall 2020 and fall 2025, degree-seeking student enrollment grew 57 percent, with the seminary welcoming its [largest incoming class](#) of degree-seeking students ever in fall 2025. In a climate where many theological schools have experienced stable or declining enrollment, United has surged. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), one of the seminary’s two accrediting bodies, named United in its 2023 Holiday Colloquy Online issue as one of only 18 ATS-accredited seminaries to have demonstrated “steady year-over-year growth during the past five years.”

President Marshall has positioned United as a leader in progressive theological education and a model for historically Mainline Christian schools. Commenting on what makes the seminary unique, President Marshall astutely noted United's "desirable curriculum that emphasizes social transformation, theology and the arts, interreligious engagement, and public theology" and the intentional welcome of "students with myriad religious, spiritual, and theological leanings." She sharpened and raised the seminary's prophetic voice, believing that progressive theological education exists to serve the common good. From considerable growth in the Interreligious Chaplaincy program to the establishment of the Sims Scholars Initiative, she has expanded the student body's depth and breadth.

Under President Marshall's fastidious leadership, United completed a Five-Year Strategic Plan in 2026. David S. Anderson, former Chair of the Board of Trustees (2020–2026), witnessed firsthand President Marshall's effective management of United's revitalization and her manifold accomplishments in office. On his close friend and colleague, David writes, "In her writings, President Marshall, Molly to me, once observed, ' . . . following the Spirit will require of all of us faith—all the guidance we usually get is enough to take the next uncertain step.' United, in late 2020, was indeed in a state of uncertainty, and President Marshall's emergence as its next president must be seen as a revelation of the Spirit. She has led United to a platform of stability from which it will move forward with confidence, heeding the Spirit toward an uncertain, as human endeavors are, but bright and sustainable future."

Friends and colleagues from throughout President Marshall's career were invited to submit reflections in her honor. These have been published on our [announcement page](#). United eagerly anticipates celebrating President Marshall in the coming year.

Strengthened and invigorated by President Marshall's faithful leadership over these six years, United enters its 65th year of progressive theological education, steadfast in its mission: preparing innovative and compassionate leaders for the equipping of churches, other faith communities, and society toward justice and peace.

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