

PRESBYTERIAN LEADERSHIP FORUM

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

FALL 2014



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FOUNDATION

THE FOUNDATION FOR PRESBYTERIAN LEADERSHIP

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Help More Than a Student

The challenge to support talented, dedicated, and called servants of the church continues. Seventeen new Apollos recipients just learned that they will receive scholarships while they are enrolled in the Master of Divinity program.

Will you join us in celebrating the 60th year of supporting seminarians through financial funding? These scholars need many kinds of encouragement as they follow their call and seek to increase their knowledge and understanding of God's grace, forgiveness, and love.

Please help us support Christian scholars serving the Church! Many examples abound inside these pages as students and graduates share their unique experiences and desire to serve God's people.

Won't you prayerfully consider sending your check supporting the Foundation's \$60-4-60 Years challenge?

You can provide hope for the future Church.

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

In Memoriam

Earlier this year, the Foundation lost two longtime and faithful advocates. The Rev. Dr. Richard H. Skelley and his wife, Marion H. Skelley, died within months of each other. Both provided considerable service to the Foundation and the broader church.

Dr. Skelley, who was president of the Foundation from 1998-2001, graduated from the University of Dubuque in 1961 and from the Seminary in 1963. Following ordination, his first call was a two-point charge in Nebraska: First Presbyterian in O'Neill and Bethany Presbyterian in Ewing. He served these two churches until 1972, when he accepted a call as pastor of Faith Presbyterian in suburban Omaha, where he remained until retirement in 1992. During his tenure at Faith, the congregation grew to nearly 700 members. In 1984 he earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary. In 2004 he received the Manning Award from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.



Dick was an interim and supply pastor for a number of years. He served on numerous community, presbytery, synod and denominational committees and held leadership positions in these groups. At the Foundation, he was a strong advocate for the Apollos Scholarship Program (Acts 18:24-26) that provides support for Presbyterian seminarians.

Marion participated fully in the churches that Dick served. Along the way, she was a church secretary, a Presbyterian ruling elder, an active member of Presbyterian Women, and an administrative assistant at the Foundation. She was a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Skelleys, who were married for 66 years, enjoyed their family and traveling together along with a variety of hobbies and interests.

All of us at the Foundation join the many whom their lives of service impacted in gratitude for their devoted and enduring witness to Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,

The Rev. Dr. Gary S. Eller
President

Congratulations to the 2014-2015 Scholarship Recipients

In the 60th year of financial support to those preparing for ministry in the PC(USA), the Apollos Committee of the Foundation selected 17 individuals to receive scholarships from among the 56 who applied—four for \$6,000 per year named scholarships honoring former Foundation leaders and 13 for \$3,000 per year of Apollos Scholarships.

Here is what they think about a variety of topics:



HOWARD B. DOOLEY
Scholarship winner Brian Beverly

Describing his sense of call: I have wanted to be a pastor since I was a child. Over the years people have told me what [they thought] might be a potential career for me. I have been told that I should be an electrician, fire fighter, psychologist, house appraiser, and many other occupations. However, God has called me to be a pastor and I could not imagine myself doing anything else.

Brian Beverly is a Senior at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

EUGENE C. DINSMORE
Scholarship winner Rachel Hebert



Describing her gifts for ministry and how they might be used in the Church: Gifts that I possess for ministry [include] the ability to listen, to encourage, to have patience, to teach, and to move seamlessly throughout various age ranges of ministry... I want to work towards mentorship and discipleship programs within the church, to create safe spaces for college

students and young adults to come and not only explore questions about their faith, but to make their faith their own as they transition from the faith they've been taught into what they believe.

Rachel Hebert is a Senior at Princeton Theological Seminary.

ROBERT K. ADAMS
Scholarship winner Caroline Newman



Describing her sense of call: Youth ministry introduced me to God and changed my life as a teenager. What draws me to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is a deep desire to introduce youth to the same life-changing Love that was introduced to me. Upon [entering] seminary in 2012, I began to discern a call not specifically focused on youth... Rev. Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean, one

of my professors says, "The secret to youth ministry is that it is just ministry." Youth ministry is not ministry only to youth—it is ministry to parents, volunteers, and the entire church...

Caroline Newman is a Middler at Princeton Theological Seminary.



SILAS G. KESSLER
Scholarship winner Lisa Schrott

Describing her gifts for ministry and their use in the Church: I come to seminary education and ministry as one who has sat in the pews for many years. I view empowering leaders—equipping individuals to bear witness to God's word and work in their life—as a major challenge that faces the Church today... My leadership style, administrative gifts, and love of people combine the practical and pragmatic with nurturing and imagination to encourage, nudge, and maybe even embolden individuals to live out each of their callings to be disciples in the world.

Lisa Schrott is a Middler at Columbia Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Chelsea Guenther Benham**



Describing the challenge facing the Church today: The Church in our age struggles to confront a culture of consumerism and greed which contributes greatly to problems of environmental destruction and global poverty and inequality...At its root, the materialism of our society is a spiritual problem.

Chelsea Benham is a Senior at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Rebekah Carpenter**

Describing her spiritual pilgrimage: My childhood church and home were places where people of all education and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in worship and socialized together. These early integrative experiences began shaping my current calling—to create ministries that cultivate genuine relationships and partnerships with all people.

Rebekah Carpenter is a Junior at Columbia Theological Seminary.



**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Sarah Chivington-Buck**

From an email to the Foundation: I have attached a photograph of myself...with my late grandmother, Emily Buck. She moved from the East Coast to New Mexico in 1939 to work at a Presbyterian mission school. My relationship with her nurtured and influenced the call I now seek to answer...as a pastor who desires to know God deeply and to help others grow in meaningful relationship with their Creator.

Sarah Chivington-Buck is a Middler at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
John K. Craft**



Describing his leadership style: I believe in leading by example...in the midst of making decisions, whether they be everyday or life-changing, we must always remember to seek God's leading through prayer and discernment. This challenges us to admit our weaknesses, rely on each other, and—most importantly—listen for God's voice

in the middle of life's challenges.

John K. Craft is in his final year of Distance Education studies at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Brittany Fiscus**

Describing her sense of call: The church community that I grew up in, and am continuously inspired by, is a group of people who love and care for one another...Though what we do is often on a small scale, we are a force for good in our community, and I believe that affects peoples' lives in big ways...Even if what I do is small, I feel called to be a force for good through God.

Brittany Fiscus is a Junior at Columbia Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Carolyn Grice**

Answering the question, What draws you to ministry? During my teens my parents said, "Enjoy Saturday night activities, but choir rehearsal is at 10:15 and church starts at 11." I have willingly been involved in church ever since as an ordained deacon and elder, serving on most committees of the church, as the youngest person ever to serve on a pastor nominating committee at my home church, and as clerk of Session...I want to serve the Lord with all my heart, mind and strength in whatever capacity I am needed.

Carolyn Grice is a Junior at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Patrick Kiptum**

Describing a major challenge facing the Church: The Church faces a crisis of a diminishing church body. My goal is to give people a reason to return to the church. People are yearning for spirituality. The word of the Lord is unchanged in all these many years but the method and mode of delivery can evolve.

Patrick Kiptum is a Middler at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Megan McCarty**



Answering the question, What draws you to ministry? After graduation, I wasn't sure what direction to go. I majored in photography but after a semester-long magazine internship, I realized I no longer felt led to work in journalism. I decided to join the Young Adult Volunteer program and ended up serving a year in Miami, Florida. That year radically

changed my life...I learned that service, living simply, caring for others, and learning to live in community were much stronger values than needing to make a large salary or have many possessions.

Megan McCarty is a Middler at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Aaron Neff**



Describing his leadership style: I know that one individual cannot and should not be the driving force behind everything, and I look forward to facilitating others' use of their gifts and passions. I believe that the primary roles of a pastor in this sense should be (1) to help discern a unifying vision for the church's direction; (2) to facilitate respectful

communication between individuals in the church in order to fulfill this vision; and (3) to encourage and empower congregants to take part in the work of the church.

Aaron Neff is a Middler at Princeton Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Keith Phillips**



Describing gifts for ministry and their use in the church: The power of communication technology today is remarkable. Nearly a quarter of the world's population has access to the Internet...The church must have a strategy to teach all its members the "language" of global communications so that each person can become a better

communicator of God's love. My experience in communications [with a professional sports team] can help the church...

Keith Phillips is a Middler at Columbia Theological Seminary.

**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Jessica Rigel**



Demonstrating commitment to Christ in and through the Church: My most meaningful Christian service experiences have come through my participation in the PC(USA) Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program, where I worked as a land steward in Tucson and an urban community gardener in New Orleans. Through these experiences I have learned

how to live within my means, to better appreciate the beauty of God's creation, to explore meaningful work, and to trust in God for peace and sustenance.

Jessica Rigel is a Junior at Princeton Theological Seminary.



**APOLLOS SCHOLAR –
Zachary Wooten**

Describing the ways he cares for himself: To take care of my body, mind, emotions and spirit, I make a daily practice of surrendering all of these to God. For instance, when I run I pray during each lap, thanking God for something different each time I circle the gym. This practice helps me take care of the body God has given me while simultaneously nurturing my spirit with gratitude.

Zachary Wooten is a Junior at Princeton Theological Seminary.

I am grateful to accept the Robert K. Adams Scholarship. This scholarship is an incredible blessing, greatly assisting me financially during my last two years of seminary. Thank you to you for your commitment to seminarians. I look forward to a continued relationship with the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation.

Together in Christ, Caroline Newman

Caroline is a Senior at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.



APOLLOS SCHOLAR – Fred Young

From his “Thank you for the Scholarship” letter: In the summer of 2013, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 throat cancer. This diagnosis forced me to step away from my studies for the 2013 fall semester. During that time, I completed a treatment program involving both chemotherapy and radiation. My wife was also pregnant with our son, Preston, who was born two days after I completed my final day of cancer treatment. This treatment, while painful and temporarily debilitating, has resulted in a recent cancer-free diagnosis, and our Preston is now a happy and healthy ten-month old baby.

Fred Young is a Senior at Columbia Theological Seminary.

As the 60th year of grants, loans, and scholarships to seminary students comes to an end, the Foundation has provided financial support to 770 individuals preparing for pastoral leadership positions in the PC(USA)—a worthy way to fulfill its mission to continue the work of preparation for ministry begun by the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Omaha.

It is with deep gratitude and humility that I thank you for the award of the Silas G. Kessler Scholarship from the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation for my education at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. My journey to seminary to pursue a vocation in ordained ministry has been shaped in innumerable ways by the congregations that have nurtured me throughout my life. I am deeply indebted to the leadership of the former Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Omaha for their foresight in developing a fund for theological education and am appreciative that the Foundation continues to value the development of teaching elders by supporting the distribution of funds for seminary scholarships.

I am excited that the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation is a partner with me on this journey.

In Christ's Love, Lisa M. Schrott

Lisa is a Middler at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

Matt Nieman Former Member of the Board of Directors and Past Apollos Recipient



The work of the Holy Spirit, as we all know, can be unpredictable and befuddling. Just when we think we have God figured out in terms of our calls to serve, we are surprised that God has alternate plans.

Such was the case for me in light of my recent move to a new congregation. After twelve

years as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Bellevue, Nebraska, the Spirit struck and called my family and I to East Tennessee. On August 1, I began my new role as pastor of Farragut Presbyterian Church on the outskirts of Knoxville.

The move to a new church, a new part of the country, and different culture has brought with it apprehension, eagerness, and excitement all at the same time. We've left our families, which are in Nebraska and Iowa, in order to serve the Church in the South. We are learning new traditions and customs, along with the names and faces of God's children here.

Despite the differences in the congregation I left and the one I am now serving, it is remarkable how similar these church families are. They both desire to be faithful, to be Presbyterian, and to be a force for Christ where they are. They also have similar struggles—membership, involvement, and nervousness about the future.

Throughout this change, one thing has not changed: the hope we have in Jesus Christ and the trust we place in the God who made us. This is what sustains—always.

OPSF has been a great catalyst for me to do ministry since I entered seminary in the mid-90s. While I will no longer be serving on the Board of Directors, I am eager to continue sharing the story of the Foundation in this region so that it can continue to impact the lives of church leaders for decades to come.

The Reverend Matthew R. Nieman and his wife, Jennifer, and their two young sons begin a new journey as Matt leads the congregation at the Farragut Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, Tennessee.

August 9, 2014

Dear Dr. Eller:

As a former Apollos Scholarship recipient, I am writing to share with you a little bit about my ministry since graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2011...I completed two CPE residencies in North Carolina. Both of those residencies were deeply challenging to me emotionally and spiritually as well as integral to my formation for ministry. It was in the hospital environment helping patients and their families to cope with the tragedies that befell them that I discovered within myself a passion and call to crisis ministries.

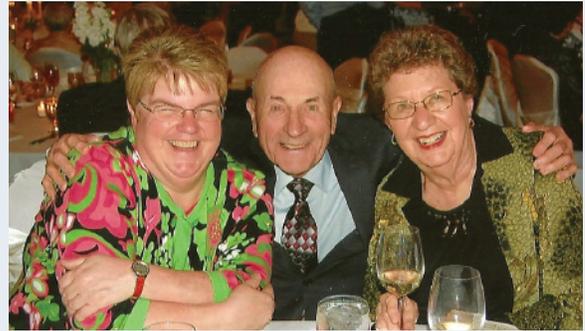
From January to June 2014, I worked as a case manager at Urban Ministries of Durban, NC -- an emergency homeless shelter. I absolutely loved serving there as my work focused specifically on assisting homeless veterans with connecting to VA benefits and obtaining permanent housing. At the beginning of July, I began a full-time, permanent job as a case manager with the nonprofit organization, Volunteers of America Carolinas. There I help administer a VA funded grant called Supportive Services for Veteran Families. Similar to my work at Urban Ministries, I help veterans who about to be evicted or have their utilities shut off to stay in their home. I also help rapidly re-house homeless veterans and connect them to the support services they need to stay housed, including employment assistance and health services. Veterans face unique challenges in integrating themselves back into the civilian world after their military service. I feel blessed to be part of a ministry that assists those veterans who have struggled or are currently struggling with that transition.

I continue to remain grateful for the financial assistance that the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation provided while I was at Princeton. It helped lessen my debt load significantly and made it financially possible for me to pursue the experiences I have had since graduating...

Peace,

Jonathan T. Crooms
Durham, North Carolina

Jonathan T. Crooms received an Apollos Scholarship for two years while he was enrolled in the M.Div. program at Princeton Theological Seminary.



The Rev. Elaine Cozad (left) visits with Craig and Betty Worrell from Cozad.

“Exploring a Holy Curiosity”

Albert Einstein said, *“One cannot but be aware when contemplating the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”*

Never lose a holy curiosity. Is that not a great phrase? Is that not what Jesus taught, among other important life practices of love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, justice, and compassion?

Holy curiosity propelled me to take a leap of faith and trust with a move to the Phoenix, Arizona area without a particular call in hand. It was a holy curiosity which I could not ignore. It was the Spirit inviting me to explore what is holy in life and what propels my curiosity.

My first love has always been spirituality; learning the language of silence, entering into my heart instead of my head, resting in the Mystery we call God and the Mystery others call by many names. My work in spiritual direction has allowed me to be aware of whom and how God has called me to ministry. My ‘holy curiosity’ is to help others find the Divine in their lives.

It is not always easy. Life is messy and very complicated. Listen to the Twitter hash tags:

#ferguson	#bringourgirlshome	#immigration
#MichaelBrown	#RobinWilliams	#middleeast
#Gaza/Israel	#Ebola	#Iraq
#Israel/Gaza	#refugeekids	

What would happen if we brought our sense of “a holy curiosity” to these events? How might we change? How might the world change?

The Reverend Elaine J. Besthorn followed her “holy curiosity” to Phoenix last spring after serving on the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation’s Council of Advisors for the past two years representing Central Nebraska congregations.

Presbyterians Today – August 2014

Here are two excerpts of articles written by or quoted from two previous Apollos scholarship recipients.

A Seminarian's Journey by Lynn Hasselbarth

Since Sunday is a workday, most pastors take a “second Sabbath” – often a Friday or a Monday—to stay refreshed amid the busy demands of ministry. It can serve as a day of prayer and sermon preparation or a day for mundane tasks...I used to think this was one of the perks of being a pastor, but I now know that this non-Sunday Sabbath helps ministers remain attentive and grounded amid the constant movement of ministry.

This practice of staying grounded has been a challenge for me, especially during my last semester in seminary. As spring approached, the weeks became a blur of paper writing and job interviews, leaving little time for reflection. At the same time, I was aware that this unique experience of study, spiritual growth and community would soon end.

...I decided to take some unstructured time for myself off campus. I needed to step away from the environment that had formed me in order to get a bird's eye view of that formation.

While my midweek jaunts might appear to have been mere luxuries, they prepared me for the quickly approaching changes in my life. Rather than anticipate the end of seminary with anxiety and exhaustion, I found that these off-site sanctuaries created firm grounding on which I could stand as everything around me shifted.

As I stood in line with my classmates, waiting to enter the seminary chapel, I looked around at the beaming faces beside me. Loud chatter and laughter filled the lobby of the seminary's main office building as we looked across at our proud professors. Outside, in the center courtyard, a bagpipe player began a Highlands medley, our cue to start the procession. As the line gained momentum, I couldn't help but move along with it. But I remained grounded, taking time to experience each step of the way.

Lynn Hasselbarth received an Apollos Scholarship for two years while she was enrolled in the M.Div. program at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

From an article entitled, *“Launching Pads for Leaders -- Small congregations make a big impact by nurturing young pastors”*; this article was written by Erin Donegal and appears on pages 36-39 in the August 2014 edition of *Presbyterians Today*.

Within the section entitled: *“Challenges and Gifts of Diversity”*, another seminary graduate and recipient of an Apollos scholarship and the Marilyn A. Jackson Memorial Award, the Reverend Shavon Starling-Louis, was featured.

“Listening to God Talk”

Spiritual growth also has been a two-way street for Shavon Starling-Louis and her various congregations over the years.

A black woman, Starling-Louis grew up as part of the biracial congregation Lakeview Presbyterian Church in St. Petersburg, Florida. Starling-Louis says Lakeview helped prepare her for her current role as a pastor of the mostly white congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Midwest City, Oklahoma.

Sometimes, she admits, she wonders why the Midwest City congregation called her to be its pastor, and she wonders whether congregants sometimes struggle to “hear” her. But she believes her call ultimately has come from God—for a reason and for a season. And she credits her time in seminary and at Lakeview with preparing her for the task that lay ahead.

“I've been amazingly grateful for how I've been formed in both my home church and by being connected to the wider church through seminary,” she says. “There are growing pains in a biracial church, and in the struggles between two cultures, even in the best scenario.”

Her leadership in the church began when she was asked to lead worship as a teenager. “It helped me begin to think theologically early on—before going to seminary—and helped me learn what conflicts look like and to claim Jesus as this reconciling God,” she says.

Though the diversity could be a challenge to navigate, it also brought great gifts. “The positive side of diversity is that I got to hear ‘God talk’ from people similar to me and people different from me demographically—whether that be racially or economically,” Starling-Louis says. “From week to week, to hear ‘God talk’ from folks different from me—it blew my mind.”



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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED



SAVE THESE DATES

Winter Pastors' School –
Hastings College, Hastings, Nebraska
Monday, February 2 through Thursday, February 5, 2015

The 59th Annual Summer Pastors' School –
Hastings College, Hastings, Nebraska
Sunday, June 7 Registration through Saturday,
June 13 Closing

OTHER FUTURE LIFELONG LEARNING EVENTS

2014 Lay Academy Training –
October 24-25 and November 21-22, Fort Dodge, Iowa

Synod of Mid-America Spring Pastors' Event –
April 13-15, 2015, Heartland Center, Parkville, Missouri

The Church Growth Leadership Summit –
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
April 13-14, 2015

Great Plains Wee Kirk –
May 5-7, 2015 – Calvin Crest Center, Fremont, Nebraska

2015 Synod School –
Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa
July 26-31, 2015

The Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation supports these various events through its Continuing Education Program Grant program. Presbyteries, Synods, and other Presbyterian groups apply for grants.

Supporting Excellence in Christian Leadership