

**MTSO STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**Adopted by the Board of Trustees**  
**October 28, 2016**  
**Revised Fall 2021**

**OUR MISSION**

MTSO provides theological education and leadership in pursuit of a just, sustainable, and generative world.

**OUR VISION**

MTSO aspires to be a vibrant, diverse, inclusive community that faithfully engages the intersections of church, society, and academy to prepare leaders for ministry and service in pursuit of a transformed world. Celebrating and appropriating the scriptures, traditions and myriad experiences of Christian faith in an open and challenging formational community, we cultivate learning for ministry and service.

**OUR DISTINCTIVENESS**

MTSO is deeply committed to transformative, sustaining justice as an expansive theological vision consistent with the creative, renewing, resurrecting activity of God in the world. To this end, we create a new imagination for the church of the future through creative work in institutional programs, relationships and resources to promote equity, justice and integrity. We intentionally connect with social justice movements that attend to sustainable social change, transforming both church and world.

**INTRODUCTION TO OUR APPROACH**

Reaching into a rapidly changing world, MTSO affirms its Christian identity as a seminary in the Wesleyan family, committed to conversation and interaction with people, communities and movements of many perspectives and faith traditions. Devoted to our longstanding motto, “To Preach the Word,” we prepare and invigorate extraordinary leaders for pastoral ministry. Aware of dynamic changes in the religious and spiritual lives of people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we also embrace our responsibility to educate for new vocations. We cultivate leadership for enhancing theological literacy and constructing social good within and beyond church communities.

We seek to claim and proclaim our enduring commitment to academic excellence and take seriously our responsibility for the intellectual life of the Church and the emotional and spiritual health of individuals in communities. Faithful to our history of acting and teaching for social justice, we offer the world around us leaders who will make a significant difference for good in the communities they will lead and serve. We do this through teaching and forming pastoral counselors, ministers, nonprofit leaders and local church laity within a variety of theological traditions.

“Sustainable justice” is a central institutional commitment, reflected in our curricular foci, our public conversations, our community ethos, and our sense of place and context. This commitment is also a call to the church to proclaim and promote the Gospel values of justice and community in

relationship to the natural world in our era of division and inequality. Additionally, a transforming, sustainable justice lens creates space for partnerships new to MTSO and for significant platforms for leadership in theological education as a whole.

In light of this commitment, we endeavor to build and sustain connection with peer institutions and movements with shared values. To that end, we see our school and campus as a hub for relationship and interactivity with others regarding theological concerns for the intersections of ecology, race, gender, class, economics and the importance of place.

### **OUR INTENT IN PLANNING**

This plan, first adopted in 2016, assumed a five- to seven-year horizon and an ongoing process of strategic navigation and planning among representative constituents and stakeholders. In committing to a next phase of the plan, we acknowledge the rapidly changing context in which we seek to fulfill our mission, and we value the nimble nature of our community, which is a unique asset for engaging a dynamic world. As we look ahead, we expect to renew and even reshape the plan at least every three years. An addendum with specific and assessable action steps will be implemented each year.

### **OUR PLAN**

#### **Goal One: Develop and Augment Institutional Identity and Vocation.**

##### Objectives

- Undertake a process of discernment and adaptation regarding institutional engagement with the changing landscape of church and spiritual life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Commit to challenging and healing divisions in our world including but not limited to those based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, religion, and culture by offering education and training to do this work.
- Continue to deepen and broaden our institutional commitments to ecotheology, environmental justice, and sustainability.
- Engage regularly in curricular and programmatic conversation for deepening academic excellence and intellectual inquiry in all theological disciplines and programs; further discern and develop our institutional distinctiveness.
- Develop Theological Commons programming as a primary means for connection among students, faculty, alumni and the public to create and further theological work and knowledge in church and society and to develop and promote our institutional distinctiveness.
- Conduct regular assessment of programs to enable discernment of ever-developing mission for the purpose of further institutional self-awareness and vision.
- Retain and enhance institutional innovation and flexibility to advance in a dynamic society without losing our core identity.

## **Goal Two: Prioritize and Develop Institutional Programs to Empower the Mission.**

### Objectives

- Align the theological curriculum to create a sustainably just world through studies in heritage, intellectual inquiry, spiritual formation, and informed and hospitable action with sustainable justice foci in terms of eco-theology, economics, social locations, abilities, immigration and refugee status, sexualities, and theological understandings of students and the constituencies they serve.
- Build on the Connections M.Div. program to further develop our ability to offer innovative and relevant approaches to education for pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, non-profit leadership and community organizing.
- Building on recent approval by ATS, HLC, and ODHE for online education; make all academic programs accessible both remotely and on campus.
- Seek distinctive, entrepreneurial opportunities for practical ministry in churches, nonprofit organizations, community organizations, counseling centers, and movements for justice and sustainability.
- Plan to become a significant place for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and education as the need for theological schools to expand horizons continues to grow.
- Further enhance technological capability and innovation, providing educational connection in regional, national and international networks in order to continue to build connection with church bodies, partner organizations and peer schools.
- Further develop Seminary Hill Farm as a means of living our values and providing a tangible hub of connection with partners and communities.

## **Goal Three: Build and Enhance Institutional Relationships and Resources to Enable the Mission.**

### Objectives

- Engage partnerships and relationships that further the vision and mission of MTSO in connection with other academic institutions and movements within and beyond the church.
- Attract students who will further the vision for a sustainable, just church and world through their vocational ministries and service.
- Commit to financial development and investment that aligns with MTSO values and invites partners to help shape and fund theologically based innovation and vision.

- Commit to sustainable campus development and energy use aligning with MTSO's mission and vision.
- Further develop a strategic communications plan that that engages current and potential stakeholders, including alumni, churches, partner institutions and the general public through frequent and comprehensive use of social and other media for the purpose of increasing enrollment and financial development.

## **ADDENDUM: Action Steps for Academic and Fiscal Year 2021-22**

### **Goal One: Develop and Augment Institutional Identity and Vocation**

- Evaluate groundskeeping, moving toward a sustainable landscape
- Install vehicle charging stations
- Have one day per week of meatless meal offerings in the dining hall
- Campus-wide composting
- Prioritize the use of environmentally friendly options when replacing appliances, flooring, toilets, etc. in housing units
- Host international Institute on Theology and Disability

### **Goal Two: Prioritize and Develop Institutional Programs to Empower the Mission**

- Revise field education – renaming to contextual learning, working more closely with the office of discernment and community engagement (Academic Area) Completed, and ongoing
- Revising curriculum – expect this to be a two-year process (Academic Area) Ongoing with goals to complete draft by May 2022, and implement in Fall 2023
- To retain the services of a non-Christian scholar for interreligious courses (Academic Area) Under review with review of curriculum for MDiv
- Implement MTSO Scholar-in-Residence Program (farm & classroom intensives/retreats)
- Finalize Seminary Hill Farm organizational plan
- Implement volunteer program for SHF
- With the Community Food and Wellness Initiative consider ways to expand the CSA program to feed more people (sliding scale, EBT, etc.)
- Complete installation of accessible growing beds for SHF

### **Goal Three: Build and Enhance Institutional Relationships and Resources to Enable the Mission**

- Participate in SMART Columbus' solar feasibility/energy study with other institutions of higher learning (including Otterbein, Denison, Ohio University and OSU Marion)
- MOU with Stratford Ecological Center (USDA Beginning Farmer program, AmeriCorps, intern housing, etc.)
- Add embedded student video interviews to all degree program web pages.
- Update seminaryhillfarm.org content management system to ProcessWire, the CMS used for mtso.edu. Includes updating farm website content to better reflect integration into MTSO's mission and design to appear separate from but compatible with mtso.edu.
- Transfer 80-plus archived Theological Commons event videos from the paid-subscription Livestream platform to YouTube, where they will be more widely accessible and posted at no charge.
- Format, print and mail stand-alone *Campus View* print digest in the spring, featuring highlights from past emailed versions. Include *Campus View* digest in *The Story Magazine* in the fall. (Advancement)
- Increase Facebook likes to 5,000, Twitter followers to 1,200 and Instagram followers to 700. (As of September 2021: Facebook 4,731 likes, Twitter 1,111, and Instagram 617.)
- Create at least six new faculty videos. As of Sept. 2021, 3 new videos, ongoing
- Achieve Spring 2022 masters admissions of 10 (HC) and 7 (FTE)

- Achieve Summer 2022 DMIN admissions of 10 (HC) and 3.3 (FTE)
- Achieve Fall 2022 masters admissions of 40 (HC) and 36 (FTE)
- 20 restored donors
- 50 new donors
- 50 donors increase giving amount
- 10 new members of Gold Crest (\$1,000 or more per year)
- 25 donors moved to new giving level (eg. from Wesley Circle to Werner Circle, etc.)
- 5 new members of Sterling Legacy Society.
- Continued nurturing of institutional partnerships.
- Complete design of 3+3 programs with Ohio Wesleyan University (and possibly Otterbein University and Bluffton University) (Academic area) Paused until Fall 2022
- Develop a collaborative initiative with AETH and Latinx/Hispanic Theological Center in Cleveland (Academic) AETH has lost its executive director and this goal is on hold
- Fundriver – convert endowment pool from spreadsheets to SaaS environment
- Complete documentation of all accounting processes
- Integrate Raiser’s Edge and Financial Edge for gift processing
- Research single sign on technology
- Implement single sign-on
- Back-up conversion – move from server-based environment to cloud
- Disaster recovery plan (create or update existing one)
- Create capital maintenance/improvement plan for all buildings on campus
- Research options for upgrading main campus electrical transformer (not sure if transformer is the right word)
- Address campus traffic and safety in light of new traffic circle at rear entrance

## **ADDENDUM: Action Steps for Academic and Fiscal Year 2022-23**

### **Goal One: Develop and Augment Institutional Identity and Vocation**

- Undertake a process of discernment and adaptation regarding institutional engagement with the changing landscape of church and spiritual life in the 21st century.
- Commit to challenging and healing divisions in our world including but not limited to those based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, religion, and culture by offering education and training to do this work.
- Continue to deepen and broaden our institutional commitments to ecotheology, environmental justice, and sustainability.
- Engage regularly in curricular and programmatic conversation for deepening academic excellence and intellectual inquiry in all theological disciplines and programs; further discern and develop our institutional distinctiveness.
- Develop Theological Commons programming as a primary means for connection among students, faculty, alumni and the public to create and further theological work and knowledge in church and society and to develop and promote our institutional distinctiveness.
- Conduct regular assessment of programs to enable discernment of ever-developing mission for the purpose of further institutional self-awareness and vision.
- Retain and enhance institutional innovation and flexibility to advance in a dynamic society without losing our core identity.

### **Goal Two: Prioritize and Develop Institutional Programs to Empower the Mission**

- Align the theological curriculum to create a sustainably just world through studies in heritage, intellectual inquiry, spiritual formation, and informed and hospitable action with sustainable justice foci in terms of ecotheology, economics, social locations, abilities, immigration and refugee status, sexualities, and theological understandings of students and the constituencies they serve.
- Build on the Connections M.Div. program to further develop our ability to offer innovative and relevant approaches to education for pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, non-profit leadership and community organizing.
- Building on recent approval by ATS, HLC, and ODHE for online education, make all academic programs accessible both remotely and on campus.
- Seek distinctive, entrepreneurial opportunities for practical ministry in churches, nonprofit organizations, community organizations, counseling centers, and movements for justice and sustainability.
- Plan to become a significant place for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and education as the need for theological schools to expand horizons continues to grow.
- Further enhance technological capability and innovation, providing educational connection in regional, national and international networks in order to continue to build connection with church bodies, partner organizations and peer schools.
- Further develop Seminary Hill Farm as a means of living our values and providing a tangible hub of connection with partners and communities.

### **Goal Three: Build and Enhance Institutional Relationships and Resources to Enable the Mission**

- Engage partnerships and relationships that further the vision and mission of MTSO in connection with other academic institutions and movements within and beyond the church.

- Attract students who will further the vision for a sustainable, just church and world through their vocational ministries and service.
- Commit to financial development and investment that aligns with MTSO values and invites partners to help shape and fund theologically based innovation and vision.
- Commit to sustainable campus development and energy use aligning with MTSO's mission and vision.
- Further develop a strategic communications plan that that engages current and potential stakeholders, including alumni, churches, partner institutions and the general public through frequent and comprehensive use of social and other media for the purpose of increasing enrollment and financial development.



## **ADDENDUM: Action Steps for Academic and Fiscal Year 2023-24**

### **Goal One: Develop and Augment Institutional Identity and Vocation**

- Implement the revised curriculum for incoming Fall 2024 students for all the M.Div., MAPT, and MTS programs. The MASJ remains as devised.
- Re-engage and revise our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ohio Northern University (ONU) for a 3+3 program to be mapped onto the new M.Div. curriculum. In this program the students complete their last year of undergraduate as their first year of the Masters' degree.
- Develop a 3+2 MOU with ONU mapped to the MASJ, MAPT, and MTS.
- Re-engage with Mt. Union College for the 3+2 degree connected with the MASJ, with a goal of at least two undergraduate students will enroll by Fall 2025.
- Continue to deepen and broaden our institutional commitments to ecotheology, environmental justice, and sustainability.
  - Continue strides in moving toward a sustainable landscape with native prairie restoration, removal of invasive species, beginning food forestry.
  - Install electric vehicle charging stations
  - Enhance campus composting
  - Continue to have presence with external networks and committees to help guide our work and initiatives like the Community Food and Wellness Initiative
- Commit to challenging and healing divisions in our world including but not limited to those based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, religion, and culture by offering education and training to do this work
  - Create Theological Commons and other programs to reflect this commitment
  - Provide training as possible, including revisiting institution-wide conversations on implicit bias and/or other

### **Goal Two: Prioritize and Develop Institutional Programs to Empower the Mission**

- Review and revise the Connections model and intensives in order to broaden our course time offerings for more flexibility for students and professors to include larger block courses across weekdays and some weekends.
- Participate in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy
- Further develop Seminary Hill Farm as a means of living our values and providing a tangible hub of connection with partners and communities.
  - SHF continues to be a hub for diverse interns, AmeriCorps community building, site for culinary school interns, Olentangy interns, etc.
  - Continue to develop the Community Food and Wellness Initiative with at least two MTSO students as associates this year, one new community partner and continued partner conversations; collaborate on at least two programs with SHF and share produce with at least 2 partners
- Engage the MTSO community, including the board members, regarding our anti-racism goals toward inclusion, diversity, and belonging
  - Evaluate with the anti-racism task force strategies for engaging campus in appropriate training, programming and structure for the group
- Investigate the possibility of hosting a Freedom School (Children's Defense Fund), staffed by MTSO students and staff members for local youth.
- Host an Ecumenical Conversation with Ohio Council of Churches to enhance our commitments

to interreligious dialogue and relationships.

- Host Theological Commons programs related to our mission and commitments, at least 4 throughout the year

### **Goal Three: Build and Enhance Institutional Relationships and Resources to Enable the Mission**

- Enhance partnerships and relationships we have built through the three Lilly Endowment grants (Spaces for Thriving, Connecting Pathways and Compelling Preaching)
- Communicate significant curriculum changes through website updates and external publicity.
  - Transition of MA in Practical Theology to MA in Public Theology.
  - Change in credit-hour and other degree requirements for M.Div., MAPT and MTS.
- Create new recruiting materials to support on-the-road recruiting.
  - Banners, tabletop signs and table covers.
  - Photos loaded onto iPad for easy access in showing campus scenery, classrooms, residences, farm and campus life.
  - Printed materials highlighting degrees, scholarships, partnerships etc.
- Update seminaryhillfarm.org to include information and registration opportunities for volunteers.
- Update the website to tell the story of CFWI and communicate the opportunity to students.
- Post to social media 2.5-3 times per week, simulcasting on Facebook and Instagram when practical.
- Change the school's external email platform to Mailchimp from iContact, bringing the school and farm email efforts together under on a single platform for the first time.
- Engage partnerships and relationships that further the vision and mission of MTSO in connection with other academic institutions and movements within and beyond the church.
  - Build relationships through the Stinner Summit with various community partners in Columbus and beyond (at a minimum, 10)
  - Build relationships with undergraduates from various universities through the Lilly grant and Community Food and Wellness Initiative, to support them through Stinner and beyond (at a minimum, 14)
  - Host the Climate Justice Ministries retreat in collaboration with multiple organizations and provide a space for retreat for pastors
- Finish the implementation of moving the endowment pool from spreadsheets to SaaS environment, [adavico](#).
- Complete documentation of all accounting processes
- Disaster recovery plan (create or update existing one)
- Update capital maintenance/improvement plan for all buildings on campus
- Research options for upgrading main campus electrical transformer
- Address campus traffic and safety considering new traffic circle at rear entrance
- Continue accessibility upgrades (library elevator, ADA compliant housing units)
- Continue partnerships with Claremont and the [Center for Chaplaincy Studies](#).
- 20 restored donors
- 50 new donors
- 50 donors increase giving amount.
- 10 new members of Gold Crest (\$1,000 or more per year)
- 25 donors moved to new giving level (eg. from Wesley Circle to Werner Circle, etc.)
- 5 new members of Sterling Legacy Society.