



ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2026 Centennial Plan

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Asbury Theological Seminary**

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Introduction

Historical Overview of our Strategic Planning from 2009 to present

2009 - 2023

In 2009 Asbury Theological Seminary began a process of strategic reflection which ultimately led to what became known as the 2023 Strategic Plan. The process began with the Board of Trustees officially authorizing the development of a Strategic Plan in November, 2009. The process involved extensive discussions throughout the community responding to four strategic questions which President Tennent posed to the community.¹ Then, utilizing the World Café model² each area of the seminary (faculty, staff, students, administration and Trustees) were represented on ten vision teams around the following ten areas: Global Christianity; Church Renewal and Revitalization and Church Planting; Community Life;³ Delivery Systems; Students in the 21st Century; Globalized Faculty; One Seminary, Diverse Campuses, One Mission; Finance and Advancement; Board of Trustees; and Curriculum. The President and Cabinet presented a “charge” to each of the vision teams, along with a series of certified questions which they were invited to respond to.⁴

These ten “vision teams” spent months discussing their theme and, by the Spring of 2010 each team produced a paper with specific, measurable goals, as well as tactical advice and aspirational statements consistent with our mission. From the start, we were committed to focusing on adaptive change, not merely technical change.⁵ During the academic year 2010-2011 each paper from the Vision Teams was processed by the Strategic Planning Council, the Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees. The Cabinet finally took all of the goals and consolidated them into a single document with a consistent format. This final document was then received by the staff and received a full vote of the plenary faculty and the Board of Trustees in 2011.

In 2015, the Strategic Plan was re-visited and consolidated into 23 goals and connected to “ten core values” thereby making the plan more accessible and marketable (23 goals by 2023). The 2015 re-presentation of the 2023 Strategic Plan did not represent substantive changes to the content of the original version of the plan, but it was a major reorganization of how the plan was displayed and organized. The newly updated Strategic Plan 2.0 also included our newly updated Ethos statement and a better ordering of our ten values on the one-page chart. We also produced an extensive “progress report” on each of the goals. This 71-page document was the fullest interim report since the inception of the 2023 Strategic Plan. In May 2016 the Board of Trustees officially adopted the **2023 Strategic Plan 2.0** which became the official strategic plan of the Seminary.

¹ The Four Certified Questions are found on p. 6, 7 of the 2023 Strategic Plan (1.0).

² The seven principles of the World Café Model for strategic planning can be found on p. 6 of the 2023 Strategic Plan (1.0).

³ In 2010 this phrase was changed to Community Formation

⁴ The Ten Presidential Charges are found on pages 51-54 of the 2023 Strategic Plan (1.0). The Certified questions for each vision team is found on pages 54-56 of the 2023 Strategic Plan (1.0).

⁵ For more on the crucial distinction between “adaptive” and “technical” problems as developed by Harvard professors Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie, see p. 4, 5 of the 2023 Strategic Plan (1.0).

In May, 2019 the President presented a 120-page document entitled “2023 Strategic Plan – Cabinet Progress Report, April 2019.” This document represented the most extensive report on each of the 23 goals of the Strategic Plan. In addition, we proposed a range of mostly minor changes to the 2023 2.0 Strategic Plan. The changes to our Strategic Plan were adopted in May 2019 at the Board of Trustee meeting and the official plan of the seminary became known as the **2023 Strategic Plan 2.1**. Besides several key edits in the 2.0 Plan, the most important directional change in the revised plan was initiation of a year-long process to reconsider the future of the Florida-Dunnam campus (goal #18). After a year of reflection by the Florida Task Force the administration submitted to the May 2020 Board of Trustees a recommendation that we sell our physical assets in Florida (building and all parcels of land) and relocate into multiple “variable cost” church sites in Florida and beyond. This was a solemn moment in the history of the seminary. The unanimous vote was a remarkable demonstration of the willingness of the Trustees to embrace a new strategic direction for Asbury which became known as Asbury Global. By 2022 Asbury Seminary will have two main expressions: A residential model which is “formative education delivered to a community embedded in a sacred space” and a global model which is “formative education delivered in contextually appropriate settings creatively using online, regional sites for “face to face” instruction, and post-traditional scheduling” for our students. This resulted in a final presentation of the plan at the November 2020 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Therefore, the official strategic plan of the Seminary became known as the **2023 Strategic Plan 3.0**. The President provided a full update on each goal of the Strategic Plan at the November 2020 meeting. There was a strong sense of amazement at the grace of God in bringing us so close to the fulfillment of our strategic goals. It seemed particularly providential that during the global COVID-19 pandemic God blessed Asbury with its largest enrollment in history (1,806), our highest number of “hours sold” (10,793), and our largest incoming Fall class in our history (514). This so-called “triple crown” achievement happened in the midst of an economic downturn, a global pandemic, serious racial unrest, and a bitterly divided national election. In the midst of this, we were thankful to God for his grace and mercy in guiding the mission of Asbury through these challenging times.

There was great excitement in the September 2022 meeting of the Board of Trustees which kicked off our Centennial Year. At the “gala” meeting of the Board of Trustees at the Marriott Hotel in Lexington, the Trustees voted and officially certified that every goal of the 2023 3.0 Strategic Plan had been met. The Board also officially certified that the Hundredfold Campaign which had been launched seven years earlier to support the plan was officially completed. The goal was to raise 100 million dollars to support the strategic initiatives of the Seminary. The final certification was the June 30, 2022 Campaign report which reported a total figure of 157,027,070!

Centennial Plan

At the May 2022 meeting of the Board of Trustees the Administration presented a process for a three year “bridge” Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. The reason for this “bridge” plan was as follows. First, there were a number of key initiatives which began during the previous strategic direction of the Seminary which needed to be brought to full maturity. Second, the Seminary was on the verge of our re-affirmation of our accreditation in 2024-2025. Because of the importance of that process (including a whole new set of standards from our previous reaffirmation which culminated in the Spring of 2015) we knew that the two years prior to

reaffirmation will involve countless hours of data gathering and reporting to our accreditation bodies (tATS, SACS/COC and CACREP). It was unanimously affirmed that we needed a bridge plan which would strategically carry us from the official certification of the 2023 Strategic Plan 3.0 through our reaffirmation in 2025.

Centennial Plan Process

At the May, 2022 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Administration presented the concept of a Centennial Plan. The Administration presented eleven key initiatives which we believed were crucial for consideration as we transitioned into the post-2023 phase of the Seminary. The Trustees adopted a process for full community consideration of these and other new ideas for the following year leading to the May 2023 meeting of the Board when the Centennial Plan would be presented for full adoption by the Board. In the summer of 2022, Karen Thomas, the chair of the Board, presented to the Board of Trustees the eleven initiatives for conversation and thoughtful reflection leading up to the “gala” meeting of the Board in September, 2022. It was providential that at the very meeting we were celebrating God’s faithfulness over the last 100 years, and the official certification of the 2023 Strategic Plan 3.0 and the Hundredfold Campaign, we spent the bulk of the meeting in small group discussion and reflection of the future strategic direction of the Seminary. This resulted in an official document from the Board of Trustees reflecting on each of the initiatives as well as discussion about new initiatives in keeping with the parameters set forth given the shorter time-frame of the strategic plan.

A similar process was followed with the faculty of the Seminary, key student representatives, staff and alumni of the Seminary. This unfolded throughout 2022 and early 2023. The result was significant feedback from across all of the major constituency groups of the Seminary. All of this reflection was presented to the Cabinet in preparation for a final report to the Board of Trustees at the May 2023 meeting of the Board. This strategic document is now officially known as the Centennial Plan.

This document is a strategic map only. Once approved, all strategic initiatives will eventually be benchmarked for economic cost, missional effectiveness, and alignment with our own mission as a Seminary. Dashboards and other measurements will be utilized to track the progress of each goal. Every initiative will be accompanied by a later strategic economic analysis, including a full assessment of staffing needs. Specifically, every strategic initiative, once approved, will go through a process of evaluation to determine what additional staffing may be necessary to successfully complete this goal.

2026 Centennial Plan

Strategic Initiative #1: Center for Church Multiplication

By 2026 Asbury Theological Seminary will launch a Center for Church Multiplication which will enable the Seminary to plant and support 1,000 new churches.

In the original strategic plan, the seminary launched a Church Planting Initiative which resulted in the training of 1,000 church planters. These initiatives involve both starting new communities of faith, as well as the re-missioning of existing churches to reach their full potential in church multiplication. The Seminary is now bringing this to a new level with the establishment of a full Center for Church Multiplication. The new center has a strategic plan built around the themes of “training” “mobilizing” and “resourcing.” The new center will expand our existing training emphasis with dozens of video based “master classes” which will allow us to train more extensively. Furthermore, will we develop our coaching of new church multipliers with a greater emphasis on supporting actual church re-missioning and church multiplication around the world. We will work with dozens of different denominations, movements and networks. In preparation for this new center, the seminary has already raised millions of dollars to partner with organizations belonging to our “connection” in helping to multiply churches. By 2025, Asbury Seminary could be the premier center of church mobilization in the country, bringing support and strength to dozens of new and existing church movements around the world. Church multiplication is central to our mission to “evangelize” and to “spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.” In the past, “evangelism” was often conceptualized as separate individual decisions. While, evangelism is never less than an “individual decision” it is increasingly clear that it often happens in the context of community. Church multiplication is central to our strategy for evangelization.

Core Value: Commitment to the Global Church

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Strategic Initiative #2: Asbury Latino Center

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will dramatically increase our commitment to training and supporting Hispanic theological education around the world through the establishment of the Asbury Latino Center

Asbury has a long history of training Hispanic leaders through our LLSP, and later, our LMFP initiative. Asbury launched our first LLSP certificate pilot program in the Spring of 2001 and the full program that Fall. This was a non-degree certificate level training which has helped to equip hundreds of Hispanic leaders in the church. However, we now believe that our greatest contribution will be pivoting to a deeper commitment to full degree programs delivered in a hybrid (Spanish/English) format. Previously, through the Piper grants, we were able to create a sustainable program for Hispanic leaders to get certificate education couple with pathways to higher degree work. However, this initiative resulted in very few degree students and was

exclusively focused on N. American Hispanic leaders. Now, with more significant funding, we will establish an Asbury Latino Center which will be centered around bi-lingually delivered MA and DMin degrees both here and throughout Latin America, while continuing our commitment to certificate training through the LMFP initiative. The mission of Asbury has always been responsive to the needs of growing, often under-served populations. Spanish speaking Christianity is one of the fastest growing segments of the church in N. America. It is vital that we continue to reach out and train these newly emerging constituency groups.

Core Values: Commitment to the Global Church, Serving Ethnic Churches

Strategic Initiative #3: Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will expand our constituent base, transitioning from our undue reliance upon United Methodist Students.

Under the leadership of our third President, Frank Stanger, Asbury Seminary pivoted to a training students from several smaller holiness denominations to a deeper commitment to training mainline United Methodist clergy who were committed to evangelical, historic faith. We will continue to do all we can to continue that noble tradition. However, we cannot ignore the huge implications of the fracturing within the United Methodist Church, the emergence of the Global Methodist Church and the disaffiliation of hundreds of United Methodist Churches which is changing the landscape of Methodism here and around the world. We need to support current and future pastors who have been harmed by this tragic divide in one of our major constituency groups. For many decades, Asbury's enrollment has been built around a relatively stable network of denominations within the broader Wesleyan stream: United Methodist, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, C and MA, Nazarene and Salvation Army, to name a few. It is now clear that Asbury cannot maintain our current levels of training without significantly broadening our constituent base. This involves two major enrollment shifts. First, the nurturing of new constituent groups. Asbury must build strong relationships with many new, diverse emerging Christian movements ranging from independent, to Pentecostal to Anglican. Second, Asbury must become an even more welcoming place for ethnically diverse constituencies. Specific strategies must be followed which demonstrate reconciliation rooted in the power of the gospel. Third, Asbury must dramatically increase our training of leaders from the Global church. The former initiative involves many new training agreements with existing and newly emerging movements. The latter involves establishing MOUs with our global partners to assist in the training of leaders, especially with the DMin and various MA degrees. Conceptually, this involves shifting from a more tuition based enrollment management plan to a more donor based enrollment management plan. However, for this strategic period (2023-2026) we believe that a donor based enrollment strategy will be more stable than our current tuition driven model.

A second key aspect of our Strategic Enrollment Plan will be specific strategies to respond to the falling enrollment in our MDiv program. Many of our peer schools have responded to the decline in MDiv enrollments by the dramatic reduction of the number of credit hours required to earn an MDiv degree. In contrast, Asbury will launch our MDiv plus program which maintains the highest level of ministerial training with a range of "extra" add-ons to attract students into the program, including more scholarships, study abroad opportunities for all MDiv,

and a deeper commitment to one-on-one faculty mentoring. Our global partnerships will be vital relationships which will help to foster these overseas learning experiences.

New degrees should be supported by market research. The Seminary will involve a cross-systems “innovation” committee which draws on the insights of Enrollment management, marketing, formation, pedagogy and the needs of the church as the faculty has curriculum discussions. The faculty must continue to innovate on everything from naming of degrees and concentrations, to curriculum design, to staying ahead of the every changing landscape of ministry needs for the next generation.

Core Values: Developing New Constituencies, Equipping Pastors for Missional Engagement, Embracing a Diverse, Missional Oriented Student Body

Strategic Initiative #4: Global Partnerships

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will strengthen and expand our network of global partners.

The global Christian movement is increasingly characterized by a post-Christian retreat from the gospel in the West and a post-western advance of the gospel in the majority world. Asbury must further position ourselves as a truly global institution preparing men and women throughout the world. We must continue to invest in the renewal of western Christianity, which is largely fueled by new church multiplication and ethnically diverse churches. But, we must also deepen our global partnerships to train new cohorts of students from the wider global church. Asbury must be careful to strengthen and support existing theological centers of education by training up indigenous leaders who will teach in and start new seminaries throughout the world. To do this, we must dramatically expand our network of global partnerships which were started during our earlier strategic plan. This will be particularly important for those regions of the world which are either English speaking (e.g. UK, Australia, Anglophile regions of Africa, etc...) or are Spanish speaking (Latin America), even as we explore other language possibilities in the years ahead. Some of our global partnerships may become long-term sister institutions with whom we deliver shared degrees, whereas others may be more temporary due to specific opportunities arising out of contextual situations.

Core Value: Commitment to the Global Church

Strategic Initiative #5: Asbury Global and Asbury Residential

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will fully emerge as offering two distinct platforms: A residential platform based in Wilmore, KY and a global platform utilizing our sites in various locations around the USA and world.

Asbury Theological Seminary's traditional models of delivering courses, supporting students, and immersing students in the Asbury Experience, were designed with a physical, classroom, and residential campus in mind. In the past, we have primarily used the same models for our non-residential students, and they have been moderately effective (at best) and at times, ineffective (at worst). Asbury Seminary Global (ASG) is a shift from the traditional model to an adaptive model that maximizes the online-hybrid platform and our existing sites, rather than doing work-arounds and temporary fixes to make our current systems work. Often, our staff who work with non-residential students see indicators that using the traditional systems, processes, and methodologies aren't working for these students. Asbury Seminary Global is a complete re-design our entire student experience (not merely how we deliver degrees). Asbury Global will have its own uniquely created systems for delivering student services, counseling, spiritual formation, registration, delivering library resources, etc. By 2026 Asbury Seminary will become the leader in creating the future of seminary education. As Asbury Global grows, we will continue to monitor effective faculty deployment and assess the need to add additional sites according to our normal approved process.

A renewed focused on Asbury Residential will allow us to fully enhance our capabilities on the Wilmore campus which are unique to the residential experience. In recent years we have been inhibited from certain residential initiatives because they could not be replicated in the larger non-residential environment not only because of the different context, but also because the Asbury Global student body has its own unique student profile, needs and ministry placement opportunities. Our residential renaissance, coupled with dedicated staff members, allows us to continue to foster a vibrant residential community at Asbury Seminary for the years ahead. Asbury Residential is the foundation for all of our educational initiatives. Without a strong "home base" we cannot effectively extend education onto our sites, or around the world.

Core Values: Training in Graduate Level Theological Education, embracing a diverse, mission oriented student body

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Strategic Initiative #6 Career and Calling Center

By 2025, Asbury Theological Seminary will launch a new center to support students in discerning their gifts, callings and professional placement in ministry.

Traditionally, Asbury Seminary worked with denominations which provided guaranteed placement services within various spheres of ministry. Furthermore, students often arrived at Seminary with a clear sense of calling and how their ministry preparation would prepare them for ministry in the church. Today, students arrive with less clarity about their calling and most churches no longer guarantee appointments for students who are training within their respective denominations. In response to this, Asbury Seminary will merge and enhance a number of independent initiatives, including mentored ministry, current placement services, and certain aspects of student services to enhance our students' capacities to discern their call and test their calling in actual ministry settings. Furthermore, we will develop extended ministry placement networks which will allow us to better place our graduates in ministry settings which meets their calling and giftedness. The Career and Calling Center, in full partnership and collaboration with our Mentored Ministry Office, will be committed to a proactive, systematic placement of our

graduates in effective places of service which reflects the giftedness and discerned callings in their lives. We intend to draw upon the great capacities and gifts of our alumni in building these opportunities for mentoring and field-based internships. This initiative will be enhanced and supported by our student success initiative which will be our proposed QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) for our upcoming accreditation with SACS/COC. Adequate and competent staffing will be essential for the success of this initiative, both in residential support, and mentors around the country.

Core Value: Equipping Pastors for missional engagement

Strategic Initiative #7: All Asbury Community Formation

By 2023 Asbury Theological Seminary will be extend the “Asbury Experience” of Spiritual Formation to all students, faculty and staff on all sites

Asbury has enjoyed a long commitment to formation for our Asbury students and the wider community of staff and faculty. Historically, Asbury’s commitment to formation is not only strong offices of staff support (Formation Office and Office of the Chapel), but also a deep commitment to formation from our faculty. Our School of Theology and Formation has faculty experts in the area of formation who help to oversee both degrees and co-curricular work which relates to the formation of our entire community. Increasingly with over half of our students no longer living in Wilmore, new efforts must be made to extend formation to our community on all Asbury sites, here and abroad. Chapel, formation opportunities, banding, counseling, and so forth has previously been much stronger on the Wilmore campus than those taking courses online or in hybrid education on our sites. We are committed to extending spiritual formation of heart and mind to everyone who is a part of the Asbury community.

Core Value: Embodying Personal and Missional Formation

Strategic Initiative #8: Lay Formation and Training

By 2023, Asbury Seminary will extend new opportunities for the training, equipping and formation of the laity.

Asbury is uniquely positioned through our Beeson Center, our Institutes and our auxiliary arm of Seedbed to equip and train laity in a wide range of ministry opportunities. We commit ourselves to expanding our commitment to lay education for all levels of ministry. The future of the church includes a significant increase in lay pastors in addition to the many other areas of lay witness and service to the church.

Core Value: Commitment to Lay Education

Strategic Initiative #9: Economic Model for Asbury Global

By 2026 Asbury Theological Seminary will transition from a tuition based economic model to a hybrid model which deepens our financial scholarship support for students from around the world.

In recent years, Asbury Seminary has begun to offer degrees outside the United States. We offered a DMin degree in London in 2021 with considerable success, but it was built around our current tuition model. A similar launch in Bangalore in 2022 raised serious concerns about the sustainability of our delivering degrees in developing regions of the world. The degree, in collaboration with SAIACS, required 100 tuition support. Moving forward we would like to develop a deeper understanding of the actual costs in delivering degrees around the world and create a hybrid model which has reasonable expectations for student tuition coupled with donor support to create a long-term sustainable platform for Asbury to deliver degrees to any part of the world.⁶

Core Value: Strengthening our Economic Model and Governance

Strategic Initiative #10: Communications

By 2026 Asbury Theological Seminary will become more capable in defending our ethos and theological heritage in the face of increasing cultural challenges. Increasingly, we must not only “tell our story” but also “defend our mission.”

Asbury Theological Seminary has a wonderful communication tradition of sharing our story with our alumni and supporters through podcasts, livestreaming chapel, the *Herald*. However, whenever we faced legal or cultural challenges to our ethos statement, we have relied heavily upon outside communications experts to help us navigate these challenges. However, Asbury must be able to defend our ethos and theological heritage with our own voice and expertise. We anticipate continued and increasing challenges to our ethos commitments and our theological particularity. It will be essential that we build a communications department which better assists the Seminary from student recruitment, to responding to internal and external challenges to our biblical and theological orientation in an increasingly post-Christian society.

Core Value: Embodying Personal and Missional Formation

Strategic Initiative #11: Board of Trustees

By 2026 Asbury Theological Seminary will have a new generation of Board members who are more diverse, policy driven, and highly collaborative to meet the missional and fiduciary challenges which face Asbury in our second century of service.

⁶ The call for economically sustainable tuition for an increasingly diverse student population was one of the key themes of the Trustee discussions during the September meeting of the Board of Trustees.

January 2024 represents a watershed in the history of the Seminary as many of our most experienced and longest serving Board members will rotate off due to our 2008 commitment to term limits not exceeding 15 years of continuous service to the Board. The newer members of the Board of Trustees shall reflect the diversity of our emerging constituencies and global relationships. Furthermore, the Trustees of Asbury Seminary shall embody a global perspective on the church and on theological education, not at the expense of our Wesleyan heritage, but as a natural extension of our mission to “spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.” In addition to the shared qualities of orthodoxy, Wesleyan commitments, global awareness, strategic thinking and missional focus, our Board shall be composed of members with clearly defined expertise in a wide range of areas, including, but not limited to, graduate level theological education, finance and investment, pastoral leadership, spiritual formation, technological competence, and legal expertise.

New Trustees will undergo a training program which initiates them into the following: the history of the institution, the founding documents (mission statement, statement of faith and ethos statement), the missional ethos, global realities, shared governance, the operational structure of the Seminary, following orderly process, and the by-laws of the Board of Trustees. Every new Board member will be placed in a mentoring relationship with a seasoned Board member to help in passing down the ethos, expectations and operational procedures of the Board of Trustees. Because of term limits and the increased diversity of our Board, we will need to be policy driven and mission focused and be attentive to embracing the optimal size of the post-2023 Board of Trustees. No Board meeting will be devoted entirely to agenda business. A culture of spiritual formation, learning and reflection will also characterize Board meetings. Each Board member shall share a deep, single-minded commitment to invest their time, skills, competencies, experience-honed wisdom, financial resources and relational connections towards the furtherance of the mission of the Seminary.

The Board will also be committed to assisting the administration in developing long-term succession plans for senior administrators.

Core Value: Strengthening our Governance

Strategic Initiative #12: School of Counseling and the VanTatenhove Counseling Center

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will launch our new School of Counseling and Van Tatenhove Counseling Center in a new facility on our Wilmore campus.

Our society is experiencing a significant rise in the need for professional and pastoral counseling care. In response to this growing need, Asbury Seminary now has two CACREP accredited licensed programs in providing students with professional preparation for a career in Christian counseling. We will be approved to offer accredited degrees in mental health counseling and in Marriage, couple and family counseling. In addition, we intend to dramatically increase the preparation for pastors in pastoral counseling to meet this need, including build healthy family systems, responding to addiction, counseling people with gender dysphoria, etc.

Professional counseling services are crucial for our capacity to respond as Christians to this growing crisis, but this should be built on the foundation of better pastoral counseling and understanding of when to refer to professional care. Asbury is committed to strengthening both of these platforms.

Core Values: Embodying Personal and Missional Formation and Training in Graduate Level Theological Education

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Strategic Initiative #13: Centennial Campaign

By 2026 Asbury Theological Seminary will launch a new Centennial Campaign to support the strategic initiatives of the Seminary.

Asbury Seminary has recently completed the largest and most successful financial campaign in our history. We have a strong base of financial supporters and we want to leverage that for the ongoing mission of the Seminary. We will conduct a new Centennial Campaign with two major focal points. *First, Asbury's liberation from Title IV funding.* Currently, our students borrow millions of dollars every year from the government to fund their theological education. Graduate students are eligible for this funding based on regulations from the Department of Education Title IV Education Act of 1965 which administers these federal loans. While our position as a non-profit institution may be vulnerable in the decades ahead, it is more likely that our first challenge will be cancelling all Title IV funding for educational institutions which are committed to an historic understanding of marriage and gender. Therefore, it is important for Asbury to prepare now (through planned giving and expanded current giving to scholarships) to diminish or completely eliminate our reliance upon all Title IV funding. But, Asbury is committed throughout this transition to not decrease accessibility to funding.

Second, Asbury must expand our donor commitment to our Asbury Global initiative. If Asbury is to move from a tuition driven economic model to a hybrid model which is driven by tuition and donor sponsored tuition support, we will need to dramatically increase our commitment to student scholarships. In the last campaign we raised over 40 million dollars towards student scholarships. This Centennial campaign will have to increase our planned giving (directed to student scholarships) and current giving to approximately 200 million to allow us to be fully liberated from both Title IV and to assist us in providing far more international student scholarships.

Core Value: Strengthening our Economic Model

Strategic Initiative #14: TATS, SACS/COC and CACREP accreditation

By 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary will successfully achieve our TATS and SACS/COC reaffirmation of our ten-year accreditation, including our new QEP SACS/COC.

The work of accreditation is an ongoing cornerstone of the success and vitality of all academic institutions. In recent decades, accreditation has mainstreamed assessment, evaluation and continuous improvement into the normal ebb and flow of academic work, rather than just as discrete periods of institutional reaffirmation.

Nevertheless, every ten years all institutions of higher education who wish to remain accredited must go through an extensive self-evaluation based on approved standards which are adjudicated by independent visiting teams and their respective Boards. This involves the preparation of extensive documentation as well as demonstrable assessments of all our programs (both SLOs and PLOs), mission, governance, finances, formation, and so forth. This is not merely focused on our degree programs, but every aspect of the work and mission of the Seminary, including our commitment to student formation, our global initiatives, our financial strength, and even our auxiliary ministry of Seedbed. This involves the work of the entire community and will result in a self-study report delivered to our accreditors by 2024 and an on campus visit in 2025, which also includes visits to each of our extension sites. The seminary is committed to investing the necessary strategic space and time to focus on these reports resulting in a positive evaluation.

Core Value: Training in Graduate Level Theological Education

Foundational Documents of the Seminary

Introduction

The three guiding, foundational documents of the Seminary are the mission statement, the statement of faith and the ethos statement. All Trustees, Administrators, Faculty and senior Staff (director and above) are asked to sign all three of these statements every year.

The documents emerged from the earliest days of the seminary in which the Articles of Incorporation on July 27, 1931 stated the following:

“It will be the object of this Seminary to prepare and send forth a well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry. This Seminary will emphasize in its teaching the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, and the Virgin Birth, Godhead, Vicarious Sufferings, and bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The instruction of this Seminary will fully recognize the fallen state of mankind, the necessity of individual regeneration, the witness of the Spirit, the remains of the carnal nature, and entire sanctification as a definite second work of grace subsequent to regeneration. The instruction in this Seminary will conform fully to the Wesleyan interpretation of the Scriptures. The instructors in this institution will guard with jealous care against any sort of teaching in sympathy with modern liberalism.”

Mission Statement

Asbury Theological Seminary is a community called to prepare theologically educated, sanctified, Spirit-filled men and women to evangelize and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world through the love of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father.

Statement of Faith

WE BELIEVE:

God

In the one God, creator and sustainer of all things, infinite in love, perfect in judgments and unchanging in mercy. God exists eternally in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

Scripture

In the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both the Old and New Testaments, the only written Word of God, without error in all it affirms. The Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The Holy Spirit preserves God’s Word in the church today and by it speaks God’s truth to peoples of every age;

Humankind

That human beings were created in the image of God. This image was marred in every part through the disobedience of our first parents, and fellowship with God was broken. God, by His prevenient grace, restores moral sensibility to all humankind and enables all to respond to His love and to accept His saving grace, if they will;

Jesus Christ

That Jesus Christ is God's Son incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary. He died for the sins of all, taking on Himself, on behalf of sinful persons, God's judgment upon sin. In His body He rose from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father where He intercedes for us;

Holy Spirit

That the Holy Spirit is God present and active in the world. The Holy Spirit was given to the church in His fullness at Pentecost. By the Spirit, Christ lives in His church, the gospel is proclaimed and the kingdom of God is manifested in the world;

Justification

That God graciously justifies and regenerates all who trust in Jesus Christ. Believers become children of God and begin to live in holiness through faith in Christ and the sanctifying Spirit.

Entire Sanctification

That God calls all believers to entire sanctification in a moment of full surrender and faith subsequent to their new birth in Christ. Through sanctifying grace the Holy Spirit delivers them from all rebellion toward God, and makes possible wholehearted love for God and for others. This grace does not make believers faultless nor prevent the possibility of their falling into sin. They must live daily by faith in the forgiveness and cleansing provided for them in Jesus Christ;

Assurance of Believers

That believers are assured that they are children of God by the inward witness of God's Spirit with their spirits, by faith in the gracious promises of God's Word, and by the fruit of the Spirit in their lives;

Christians in Society

That Christians are called to live in daily witness to the grace which comes to us in Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel to every person according to the command of Christ, and to declare God's insistence upon righteousness and justice in all relationships and structures of human society;

The Church

That the church is the people of God composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The church is Christ's body; it is visible in the world wherever believers, in obedience of faith, hear the Word, receive the sacraments, and live as disciples;

Return of Christ

In the personal return of Jesus Christ, in the bodily resurrection of all persons, in final judgment, and in eternal reward and punishment;

God's Ultimate Victory

In God's ultimate victory over Satan and all evil and the establishment of His perfect kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth.

ETHOS STATEMENT

Community Vision

We, the trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students embrace this ethos as a Wesleyan community which stands within the tradition of Christian orthodoxy and whose life and work are committed to reflecting the truth, beauty, and goodness of God's holiness.

We aspire to order our communal and personal life according to the truth and love revealed in Scripture and imparted by the Holy Spirit. We pledge ourselves to go on to the fullness of salvation, seeking through relationships of mutual accountability the maturity of faith, hope, and love that reflects the mind and likeness of Jesus Christ. By the Spirit's power we will bear witness to God's Kingdom, embodying a way of scriptural holiness that unites sound knowledge and vital piety in proclaiming the Gospel and participating in God's mission.

We covenant together to embrace ways of living in keeping with the spirit and intent of the General Rules set forth by John Wesley:

- By doing no harm and by avoiding evil of every kind.
- By doing good of every possible sort as far as possible to all people.
- By practicing the means of grace together.

We are committed to speaking the truth in love, sharing one another's burdens, bearing with one another's weaknesses, and serving one another by the mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation extended by God. We will practice and nurture speech that is just, charitable, encouraging, and respectful of the standards and policies of Asbury Seminary. Exercising discernment which is guided by the law of love, we will affirm the breadth of views that bear witness to the richness of the Gospel and the diversity of Christian communities it calls and creates.

With God's help we will exercise the freedom of joyful obedience in being faithful stewards of our minds, bodies, time, gifts, abilities, possessions, and finances as expressions of God's good creation. We will renounce those attitudes and actions that resist the work of the Spirit, divide Christian community, and impede human flourishing. In faithfulness to the Gospel, we will resist the pervasive influence of materialism and commit ourselves to ministry with the poor. We will reject utilitarian methods that commodify the faith and mission of the church according to the values of a consumerist culture. By God's grace, we will nurture redemptive relationships that honor and uphold the dignity of creation, human life, the sanctity of embodied human sexuality, the equality of women and men, the covenant of Christian marriage between one man and one woman, and the importance of the family. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Application of Community Vision

This covenantal ethos orients our community life toward the fullness of holy love as the end of God's Law which has been fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ. In light of the truth and goodness of God revealed by Christ, and as interpreted by our Wesleyan heritage, we acknowledge the Christian life cannot be reduced to either right doctrine or morality. Because we have been created and redeemed through Christ in the power of the Spirit, the fullness of salvation consists of the restoration of the image of God and our life in communion with God and others. Intrinsic to our task as a theological seminary is the cultivation of knowledge,

wisdom, and virtue for the practice of faithful obedience that bears fruit in love for God, our neighbors, and the whole creation.

For this reason, concerns related to particular expressions of thought and behavior will be assessed in light of the law of love which is the source, means, and goal of true freedom in Christ. To this end, we commit ourselves to seeking the Spirit's wisdom and discernment through the study of Scripture and participation in the means of grace, common worship, and holy conversation.

For the common good of the Asbury Seminary community, the Seminary commits to the following guiding principles:

- We believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as either male or female. Together these two distinct sexes reflect the creative nature and image of God.
- We affirm celibacy as a valuable and honorable practice related to holy living. We honor and esteem the fidelity of deep holy friendships as being in the image of God.
- We affirm marriage as sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union for life, as delineated in Scripture, and provides the sole context for sexual intimacy, helping to ensure the blessings of that relationship as God intended.
- We affirm God's design for holy living, and believe that Scripture clearly prohibits certain acts, including but not limited to drinking alcohol to excess, using pornography, stealing, speaking or writing profanely or slanderously, acting dishonestly, cheating, engaging in occult practice, and engaging in sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage (including but not limited to premarital sex, adultery, and same-sex sexual behavior). Such actions have devastating personal, social, and global effects, especially upon society's most vulnerable members.
- Based on a Biblical view of creation, fall, and redemption, our goal is to come alongside as a loving community anyone who is experiencing gender identity discordant with their birth sex. We do not affirm theologically the adoption of a psychological identity discordant with one's birth sex as a result of the tension between one's biological sex and one's experience of gender. Similarly, we do not affirm attempts to change one's given biological birth sex via medical intervention in favor of the identity of the opposite sex or of an indeterminate identity.
- We affirm the need for responsible care and stewardship of the human body through regular exercise when possible; practicing healthy eating habits; and properly balancing study, work, rest, and leisure.
- We stand with all Christians, both past and present, against the misuse of all substances that abuse the body, foster addiction, and bring harm to others.
- We covenant with each other to maintain an alcohol, tobacco, and drug free environment with respect to all Seminary facilities, events, and activities.
- We condemn any form of harassment or abuse.

This Ethos assumes the practice of Christian hospitality within a seminary community that is dependent upon the gift of God's grace and characterized by relationships of mutual trust and respect. To this end, we acknowledge our constant need for keeping covenant with one another and diligence in speaking the truth in love. We encourage the practice of repentance, confession, pardon, correction, and redemptive discipline when breaches of this covenant may occur. In witness to society, we commit ourselves to these guiding principles, and we disavow advocating, supporting, or condoning behavior contrary to this Ethos. We will make institutional decisions in light of this policy.



Asbury Theological Seminary: 2026 Centennial Plan

MISSION STATEMENT: Asbury Theological Seminary is a *community called* to prepare theologically educated, sanctified, Spirit-filled men and women to evangelize and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world, through the love of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to the glory of God the Father!

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DEFINING VALUES: "Asbury Seminary is committed to historic Christian faith in the Wesleyan tradition in a way which is globally engaged, spiritually formative, and missionally alert."

Ten Core Values of Strategic Vision

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>serving the global Church.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>graduate level theological education which is faithful to God's Word.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>personal and community formation.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>pursuing a diverse, missionally oriented student body.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>life-long learning for pastors and church leaders.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>the laity.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>equipping pastors for missional engagement in service to the church.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>serving the emerging ethnic churches.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>developing new constituencies.</i>	Asbury Seminary will be committed to <i>strengthening our economic model and developing our network of support.</i>
We will be ever mindful of the global Church as we develop new programs, utilize technology and innovative delivery systems, understand global trends, and partner with theological institutions around the world. We will strategically deploy faculty, student, and learning resources on every continent in a collaborative way marked by servant leadership.	Serious biblical, theological and pastoral reflection which is committed to historic orthodoxy is crucial for the long-term health and vitality of the church. Asbury Seminary needs a well-trained, missionally alive, spiritually vibrant faculty and staff in order to "theologically educate" men and women. Although we are generously catholic with all those who are historically orthodox, we are called to highlight the distinctive contributions of the Wesleyan/Arminian tradition. We will resist attempts to downgrade our programs and scholarship and, instead, we will extend effective pastoral leadership and Wesleyan scholarship around the world.	Asbury Seminary is a worshipping community of formation and learning. We acknowledge the need for, and indeed, the crucial relationship between, academic and spiritual formation. Our campuses should be rich environments for spiritual development, global community, sacrificial service, catechesis and holiness, to the end that Asbury Seminary might propel a 21st-century renewed emphasis and deeper understanding of holiness. If students do not graduate holy and Spirit-filled, then we have not fulfilled our mission. To this end, we must extend formation opportunities to all our faculty, staff and students.	We will identify students who are missionally diverse, committed and teachable. Asbury Seminary is committed to developing a life-long relationship with our students and alumni. We want to assist in helping students to understand the call of God in their lives and we want them to see the Seminary as a life-long partner in helping them to be effective in their service to Christ and His Church. We believe that helping to equip students to effectively engage a post-Christendom context in N. America is highly strategic for both church renewal and church planting. We believe that helping students understand the remarkable missional possibilities around the world is strategic for our commitment to "spread scriptural holiness throughout the world."	The rapid pace of change in the world requires that we no longer conceptualize a two or three year degree as an isolated period of training which equips someone for a lifetime of ministry. Rather, we affirm the importance of developing an ongoing relationship with our alumni/ae for their entire ministry. The growing challenges in the world today requires that pastors and leaders become life-long learners. Asbury Seminary is committed to extending the resources of the Seminary as a bridge to not only our graduates, but to many new groups who will look to us for training and instruction. Asbury Seminary will become a vital resource for ongoing teaching, distribution of resources, networking, collaboration, re-tooling and reflection.	We affirm that the Church, properly understood, is a lay movement, guided and deployed through effective, often ordained, leadership. Every Christian should see their lives as a divine, strategic placement for the effective extension of the gospel. We will develop specific programs and reproducible models for effective lay training and empowerment for ministry. The Beacon Center is strategically positioned to lead Asbury Seminary in this area.	North America is the fastest-emerging mission field in the world. Many churches have either lost connection with dynamic, apostolic orthodoxy or do not have a clear strategy for missional engagement. Asbury Seminary is committed to spiritual renewal, church revitalization, church planting, and evangelism. Only through the full recovery of the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers can we effectively strengthen and extend the church of Jesus Christ. Asbury Seminary must become a leader in preparing planters as well as fostering church planting networks around the world.	We are committed to responding effectively to the growing ethnic diversity and urbanization of North America. We will develop degree and non-degree programs as well as demonstrate flexibility in delivery systems for Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, African-American, Indian and other ethnic minorities.	"mainline" churches. The fastest growing churches in America are ethnic, urban, missional and non-denominational. Asbury Seminary is committed to training these Christians and introducing (or re-introducing) them to the great Wesleyan heritage and history of the Church.	Under God's grace, the mission of Asbury Seminary is enabled through two sources of revenue: students and gifts from alumni and friends. The Seminary must develop a long-term model of economic viability which optimizes and expands our revenue. In order to achieve our strategic plan we also need a full-orbed, long-range advancement and communication strategy. This includes a robust commitment to donor development, capital campaigns, scholarship support, planned giving, alumni affairs, trustee involvement and generous donations into the mission of the Seminary.

Identifying Three Defining Themes and Single Statement

In reflecting on the strategic plan as a whole the 55 original goals of the 2023 Strategic Plan 1.0 and the newly presented 25 goals of the 2023 Strategic Plan 2.0 can be captured well by three defining themes and a single statement. These are included to help in advertising and how we communicate our identity within the larger world of theological education.

Three Defining Themes

1. Asbury Theological Seminary will be faithful to historic, biblical orthodoxy in the Wesleyan tradition.

(biblical and theological training, formation in holiness, pastoral leadership/care, scholarship, catechesis, ethics, etc.)

2. Asbury Theological Seminary will be globally engaged, seeking to serve the church of Jesus Christ around the world.

(global partnerships, technological reach, training, learning, etc.)

3. Asbury Theological Seminary will be committed to forming missional pastors and Christian leaders who are committed to the Church of Jesus Christ

(post-Christendom, pastoral leadership, church planting, lay training, evangelizing post-moderns, Christian response to world religions, new atheism, secularism, etc.)

Single Statement

All three of these defining themes might be summarized in the following single statement of our strategic vision:

“Asbury Seminary is committed to historic Christian faith in the Wesleyan tradition in a way which is globally engaged, spiritually formative, and missionally alert.”