HOPE FOR CREATION
POSITIONING GARRETT-EVANGELICAL FOR ECOLOGICAL RENEWAL
COMMITTED TO THE WISE CARE OF GOD’S CREATION FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to addressing the urgent environmental crises facing the world’s peoples today and to promoting the just and wise care of God’s creation for the flourishing of all. This commitment is rooted in an affirmation of God’s love for the world, an embrace of our human vocation to be faithful stewards of the good earth, and an active hope in God’s promise to establish justice and righteousness throughout the land.

Through the pioneering work of faculty emeritus Rosemary Radford Ruether, Garrett-Evangelical has long been associated with a critical eco-theological perspective, viewing the aims of environmental sustainability as inseparable from struggles for racial, gender, and socio-economic justice. In recent years, the seminary became a founding member of the Seminary Stewardship Alliance, achieved LEED Gold certification for Loder Hall, and formed a sustainGETS student group and administrative oversight committee. Additionally, Garrett-Evangelical hired assistant professor of theology and ecology Timothy R. Eberhart to teach in the areas of ecological theology, environmental ethics, and food justice. Eberhart was recognized for his work in the recent "Report on Faith and Ecology Courses in North American Seminaries.”

Even so, the times call for even deeper levels of commitment and response. The human-related crises of climate change, ecological degradation, biodiversity collapse, and resource depletion are already the sources of devastating social and ecological harm worldwide. Unless we see widespread, profound changes in humanity’s relationship to nature and to one another, we can expect an ecological collapse of the earth and human society as we know it.

Theological education has a unique role to play in the great work of transitioning toward a more life-sustaining and socially just future. In the September 2014 issue of Science magazine, scientists Partha Dasgupta of Cambridge University and Veerabhadran Ramanathan of the University of California write that “finding ways to develop a sustainable relationship with nature requires not only engagement of scientists and political leaders, but also moral leadership that religious institutions are in a position to offer.”

In a separate article, Ramanathan writes, "eight decades of research...on the natural and social science aspects of environmental changes has led us to the doorsteps of moral leaders of religions to rescue humanity from climate change.”

Garrett-Evangelical is poised to meet this urgent challenge. In particular, we aim to strengthen our longstanding commitments to ecological justice in three distinct but overlapping ways: 1) by educating ecologically literate leaders for faithful service to the church and the world, 2) by integrating sustainable practices and ecological awareness throughout the life of the seminary, and 3) by expanding our public engagement for the sake of environmental and social regeneration.

INVESTING IN ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE FOR THE CHURCH, THE ACADEMY, AND THE WORLD

EDUCATION

An Endowed Chair in Theology and Ecology

A fully endowed chair will ensure that ecological justice remains central to the seminary’s curriculum offerings at the certificate, master, and doctoral levels, support the development of an MA focus in environmental theory and practice, and solidify the seminary’s leadership in the fields of ecological theology and environmental ethics. Garrett-Evangelical is seeking $2 million to permanently endow a chair in theology and ecology.

Endowed Student Scholarships for Eco-Cohort

Financial support for students drawn to study ecological theology and philosophy and environmental ethics in a setting of experimental learning will help nurture faith leaders equipped to address the environmental challenges of our time. Garrett-Evangelical is seeking $5 million to support full-tuition scholarships for five students a year (at the endowment cost of $400,000 per student per year) for up to three years as part of an eco-cohort of no more than 15 total students.

INTEGRATION

The Greening of the Seminary

The integration of sustaining ecological practices and a robust ecological consciousness across the seminary’s entire operation spans the following areas: administration (e.g. coordination, purchasing and investments, metrics), buildings and grounds (e.g. energy, dining services, cleaning supplies, waste and recycling), faculty and curriculum (e.g. faculty training, new course development, library resources, field education opportunities), seminary culture (e.g. community life, worship, student groups, programming), and institutional collaboration (e.g. Northwestern, Seminary Stewardship Alliance, Green Seminary Network, Faith in Place, Citizens Greener Evanston). Garrett-Evangelical is seeking $1 million to support the implementation of the sustainGETS Environmental Stewardship Plan, which identifies key sustainability goals across all areas internal to the seminary’s operations.

ENGAGEMENT

An Endowed Center for Ecological Regeneration

The historic social commitments of Garrett-Evangelical are embedded in our many centers and institutes: e.g. Center for the Church and the Black Experience, Hispanic/Latino/a Center, and Reuben P. Job Institute for Spiritual Formation. At present, the seminary does not have a related center/institute focused upon ecological justice. Garrett-Evangelical is seeking $2 million to endow a Center for Ecological Regeneration to support an annual budget for staffing, research, conferences/ workshops, an online Journal for Bioregional Discipleship, and public eco- theological engagement with the Evanston community, Chicago area, and Midwest region.
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary has been at the forefront of Christian theological education for over 160 years. The seminary offers rigorous, intellectually challenging academics paired with a commitment to intentional spiritual formation that trains the mind, body, and spirit. Through a diverse curriculum taught by our distinguished faculty and prominent practitioners, students are well-equipped for ministry in today’s church, academy, and world.