

In a time marked by deepening ideological and theological divides and spiraling reactionary responses, pastoral theologians and spiritual care practitioners offer hope and grounded, courageous presence. This year’s conference invites reflection on how pastoral theology can respond to the fragmentation of our families, communities, and institutions with practices of care that transcend ideological boundaries. We gather to explore how pastoral theology can exist rooted in justice, compassion, and relational integrity, even as the cultural landscape spins with uncertainty. Together, we work to uplift our field as deeply attuned to the distressing realities of those most impacted.

Greetings from the Steering Committee!

Greetings from the Steering Committee of the Society for Pastoral Theology. We are delighted to extend a warm and collegial invitation to our members and friends to join us in Charlotte, North Carolina, for our upcoming annual conference. The Steering Committee has been hard at work planning what promises to be a meaningful and engaging gathering for our community of scholars and practitioners. We are grateful for your continued commitment to the Society, and we look forward to being together in Charlotte.

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SPT Steering Committee



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PLENARY SPEAKERS

The Rev. Pamela Cooper-White, Ph.D.

“Resistance as Care and Care as Resistance in a Time of Polarization”

The Rev. Pamela Cooper-White, Ph.D., is Christiane Brooks Johnson Professor Emerita of Psychology and Religion, and Dean and Vice President Emerita at Union Theological Seminary, New York. While teaching at Union, she also served for 8 years as Assisting Priest at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and currently assists at the Memorial Church of the Prince of Peace in Gettysburg, PA. A psychoanalytic and pastoral psychotherapist, spiritual director, and scholar of the history of psychoanalysis and religion, she has published 11 books including *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2nd ed. and *Old and Dirty Gods: Religion, Antisemitism, and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*. Her most recent book, *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism*, was awarded the INDIE independent publishers’ 2022 gold medal for social and political science. As the 2023-14 Fulbright Scholar at the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna, she serves on the Freud Foundation Board U.S., and has been active in leadership in the International Association for Spiritual Care, the Society for Pastoral Theology, and the Psychology, Culture, and Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion. She is a frequent speaker nationally and internationally. She has been a member of SPT since 1994.



Chanequa Walker-Barnes, Ph.D.

“Caught in the Crossfire: Solidarity, Stress, and the Struggle to Stay Human“

Chanequa Walker-Barnes, Ph.D., is a prominent scholar, theologian, and author, known for her thought-provoking work on racial justice and spirituality. With a deep commitment to social change, she combines her expertise in clinical psychology and theology to tackle issues of systemic oppression, cultural trauma, and their impact on individuals and society. Through her research, writing, and speaking, Dr. Chanequa strives to inspire others to transformative social action and wholistic self-care. A professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, she has authored three books – *Sacred Self-Care*, *I Bring the Voices of My People*, and *Too Heavy a Yoke*. Her faith has been shaped by Methodist, Baptist, and evangelical



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social justice communities as well as by Buddhism and Islam. In her thirty years in higher education, she has been a Hurricane (U. Miami), Gator (U. Florida), Tar Heel (UNC-Chapel Hill), and Blue Devil (Duke). Yet somehow, she is still not a sports fan.

PANELISTS

We will have a panel response to our plenary speakers.

K. Samuel Lee, Ph.D.

Dr. Samuel Lee serves as Senior Vice President for International Relations and Professor of Practical Theology at Claremont School of Theology. A practical theologian, his scholarship engages the intersections of spiritual care, intergenerational trauma, and the lived experiences of Korean American and global faith communities. As co-editor of the *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, Dr. Lee has helped shape the field through dialogical, justice-oriented scholarship that centers lived experience as a source of theological reflection. His editorial leadership has created space for emerging and diverse voices, expanding pastoral theology's engagement with global and marginalized contexts while holding together academic rigor and pastoral imagination.



He co-created the SPT Preconference for Scholars of Color with Lee Butler and has spearheaded a campaign to establish an endowment fund for the Society, strengthening long-term support for its annual conferences. Through his scholarship, teaching, and leadership, Dr. Lee continues to cultivate spaces of compassion, justice, and belonging—equipping leaders the world cannot afford to lose.

Candice NunnTelfort, Ph.D.

Candice M. NunnTelfort, Ph.D. (they/them), is Assistant Professor of Psychology, Culture, and Spiritual Care at Iliff School of Theology. Their academic formation spans Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt Divinity School, and Lincoln University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). They also completed the Advanced Certificate in Self Psychology and Religion at the Center for Religion and Psychotherapy of Chicago.



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PANELISTS

Dr. NunnTelfort is a Lacanian psychoanalyst in formation and a founding clinician of the Openings Project, a clinic for psychosis and extreme states at Depth Counseling in Chicago, Illinois. They serve as Clinical Associate Faculty at the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis and previously held a Teaching Fellowship at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. In addition, they serve on several community and nonprofit boards, including Chicago's 606 Project and the U.S. chapter of the International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis (ISPS-US), where they work to address gaps in care for individuals experiencing psychosis and other extreme states.

Ordained in the Baptist tradition, Dr. NunnTelfort integrates clinical practice, theological reflection, and community-based engagement. Their work reflects a deep interdisciplinary commitment to the study of religion, psychology, and culture, with particular attention to Blackness, madness, and insanity.

Leenah Safi, Ph.D.

Leenah Safi serves as Assistant Muslim Chaplain at Yale University, where she works closely with students to heighten connection with their voices and with their intuition as they navigate external and internal difficulties. Based in a theology of care, Leenah holds in her pastoral perspective that voice and intuition are necessary mediums to connection with the Divine, with self and within community. Leenah holds degrees in Islamic Law and Theology (B.A. Zaytuna College, 2014) and a Master of Divinity degree (CTS, 2018). Leenah's Syrian heritage is a meaningful part of her identity; she seeks to maintain and recover connection to ancestral origins in hope and repair.



Rev. Cody Sanders, Ph.D.

Cody J. Sanders is associate professor of congregational and community care leadership at Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN, and the author of several books, including, *Spiritual Care First Aid: An All-Hands Approach for Church and Community* (Fortress, 2025), and *A Brief Guide to Ministry with LGBTQIA Youth, Updated Edition* (WJK, 2026).



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WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP #1: Rage-Baiting and Faithful De-Bait: Attuning Adolescents to their Holy, Prophetic Rage

Workshop Presenter: Rev. Henry Burt, Ph.D.

Postdoc Teaching Fellow, Flagler College

“Rage-baiting” or “rage-farming,” which the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2026) defines as “online content that is intentionally offensive or provocative,” is an increasing concern for social media users (Gomes et al., 2025).

Individuals and organizations use rage-baiting most often on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to increase user following, thereby gaining traction as “influencers” and advancing their political agendas and marketing campaigns, respectively (Chen, 2022). The negative impact of rage-baiting on social media users is multi-faceted. “Brain rot,” in which users scrolling through social media platforms succumb to an inability to moderate digital usage and develop mental fatigue, is a common psychological reaction that rage-baiters manipulate (Gomes et al., 2025). Furthermore, rage-baiting can induce social and political polarization as users become siloed into certain political and social forums that promote fake news, disinformation, and hate speech (Gomes et al., 2025).



WORKSHOP #2: The CHARIS Model: The Art of Forgiveness Using a Community Process

Workshop Presenter: Rev. Jaye Lynn Peabody Smith, DMIN, MPA, MDIV, MS, LPC, CPCS

Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, BSK Theological Seminary

Forgiveness is a crucial aspect of both a spiritual and healing journey. The CHARIS Model, derived from the Greek word *charis*, which means grace, love, and kindness, is a unique psychoeducational group curriculum that addresses the spiritual and psychological aspects of interpersonal forgiveness. The model consists of six steps: Choosing to forgive, Holding the Hurt, Asking introspecting questions, Releasing the hurt, Identifying the response, and Serenity. Each session of the



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WORKSHOPS

curriculum focuses on one step and incorporates stories, psychoeducation, therapeutic exercises, and the sharing of personal experiences to explore different aspects of forgiveness.

In this workshop, we will present the CHARIS model of forgiveness and share highlights and insights from a recent pilot study that examined the potential effectiveness of the curriculum in facilitating interpersonal forgiveness. Through presentations and discussions, participants will also explore common barriers to forgiveness and how a group process can create a sacred community for individuals seeking psychological and spiritual healing.

WORKSHOP #3: Respecting Our Body Knowledge as Healing and Liberative Practice

Workshop Presenter: Rev. Bridget L. Piggue, Th.D.

*Director of Spiritual Health, Emory University Hospital
Midtown*



Our bodies are ALIVE! They hold significant knowledge, wisdom of ages past and the ability to inform themselves. Even when unaware, our bodies are engaging and mapping all that exists around them and consequently are creating and supporting narratives we would do well to investigate.

These narratives have the power to lodge within the scripts of our bodies while at the same time continuing to inform our choices and decisions without explicit permission. As spiritual leaders it is important to understand that Healing and Liberation begins with our own Self-Literacy. The relationship between having and knowing an embodied self can significantly inform the impact leaders have on others, as well as the state of their own physical and mental health. From an interdisciplinary approach, this workshop will explore the intersection of what select Neuro-scientific concepts, Womanist Theology, Psychology and Indigenous Spirituality have to offer conversations on embodiment, healing, and leadership.

WORKSHOP #4: Gathering Space for Recently Published Works

This will be an informal gathering space for attendees who would like to showcase recent published works or current works in progress.

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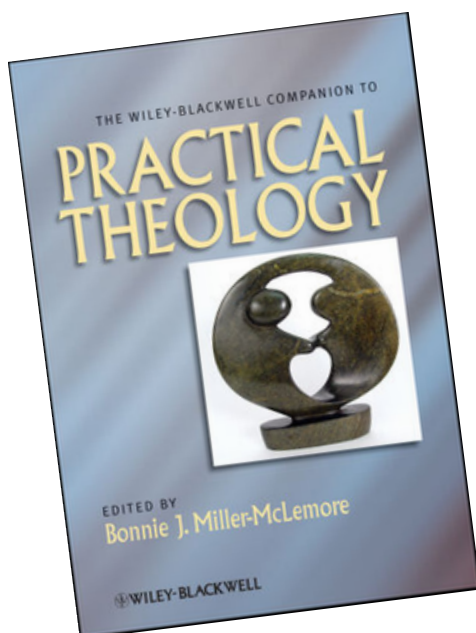
WORK-IN-PROGRESS

We are pleased to announce that this year's Work-in-Progress presenters will be Eunil David Cho, Mindy McGarrah Sharp, & Bonnie Miller-McLemore, co-editors of the forthcoming, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology, Revised Edition*.

Wiley Blackwell Companions are comprehensive reference works in which leading scholars in a field contribute essays on major developments, themes, and figures, providing a survey of an area and its most dynamic advances. The 2012 *Companion to Practical Theology* was a significant tribute to the advance of the field of practical theology. While it continues to be read around the world over a decade later, the field of practical theology has advanced in exciting ways.

Dr. Miller-McLemore notes, "We will be in the penultimate phase and would welcome feedback even if we can't incorporate anything major. Although on practical theology, the volume definitely has a pastoral theologian slant given our own orientation as editors."

We look forward to engaging with this exciting and important work.



**Special thanks to:
Eunil David Cho, PhD.
Mindy McGarrah-Sharp, Ph.D.
Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Ph.D.**

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STUDY GROUPS

1. Pastoral Theology and Climate Change

Christine Tind Johannessen (ctj@km.dk)

Pamela McCarroll (pam.mccarroll@utoronto.ca)

The Pastoral Theology and Climate Change Study Group is focused on building a sustained conversation within the discipline of pastoral theology about climate change – the implications and challenges of climate change for pastoral theology; the call for earth-centered decolonial pedagogies, justice-making and transformed practice. The study group meets to share resources, works-in-progress, connect about forthcoming special issues and discuss other possibilities for upcoming collective projects. This year the study group will have the opportunity to join both in-person and remotely. We will especially celebrate and discuss the recently published JPT special issue "Pastoral Theology and The Climate Crisis," where different authors briefly present their contribution as a point of departure for further sharing and collaboration. All are welcome!

2. Postcolonialism, Globalization, and Pastoral Care

Fulgence Nyengele (fnyengele@mtso.edu)

Cedric Johnson (cedcjohnson@gmail.com)

Hee-Kyu Heidi Park (heidi.park@me.com)

The postcolonialism, globalization, and pastoral care study group explores and encourages postcolonial approaches to pastoral care, with particular attention to globalization as an interpretive lens for the development of pastoral care practices. For our purposes, "postcolonial" refers not merely to a historical period, but also to a strategic response to the contemporary context of domination and differentiation. The study group is especially concerned with communities at the margins whose identities and traditions have been dislocated by the forces of colonialism and globalization, as well as with the traumatic inequalities produced by neocolonial conditions, neoliberal capitalism, and a shifting world order. For this year's conference, the conveners of this study group welcome presentations that employ postcolonialism or globalization as a heuristic lens for examining the psychic, spiritual, social, cultural, and material effects of imperial afterlives, neoliberal destabilization, racialized violence, displacement, ecological crisis, political fragmentation, geopolitical uncertainty, and the erosion of communal forms of care. Papers that critically engage pastoral theological and spiritual care responses to

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STUDY GROUPS

these conditions, including practices of accompaniment, lament, resistance, healing, and collective care, are especially encouraged. Other proposals aligned with the broader concerns of the study group will also be considered. Participants are welcome to submit paper proposals via email to the conveners of this study group by April 30, 2026, noting your area of interest and your theoretical perspective to be presented at our gathering.

3. Religious Practices and Pastoral Research

Eileen Campbell-Reed (eileen.campbellreed@gmail.com)

Keith Menhinick (keithmenhinick@gmail.com)

We are pleased to invite members of SPT who are studying religious practices or researching pastoral issues, particularly using qualitative methods, to present at our gathering in Charlotte, North Carolina. We are especially interested this year in scholarship that engages womanist, queer or feminist theologies to interpret qualitative findings. Send an abstract (300 words or less, including your research question, and one or two theologians you engage in your study) to us by May 1, and we will notify you of our decision by May 15. All who attend the study group at SPT will also follow our tradition of introductions and a brief statement about your research, focusing on questions that motivate or challenge your study.

4. Embodiment Study Group: Responding to trauma in theological education

Felicity Kelcourse (fkelcourse@cts.edu)

Chanequa Walker-Barnes (Walker-BarnesC@CTSnet.edu)

ATS has identified a link between trauma and theological education. What practices support and nurture your capacity to work with students who are seeking healing from trauma? Did you come to theological education to be healed yourself? What practices of healing have you discovered?

We invite workshop participants to respond to a call for brief 500-750 word reflection papers designed to prompt group discussion.

Please send advance reflection papers with “SPT Embodiment 2025” in the subject line to the groups’ co-leaders.

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SOCIETY LUNCHEON

Felicity Kelcourse, Ph.D., LMHC

“Transformation through Trauma: Responding to a World on Fire”

Our world is on course to trigger tipping points with cascading irreversible consequences, from the melting of ice sheets to the death of the Amazon rainforest. Scientists have issued warnings consistently ignored by petrochemical economies ocused on GDP as the sole measure of human wellbeing. EPA Director Lee Zeldin stated his agency’s intent to “drive a dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion” as part of a sweeping deregulation agenda. This goal is a direct attack on environmental stewardship, which many view as a moral or spiritual obligation. Is there hope for humanity, for our children’s world? Yes, but it has to be active hope, not just “hopium”. What is our role as pastoral theologians, how can we best stay awake and alert, not look away or give in to despair? The 2020 pandemic was a wake-up call – now is the time to stay “woke” in service to Imago DEI. We humans are a single species on the Earth that is mother to us all. The lives we save may well be our own.



About the Speaker:

Felicity Brock Kelcourse is Associate Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Psychology of Religion at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. She is author and editor of *Human Development and Faith, 2nd Ed.* (Chalice, 2015), co-editor, with Pamela Cooper-White, of *Sabina Spielrein and the Beginnings of Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2019), and co-editor with Brynolf Lyon of *Transforming wisdom: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Theological Perspective* (Cascade, 2015). A 1981 graduate of Earlham School of Religion, recorded for her gifts in ministry by Wilmington Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in 1987, Dr. Kelcourse served congregations in Notting Hill London, Jamaica West Indies, and Wilmington Ohio prior to clinical training concurrent with her doctoral at Union Theological Seminary NYC. With over 30 years of continuous clinical experience, she has been a Mental Health Counselor since 2001.

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IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

Explore Charlotte with cultural organizer, Greg Jarrell.

With author and organizer Greg Jarrell, participants will explore uptown Charlotte searching for stories of "exclusions and invisibilities" --ghost stories. Over the course of two hours, we'll look for the untold and disappeared stories of Charlotte's built environment that determine our future. We'll also consider the material and cultural changes that might lead to a different urban environment. This walk will begin at Charlotte's oldest intersection, Independence Square. It will move into the historic Fourth Ward neighborhood in search of how the architecture of segregation persists in surprising spaces. It concludes in the Second Ward neighborhood, the site of North Carolina's first federally-funded urban renewal project, which today still bears the markers and the scars of urban renewal's devastations. Jarrell is the author of *Our Trespasses: White Churches and the Taking of American Neighborhoods*.

STUDENT LUNCHEON

There will be a catered luncheon for students attending our SPT conference. This is an opportunity for students to get acquainted with each other and the Society. More information will be forthcoming.

If you are a current student or know a current student interested in facilitating the student luncheon, please contact Sophia Park at park@neumann.edu by May 15.

PRE-CONFERENCE FOR SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS OF COLOR

The Scholars and Practitioners of Color of SPT warmly invite you to join our upcoming preconference event. This gathering will feature guest presenters and provide opportunities for meaningful networking. Your presence and participation are invaluable as we engage in conversations vital to scholars and practitioners of color in pastoral theology.

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PRE-CONFERENCE

Theme: What Has Happened to Our Sacred Spaces? Immigration, Separation, and the Work of Hospitable Resistance

In a time when homes, schools, churches, and even ideological communities experience violation from political forces, how do pastoral theologians of color reclaim our sacred spaces? Drawing from contemporary scholarship and lived experience, together, we will explore: When sacred space is disrupted, what forms of resistance and care generate hope? How do we cultivate allyship and hospitality as a disciplined, justice-oriented practice when it is challenging - even dangerous to resist?

Date: Wednesday, June 10 (dinner) and Thursday, June 11 (morning session), 2026

Speakers: Dr. Samuel Lee and Dr. Fulgence Nyenegele

Pre-Conference Planning Committee:

April Bristow (revbristow@gmail.com)

Jeeyong Kim (jeeyoung_kim@iliff.edu)

Charles Adonteng (charles.adonteng@garrett.edu)

Amina McIntyre (amcintyre@lpts.edu)

Hee Jin Lee (hlee@lpts.edu)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE INFORMATION

LOCATION

Union Presbyterian Seminary, Charlotte Campus

5141 Sharon Rd, Charlotte, NC 28210

AIRPORT

Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT)

5501 Josh Birmingham Pkwy, Charlotte, NC 28208 (11 miles/25 minutes from UPSem)

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CONFERENCE INFO

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Hampton Inn & Suites Charlotte/SouthPark at Phillips Place (recommended)**
6700 Phillips Place Court, Charlotte, NC 28210 (0.8 miles from UPSem)
 - Complimentary breakfast
 - Complimentary parking
- **Hilton Garden Inn SouthPark**
4808 Sharon Rd, Charlotte, NC 28210 (0.5 miles from UPSem)

Attendees are responsible for their own accommodation reservations.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Please visit the [SPT website](#) to register for the conference.

If you are a current SPT member, you must login to the SPT website to receive the discounted members-only rate. If your membership has expired, renew your membership for 2026 now by logging into the website and selecting 'Join/Renew' under 'Membership.' If you are not an SPT member, join today and save on your SPT 2026 registration!

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

	Early Bird Rate (through May 20)	Regular	On site
SPT members	\$325	\$375	\$425
Non-members	\$425	\$475	\$525
Students	\$200	\$200	\$200

If you are a student and would like hotel accommodation support, please e-mail Rode Molla at rmolla@vts.edu by May 20, 2026.

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SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Journal of Pastoral Theology (JPT) is the Society’s journal of record, publishing annual (and later bi-annual) journals since 1990. Currently co-edited by Eunil David Cho (eunilcho@bu.edu), Hee-Kyu Heidi Park (heidi.park@me.com), and Michael S. Koppel (dgg085@calvinseminary.edu), JPT is now reviewing submissions for 2026 issues.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Society welcomes to the membership any person with professional interests in the field of Pastoral Theology. Visit our website at www.societyforpastoraltheology.org and read the Mission Statement for the Society for Pastoral Theology which includes a definition of Pastoral Theology, and the Journal of Pastoral Theology’s Statement of Purpose. One joins the Society and remains in good standing by paying annual dues. Please be reminded that dues are payable by calendar year (Payment date plus one year).

If you have not renewed your membership, you will need to do so before registering for the conference. Society for Pastoral Theology membership can be renewed online by clicking [here](#). Annual dues for international members are waived; however, the registration fee for Society Annual Conferences is not waived. Canadian members are not regarded as international members.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Regular Member	\$100
Student Member	\$50
Fixed/Retired Member	\$50
International Member	\$0

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2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10	
6:30 PM	Pre-Conference for Scholars and Practitioners of Color
THURSDAY, JUNE 11	
9:00-12:00	Pre-Conference for Scholars and Practitioners of Color
1:00-1:30	Welcome and Opening Liturgy
1:30-2:30	Plenary 1: Chanequa Walker-Barnes
2:30-3:00	Break
3:00-4:00	Plenary 2: Pamela Cooper-White
4:00-5:00	Panel
5:30-6:30	Society Reception
6:30	Dinner on your own
FRIDAY, JUNE 12	
TBD	Journal of Pastoral Theology Business Meeting
8:00-8:15	Morning Devotion
8:30-10:00	Workshops
10:00-10:15	Break

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2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

10:15-12:00	Study Groups
12:00-1:15	Lunch on your own
12:00-1:15	Student Luncheon
2:00-6:00	Immersion Experience
6:00-7:00	Break
7:00-9:00	Society Banquet
SATURDAY, JUNE 13	
7:00-8:15	Special Interest Groups
8:15-8:30	Morning Devotion
8:30-9:45	Work-in-Progress
9:45-10:00	Break
10:00-11:15	Society Conversation
11:15-12:15	Business Meeting
12:15-2:00	Society Luncheon
2:15-3:00	Closing

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2025-2026 STEERING COMMITTEE

Co-Chair: Jessica Chapman Lape (chapmaje@dickinson.edu)

Co-Chair: Sophia Park (parks@neumann.edu)

Corresponding Secretary: Bruce Rogers-Vaughn (bruce.vaughn@vanderbilt.edu)

Recording Secretary: Josh Morris (josh.morris@upsem.edu)

Treasurer: Rode Molla (rmolla@vts.edu)

SEE YOU IN CHARLOTTE!

