**2019-2020 Annual Report**

This report summarizes the accomplishments and efforts of the Women’s Council of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for 2019-2020. We are grateful to God for enabling the Women’s Council to serve the seminary and students in particular.

This year marked the 93rd year of the Women's Council of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The Fall and Advent Programs featured a Scholarship Spotlight with testimony from one of the six Partnership Program Women’s Council Scholarship recipients along with special music. Bobby Ross, former scholarship recipient and current pastor of the Dunstable Congregational Church spoke at the Fall Program and James Holt was our scholarship speaker. The Advent Program of Lessons and Carols included scholarship recipient Corri Ogburn as the speaker and scholarship recipients James Holt, Ashley de Sousa and Charles Fick as our readers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to have the Spring Program.

Wendy Betts, in her third year as **Music chair** coordinated special music for each program. Through her connections to musicians in the area and her ministry as Organist/Director of Music Arts at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Topsfield, she and other talented musicians shared their gifts of music at each program and the concert. A highlight included her efforts to coordinate student pianist/songwriter/arranger Brandon Morris to play for the Advent Program.

The creative work of **Social chair** Dorine Waller set a welcome and cheerful atmosphere at each luncheon with seasonal table arrangements. As in the past, attendees could purchase arrangements, with any profit from sales going to the scholarship fund. Dorine also arranged details with seminary dining staff, ensuring that members and friends of the Women’s Council enjoyed delicious meals. Attention to these details allowed for good fellowship and conversation.

Lisa Steigerwalt joined the Board in the role of **Membership chair**. There were 69 dues-paying members for the year, including 10 new members. Program cards were made available at each luncheon to encourage attendees to join by paying annual dues, which defray administrative costs and allow 100% of offerings and gifts to be applied to the Scholarship Fund.

The Scholarship Recipients for the 2019-20 academic year were Kristen Challapalli, Ashley de Souza, Charles and Kimberly Fick, James Holt, and Corri Ogburn. As **Scholarship Chair**, Rose Hausman arranged for one of the student scholarship recipients to speak at each of the Women’s Council meetings over the course of the academic year: James Holt (September), Corri Ogburn (December) and Kristen Challapalli (April). However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the April meeting was canceled, and we were not able to hear from Kristen. Ashley, Charles and James also participated by reading the scripture lessons for the Advent *Lessons and Carols*. Choosing the speaker involves communicating with them to understand their history in order to write the invitation letter and supporting them as they prepare. This process begins approximately two months prior to the actual meeting. Rose also communicated with each student throughout the year especially to introduce herself and the Women’s Council, as well as to encourage them to attend the programs and luncheons as guests of the Women’s Council. The students love to attend these events and were well represented in September and December.

At the beginning of the year the Women’s Council Board again held a gathering with the new and returning scholarship recipients. On the evening of October 1, four students and eight Board members gathered in the Mezzanine in Pierce Great Hall for a time of refreshment and fellowship. This event provides the opportunity for students and Board members to get acquainted early on in the year.

To help connect the ladies of the Women’s Council with the students, Rose writes a personal letter several times during the year to all of those who made contributions to the Women’s Council Scholarship Fund. Because of COVID and the cancelation of the April meeting, our total contributions of the year ($11,300) were supplemented with surplus from past years to meet the new goal ($2,500 per student) we had set to fund these scholarships ($15,000).

This was the fourth year the Women’s Council chose scholarship recipients from the Partnership Program, allowing us at times to support a student over multiple years. The first such student was Corri Ogburn who was with us for four years. It was good to hear from her at Women’s Council programs at the beginning of her time with us (September 2016) and near the end (December 2019). Kristen Challapalli also graduated in May after one year as a Scholarship Recipient. The monthly letters that these Partnership students send to their supporters come to Rose and Rose forwards them to all Board members. In addition, the scholarship recipients’ bios are listed on the Gordon-Conwell Women’s Council website with updates, written by the students themselves, posted twice a year at the end of each semester. We do this to enable all of us to get to know them better and follow them throughout the year.

In her role as Scholarship Chair, it was again Rose’s privilege to get to know scholarship recipients and to work together with staff and Board members to support these students as they prepare to go out into the world with the good news of the gospel.

**Secretary** Judy Terhune maintained orderly details for the Women's Council. Judy fulfilled duties through the year as she worked with seminary staff to schedule Women’s Council program meetings, update documents, and prepare the fall invitation and program bulletin. Anne Swetland, Lisa Steigerwalt, and Grace Chmura assisted with invitation mailings and programs.

**Treasurer** Erica Giovanniello reported that the Women’s Council maintained a healthy financial position. In January 2020, the Women’s Council Board met and voted unanimously to increase the scholarship award offered to each Women’s Council scholar from $2,000/year to $2,500/year effective FY19/20. A total of $11,299 was received in scholarship donations, of which $15,000 was disbursed to six scholarship recipients. Account balance totals are as follows: an ending balance of $1,209.91 in the operating fund, which represents dues, luncheon payments and expenses related to honorariums, food costs, mailings, and office supplies; an ending balance of $17,147.34 in the Women’s Council Scholarship fund, after scholarship disbursements totaling $15,000; and an ending balance in the Women’s Council Endowment fund of $74,327.42, after a net investment gain of $1,435.87 (calculated on 6/30/20). In FY19/20, 172 people attended the two luncheons held in September and December 2019. The spring 2020 luncheon was cancelled due to COVID. Even with this cancellation, the Women’s Council was able to maintain a healthy financial position, thanks be to God, and all who generously contributed.

**Archivist chair** Anne Swetland, entered records of the Executive Board minutes, luncheon invitations, scholarship letters, printed programs and program minutes into their respective notebooks. She continues these activities while a replacement for the position is sought.

Executive Board members continuing in 2020-2021 include: Grace Chmura, President; Erica Giovaniello, Treasurer; Rose Hausman, Scholarship Chair; Dorine Waller, Social Chair; Kathy Kishbaugh, Secretary; Lisa Steigerwalt, Membership Chair; Wendy Betts, Music Chair; and Ex-Officio members Rhonda Gibson, Immediate Past President; Nancy Sunquist, wife of the seminary President. Members-at-Large continuing to serve include: Miriam Boylan, Anne Swetland and Camille Bishop. We welcome new Board member: Beatrice Lyons, Archivist.

All of our work could not be accomplished without the support of the staff and administration of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. We thank President Sunquist and many departments of the seminary, including the advancement team, which assists with invitations, registration and check-in for each event while campus safety, the dining hall, facilities, communication and media departments serve us so well through the year.

As President of the Women's Council, I especially want to express gratitude to the entire Women’s Council for their interest in and care for seminary students. The impact is eternal. We have seen growth in attendance at programs and an increase in giving – all by God’s good grace to us.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Chmura

President, 2019-2020