**Report to the Student Life Committee of the UD Board of Trustees**

**Beth McCaw, Pastor to Seminary Students**

**Fall, 2018**

For the 2018-19 school year, the seminary further changed “orientation” into an online, required, no-credit class for our 42 incoming students. The four week class which began mid-June covered technical instruction; academic strategies including an overview of UD resources and integrity policies; boundary considerations including Title IX training; and self-care including debt management. Students engaged on each topic with a quiz, a group discussion, and an individual assignment. Responses were very positive with the class rating the usefulness of the experience and content as 3.6/4. By registering the new students for this introductory class, it also streamlined the registrations process for their subsequent August and fall classes.

The incoming class included five new Young Adult Ministry Scholars, joining our three pioneer students in this graduate assistant program. The group is cohesive, energetic, and creative, and are already engaged in teaching Worldview classes and working in diverse settings on campus. Examples include leadership in campus ministry, management of the campus Food Pantry with accompanying consciousness-raising activities (the CROP hunger walk, education on food security and food deserts, etc.), and supporting the interfaith dialogue and fellowship “Better Together” initiatives.

A record number of seminary students sought to be elected to the Student Council, filling additional at-large seats and generating significant momentum for the mission of the council. With several representatives who live in Dubuque (which was not the case last year), more collaboration with undergraduate organizations will be possible. Anticipated programs such as the CROP walk, screening a fill for the Dubuque community on homelessness, and creating cold-weather kits are described in STUCO Moderator Nicole Wegele’s report. The council continues to be tremendously creative in finding ways to build community and practice service across geographical divides with distance students, making UDTS a model in online education for offering a corporate formative experience.

The seminary sent several students (seminary and undergraduate) and alumni back to the Dominican Republic for ongoing mission in a remote area of the country isolated due to a washed-out bridge. Deep thanks were expressed to UD by the people of the village Christ the King for not forgetting them in their time of need. Construction of a village center park, vacation Bible school, meetings with village leaders, and a series of worship services in the local church were among the shared offerings. Next year the Synod of the Sun of the Presbyterian Church will take point on leading the trip –three alumni/students are bridge members of that Synod.

The worship and spiritual life of the seminary was marked by a move to Alumni Chapel for the larger number of commuting/residential students. The chapel was furnished with pulpit, communion table, kneeler and glass cupboards from the Harmony UCC Church, which closed in Zwingle. This furniture along with banners and other service items have begun to make this space a warm, bright and encouraging one for worship. An August spiritual retreat has been woven in to the curriculum that all incoming students, and all senior students, appreciate much.