

Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary

21 students
26 full-time faculty
(20 from Interdenominational
Theological Center)

Degrees Offered

Master of Arts in Christian Education
Master of Arts in Church Music
Master of Divinity
Doctor of Ministry
Doctor of Theology in Pastoral Care
and Counseling

Joint Degrees Offered

Master of Divinity/Master of Public
Health with Morehouse School
of Medicine

Special Programs

Recruitment Conference for African
American Presbyterian Youth
Biblical Studies Club,
including travel seminars
Internship opportunities
Mission study tours, domestic
and international

Partnerships

Member of Interdenominational
Theological Center
Educating clergy in Africa, with the
Presbyterian Church of East Africa
and other Presbyterian denominations
in Africa
The Henry Highland Garnett
Presbyterian Campus Ministry
Program, Atlanta University Center,
with the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta





The mission of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary is to serve God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. The seminary's particular calling is to prepare leadership for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) out of the African American heritage and membership of our denomination.

Seminarians are educated through the resources of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), a consortium of six historically black Protestant seminaries, of which Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary is the PC (USA) constituent. ITC enrollment: 572. ITC provides 20 of 26 faculty positions at the seminary.

Vital organizations become so because of the involvement of dedicated individuals. Often those individuals are themselves beneficiaries of the organization's mission. Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary lives today because it has served well for 142 years and because those who benefited from that service have returned to support the seminary. Robert M. Burkins, a graduate of the seminary and pastor of the Elmwood United Presbyterian Church in East Orange, NJ, is a prime example of the seminary's best gifts to the church. In his ministry the seminary's mission becomes reality. Now Pastor Burkins' vision is driving the seminary forward.

As chair of the seminary trustees, Rev. Burkins is leading the implementation of a new business plan. Informing that process is his proposed vision around which the future ministry will be built. The vision, "Preparing Pioneering Leaders," will lead the school into a new paradigm for ministry and a new approach to theological education.

Rev. Burkins explains: "Much of the current interpretation of theology has de-emphasized the importance of developing pioneering leaders (i.e., disciples). In fact, most churches place greater emphasis on church growth than in being faithful to discerning the will of God for our life together.

"Johnson C. Smith's obligation is to nurture students who will become pioneering leaders who understand that the benediction . . . must be just as powerful as the opening of the church doors for prayer, praise, and preaching the Word.

"We need clergy persons who are equally well trained in exegeting Scripture and identifying community resources. Pioneering leaders do not merely look to the larger church or the local collection plate to underwrite ministry. . . . Rather, they are individuals who accept the incarnational witness of the gospel and who seek to nurture disciples who will change the world."

In this paradigm the community's investment in the mission is just as important as the congregation's investment in the health of the community.

Speaking of his experience in seminary, Rev. Burkins recalls a more limited approach: "We were prepared as leaders with a somewhat bifurcated vocation: on the one hand, to nurture the ethnocentric faith of the congregation, and on the other, to care for and serve the community. . . . We need new paradigms . . . that would develop pioneering leaders. . . . These leaders must be entrepreneurial; like Jesus they will be able to go into their communities and 'turn the water into wine.' They must be pioneering leaders who have the ability to identify the resources within a community and create partnerships for change and development.

"The missional church requires leaders who have the capacity to understand their context and develop congregations in which pastors are not the sole decision makers. Rather, as pastors we must understand that we are called to make disciples and those disciples are, by definition, leaders. In preparing pioneering leaders for the missional church, I believe that Johnson C. Smith can internalize and externalize resurrection experience in its students and graduates."