

## Welcome to our new look!

Even before you opened this magazine, you should have already noticed our new look.

The *Epistle* has not been sitting around in its sweatpants eating junk food during this pandemic; it's been getting a makeover.

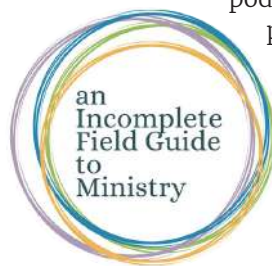
I hope you enjoy the transformation to a more open, readable and engaging layout. We will continue to make subtle changes in content and design as we bring the stories of LSTC into your home and into your hands. As always, we are grateful for your feedback. ✿



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## LSTC professors host new podcast

When LSTC professors Kimberly Wagner and Marvin Wickware Jr. were looking for a new way to collaborate across their courses, a podcast became the perfect vehicle.



Thanks to a grant from the Lyn C. and Stewart Herman Jr. Innovation Fund, they launched An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry (buzzsprout.com/1345783).

Each week, they cover topics relevant to their course, but an even wider audience is enjoying their wisdom and banter, as well as those of their weekly guests (from LSTC and beyond). New episodes are posted weekly. ✿

## LSTC forms Antiracism Transformation Team

LSTC has formed a 29-member Antiracism Transformation Team (ATT) that meets monthly to develop an action plan to move LSTC toward becoming an antiracist and interculturally competent institution.

The team is 51% Black, indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC), and includes students, alumni, faculty, administrators, staff and representatives from two Chicago area seminaries. It is guided by Chicago Regional Organizing for Antiracism (Chicago ROAR), which has for the past four years offered antiracism workshops for faculty, staff and students as part of a multiyear partnership with LSTC.

“LSTC holds ‘being attentive to diversity’ as one of its values, but we still have not aligned our institutional practices with that value, especially in terms of confronting racism and white supremacy,” said James Nieman, president. “I am grateful that this team will do a thorough analysis and make recommendations for transforming the school.”

Institutional transformation teams usually meet in person but the global pandemic has meant that LSTC’s team meets via Zoom.

“We would prefer to meet in person,” said Vima Couvertier-Cruz, admissions recruiter and acting international student services coordinator, who is also the liaison for the ATT. “But we are undeterred in moving ahead with this important work, which is more urgent than ever. Chicago ROAR is developing new innovative online

tools and our team will be one of the first to use them.”

Ismael Calderon, MDiv student, said, “I have observed an openness and slow awareness of this problem among the student community and institution staff. We must continue to heal the wounds generated by blind institutional racism from all angles of the community.”

PhD student Denise Rector said, “I believe this institution is still operating on the idea that addressing racism is about diversity, as opposed to addressing racism by sharing power and leveling inequities; that the institution is more concerned about ‘not seeming racist’ (as much of America is, unfortunately) instead of actively sacrificing power to be anti-racist.”

Janelle Neubauer (2017, MDiv), who joins the team from her ministry in Rwanda, said, “My first observation of racism was in the sheer ignorance and defensiveness of students like myself who rebuffed the idea that we were part of such a structure. Unfortunately, we are taught to believe that we know ourselves better than anyone else ever could, but it became apparent to me that I, along with my other white classmates, understood very little of our impact in spite of our ‘best’ intentions.”

The team will learn how to conduct an audit of the ways LSTC perpetuates racism, and what the major concerns are within the school and ways to change them. Their work will result in an action plan in Spring 2021. ✿