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Dear friends,

This is truly an exciting time at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS). Our beloved CRCDS is embarking on a journey to re-envision and reinterpret theological education for our present age.

My May letter to you announcing the decision by the Board of Trustees to relocate the school to a new campus setting designed to meet the needs of 21st Century education is, while certainly significant, only one of the many strategic initiatives the school is engaged in. Since my letter, I have heard from many of you who have graciously taken the time to share your thoughts on the future direction of the school and the key values and components you believe the school must retain going forward. This feedback is invaluable to me and to all of us entrusted with the task of carrying out the mission of CRCDS and securing its successful future. I hope you will continue to share your thoughts with me throughout this entire process as we transition not only from our current location, but toward a new model of theological education. We have formed a Transition Committee, headed by CRCDS alumnus, Paul Vick, with broad representation from the students, staff, faculty and the community (see the Transition Committee profile following my letter). They have begun their work and have already held initial meetings with pastors, alumni/ae and partners of the school to seek their input not only on relocation, but more importantly, on how the school can best serve this present age. We will be hosting a series of meetings throughout the fall and early winter in a variety of locations and we hope you will be able to participate either in person or through the use of technology. We will be sending a list of meetings, including dates and locations, to you soon. In the meantime, the Transition Committee and I are interested in hearing your initial thoughts and ideas and have set up a special e-mail to make it easier for you to provide your thoughts and feedback to us. The e-mail address is transition@crcds.edu. We are so grateful for your partnership and thank you in advance for sharing your wisdom with us as we embark on this exciting and vitally important journey.

Many people—alumni, alumnae, friends, pastors—have shared with me their sadness over the school leaving *the Hill*, but they have also expressed a clear understanding of why it is necessary to not only relocate, but, more importantly, why it is vital for the school to adapt its mission to meet the needs of

our current age, a commitment we have made throughout our history. I am reminded that no institution can survive, much less thrive, without adapting to the time and the people it serves. CRCDS exists today—almost 200 years after its founding—because those who have loved and cared for it over generations understood the necessity to adapt. Had the school abdicated this core responsibility, it would have withered on the vine long ago. What drove the founding of the school in Hamilton, what brought the school to Rochester (in two phases), brought the Baptist Missionary Training School (BMTS) from Illinois, brought Crozer from Pennsylvania and brought all our numerous partners over the years, including Bexley Hall and St. Bernard's, was an unflinching commitment to critically assess the needs of theological education and to adapt the CRCDS mission accordingly to meet these ever evolving, ever-changing needs. This is an awesome and, at times, daunting responsibility, but as we all know, and as we constantly teach our students, answering God's call to serve demands boldness, courage and a willingness to have faith and belief in the future. In a recent conversation with a concerned alumnus, I expressed a need for all of us who attended seminary years ago to recognize that the model for theological education that we were formed by would not—and does not—meet the needs of today's students. Significant societal shifts have occurred over the past few decades that impact how people understand religion, faith, theology, spirituality and the church itself. We experience this in various forms including the decline in church attendance, the rapid "greying" of our congregations, and the struggle of our faith communities to remain solvent and relevant. I am reminded, however, that these conditions are lamentable only if we are fixated on the past and struggling to preserve and maintain old models—often for their own sake—that are not meeting the needs of people in our present age. Our ever-present challenge is to answer God's call to reorient ourselves toward the future. When we do this, opportunities abound, challenges are enthusiastically engaged, creative solutions are discovered, new models are developed and, ultimately, our mission is given the opportunity to truly serve and to thrive.

The business world offers countless examples of companies whose failure to adapt has led directly to their demise.

One need look no further than Rochester's own Eastman Kodak Company, once known around the world for film manufacturing, to see a stark example of people failing to adapt to the future. Kodak once employed over 60,000 people in Rochester, but now employs fewer than 5,000. This decline, interestingly, was not the result of fewer people taking pictures. In fact, we all take more pictures now than we ever did at any other time in history. What changed was *how* people take pictures, *how* we capture images. Film is gone, long ago replaced by digital photography. And as film went, so did Kodak. Ironically, Kodak itself developed the technology for the digital camera, but could not envision how this could change the future for the better until it was too late. Many of our mainline churches and seminaries face a similar challenge to adapt or face the prospect of severe diminishment or worse—closure. There is, of course, still the ever-present need in the world for God's presence and for people to find ways to be spiritually and theologically fed. What has changed, however, similar to the situation with Kodak, is *how* these needs are met. Some churches and some seminaries are beginning to figure this out, but sadly, many are not. The future demands that we look forward, not backward. When we refuse to orient ourselves forward, we create an idol out of the past and that is spiritually deadly because it prevents God's in-breaking and prevents any substantive future progress.

The world of theological education has already changed dramatically. Long gone are the days when only 22-25 year-old males enrolled full-time in seminary, took classes exclusively on campus, in-person, during the daytime with the expressed goal of one day becoming a pastor or perhaps a missionary. Now, the overall number of people attending seminary has changed, but, importantly, so has *who* attends seminary, *how* they attend seminary and *where* and *when* they take classes. As if those changes were not significant enough, an already large (and increasing) number of students are now preparing for ministries far different from the traditional role of pastor. Thus, even the reasons why people attend seminary have shifted. Today's students require a much broader and exten-

sive education than any seminary students in history, given the variety of ways they will likely be called to serve and the broad skill base they will need to be successful. Upon graduation, today's students are not stepping into an established, healthy church structure. They are being asked to lead at a time when the mainline churches are struggling for relevance and for their very survival. This will demand everything our graduates can bring to the table in order to fashion a new way forward. Add these challenges to the high cost of theological education, the long hours of ministry and the relatively low salaries and we can all see why it is increasingly difficult for people to hear God's call to ministry clearly in our present age.

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I admit this all sounds dire and overwhelming, except for the very real fact that the world continues to need—now more than ever—the leaders that CRCDS is uniquely equipped to provide. Were it not for this fact, we could easily declare the mission of CRCDS dead based on a conclusion that the mission was no longer needed and therefore irrelevant. I know, however, that our world, in a very real way, urgently needs CRCDS graduates and needs CRCDS to live out its mission by adapting it to the present age. The world needs leaders who are pastoral, prophetic and learned, who stand as a sign of God's faithfulness, even in times of uncertainty and struggle. People remain

hungry and thirsty. They continue to strive to find meaning in life, to deal with the many challenges we all face, to make sense of a world where violence abounds and so many continue to suffer. People still look for leaders who voice an authoritative “No!” to violence, oppression, prejudice, economic inequality, racism, sexism, ageism, xenophobia, ignorance, hate.... Each day, the news brings us clear testimony of why we need CRCDS and why CRCDS matters. Our graduates engage these issues head-on and are a tangible sign of God's love, presence and healing in a world that seems increasingly fractured, polarized and devoid of any sense of love, fairness, caring, justice or responsibility. This is the work of CRCDS—to prepare leaders who lead, who make a difference, who are God's change agents, who sacrifice so much so that all may have the opportunity to thrive,

and to bring the sense of peace to the world that only God's love can provide. CRCDS matters, and we must all do our part to make sure we make decisions that not only allow it to survive, but to thrive. *Where* our graduates serve and *how* they serve has shifted dramatically, but the need for our graduates has, in fact, increased, as has the urgency for the school to re-imagine how we identify, attract and form these future leaders to meet the needs of the present and future age.

This challenge has occupied my heart and mind ever since I took up the presidency of this historic and beloved school. The Trustees, faculty and staff are working tirelessly to forge this new way and are already engaged in the vitally important work identified in the strategic plan that was approved by the Board of Trustees this past February. While I will not attempt to fully explicate the entire strategic plan here, I would like to briefly share with you some of its most salient points. Our strategic planning is based on some important assumptions that continue to shape our work going forward:

- ◆ CRCDS must increase its overall enrollment in terms of both numbers of students (head count) and in terms of full-time equivalency (the number of courses each student takes).
- ◆ CRCDS must reduce its endowment draw, while identifying ways to increase the overall size of the endowment (providing greater financial resources for the school and for financial aid and scholarships).
- ◆ CRCDS must substantially increase national awareness of the school and its mission.
- ◆ CRCDS must carefully evaluate and adjust both its academic programs and its delivery systems.
- ◆ CRCDS must serve both degree and non-degree students and must focus on engaging both "seekers" and "nones" who are unlikely to be familiar with the work of CRCDS, but who are likely to find affinity with its courses and degrees.
- ◆ CRCDS must identify a location for its operations that is better suited to support its mission in terms of technology, accessibility, maintenance costs, space utilization and a shift in theological education from a residential population to a commuter population.
- ◆ CRCDS must be prepared to invest resources to achieve its future goals.

Based on these assumptions, the Strategic Planning Committee set out to identify five major goals around which the school will focus its energy for the next three years. Based on the assumptions outlined above, the Strategic Planning Committee identified five major goals for CRCDS:

- ◆ Increase full-time equivalency enrollment for all Masters level students.
- ◆ Expand lifelong learning opportunities to meet the needs of a broader range of the public.
- ◆ Establish a plan for long-term financial sustainability including increased enrollment, increased philanthropic revenue, evaluating the suitability of current campus setting for students and overall school operations, evaluate staffing needs/models and reduce endowment draw.
- ◆ Establish CRCDS as a "go to" voice for progressive theological response to issues of social justice, religion and society, and civil and human rights
- ◆ Expand the Doctor of Ministry program (already an area of distinction and growth for CRCDS).

While implementation of the Strategic Plan is already underway, I must emphasize that it is a living, breathing and, most importantly, *responsive process, not a finished unresponsive document* with a list of "To Do" items. Every institution, and especially theological schools, must constantly be thinking and planning strategically. CRCDS must bring an entrepreneurial spirit to all we do and we must be prepared to try new things, abandon things that are not working and enlist the assistance of a broad range of partners, *including, most importantly, YOU!* It is this last point that I hope you will consider seriously. CRCDS needs your thoughts, your ideas, your insights as we build this new model for theological education. While the move from our current campus to a new location provides a tangible opportunity for bringing the entire CRCDS family together in conversation, the actual discussion and task is so much greater than simply identifying a new place for CRCDS. We must all work together to identify the best ways to be CRCDS in this new age and to achieve our identified strategic goals. It will take all our effort, all our care and concern to fashion this new direction, this new way. We must remain open to the future while continuing to ground ourselves in our long and distinguished legacy of preparing and forming pastoral, prophetic and learned leaders who stand as a witness among us of all that is possible when we are open to God's love. I am eager to continue this journey with you and, as always, ask your prayers for all of us who work on behalf of CRCDS. Mostly, however, I ask for your prayers for our beloved CRCDS. May God continue to guide us in our work to carry forth our legacy and mission in this new direction and new age.

Yours in Christ,



Dr. Marvin A. McMickle
President