



Meadville Lombard  
Theological School

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## **Downtown Chicago Gains New Graduate Degree -- Educating Ministers -- As Meadville Lombard Theological School Moves to Loop in December**

CHICAGO -- Meadville Lombard Theological School, a 167-year-old Unitarian Universalist seminary, will add a new dimension -- professional education of ministers -- to graduate education in downtown Chicago when it moves in December to the central business district known as the "Loop."

Meadville Lombard has been located in the South Side's Hyde Park area near the University of Chicago since 1926, when the seminary moved to Chicago from rural western Pennsylvania.

Now the seminary will join 20 other private and public colleges, universities and graduate schools that have in recent years located or expanded in the "Loop" -- to use the distinctly Chicago name for the central downtown commercial, cultural and civic core. Meadville Lombard's new home will be at 610 S. Michigan Ave., across from Grant Park in the Loop's growing educational corridor.

Meadville Lombard announced today it has agreed with Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies to lease an entire floor and access to additional facilities in the architecturally acclaimed Spertus building, which opened in 2007. The long-term lease includes moving Meadville Lombard's library into Spertus' library, with the two collections operated side by side, and use of classrooms and other gathering spaces in the Spertus building. The lease also includes provisions for Spertus to supply information technology services to Meadville Lombard.

"We are so excited about this move," said The Rev. Dr. Lee Barker, president and professor of ministry at Meadville Lombard. "It is the most significant physical change for Meadville Lombard since the Meadville Theological School moved from Pennsylvania to the University of Chicago in 1926 and set in motion the rapid development of our Hyde Park campus and the merger of Meadville, a Unitarian seminary, with Lombard College's Universalist seminary."

"By moving into the Spertus building, our students gain access to technologically sophisticated and visually stunning classrooms and educational spaces, as well as a location easily accessible by rapid transit from Chicago's airports. This facility is perfectly tailored to the needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning community" said Barker, a Unitarian Universalist minister and Meadville Lombard alumnus who has been the school's president since 2003.

"Our faculty and staff will join the vibrant educational community that has grown in the Loop in recent years, adding a new dimension to downtown Chicago by offering theological studies. Our new curriculum emphasizes experience-based education critical to the work of ministers and liberal religious in today's multicultural and multiracial world."

Although Meadville Lombard is leaving Hyde Park, it will maintain its relationships with the seminaries located in Hyde Park and throughout the Chicago area that comprise the Association of Chicago Theological Schools. There are 11 seminaries in ACTS, which makes Chicago one of the

nation's great concentrations of theological education. Many seminaries are in Hyde Park, but others are scattered across the city and nearby suburbs.

After moving in December, Meadville Lombard's first classes in the Loop will be held in January.

A \$2 million gift this year to Meadville Lombard by Martha Atherton, co-founder of Racor Industrial Corp. and Atherton Machinery Division in Des Plaines, Ill., is helping Meadville Lombard offset the costs of the long-term lease with Spertus. Ms. Atherton was especially eager to assist in helping the school find a location that stressed the importance of multi-faith cooperation.

The gift by Atherton, a member of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist in Palatine, Ill., includes \$200,000 to bring international students to Meadville Lombard and downtown Chicago during a span of ten years. The first students, hailing from Japan, studied at the school during classes this past summer.

Meadville Lombard has 115 students. More than half are enrolled in low-residency master of divinity degree programs allowing them to work on much of their studies from home regions around the country and abroad, coming to Chicago for several weeks at a time during the year for bursts of intensive class studies. Some students also choose to live in Chicago during their studies.

Besides the master of divinity degree, the school also offers the doctor of ministry, master of arts in leadership studies and master of arts in religion degrees.

The seminary has a 10-member faculty, an additional staff of approximately 15 people and an annual budget of \$3 million. It has about 400 living alumni, many of whom are ministers in Unitarian Universalist pulpits across North America. It is one of two UU-identified seminaries in the country, although aspiring UU ministers can also prepare at seminaries that are not UU identified.

Meadville Lombard owns a 16,000-square-foot academic building at 5701 S. Woodlawn Ave. constructed for the school and opened in 1929. It contains classroom, library, office, and lounge spaces and is being sold later this year to the University of Chicago. The university has already purchased two adjacent Woodlawn Avenue properties from Meadville Lombard. A fourth building, across the street from the other three, was sold this year and has since become the Rohr Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning in Hyde Park.

Meadville Theological School was founded by Unitarians in Meadville, Pa., in 1844. Lombard College was founded by Universalists in Galesburg, Ill., in 1853 as the Illinois Liberal Institute. Lombard's Ryder Divinity School opened during the 1880s.

When the Unitarian Meadville and Universalist Lombard seminaries merged in Chicago in 1930, they foreshadowed by three decades the eventual merger of the two liberal religious denominations. The denominations merged in 1961 and Unitarian Universalists in the United States are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their combined denomination this year.

Nationwide, the Unitarian Universalist Association has more than 1,000 congregations and 160,000 adult members. There are 28 UU congregations in the Chicago area.

Attachment: ML Fact Sheet

On the web: [www.meadville.edu](http://www.meadville.edu) and [www.mlflash.org](http://www.mlflash.org)