



# 2023 / 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



### **Dear friends, supporters, and members of the Meadville Lombard Community,**

Writing for our Annual Report offers me an opportunity for reflection on the work we have achieved as an institution of theological education in service to Unitarian Universalism and to the Liberal Religious Tradition. When my reflections turn to the work that we have accomplished, I am filled with equal parts wonder and gratitude. My experience of wonder is sparked by the unique ways in which imagination, grit, resilience, forward-thinking, and communal-centric ways of belonging shape our day-to-day living out our mission. And as I experience this wonder, I feel moved to gratitude. The gratitude that comes from the grace received and extended, the affirmations, the wise counsel shared in times of need, and for the ways that our community turns to lift our work and support it in the good labor of nurturing a

community of learning that will serve in our congregations and communities.

The landscape of theological education is ever shifting; institutions seek ways to respond in novel ways to those shifts. The shifts we face as a theological institution are not unique in the landscape of Higher Education. Yet, how we respond to them, grounded in our mission and values, and responsibility to our stakeholders, continues to lift the relevance of our institution's reason for existing. We are continuing our growth into a multi-platform learning community, adjusting to the realities of adult learners managing life commitments, working life, and their vocational preparation. Responding to this reality moves us as an institution to be adaptable in the ways in which we offer high-quality education in ways that strive to remove barriers of access due to geography and cost. We are learning new ways of being in community by maximizing how communication technologies reduce the distance between us, while at the same time being reflective on ways in which we need to consider the emerging needs of preparing faith leaders whose work will be in person and on online platforms.

Each year, as I reflect on the journey of Meadville Lombard Theological School, I am inspired by the courage, resilience, and bold imagination within our community, and this year is no exception. We continued to embody our calling: fostering religious leadership anchored in justice, equity, and compassion in a rapidly changing world. Over my time leading this institution, it has been important to me that we reflect with care and concern on who we need to serve and how. In moments of transition and decline of religious communities, changing economic and political tides, inspiring

service and making our education more accessible is a deep need. One thing has remained central and constant in my thinking of this institution and its mission: that we are committed to the work of *helping reshape a broken world through the power of justice, equity, and compassion in our ways of being faithful to our sacred faith and with responsibility for one another.*

For this reason, we have continued to look into the possibilities of learning about new opportunities for service. Our work matters, and how we carry out this work makes an impact:

- **Academic Excellence and Innovation:** Our low-residency, community-embedded degree programs enabled students to remain rooted in their contexts while engaging in rigorous academic and spiritual formation. Signature courses—where theory meets practice—provided spaces for our leaders-in-formation to integrate learning and ministry in real-world settings.
- **Justice-Making and Spiritual Growth:** Justice is not an add-on—it is inextricably woven into our curriculum. In 2024, our graduates and students led and participated in significant social justice efforts, championing equity from pulpits, in community organizations, and in advocacy work. Our Leadership Institute for Growth, Healing, and Transformation (LIGHT) further enriched continuing education and the work of religious professionals and lay leaders alike.
- **Learning Across Difference:** True to our Unitarian Universalist values, we centered interculturality and multi-faith engagement as essential to preparing leaders for a multiracial, multicultural world. Our learning model promoted

spiritual leadership through experiences that honed moral imagination, emotional intelligence, and faithful discernment.

- **Community and Collaboration:** Convocations and intensives provided moments for heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul connection among students, faculty, and staff. Cohorts grew in wisdom together, supported by the guidance of teaching pastors, mentors, and the rich diversity of experience within our community.

As President, I witness the extraordinary dedication of our students, alums, faculty, staff, trustees, and supporters to move our mission forward. It is my belief that every gift of time, talent, or treasure builds upon the foundation laid by those before us and enables our mission to continue its march forward. Let us continue, together, to nurture leaders who will bend the arc of the universe toward justice, lighting the path toward a world where everyone can flourish. In a world that asks us daily to affirm our inherent dignity and resist forces of dehumanization, our community has not wavered. Together, we have fostered a space where worth, hope, and creative resistance thrive. As we live out our mission through academic rigor, spiritual practice, and the collaborative pursuit of justice, we are indeed an embodiment of the “good news” of our tradition: that each of us is worthy, and all are called to the urgent work of love and liberation.



Elías Ortega, PhD  
President

# 2023/2024 FUNDRAISING STATISTICS

We received

**\$1,132,933** Last year: **\$893,237**

from **247** donors, including **32** first-time donors.

Last year: **234** donors, including **27** first-time donors

**\$848,525** (75%) Last year: **\$544,057**

from **19** non-individual donors Last year: **18**

**\$248,407** (25%) Last year: **\$349,180**

from **228** individual donors Last year: **216**

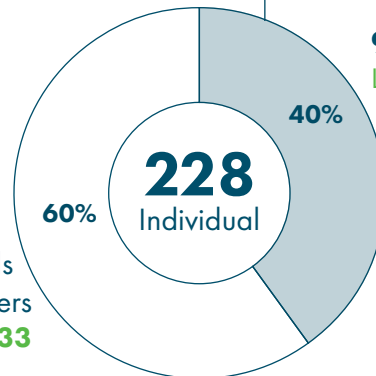


## Who were our donors:

- 7 Congregations
- 8 Foundations, Trusts, or Estates
- 3 Other Organizations

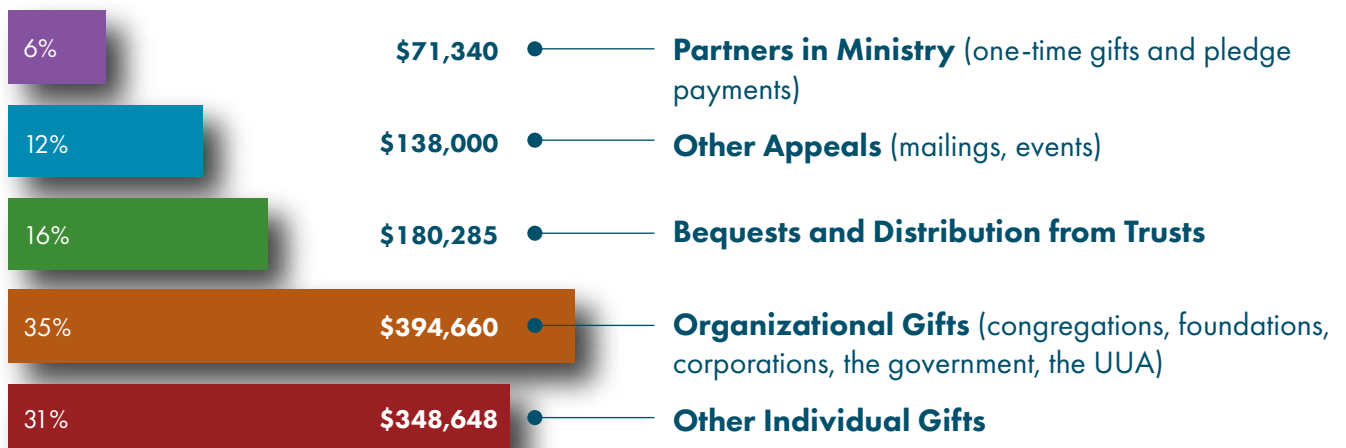
**19** Non-Individual

**137** Friends and Supporters  
Last year: **133**



**93** Alums  
Last year: **83**

## How we received the gifts:



# OUR DONORS: THANK YOU!

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL for our Fiscal Year 2023/2024 donors who made gifts to Meadville Lombard between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. Their generosity continues to sustain our work. Thank you for supporting the education and training of the progressive faith leaders our world needs.

The following list is based on gift amount received during the 2023/2024 Fiscal Year.

\* Recurring Givers and Student Success Sustainers: contributing to the success of MLTS current and future students with a sustaining monthly gift

## \$100,000 +

Trust of Nathaniel Page Lauriat, BD '45, DD '72  
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Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

## \$50,000 – \$99,999

Lucia Santini, DD '23 and Bruce Field  
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## \$10,000 – \$49,999

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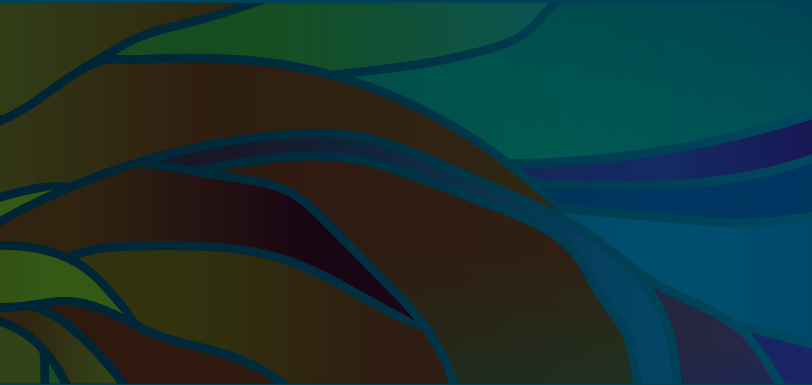
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