

181st

Commencement

of
Meadville Theological School
of Lombard College



Sunday, the 31st of May, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

First Unitarian Church of Chicago
5650 South Woodlawn Avenue

181st Commencement

Meadville Theological School
of Lombard College's

Order of Service

Conducted by

Doctor Elías Ortega and Doctor Vanessa Gomez Brake

Prelude

Prelude, Op. 28, No. 15

by Frédéric Chopin

Processional

Rank by Rank Again We Stand

Words from John Huntley Skrine, new words by Carl G. Seaburg

Music by Henry Walford Davies

*Rank by rank again we stand, from the four winds gathered hither.
Loud the hallowed walls demand whence we come and how, and whither.
From their stillness breaking clear, echoes wake to warn or cheer;
Higher truth from saint and seer call to us assembled here.*

*Ours the years' memorial store, honored days and names we reckon,
Days of comrades gone before, lives that speak and deeds that beckon.
From the dreaming of the night to the labors of the day,
Shines their everlasting light, guiding us upon our way.*

*Though the path be hard and long, still we strive in expectation;
Join we now their ageless song one with them in aspiration.
One in name, in honor one, guard we well the crown they won;
What they dreamed be ours to do, hope their hopes, and seal them true.*

Lighting the Chalice

The Reverend Eileen Wiviott, MDiv '17

Doctor Kate Lassiter

Opening Words and Invocation

Doctor Elías Ortega
Doctor Vanessa Gomez Brake

Choral Invocation

Be the Light
by Lea Morris

*There is always a light—when we are ready to see it
There is always a light—when we are ready to be it
To see the light, to be the light,
to raise our eyes in the dark of night
To climb this hill, together we will*

*Shine your light in the darkness
Shine your light in the darkness
Let your bright light burn out loud
And be a gift to the world*

Commencement Sermon

Always
Doctor Emilie M. Townes

Offertory

The Reverend Mister Barb Greve

Offertory Music
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
by E.A. Hoffman



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The Conferral of Honorary Degrees

Doctor of Humane Letters
Doctor Emilie M. Townes
Presented by Doctor Pamela Lightsey

Anthem

How Can I Keep from Singing

Music by Robert Lawry, arr. by Adam D. O'Dell;
Sylvia de la Cerna, Violinist

*My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation.
I hear the real, though far off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Above the tumult and the strife,
I hear its music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?*

*What though the tempest loudly roars,
I hear the truth, it liveth.
What though the darkness round me close,
Songs in the nights it giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is lord of Heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?*

*When tyrants tremble, sick with fear,
And hear their death-knell ringing,
When friends rejoice both far and near,
How can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile
Our thoughts to them are winging.
When friends by shame are undefiled,
How can I keep from singing?*

Announcements

Doctor Pamela Lightsey

Presentation of Prizes

The Reverend Kathryn House, PhD

Doctor Karen Mosby

Presentation of Candidates and Conferral of Degrees

Doctor Elías Ortega
Doctor Pamela Lightsey

Doctor of Ministry

Jane Eileen Davis

BS, University of Illinois
MDiv, Meadville Lombard Theological School

*The Support Triad: Using Agriculture and Liberal Spiritual Direction
for Improved Outcomes from Carceral Peer Support*

First Reader: Doctor Michael Hogue

Donté R. Hilliard

BS, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
MA, The Ohio State University
MA, Chicago Theological Seminary

*Conjuring a Culture of Thriving:
A Theopoetic and Corporeal (Re)Imagining of Liturgy and Leadership*

First Reader: Doctor Kate Lassiter

Brenton Tyler Weathers

BA, Humboldt State University
MDiv, Reformed Theological Seminary
MBA, Western Governors University

*Loving-Kindness Leadership:
A New Paradigm for Personal and Global Transformation*

First Reader: Doctor Nicole Kirk

Master of Arts (Religion)

Jen Salamone

MSEd, Western Illinois University

Master of Divinity

Monica Clark-Robinson

MFA, Hamline University
MFA, Michigan State University

Madison Colquette

MFA, University of Iowa

Birch Thomas Spick Cue

Nicholas Lee D'Agosto

BA, Marquette University

William P. Esty

Emma K. Farrell

PhD, University of South Florida

Anunnaki Ray Marquez

BA, Colorado University at Denver

Michelle McKenzie-Creech

BS, Eastern Michigan University

Swamini Adityananda Saraswati

Master of Divinity & Master of Arts in Leadership Studies

Wekoye SarahRuth Hodgkinson Davis

AS, Community College of the Air Force; BS, University of Maryland
MBA, Indiana University

Spoken Prayer

The Reverend Jules Taylor

Choral Prayer

One Million Voices

by Brian Tate

*One hundred, one thousand, one million voices.
I raise my voice. I give my word.
I raise my voice until I'm heard.
I will not cease. Too many hearts are broken.
Stay! Until my words are spoken.*

*The time is now. Silence is past.
The time is right. Justice at last.
I stand my ground. I will not bend.
I make my sound. A sacred journey to defend.*

*From every heart, from every mouth, these words are speeding.
My words are fire, my words are ice.
They stop the lies. They stop the bleeding.
One hundred, one thousand, one million voices!*

Charge to the Graduates

Birch Thomas Spick Cue and Donté R. Hillard
Class of 2026

Recessional

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!

Arr. by Mary Allen Walden

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Since I laid my burden down.
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Since I laid my burden down.

Feel like shouting, "Hallelujah!"
Since I laid my burden down.
Feel like shouting, "Hallelujah!"
Since I laid my burden down.

Life is sweeter, so much sweeter,
Since I laid my burden down.
Life is sweeter, so much sweeter,
Since I laid my burden down.

Feel like dancing, hallelujah!
Since I laid my burden down.
Feel like dancing, hallelujah!
Since I laid my burden down.

Love is shining all around me,
Since I laid my burden down.
Love is shining all around me,
Since I laid my burden down.



Reception

Following Commencement in Hull Chapel

Participants

Thank you to all participants from the Board of Trustees

Marshals

Doctor Michael Hogue, Commencement Marshal
The Reverend Jules Taylor, Assistant Marshal

Music

Under the direction of Adam D. O'Dell, the choral music today is performed by members of First Unitarian Church of Chicago, Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, Unity Temple, Unitarian Church of Evanston, and Second Unitarian Church of Chicago; with Carl Kennedy, piano, and Sylvia de la Cerna, violin.

Meadville Lombard Commencement Planning Committee

Faysha Crosbie, Elena Maria Jimenez, Chandler Little, Chloë Westerfield

Sylvia de la Cerna

Violinist

Faysha Crosbie

Academic Services & Facilities
Coordinator

Birch Thomas Spick Cue

Class of 2026

Doctor Vanessa Gomez Brake

Chair, Board of Trustees

The Reverend Mister Barb Greve

Board Member

Donté R. Hillard

Class of 2026

Doctor Michael Hogue

Professor of Theology, Ethics, and
Philosophy of Religion

The Reverend Kathryn House, PhD

Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies and
Practical Theology, Chair of the Rev. Dr. Lee
Barker Professorship of Leadership Studies

Elena Maria Jimenez

Registrar

Carl Kennedy

Pianist; Director of Music
Second Unitarian Church of Chicago

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First Unitarian Church of Chicago

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Professor of Religion, Ethics, and
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The Reverend Jules Taylor

Senior Director of Contextual Ministry
Affiliate Faculty

Doctor Emilie M. Townes

Honorary Degree Recipient
Commencement Preacher
Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of
Religion & Black Studies, Boston
University School of Theology

Chloë Westerfield

Marketing & Communications Officer

The Reverend Eileen Wiviott

Meadville Lombard Chaplain
Senior Minister
Unitarian Church of Evanston

The world needs more Meadville Lombard graduates.



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