

ACADEMIC LIFE

The Theological Fabric of the Trinity Curriculum

The early Trinity Evangelical Divinity School was birthed in the vision of the late nineteenth-century Norwegian-Danish Free Church and Swedish Evangelical Free Church, both of which developed Bible-theological curriculum to serve their pastoral leaders. Both were part of the Free Church movement, “an association of evangelical denominations whose sole requirement for church membership is spiritual life through personal faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Savior and Lord” (Article 2 of the Constitution). The merger of these two groups in 1950 formed the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), which continues today as the sponsoring church of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Catholicity of spirit marked the early EFCA founders, who emphasized “unity in essential matters and liberty in all things non-essential” (E.A. Halleen, church leader). Doctrinal statements supported common beliefs and were intentionally silent on matters such as the time and method of baptism, the extent of the presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord’s Supper, Arminianism and Calvinism, and the timing of the Tribulation in eschatology. The belief was strong- “Since all were members of the body of Christ through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and submission to Him we should not demand that all believers be in agreement in all other matters” (A.T. Olson, retired EFCA president).

The arrival of Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer to TEDS in 1962 reinvigorated the vision of the Seminary in terms of catholicity. Dr. Kantzer, with the support of the EFCA leadership, promoted TEDS as the “love gift of the EFCA to the broad evangelical world.” In an era when theological schism was rampant, Dean Kantzer called upon TEDS to embrace students and faculty who hold diverse theological views within the context of historic orthodox Christianity.

The TEDS of the twenty-first century still encourages diversity under the leadership of Dean Dr. Graham Cole. Committed to broad historically orthodox Christianity, and as a servant to the EFCA and the world wide church, TEDS welcomes and encourages faculty who affirm the inerrancy of Scripture. Regular TEDS faculty, while all subscribing to the EFCA’s Statement of Faith, currently represent diverse theological and denominational fellowships, including the following:

- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Evangelical Free Church of America
- Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ
- North American Baptist Conference
- Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Reformed Church in America
- The Wesleyan Church
- Baptist General Conference
- Conservative Baptist Association
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada
- Missionary Church (Fort Wayne, Indiana)
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Presbyterian Church, USA
- Southern Baptist Convention

Part-time and adjunct faculty members further broaden the scope of denominational inclusion.

Curriculum offerings are regularly taught a breadth of theological diversity while affirming the commonality of the Christian faith. The breadth of faculty backgrounds also enables TEDS to offer courses that emphasize the history and theological tenets of various theological traditions, including Fundamentalism, Anabaptist, Lutheran, Reformed, and Wesleyan, in accordance with faculty expertise and student interests.

We invite you to join students and faculty from many church backgrounds as we seek together to affirm our commonality in Jesus Christ and the study of the Holy Scripture.