A Life of Public Ministry

THE MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM
At the Divinity School we educate students for a life of public ministry.

When we speak about “public ministry,” we are describing leaders in congregations, chaplaincies, social service and advocacy, government, and education—and in areas we have only begun to imagine—who are fully engaged in constructive conversations with their faith traditions, their communities, and their world. We are suggesting that religious institutions and their wider societies share a concern for the flourishing of individuals, families, and communities—a concern that raises profound and enduring questions about justice and hope, freedom and responsibility, individuality, and the common good. And we are claiming that religious communities, and the cultures in which they live and move, are enriched by the deliberation of these questions—that in a pluralistic context such as our own, this mutually critical conversation is essential to rich public life.

A life of public ministry is a life immersed in theological reflection, interdisciplinary dialogue, and leadership that draws creative new maps of the inherited boundaries between the religious and the secular, the public and the private, the transcendent and everyday life. Your education at the Divinity School will help you cultivate the scholarly and professional practices—the habits of both heart and mind—that such a life demands, shaping you uniquely and decisively for faithful and courageous leadership.

1. Maggie Pothoff, a dual-degree MDiv/Public Policy student, working in the Divinity School’s student-run coffeeshop.
2. Fartun Ahmed, current MDiv student, offering a sermon in the Worship and Preaching course.
3. Steven M.G. Philp, a dual-degree MDiv/Social Service Administration student, at the annual Holi celebration on campus.
4. Hyein Park, current MDiv student, offering a sermon in a Wednesday Worship service.
5. New MDiv student Saeed Richardson enjoying a class in the fourth-floor Ministry Suite.
A life of public ministry demands a public education—responsible, rigorous, and lively dialogue between disciplines and professions.

One of the hallmarks of the Divinity School is the intentional interplay of scholarly and pastoral perspectives: ministry students and doctoral students share classrooms, course work, and a single faculty of world-class scholars, whether their studies lead to careers in teaching and research, ministry, or another form of public service. Divinity School students have access to the resources of the entire University, and they often take courses in the humanities and social sciences graduate divisions or from the professional schools of law, social work, and public policy. Hyde Park is also home to several free-standing seminaries and the Disciples Divinity House, affording ministry students at the Divinity School an endless selection of course work, connection, and community in their own traditions, with theological faculty from all over the world.
“UChicago taught me how to wrestle with deep questions, which has been the most valuable skill I’ve needed for nontraditional liberation ministry in the 21st century.”

Sandhya Jha, MDiv’05, MPP’05, pastor, First Christian Church of Oakland; founder and director, Oakland Peace Center, CA
What’s unique about the MDiv program at the University of Chicago?

Here education is truly an ongoing conversation, one that ranges from the classroom and the congregation into our communal life together. Ministry education here employs a distinctive cohort formation model, which means that our average incoming MDiv class size is 15 to 18 students per year, students who represent a broad span of denominations and faith traditions. Each class fits around a common discussion table; this intimate cohort structure draws you into a three-year conversation with colleagues exploring ministry who are just as passionate and curious as you are. It means more attention from faculty, but also a richer, deeper, and more personal community with fellow students that continues across your theological education—collaborations that will continue to enrich your professional practice long after you’ve left Swift Hall.
The master’s program in divinity at the University of Chicago gave me all I needed for a successful life in public ministry.

Jane Do

ABOVE Julian DeShazier, MDiv’10, Senior Minister of Hyde Park’s University Church, preaching in Bond Chapel during the Ministry Conference, an annual event.
In a metropolitan area of nearly 10 million residents, opportunities for ministry practice are limited only by your imagination.

Your engagement with ministry begins with an immersion experience during your first year, nine months of internship in one of Chicago’s vibrant congregations during your second year, and another customized field experience that might take you anywhere in the world. In addition to partnerships with nationally respected congregations, our field education experiences reach coast to coast, from a hospital in Hawaii all the way to the White House. Interested in a global, interreligious perspective? Through a fully funded travel grant, MDiv students have explored ministry in South Africa, Bosnia, Ghana, and India.
Elsa Marty and Michael LeChevallier, both MDiv alums and current PhD students, in India on a project supported by the Divinity School’s International Ministry Study Grant.

Megham Freytag, current MDiv student, participating in a Wednesday Worship service in Bond Chapel.

“I feel particularly equipped to speak both pastorally and prophetically to the range of challenges facing my congregation in this moment of history, to speak of Christian faith in a world shaped by powerful cultural, political, and economic realities.”

Rev. Bromleigh J. McClennihan, MDiv’05, MPP’05, Associate Pastor and Director of Christian Education at Baker Memorial UMC, St. Charles, IL.
Complicated times require creative, adaptive leaders—pastors, teachers, caregivers, and researchers who cultivate the art of paying attention.

They possess the critical skills to ask significant questions; have the imagination to forge transformative collaborations across the borders of disciplines, traditions, and professions; and embody the wisdom and courage necessary to devote themselves to these practices day after day. The Divinity School is located in the heart of a vigorous metropolis legendary for its strong and innovative leaders in many fields, and Chicago’s talented religious leaders—nationally known preachers, writers, editors, and activists—are important partners in our ministry program, serving as workshop leaders and guest preachers, teaching pastors for our interns, reflection leaders for our practicum, and teaching team members in our ministry courses.
“I believe the Christian church and the world it serves need thoughtful leaders, comfortable in both ecumenical and interfaith settings. UChicago gave me those skills, and I’m a better pastor for it.”

Rev. Shane Isner, MDiv’06, pastor, Plymouth Creek Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), MN
What can you do with an MDiv degree from the University of Chicago?

Actually, what couldn’t you do? Our alumni are leading communities of faith, working for social justice, caring for the sick, teaching in universities, advocating for change, preaching in pulpits, and engaging in public, interfaith dialogue all over the world. Our ministry students become scholars, priests, social workers, community organizers, chaplains, administrators, lawyers, and researchers—to name just a few of the possibilities. They write about religion and report on faith communities in the media. They work for faith-based agencies that advocate for justice and the common good. They staff political campaigns and work with youth and young adults in denominational and ecumenical settings. They serve their faith traditions in partnerships with congregations across the globe, living and teaching in Nicaragua, Ghana, India, and China. Combining their MDiv training with further professional preparation, they offer healing as social workers, therapists, counselors, and nurses. Still others complete PhD studies, pursuing careers in the classroom. Our MDiv graduates are imaginative, creative, entrepreneurial, and thoroughly committed to a life of public ministry amidst a constantly-changing religious landscape.

Recent MDiv graduates are working in:

Public policy agencies
- The Arc of DC
- Protestants for the Common Good
- Faith in Public Life

Postsecondary teaching of religious studies
- University of Southern California
- Texas Christian University
- Valparaiso University
- Saint Olaf College

Religious leadership
- Pastoral positions from Boston to Oakland, Alaska to Florida
- Specialized ministries from Africa to Iraq

Mission
- Teaching in Nicaragua
- Disaster relief in Indonesia
- Working with the marginalized in South Africa
- Relief and development work in refugee camps in Kenya
“UChicago’s MDiv program is exceptional. Whether your future is in a congregation, the academy, or the faith-based nonprofit sector, you’ll find the knowledge and skills you need here to faithfully answer God’s call.”

Rev. Beau Underwood, MDiv’10, MPP’10, partnership and outreach coordinator, Faith in Public Life, Washington, DC

PICTURED AT TOP: Emy Cardoza, MDiv’10, Assistant Director of UChicago’s Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

ABOVE RIGHT: Jonathan Friesen, MDiv’08, Lead Pastor, Ellis Avenue Church.

ABOVE LEFT: Celeste Grace Groff, MDiv’13, Hospital Chaplain at the Gilead Ministry of Hyde Park Union Church, at Jackson Park Hospital.

AT RIGHT: Dan Puchalla, MDiv’09, Assistant Rector, St. Paul & the Redeemer Episcopal Church.
Cynthia Lindner

I received the MA and DMin degrees from the Divinity School, rich preparation for the parish ministry, hospice chaplaincy, and clinical psychotherapy practice that challenged and fed me (and my three children) for the next 20 years of my professional life in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. I returned to Chicago in 2002 to serve as director of ministry studies, work that combines my interests in teaching, mentoring, and thinking about the art of religious leadership in our cultural context of great diversity and rapid change. I advise MDiv students, teach preaching and pastoral care, maintain a small clinical caseload in a downtown psychotherapy group, consult with pastors and congregations, and conduct narrative research on identity, selfhood, and multiplicity in pastoral practice. I am ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); here in Hyde Park I’m an active layperson in a local Episcopal church. Just as often, I’m a fascinated visitor to the congregations in which our students serve internships.

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Rev. Wesley Sun

Director of Field Education and Community Engagement

An ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches, Wesley Sun received his M.Div. from the Divinity School in 2008. After completing a two-year Lilly Residency specializing in pastoral care, Wesley became the founding Director of Hyde Park Union Church’s Gilead Ministry, a ministry field education and training program in partnership with Jackson Park Hospital. While directing Gilead, Wesley also began training as a CPE Supervisor and served as both parish pastor and hospital chaplain on the South Side of Chicago. Wesley’s interests in theology, storytelling, and language are also expressed creatively through art. Wesley co-founded Sun Bros Studios with his brother in 2011 and is the co-creator and author of several comic books and graphic novels, including Chinatown (2012) and Monkey Fist (2014). Returning as the Director of Field Education and Community Engagement, Wesley partners with faith communities and community agencies across Chicagoland to provide contextual learning opportunities for our ministry students.

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Location, Location, Location

Besides Chicago’s lively culture of faith communities and its reputation for shaping leaders in many fields, our city itself is a complicated, fascinating place to live and learn. When we asked current students what they love about life in Chicago, their answers ranged from the natural beauty of the lakeshore to the cultural vibrancy of a world-class metropolis, with plenty of local flavor as well.

Our students’ “Taste of Chicago” includes:

- Unlimited access to the Art Institute with the UChicago Arts Pass
- Baseball games at Wrigley Field (for Cubs fans) and U.S. Cellular Field (for Sox fans)
- Millennium Park, with its Cloud Gate sculpture
- Summer in the city, with free beaches, free festivals, and free concerts
- Lake Shore Drive and the 18 miles of bike and running paths alongside it: great views, plus you can bike beside skyscrapers
- The “L”—Chicago’s own term for the subway/elevated train system
- Sunrise over Lake Michigan in the winter, picnics at the Point in the summer
- New York caliber restaurants at Midwestern prices
- $10 student tickets at the world-class Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- $20 student tickets at Chicago Shakespeare Theater
- The cityscape view from the women’s bathroom in John Hancock’s Signature Lounge
- Navy Pier fireworks exploding above Pritzker Pavilion’s summer showcase of the “Stars of the Lyric Opera”
- Christmas caroling in front of Cloud Gate with Old Town School of Folk Music’s ukulele ensemble
- Biking down Lake Shore Drive to enjoy free Bollywood dance lessons in Grant Park
- 77 ever-changing neighborhoods: each with its own flavor, festivals, and foods
- Chinatown for dim sum, Lincoln Square for beers and brats, Uptown for Vietnamese sandwiches and injera, the flavors of South Asia on Devon Avenue
- Community organizing on the South Side
- The neighborhood of seminaries in Hyde Park
- Snowstorms (whatever your kind of weather, we have it here!)
- Birdwatching in Jackson Park
- Cross-country skiing at the Indiana Dunes
- Trivia Night at the Pub