

## **Atlantic School of Theology (AST) Annual Report to United Church of Canada Regions**

Atlantic School of Theology serves Christ's mission by shaping effective and faithful ordained and lay leaders and understanding among communities of faith. We did this in a variety of ways in 2023. With students and alumni in every United Church of Canada Region, we bring together a community with an extensive understanding of the varied needs of the church. The Summer Distance MDiv continues to be the degree with the highest enrollment bringing students together for 6 weeks of intensive learning in the summer and online, synchronous, and asynchronous classes in the fall and winter. In addition to the MDiv degree, we have United Church of Canada Students enrolled in the MA as well as 3 diplomas and a wide range of continuing education options.

2023 saw the soft launch of our Bachelor of Theology degree which includes a "Ministry Specialization" stream. We were pleased to welcome 7 students in the fall and anticipate an increase in enrollment in 2024. This degree reduces the barrier for those without an undergraduate degree who feel called to serve the church and want academic excellence at a bachelor's level combined with opportunities for practical experience serving the church. We are excited about the ways this may meet the identified needs of our founding parties. We value our relationship with the Office of Vocation and Candidacy Boards across the country as we seek to respond to the educational needs of the church for shaping effective and faithful leaders.

The Rev. Dr. Rob Fennell concluded his tenure as Academic Dean on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July and I have taken over the role for the next 3 years. The Presidential search committee concluded their work, and the Rev. Dr. Heather McCance began serving as President on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. Like all educational institutions, we face challenges and the road ahead is not always clear, however, there is a spirit of optimism and a sense of renewal within our school community as we chart a path for the future.

It is a joy to work with United Church of Canada students as well as those who support them within the administrative structure of the church and individual communities of faith. We welcome your input as we seek to serve the ever-changing needs of the church.

With the Deepest Respect and Gratitude,

*Susan MacAlpine Gillis*

Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis  
Academic Dean  
Atlantic School of Theology