



Commencement Convocation and Consecration Service

May 9, 2026
Fifth Week of Easter

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Edwards, Dean of the Seminary and Vice President for Church Relations,
North Park Theological Seminary, presiding

Prelude

“The Heavens are Telling the Glory of God”
“Tone Piece, Op. 22, #1”

F. J. Haydn, arr. Sandra Gay
Niels Gade

Please stand.

Processional

“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven”

Goss/Hustad

Welcome and Invocation

Dennis R. Edwards

Call to Worship

Psalm 100

Be joyful in the LORD all you lands;

serve the LORD with gladness

and come before God’s presence with a song.

Know this: The LORD alone is God:

we belong to the LORD, who made us;

we are the people and the sheep of God’s pasture.

Enter God’s gates with thanksgiving;

go into the holy courts with praise;

give thanks and call upon the name of the LORD.

For good is the LORD,

whose mercy is everlasting;

and whose faithfulness endures from age to age.

Opening Song

“Medley: Abide/Holy Spirit”

A. Williams, A. Keyes, J. Faube
Brian and Katie Torwalt

Stefanie Reiner, Master of Arts in Christian Formation

Jennifer Deardorff, Master of Arts in Christian Formation

John Sandberg, Master of Arts in Christian Formation

For my waking breath, for my daily bread,

I depend on you, I depend on you.

For the sun to rise, for my sleep at night,

I depend on you, I depend on you.

Chorus:

You’re the way, the truth, and the life;

you’re the well that never runs dry.

I’m the branch and you are the vine,

draw me close and teach me to abide.

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Where the Spirit leads, as I'm following,
I depend on you, I depend on you.
For the victories still in front of me,
I depend on you, I depend on you.

Be my strength, my song in the night.
Be my all, my treasure my prize.
I am Yours, forever You're mine.
Draw me close and teach me to abide.

Holy Spirit, you are welcome here.
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere.
Your glory, Lord, is what our hearts long for,
to be overcome by your presence, Lord.

Let us become more aware of your presence.
Let us experience the glory of your goodness.
Let us become more aware of your presence.
Let us experience the glory of your goodness.

Be my strength, my song in the night.
Be my all, my treasure my prize.
I am Yours, forever You're mine.
Draw me close and teach me to abide.

I depend on you, I depend on you.
I depend on you, I depend on you.

Service of the Word

Please be seated.

Please stand.

Please be seated.

New Testament Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Carolyn Poterek, Associate Professor of Education

The Gospel Reading

Luke 9:23–27

Ethan Carnes, Mission Advancement Officer
North Park University

Introduction of the Speaker

Dennis R. Edwards

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Commencement Address

“The Irrelevant Pastor”
David Swanson

Please stand.

Responsive Song

“Will You Come and Follow Me”

John Bell

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Academic Ceremony

Please be seated.

Conferring of the Honorary Doctor of Divinity

Jolene Bergstrom Carlson

Presented by David Bjorlin, Assistant Professor of Worship

Awards Announcement

Hauna Ondrey, Associate Professor of Church History and Dean of Faculty

History

Theology

Greek

Biblical Exegesis Award

Innovative Ministry

Christian Formation

Mark Safstrom

Austin White

Bronwyn Murphy

Mary Spriggs

Fabio Muniz

Catherine McNeil

Presentation of the Ahnfeldt Medallion

Mary K. Surridge, President

North Park University

Congratulations to Graduates

Mary K. Surridge

Conferring of Degrees

Dennis R. Edwards and Hauna Ondrey

Consecration Service

The Prayers

Of Thanksgiving

Catherine McNeil, Master of Divinity

Of Intercession

Melissa Champs, Doctor of Ministry

Of Consecration

Dontorrio Ja'mel Armstrong, Master of Arts in Christian Formation

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen.

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Charge

Tammy Swanson-Draheim, President
Evangelical Covenant Church

Please stand.

Closing Hymn

“Be Thou My Vision”

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word,
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father, thy child shall I be,
thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joy, O bright heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Benediction

David Swanson

Recessional

“Te Deum”

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Postlude

“With Joy I Go”

T. Frederick H. Candlyn

Immediately following the service, you are invited to a reception in honor of the graduates in Hamming Hall.

Please refrain from flash photography during the service.

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Speaker

David Swanson

Ordained to Word and Sacrament with the Evangelical Covenant Church, David Swanson is an author, the founding pastor of New Community Covenant Church Bronzeville, and the founder and CEO of New Community Outreach, a nonprofit organization dedicated to healing community trauma through restorative practices. Swanson is passionate about racial justice and reconciliation within the Body of Christ and regularly writes and speaks about these and similar topics, including his book *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* and *Plundered: The Tangled Roots of Racial and Environmental Injustice*. He is a member of the A Rocha USA board and a coach for the Wheaton College Preaching Institute and is a former director of church planting for the Evangelical Covenant Church. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Montreat College in 1999, his Master of Arts from Wheaton College in 2003, and his Master of Divinity from North Park Theological Seminary in 2023. He and his wife, Maggie, have been married since 1999 and are the parents of two wonderful sons. On most Tuesday mornings, you'll find Swanson wandering around Jackson Park looking for birds.

Honorary Degree

Jolene Bergstrom Carlson

Ordained to Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Church, Jolene Bergstrom Carlson's life passion has been a desire to experience and live out Micah 6:8: "This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God." She began her professional journey teaching communication and theater at community colleges in the 1960s, where she supported the development of racial reconciliation programming and materials. While raising her children, she became a parent educator, developing resources and training leaders to facilitate support groups in churches, school's and community organizations. A former pastor said to her, "You are a pastor and won't be at peace until you go to seminary." Midlife, this calling became apparent. So, Bergstrom Carlson went, despite there being few women in pastoral leadership at the time. She studied at North Park Theological Seminary, Bethany Seminary, and the Lutheran School of Theology.

After seminary, Bergstrom Carlson served as senior pastor to Douglas Park Covenant Church, a small church in an immigrant community near Cook County Jail, for 10 years. Here, she was challenged to grow in ways of justice and love beyond herself. She went on to serve as associate pastor at North Park Covenant Church and then in middle judicatory leadership as associate superintendent of the Central Conference for a decade where she facilitated new church development. During this time, she was trained as a spiritual director. Bergstrom Carlson then served as the executive director of Ministry Mentors, a national nonprofit organization that facilitated and trained pastors in peer mentoring and connected mentors with seminary students. Most recently, she served as interim pastor at Resurrection Covenant Church. In retirement, she continues to serve where she believes, "[She's] supposed to be." Bergstrom Carlson was married to the late Rev. Dr. Richard W. Carlson, a former seminary professor. She has three adult children and six grandchildren and loves walking, gardening, reading, and many outdoor activities.

COMMENCEMENT CONVOCATION

Banner Bearer

Lester M Griffin, Master of Arts in Restorative Justice Ministries

Crucifer

Lynnea Miller, Master of Divinity

Marshal: David D. Bjorlin, Assistant Professor of Worship

Organ: Sharon Peterson, University and Seminary Organist

Piano: David Bjorlin

Head Usher: Adam Gin, Master of Divinity student

A NOTE REGARDING ACADEMIC REGALIA

Today's academic attire is a legacy of the Middle Ages. While defining status, they kept wearers warm in the period's drafty and unheated stone buildings. In modern times, the attire is no longer protective, but is still worn to signify the wearer's degree.

Unadorned bachelor's gowns are the simplest in design, master's gowns have half-sleeves, and doctoral gowns are distinguishable by their velvet facing and three velvet chevrons on the sleeve. The velvet may be black or reflect the color of the wearer's degree.

You will notice some faculty are more colorfully attired. These gowns have traditionally denoted degrees from European universities, where each institution prescribes its regalia. In recent years, however, American institutions have increasingly departed from black and adopted more colorful garb for doctoral degrees.

Academic hoods reflect both the wearer's degree by the hood's size, the velvet trim's color, and the institution from which the degree was earned. At North Park, both graduates and faculty wear hoods. The degree colors commonly found at North Park are:

Apricot	Nursing
Brown	Fine Arts
Dark Blue	Philosophy
Drab	Business Administration, Economics, Management
Gold	Science
Green	Medicine
Light Blue	Education
Peacock Blue	Community Development
Pink	Music
Purple	Law
Scarlet	Theology or Divinity
White	Arts and Letters

The hood linings carry the colors of the school at which the degree was earned.

The color is also reflected in the tassels for the graduates. Some graduates are distinguished by gold cords worn around the neck. These are honor cords. One pair denotes honors (a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 on a 4.0 scale), and two pair denotes high honors (3.75).

The medallion traditionally worn by the university president contains the seal of North Park University and is the symbol of the presidential office. The Celtic cross worn by the seminary dean was presented to him as a symbol of his office at his installation.

The order of precedence in academic processions generally places those of the highest rank toward the rear. In processional order, the degree recipients enter first, led by crucifer, banner bearer, and marshal. They are followed in order by faculty, administrators, board members, and the platform party. The opposite order prevails for the recessional.

These centuries-old customs, reflected in today's ceremonies, remind us that while commencement points to the future, that which is now commencing is also a culmination. Our resources for dealing with either the present or future are necessarily drawn from the accumulated store of wisdom that belongs to the ages and is discovered and reworked anew by each generation.

North Park Theological Seminary Class of 1976

Rev. Merritt D. Berg †	Mr. Robert B. Joslin
Rev. Philip K. Brockett	Rev. Thomas W. King
Rev. David L. Coryell	Dr. Carla Lang †
Miss Linda S. Cummins †	Mr. David A. Mack
Mr. Delton D. Elkins	Rev. William L. Merritt
Rev. Daniel B. Fray †	Rev. Carl F. Miehle †
Dr. Daniel E. Fullerton †	Rev. Frederick V. Olson
Mrs. Dawn L. Fullerton	Rev. John E. Peterson
Rev. Michael L. Harper	Mr. Dale M. Shimmin
Rev. Dr. Tristan E. Hohler	Rev. David A. Smith
Rev. Douglas W. Johnson	Dr. Robert K. Tenglin
Rev. Robert L. Johnson	

† Deceased

Doctor of Ministry

Melissa Champs

“Preaching in the Middle: The Development of a Trauma-Informed Homiletic”

Master of Divinity

Adham Yosef Alaraj * †

Peter Gothold, *High Honors*

Catherine McNeil, *High Honors*

Sheri Meyer, *Honors*

Lynnea Miller, *High Honors*

“Christian Martyrdom Through the Eyes of Ancient Women: What Martyrdom Is, What It’s Not, and Why It Matters”

Fabio Muniz, *High Honors* * †

Bronwyn L. Murphy, *High Honors*

Jared Nieman, *High Honors* *

Mary Spriggs, *High Honors* *

Sarah E. Tarantino, *Honors* †

Anthony Wedel, *High Honors* †

Tamela White †

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

Matthew Podszus, *Honors*

“The ‘Generous Guest’: Chaplaincy Reimagined for the Secular US Campus”

Mark Daniel Safstrom, *High Honors* †

“Behold a Host Arrayed in Black and White: Swedish-American Missions and Imagining Blackness, 1865 to 1905”

Austin White, *High Honors*

“A Process-Relational Theology of Death”

Master of Arts in Christian Formation

Dontorrio Ja’mel Armstrong

Justin Garry Maurice Cain *

Deanna Carlson, *High Honors*

Brooke Ann Carpenter

Jennifer J. Deardorff, *High Honors*

Bonnie Renee Dighton

Joseph D. Giles, *High Honors*

Valarie Jenkins Grimes, *High Honors*

Tamara Linn Hutsell, *Honors*

Brandi Kejr, *High Honors*

Laurie Elizabeth Larson, *High Honors* †

April Marie Lyon, *High Honors* †

John David McKellar, *Honors* †

Emma Mueller, *High Honors*

Cathleen Ou, *Honors* † †

Jason Wayne Patterson Sr., *Honors*

Stefanie Reiner, *High Honors*

Amanda Sadlier, *Honors* †

John Eric Sandberg, *High Honors*

Martha Flores Solis-Paz

Christina Michele Palizzolo Triplett †

J.D. Tuell †

Brian Wylie, *High Honors*

Master of Arts in Christian Ministry

Leanne Childs, *High Honors* * †

Timothy Ray Giles * †

Michelle Griffith, *High Honors* ‡

Richard Thaddeus Jakubowski, *Honors*

Jada Murry

George W. Ross Jr. * †

Steve Lynn Wright * †

Ray Charles Ferguson †

Steven Perez Ramirez †

Master of Arts in Restorative Justice Ministries

Lester M. Griffin, *Honors*

Darrell W. Fair, *High Honors* †

Marcial Guerrero, *High Honors* †

Ronald David Henderson II, *High Honors* †

Michael A. King Jr., *High Honors* †

Peter Jermaine Lawrence Sr., *High Honors* †

Tremaine J. Mason, *High Honors* †

Alonzo Patrick McCorkle, *High Honors* †

Joseph Elliot Montague, *High Honors* †

Gregory Maurice Reed Jr., *High Honors* †

James Christopher Snow, *High Honors* †

Terrence Woods, *Honors* †

Legend

† In absentia

*Finished program requirements in August or December 2025

‡ Pending completion of requirements



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