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### Women's Leadership Institute Enters Milestone 20th Year



*Life-changing. Inspirational. Transformative.* These are the words graduates use when describing the Women's Leadership Institute (WLI) at Hartford Seminary, which is now enrolling students for its milestone 20<sup>th</sup> year.

That's 20 years of empowering women and incubating leadership projects such as the internationally known Prayer Shawl Ministry launched by Janet Bristow and Victoria Cole-Galo, graduates of WLI's inaugural class.

This September, WLI's founder, renowned feminist theologian Dr. Miriam Therese Winter, will once again lead women from different backgrounds, stages of life and faith traditions through a nine-month journey of bonding, discovery and rebirth.

"The strength of this experience-based program lies in its capacity to speak honestly to the deepest of needs, to listen to and affirm women wherever they are on their journey, and to offer a rich mix of theory and theology, prayer and practical application, as the basis for facilitating leadership, and as substance for transformative change," Dr. Winter said.

WLI meets once a month from September through May. In seminars that take place on Friday evening and on Saturday morning and afternoon, students hone leadership skills rooted in a feminist perspective, then design and implement a leadership project.

In addition to the Prayer Shawl Ministry, other projects that had roots in WLI include Bonnie Buongiorno's Ray of Light Farm in East Haddam, CT, a rescue for abused or abandoned horses and donkeys, and Cathi Nelson's Association of Personal Photo Organizers, which helps individuals and communities preserve and organize their memories. Another WLI project is the labyrinth behind 76 Sherman Street at Hartford Seminary. It was designed and constructed by 2015 WLI graduate Jeanne Pedane.

The WLI experience has been so profound that many participants asked for continued opportunities to study. In response, Dr. Winter developed a groundbreaking Master of Arts in Transformative Leadership and Spirituality that launched in 2014.

This 36-credit master's program is designed for those who are engaged in leadership roles, serving in the public or private sector, or for those who want to deepen their understanding of how to live faithfully, and with integrity, in today's multifaith and pluralistic world.

In addition to her academic credentials, Dr. Winter is well known as an author, a singer and a composer. A member of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, she has received honorary doctorates from Albertus Magnus College, Mount Saint Vincent University, the University of Saint Joseph, and the University of Hartford. She is the author of numerous books, among them *Woman Wisdom*, *Woman Witness*, *Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmilla Javorova*, *Ordained Roman Catholic Priest*, *Eucharist with a Small "e"*, *Paradoxology: Spirituality in a Quantum Universe*; and her autobiography, *The Singer and the Song*. She is now working on a book about Anna Dengel, who founded the Medical Mission Sisters, the Catholic order to which Dr. Winter belongs.

"The heart of my ministry here is learning, and helping others to learn, how to be in conversation, and eventually in community, with those who are different and consequently force us out of our comfort zone," she said. "We need to learn how to love – really love – and accept one another, and in the process hone our capacity to do good unto others. The Divine Spirit can and will initiate transformative moments of compassion and peace, healing and hope, within us and among us. Such positive energy is sacred and will help keep our world from spinning out of control."

For information about the Women's Leadership Institute or the Master of Arts in Transformative Leadership and Spirituality, please contact [admissions@hartsem.edu](mailto:admissions@hartsem.edu) or call 860-509-9549.



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