

the back page - Sheth LaRue, Middler MDiv

Graduating Seniors: I'm not good at saying goodbye. I don't always know how to express myself because I don't know if I'm going to see you again. 'Goodbye' is too final - it's like saying 'We shall never meet again!' But at the same time, 'see ya later' is too promissory - I will forever feel obligated to seek you out if we're within a 100 mile radius of one another. I've been contemplating what to say to you in these final days of our living together in community.

I want to start with thanking you. Thank you for your warm welcome as I arrived on campus. Thank you for your encouragement as I struggled where you once struggled - emotionally, mentally, and academically. Thank you for your commiseration with ridiculous classes, empathy at the loss of life, and counsel during relationship struggles. Thank you for helping me learn Hebrew and Greek, theology, ethics, and the entirety of the Bible. Thank you for guiding me as I made good choices and bad decisions; encouragement when I complained to the Deans (Gaventa and Jensen); peer-pressure to sample queso and kolaches. Thank you for being compassionate pastors, helpful classmates, and excellent friends.

To Daniel Awuah, Webster Kaisi, Axolile Qina, and Alexandra Matz - thank you for sharing yourselves and your families with me. Thank you for teaching me about new and different ways to think about God. Thank you for your undying faith and unwavering love for our God. Thank you for showing me grace and forgiveness when I was insensitive, uneducated, or unaware, and thank you for gently guiding me to new ways of thinking.

I leave you with this benediction attributed to Bishop Woodie White given during the 1996 UMC General Conference:

And now, may the Lord torment you.
May the Lord keep before you the faces
of the hungry, the lonely, the rejected and the despised.
May the Lord afflict you with pain for
the hurt, the wounded, the oppressed,
the abused, the victims of violence.
May God grace you with agony, a burning thirst for
justice and righteousness.
May the Lord give you courage and strength and compassion
to make ours a better world,
to make your community a better community,
to make your church a better church.
And may you do your best to make it so,
and after you have done your best,
may the Lord grant you peace.

much love. sheth.