



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 22, 2021

(St. Louis, MO)...Eden Theological Seminary will award honorary degrees as a part of its upcoming May 15th commencement to three outstanding leaders whose accomplishments in St. Louis and around the world embody the values which are integral to Eden.

Honorary degrees and awards recognize ordained ministers and community leaders who exemplify the Seminary's commitment to empower congregations and communities in the work of resisting racism (and its intersecting oppressions of sexism, heterosexism, ableism, colonialism, and imperialism), interfaith and non-faith collegiality, and vocational resilience. Recipients are those whose lives demonstrate service, witnessing to and carrying out the redemptive work of God in the world. "This year's recipients are amazing examples of Eden's vision of transformational leaders," said Eden's President, Deborah Krause. "Each of them has led their communities with service and teaching that expresses the hopeful vision of God's love, justice, and mercy at work in the world. This year, in particular, we celebrate their resilience to innovate in their vocations to address the global pandemic and uplift their communities."

Dr. LJ Punch
Doctor of Humane Letters
Vocational Resilience in Service of Community Health

A trauma surgeon, Dr. Punch has served as an Associate Professor of Surgery for Washington University Medical School and a Trauma Surgeon at Barnes-Jewish Medical Center. A public health advocate and activist, Dr. Punch co-founded St. Louis's "Stop the Bleed" program to treat gun violence as a public health issue. In 2019 they founded the "T" STL as a 501c3 to respond to the multiple public health crises of gun violence, homelessness, opioid addiction/overdose, and the Covid19 pandemic in the city of St. Louis. They have innovated during this Corona Virus period and are forging a way to work for public health and public safety in St. Louis to protect those most impacted and vulnerable in the community.

Honorable Stacey Newman
Doctor of Humane Letters
Progressive Leadership in Service of Justice and Shalom

Hon. Stacey Newman served as a Representative in the Missouri State House for 9 years in the 87th District. A passionate advocate for women's rights, reproductive rights, labor, Black Lives Matter, and anti-gun violence, Ms. Newman sponsored legislation in

support of these initiatives. Additionally, she chaired the Progressive Caucus in the Missouri House of Representatives. In her retirement from state congressional service, she founded *ProgressWomen*, a 501c3 that supports candidates, legislation, and advocates for these same issues. This spring and summer, preparing to support voter engagement in the General Election, *ProgressWomen* identified a need in the St. Louis community to advocate for healthcare workers and keep people safe during the Covid19 pandemic. Hon. Newman and *ProgressWomen* created and distributed masks, PPE, and sponsored a billboard campaign to promote social distancing and safety protocols along with voter engagement. Through this effort, *ProgressWomen* has increased its connections with different networks, and positioned its advocacy and witness more deeply in the community.

Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie
Doctor of Theology
Progressive Christian Leadership in the Public Square

Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie has a Master of Divinity from Eden Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Chicago Theological Seminary. An early innovator in online religious leadership, Chuck developed platforms on *Huffington Post* as a frequent contributor from 2015-2017, has a Facebook following of over 33,000 and a large Twitter following. From these platforms, Chuck has honed a message of progressive Christian witness that has challenged the evangelical conservative control of the public rhetoric of Christian faith. In addition to his influence on social media, Chuck has served as the Chaplain of Pacific University in Portland, Oregon. His ministry has exemplified vocational resilience, and progressive public religious leadership speaking to structural injustice and God's redemptive work in the world.

Eden's commencement will be held on May 15, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Eden Theological Seminary is a seminary of the United Church of Christ, with a mission to strengthen the life of the church by educating women and men for ministry, enliven critical reflection on faith, and support bold Christian discipleship. For more information visit www.eden.edu.

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EDEN SEMINARY ANNOUNCES
RECIPIENTS OF HONORARY DEGREES
TO BE CONFERRED AT
COMMENCEMENT MAY 2021



DR. SI PUNCH:
VOCATIONAL RESILIENCE IN SERVICE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
REV. DR. CHUCK CURRIE:
PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE
HON. STACY NEWMAN:
PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP IN SERVICE OF JUSTICE AND GRADUATE



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