

HISTORY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

Training for the Christian ministry was a main purpose in the founding of Yale College in 1701. As expressed in its original charter, it was to be a school “wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts & Sciences who through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church & Civil State.” That purpose has always been recognized at Yale, and the history of the university is one of increasing development in the facilities for training for religious service.

During the early years of Yale College, its general curriculum, supplemented in some cases by a year or two of reading under the direction of its instructors, was deemed sufficient for ministerial preparation. But in 1822, in response to petitioning from students of theology who asked to be recognized as a distinct group, a professorship in theology was established, marking the formation of what was later to be known as the Yale Divinity School.

Divinity School classes were first held in rooms above the university chapel, and in 1835–36 Divinity College was constructed on what is now Yale’s Old Campus as the new home of the Divinity School. In 1869, two years after Yale awarded its first Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degree (changed in 1971 to the M.Div.), the cornerstone was laid for new Divinity facilities at Elm and College streets. The present home of the Divinity School, Sterling Divinity Quadrangle on Prospect Street, opened in 1932, the same year women were admitted for the first time as candidates for the B.D. degree. A \$49 million renovation of the Georgian Colonial-style campus, where Marquand Chapel dominates as the central unifying monument, was completed in 2003.

Over the years, YDS has been associated with some of the most prominent figures in American religion, such as faculty members H. Richard Niebuhr, Roland Bainton, Brevard Childs, James Gustafson, Henri Nouwen, Margaret Farley, Emilie Townes, and moral movement leader William J. Barber II; and alumni/ae including theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, antiwar activist and Yale University Chaplain William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Union Theological Seminary President Serene Jones, Disciples of Christ General Minister and President Sharon Watkins, and Otis Moss III, senior minister at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Other well-known alumni include International Rescue Committee President and CEO George Rupp, Emory University President and U.S. Ambassador James Laney, and U.S. Senators John Danforth and Chris Coons.

Today, YDS is a thriving ecumenical school inclusive of a wide range of Christian traditions. The school graduates about 130 students every year, including many who enter pulpit ministries and others who embark on careers in chaplaincy, academia, law, medicine, business, social service, and the world of nonprofit agencies.

Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, located at Yale Divinity School for almost five decades, was founded by Bishop John Williams in 1854 in Middletown, Connecticut, to be a mediating seminary during a time of theological division in the Episcopal Church. In 1928 Berkeley moved to New Haven to better fulfill its mission by taking advantage

of the resources of an urban center and a great university, a purpose that came to full fruition through its affiliation with Yale Divinity School in 1971.

The Yale Institute of Sacred Music (ISM) has operated in partnership with YDS since it was established at Yale in 1973. The Institute is a successor to the renowned School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. ISM trains musicians for churches, and it supports programs in choral conducting, organ performance, voice, and church music studies (with the Yale School of Music) and in liturgical studies and religion and the arts (both with YDS).

In 2017 Andover Newton Theological School, the oldest graduate theological school in the country, affiliated with YDS as Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, becoming the third YDS partner institution on the Quad. The focus of Andover Newton is its celebrated tradition of ministerial formation and specialization in the training of ministers within locally governed congregational traditions.