

HEATHER VACEK LOOKS FORWARD TO SERVICE AS DEAN

The Rev. Dr. Heather Hartung Vacek, assistant professor of church history since 2012, began an appointment as the Seminary's associate dean of faculty Nov. 30, 2015, by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors. Dr. Vacek reflects, "The role of dean involves attending to the vocation of the institution and the vocations of those within it. It includes facilitating individual efforts for the good of the whole. I am eager to play a role leading that work."

Dr. Vacek's higher education and professional work prior to earning her M.Div. and Th.D. from Duke Divinity School uniquely qualify her for her new administrative duties. A teacher and scholar, Vacek also brings administrative skills to her work. Having earned undergraduate degrees in industrial engineering and in economics, a master's in engineering, and an MBA (from the J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management) at Northwestern University, she worked for a decade in corporate positions before pursuing a career in theological education. Ordained in the Moravian Church in America in 2012, she serves as a trustee and vice chair of the Board at Moravian Theological Seminary.



Dr. Vacek's work in church history and theology stems from her desire to "discover, document, and share the historical shape of Christian thought and practice in order to enable reflection about faithful Christian practice for the present and the future." Her research focuses on the historical relationship between Christian belief and practice in the American context, and her recently published book, *Madness: American Protestant Responses to Mental Illness* (Baylor University Press, 2015), explores Protestant reactions to mental illnesses from the colonial era through the 21st century. Through her research and teaching, she seeks to equip future clergy with a deep understanding of the past, including more robust theologies of suffering and the ability to shape communities that attend well to human distress.

"I am delighted to be working with Dr. Vacek during this transitional period prior to her appointment as vice president and full dean on March 1," says the Rev. Dr. Byron Jackson, who has served as vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty since 2006. Dr. Jackson will continue as Louise and Perry Dick Associate Professor of Church Education, a post he has held since 1986.

Dr. Vacek is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the American Historical Association, the American Society of Church History, The Conference on Faith and History, the Association of Practical Theology, and the Moravian Historical Society.

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