

# MEADVILLE LOMBARD

theological school

NEWS

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## **Endowment Allows Meadville to Re-envision Fahs Center and Continuing Education for Religious Educators**

In 1993, the Sophia Lyon Fahs Center for Religious Education was dedicated at Meadville Lombard. The vision for the program was to provide leadership in and direction for religious education to better serve students, scholars, ministers, religious educators and congregations. The center was endowed by a donation from the family of Dr. Sophia Lyon Fahs, to honor her legacy in the work of liberal religious education. "Mrs. Fahs--as she preferred to be addressed--was a formative figure," said M. Susan Harlow, Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education at Meadville Lombard, "and truly caused a renaissance within the Unitarian community as to how religious education was taught."

The center housed a number of historical documents that showed the evolution of religious education within the liberal religious movement. "The center has made accessible materials from the 1700s to the 1930s," said Harlow.

But when Lee Barker, DMin '78 DD '01, came to Meadville Lombard as president in 2003, he found that the original endowment was able to provide a space for the center to house these historical documents, but not much more. With Harlow, Barker gathered a group of advisors to consider how the center and Meadville might best serve the interests of liberal religious education. That group included Millie Rochester, MDiv '03, Barry Andrews DMin '76 DD '04, and Virginia Luke, MDiv '01.

This group discussed the many ways that religious education is shifting within the Unitarian Universalist movement and throughout Liberal Religion and considered that the best way to honor Fahs might be to offer continuing education resources for ministers, religious educators and the laity, and ensuring that courses and resources are available now and in the future.

Last month, the school received more than \$33,000 from Lois Fahs Timmins, one of Sophia Lyon Fahs' daughters, to further endow the Fahs center. These funds come at a time when the advisory group is awaiting the final results of a feasibility study being conducted by Ian Evison, DMin '80.

"We have not yet received the final report from the study," said Barker, "but with the proceeds of the Fahs endowment, we hope to be able to begin planning a continuing education curriculum that serves religious educators and is financially sustainable."

For more information on the Fahs Center, contact Harlow at [sharlow@meadville.edu](mailto:sharlow@meadville.edu)

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