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**Rev. Dr. Mark A. Fowler Named Senior Pastor  
at First United Methodist Church in Madison, Wisconsin**

**EVANSTON, Illinois, January 2016** – Bishop Hee Soo Jung of the Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church announces the appointment of The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Fowler to become the Senior Pastor at First United Methodist Church in Madison, Wisconsin, effective July 1, 2016. Fowler, who is currently serving as the Murray H. Leiffer associate professor of congregational leadership at Garrett-Evangelical, will retain his responsibilities at the seminary until June 30, 2016. He will remain associated with the seminary in the years to follow as an affiliate faculty member.

“I look forward to this next step in my vocational journey,” said Fowler. “Pastoring a complex and dynamic church will require the application of all of the areas in which I have immersed myself during my time of teaching and administration at Garrett-Evangelical. The invitation to lead a dynamic church into a vibrant future in a challenging and invigorating setting has engaged new possibilities for contributing my gifts to the mission of the church. First UMC, Madison made the choice to remain downtown and continue to undertake a vital witness fueled by a progressive public theology and deep commitments to spiritual and intellectual growth in close proximity to the Wisconsin state capital. The dynamic population of new communities of millennials, the students, faculty and staff of the University of Wisconsin, the homeless and marginalized, retired clergy, and the varied constituencies of Madison led me to respond to Bishop Jung’s invitation to invest the coming years in preaching and pastoral leadership.”

When asked about Fowler’s new appointment, Lallene J. Rector, president of Garrett-Evangelical, said, “Dr. Fowler’s departure is a significant loss to the seminary. For 16 years, we have benefited from his multiple gifts including teaching leadership, assisting in delivering the preaching curriculum, and assisting with our United Methodist Studies program – not to mention enjoying his sense of humor and collegiality. We also understand the great need of the local church for these gifts and so we wish him God’s speed in the new appointment to First UMC, Madison. We look forward to a new partnership with this congregation as we seek opportunities to better support our alumni, the clergy, and laity in Wisconsin.”

Fowler joined the faculty of Garrett-Evangelical in the fall of 2000. In his 16 years of service to the seminary he has been instrumental in a number of key areas and initiatives. He has served as the director of field education and developed the Vocational Formation and Church Leadership

program. Later, he would serve as vice-president for vocation in ministry and executive director of the Institute for Transformational Leaders and Communities. Fowler worked tirelessly to establish joint programming between Garrett-Evangelical and the Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University. In addition, he has served as the director of the congregational leadership concentration in the MDiv program and director of the congregational leadership track in the DMin program. In 2014, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church and Garrett-Evangelical named him Teacher of the Year.

“I have often said that students make a transition to being colleagues as they graduate from the seminary and undertake the variety of leadership roles they have prepared to fulfill,” said Fowler. “I hope that I have had a part in their discernment and preparation for leading the church in these tumultuous times. Now, I will join them as a colleague in the vineyards. With deep and profound gratitude, I take a treasure store of wisdom and experience along with deep friendships and relationships throughout the world from my years at Garrett-Evangelical. I pray that they will continue to be my cloud of witnesses in this newest appointment in my vocational journey.”

An expert in church leadership, Fowler has been instrumental in the development of numerous workshops and programs for ministers all over the world. He is an ordained elder and full clergy member of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. Fowler earned his doctor of ministry (with distinction) from Andover-Newton Theological School in Newton, Massachusetts and his master of divinity from Boston University School of Theology in Boston, Massachusetts.

Appropriate gatherings to mark this transition are being scheduled and invitations will be announced in the near future.

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, a graduate school of theology related to The United Methodist Church, was founded in 1853. Located on the campus of Northwestern University, the seminary serves more than 500 students from various denominations and cultural backgrounds, fostering an atmosphere of ecumenical interaction. Garrett-Evangelical creates bold leaders through master of divinity, master of arts, master of theological studies, doctor of philosophy, and doctor of ministry degrees. Its 4,500 living alumni serve church and society around the world.

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