



Dear Fuller Alumni and Friends,

This is the first of several letters I will be sending you over the next few months. Since our world, and Fuller Seminary's place in it, is at a historic moment of disruption and opportunity, I want to be sure you know what is going on and how we see the great vision before us.

Wherever you are on the globe when you read this, I feel confident that a whirlwind of change and uncertainty is both nearby and familiar to you. We all see and feel it. Whether in the headlines, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our ministries, or simply in our hearts, simultaneous and breathtaking change is whirling everywhere. That's your context and it's Fuller's context as well.

What former president David Hubbard said long ago is still true: the "Good Ship Fuller" is faithfully moving forward, even in the midst of high seas and stormy weather. Every day our faculty, staff, and students demonstrate that the gospel of Jesus Christ is still the hope of the world, and we continue forming women and men for the manifold ministries of Christ and his church. Right in the midst of the whirlwind, we are seeking to be faithful to this urgent and joyful mission.

What the whirlwind demands, however, is that we also take careful stock of what we are doing and how we are doing it. This has been Fuller's instinct from the start—to trust the gospel of Jesus Christ, to ground our work in thoughtful and vigorous scholarship, and to take new steps of risk in order to be faithful.

Discerning those steps is a primary challenge. Let me give you some examples.

You probably know our commitment to online formation and community began more than 15 years ago with our Master of Arts in Global Leadership degree. This beginning to Fuller's distinctive online education remains a hallmark in the design and practice of values that are core to a Fuller education. That is why we are not offering courses that are merely for information distribution, but rather are working diligently to create small learning communities for true formation. We are grateful that the evaluations of our in-person and our online courses are virtually the same. This is an example of trying to be discerning in the midst of the whirlwind of technology.

One thing you may not know is that every year, nearly 16% more classes are taken online. What may also surprise you is that most people are doing this because they want to stay in their current communities, jobs, or ministries while they earn a Fuller degree—integrating their studies where they already live and serve. We want you to know that after careful thought and prayer by our

faculty and trustees, all our non-clinical master's degrees will be fully available online starting this next fall. That is an example of a whirlwind of educational change to which we are seeking to respond wisely and effectively.

Here's something else I wonder if you know: increasing numbers of people are coming to us wanting the formation of biblical and theological scholarship, but *not* wanting a graduate degree. They may already have a theology degree, but they want more spiritual formation. They may be already in ministry and want some theological resources for strengthening their ministry. With vocations in churches, education, business, arts, or nonprofit leadership, they want meaningful engagement with resources that will deepen their spiritual lives, theological integration, and leadership development. They don't want and don't need any more degrees. What they do want is ongoing formation, greater competency, wider community, and deeper wisdom. This is why we launched *FULLER* studio two years ago, and are now developing the Fuller Leadership Platform in order to offer new access to faith and ministry resources for learners all over the world.

A whirlwind is full of disruption and opportunity. Every day our minds are bent on trying to figure out what the gospel calls us at Fuller to do and to be. Many days are full of great encouragement. Some days are just hard disruption, and discernment is even harder. The whole economic model of a seminary like Fuller is changed by these dynamics. The pedagogical formula is altered and new paradigms have to be set. Understanding what will best serve our students and maintain a thriving institution will necessarily look different than ever before.

Fuller is in the midst of the whirlwind, but confident that Jesus Christ is our still point, the One who is leading and guiding us. We do not walk in fear; we walk in confidence in the unchanging One in whom we place our trust.

Will you please pray for Fuller as we seek God in a time of discernment regarding how to be wise, bold, and faithful in such a time as this? Our current Fuller community has been in this prayerful mode for over a year, and we believe some clarity is emerging. I look forward to sharing more when I write next because I want you to know what Fuller is doing and why. After all, you are part of us and we are part of you.

Anticipating the faithfulness of God,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Labberton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. As we assess all that this "whirlwind" will mean for Fuller, it's important to me that you are informed. Please visit here for regular updates: www.fuller.edu/future