

General Seminary leases New York City campus to Vanderbilt University

by [Melodie Woerman](#)

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The Close, home to General Theological Seminary.

[General Theological Seminary](#) of the Episcopal Church on September 26 announced that it had signed an agreement to lease its property in New York City to [Vanderbilt University](#), which has its main campus in Nashville, Tennessee.

The agreement provides GTS a continued, year-round presence on the campus in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan for decades to come, the [press release](#) said.

“The General Theological Seminary is seeking to adapt to a changing world. Following the introduction of our hybrid M.Div., which combines online learning with in-person intensives, we found a mission-compatible tenant, which guarantees we

continue to operate out of our historic home. GTS is now set to serve the church for another century in New York,” GTS’s president, Ian Markham, said.

Markham also is dean and president of [Virginia Theological Seminary](#) in Alexandria, Virginia, which in August 2022 signed an [affiliation agreement](#) with General Seminary, which put both entities under Virginia Seminary leadership.

The agreement with Vanderbilt will provide GTS more than double the existing space on campus for students in its hybrid M.Div. program, which in turn will allow it to admit more students. In August, it welcomed 18 M.Div. students, its largest incoming class since 2010. The extra space also will allow the possibility of introducing additional in-person programming on campus, the release said.

Vanderbilt University, on its [website](#), said it intends for the Chelsea campus to be the home of a regional administrative hub it established in New York City in 2023 to help the university engage with alumni, prospective students and corporate partners. It added that the city is home to the largest Vanderbilt community outside Nashville.

Vanderbilt students, faculty, alumni and supporters while providing benefits for the neighborhood and the city,” according to its website.

The university was founded in 1873 thanks in large part to a major gift from New York business magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt.

GTS received other offers to lease the space, the release notes, including from the School of Sacred Music, a prospect that [prompted opposition](#) from some. After considering all offers, GTS’s board of directors voted unanimously to accept the one from Vanderbilt.

The release noted that the agreement still must be approved by the New York State Attorney General, a process that is expected to take three to six months.

GTS is the oldest of the Episcopal Church’s seminaries, founded in 1817. It was chartered by an act of the general convention, and its name was chosen to reflect its founders’ vision that it be a seminary to serve the whole church. —Episcopal News Service