THE PREACHING ISSUE
Why Proclamation Matters Today

KEEPERS OF THE WORD: THE FOLLY AND PROMISE OF PREACHING
By Charles Campbell

SINGING THE GOSPEL IN THE PULPIT
By Luke A. Powery

REDUCING THE SAUCE: PRACTICAL WAYS TO SHARPEN A SERMON
By Christine Parton Burkett
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Preaching Artists

BY ELLEN F. DAVIS

PREACHING IS a public performance, the oldest and most widely practiced art form of the church. Starting with the apostolic preaching of Peter (Acts 2:14–43) and Stephen (Acts 7), preaching has consistently been the most consequential of the Christian arts. Could the Reformation ever have happened without the revolutionary preaching of Luther, or Calvin’s exegetical and pastoral tours de force? Would the civil rights movement have gained traction without the Preacher King? More ordinary preachers regularly touch lives and minds within their congregations; thus they shape local history, far more than most of them imagine.

As a layperson who preaches several times a year, I myself am a dabbler in that performing art, like a player in an amateur theater company. Yet almost all my teaching and writing is directed toward the professionals, those who deliver sermons weekly. Many of the people reading these words are constantly in a state of more or less tense preparation for their next performance, or critical reflection on the last one, and most of my students will soon be joining their ranks. Therefore I remember their responsibility as I try to fulfill my own.

Performing artists of every kind are interpreters—of a script, a score, and, in the case of preachers, a story. The church commissions preaching artists to interpret one particular story, the story of God’s way with Israel and the church, and to show how that ancient story shapes our understanding of God’s way with the world and ourselves, even to this day. Performers can work well only if they trust their material, if they believe it is worthy of their audience’s attention. It is in that sense that the preacher must trust the biblical story. She must believe that the story is of compelling interest—not just relevant but true, true enough for Christians to wrap our minds and lives around it.

Trusting the story does not mean reading it uncritically. Every graduate of this school has labored for the knowledge required to read a given biblical text in linguistic, literary, and historical context as well as the hermeneutical perspective to see the multiple possibilities for meaning “then and now.” The preacher who lacks critical perspective is not likely to be a convincing interpreter. Nor is the preacher who approaches the story without the trust and indeed affection born of the practice of giving deep, daily attention to the church’s Scriptures, a practice that continues through a preaching lifetime.

Every Sunday in pulpits across the land, congregations witness the evidence that too many preachers do not trust the story to hold their attention for 12 to 20 minutes. With mounting performance anxiety, preachers spend the week searching their own experience and the Internet to find just the right illustration, or a series of them, often drawn out at length to fill up the time. One of the greatest gifts I received early in my own preaching life was a piece of advice from Krister Stendahl, New Testament scholar and the bishop of Stockholm, who was himself a great preacher. He startled me with a warning against sermon illustrations that are “too good”—that is, elaborate stories that may be entertaining yet ultimately defeat the preacher’s purpose. The point of preaching, Stendahl said, is to give the biblical text itself “a little more room to shine.”

For more than 30 years I have cherished Stendahl’s wisdom and also his metaphor. The text itself, artfully performed, is what has the potential to shine into the lives of those who listen to sermons; we should not rely on artificial light sources. If we trust the text, then we can stop worrying about finding the right story and instead focus on interpreting—with our words, our bodies, and ultimately our lives—the one that is already given to the church, as both comfort and challenge.

In this issue of DIVINITY magazine, we share some of the ways that we at Duke Divinity School think about and practice preaching. We are blessed with an abundance of resources, from our homileticians who are also theologians to our exceptional student preachers to international initiatives in homiletics to rich archival collections. May God use these resources to bless churches and communities as together we share the word and perform the text. ■

ELLEN F. DAVIS is interim dean and Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School.
The gospel is foolishness. Preaching is folly. The preacher is a fool. So the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18–25. Paul’s words have unsettled me in recent years. They have unsettled me as I teach preaching in the midst of a world shaped by overwhelming powers of domination and violence and death. And the apostle’s words have troubled me whenever I stand up to preach with nothing but a word in the face of armies and weapons of mass destruction, global technology and economic systems, principalities and powers that can overwhelm us by their seduction or their threat. Up against all of that, I speak for a few minutes from the pulpit? Paul is right. It seems foolish. In the face of those structures and institutions and systems and myths and ideologies that so often hold us captive and prevent us from even imagining alternatives to their deadly ways, preaching can feel like a weak and fruitless response. Why keep preaching? Why continue to teach preaching? Aren’t there more effective things I could be doing?

As I have wrestled with these questions in recent years, I have repeatedly turned to a passage from the prophet Isaiah, “The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”
That’s a grand vision! “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” It’s actually an almost unimaginable vision today: Afghanistan, Syria, ISIS; unending wars and daily drone strikes; suicide bombers and floods of refugees; perpetual gun violence, mass shooting, police killings of African Americans, and the “slow violence” of climate change and environmental injustice. Isaiah’s vision may be grand—but it also seems impossible.

But surely Isaiah’s vision was just as unimaginable in his time. Empires stalked the earth. Nation lifted up sword against nation. There were wars and rumors of wars. Swords and spears were far more powerful than plowshares and pruning hooks.

Isaiah knew the powers that be all too well. But he stared them in the eye, and he dared to speak his vision anyway. Indeed, Isaiah’s prophecy, like much biblical speech, represents the “poetics of the impossible,” rather than the “prose of probable,” as Stephen H. Webb has described it. It’s a huge vision, a kind of hope against hope. And I love that about this text. It’s so big and so daring. It convicts me. For my own preaching is often too timid, and my own vision is often too small. I think we need a renewed “poetics of the impossible” in the pulpit.

A few years ago, however, I noticed something even more extraordinary in this text than Isaiah’s vision. Right in the middle of his prophecy, Isaiah proclaims the means to this future of shalom, and that means is the Word.

The way to the new creation, Isaiah proclaims, is the Word of God. “Out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3). What’s remarkable is what’s missing—that’s not in the text. There is no violent battle, no divine shock and awe, no military victory of God. God does not meet the violence of the nations with more and greater violence. God does not send good guys with guns to defeat bad guys with guns. There’s not even any of that imagery here. That in itself is
extraordinary. Such divine military imagery is prevalent throughout much of Scripture (including Isaiah!), all the way through Revelation. But in this text that imagery is conspicuous by its absence.

In Isaiah’s prophecy, what goes forth from Jerusalem is not the sword or the spear, not the gun or the tank or the bomb. What goes forth is the Word of the Lord. This Word, Isaiah proclaims, is the way to the new creation. Only through this Word—not through greater military might—will the chaotic violence of the nations be transformed into the shalom of the new creation.

Those of us who preach know this Word. It is the Word that brought order out of chaos in the beginning—at the first creation (Genesis 1; John 1:1–4). It is the Word Moses spoke: “Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1). It is the prophetic Word that Isaiah elsewhere promises will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11). It is the Word made flesh, the crucified and risen Word who also goes forth from Jerusalem. It is the Word proclaimed through the generations by a great cloud of witnesses. It is the Word that called us into ministry, the Word at the center of our vocations and our lives. It is an extraordinary Word. And God relies completely on this Word—and on the person who dares to proclaim it.

But this Word is also vulnerable. The Word has been abused and distorted by the church.

The Crusades, after all, were “preached.” The church has repeatedly used the Word to support war and violence and exclusion rather than to transform swords into plowshares. This Word has been rejected, dismissed, even crucified. And this Word is often very poorly preached. Indeed, I often wonder: Why in the world does God entrust this Word to human preachers? God seems foolish indeed.

How will the new creation ever come through this vulnerable, abused Word? How long will it take? How much trust and faithfulness, even suffering, will it require? The means to the end of shalom seems even more unimaginable than the end itself. You have to be foolish to bet your life and the future on just this Word.

The apostle Paul learned this lesson on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–22). The story begins with the future apostle “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (v. 1). It is a disturbing image. Moreover, as the word “still” indicates, Paul’s behavior is nothing new; it is part of his ongoing pattern of action toward the followers of Jesus.

Paul’s disturbing treatment of the disciples of the Lord is recounted repeatedly in Acts. Paul is rabid in his violent religious zeal. He approved the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (7:58–8:1). He ravaged the church, entering house after house and dragging believers off to prison (8:3). He “persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison” (22:4). He voted against believers when they were condemned to death by the religious authorities (26:10). He tried to force followers of Jesus to blaspheme in the synagogues. As he himself confesses, “I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities” (26:11). That’s why Paul was headed to Damascus, a foreign city, “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” He was terrorizing believers. Violence toward his enemies had become his very life’s breath.

Paul embodies what Walter Wink has called the “myth of redemptive violence.” According to this myth, the way to bring order out of chaos is through violence; the way to deal with enemies is violently to defeat them. Violence becomes the ultimate solution to human conflicts. As Wink writes: “Ours is neither a perfect nor a perfectible world; it is a theater of perpetual conflict in which the prize goes to the strong. Peace through war, security through strength: these are the core convictions that arise from this ancient [myth].” Seeking to bring order out of the chaos created by disciples of the Lord, Paul is driven by the assumptions of this myth. He is captive to this myth, consumed by it, unable to imagine any alternatives. In this respect he is like contemporary religious terrorists (whether Christian or Muslim or Jewish), as well as like the nations that seek to combat terrorism. The myth of redemptive violence drives them all, and the cycle of violence seems unending.

But then Paul is confronted by the risen Christ, sent to wait in Damascus, and, finally, ordained to ministry by his enemy, Ananias, who lays hands on him and anoints him with the Spirit. Following his ordination, Paul begins his new ministry: he begins “to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’” (9:20). As becomes clear throughout the rest of Paul’s life, his primary mission becomes preaching—the proclamation...
of the Word. And this mission represents the most important ethical transformation in the Damascus-road story. The story begins with Paul breathing threats and murder. But the story ends with Paul preaching the Word through the breath of the Spirit.

Paul’s life has been transformed through his experience on the Damascus road and his encounter with Ananias. No longer does he resort to violence or persecution to further his cause. No longer does he drag his enemies to jail or condemn them to death. Instead, like the prophet Isaiah, Paul becomes, in the phrase of Daniel Berrigan, a “keeper of the Word.” Paul becomes one whose ministry and life are shaped by the Word. Proclamation replaces stoning. Voice replaces violence. Word replaces war.

In Damascus, Paul discovers that he cannot follow the way of the crucified Christ by continuing to use the weapons of the world. He realizes that he cannot be ordained by Ananias and continue to approach his enemies with stones. He claims as his ministry the folly of preaching, which includes not simply the odd message of the cross but also the practice of preaching itself. In the midst of a violent world—and Paul’s was certainly as violent as ours today—Paul foolishly trusts the Word.

Whenever preachers step into the pulpit, we are, like Paul and Isaiah, not simply trying to deliver a good, faithful sermon. Of course, we want to do that. But we are also doing something more. We are living into our calling as keepers of the Word, people who dare to engage the world, not with a sword or a gun or a bomb, but with the Word that Isaiah keeps and Jesus embodies and Paul trusts. And living as keepers of the Word is the most important thing we do as preachers. We live into this calling whenever we wrestle deeply with a biblical text that confounds and claims us both at the same time. We follow this vocation whenever we struggle to form the Word that’s burning inside us into a sermon, whenever we stammer to form the Word into words. We pursue this calling whenever we dare to speak the gospel’s “poetics of the impossible” in the face of the powers of death.

In all of these activities—and many more—we aren’t simply preaching sermons.

We are living into our vocation as keepers of the Word. It is an absolutely foolish calling, and the results often seem thin at best. But it is a calling rooted in the folly of God, which is wisdom and power (1 Corinthians 1:18, 25). It is a calling rooted in the promise of God, whose Word goes forth from Jerusalem and does not return empty. And, foolish as it may seem, living as keepers of the Word is one of the most important things we can do in the midst of a violent world.

Several years ago I watched a documentary about a barefoot South Korean street preacher. He had actually been a professor, but he gave that up, took off his shoes, and began to preach. He hobbled through the streets and subways of Seoul with nothing but the Word. “Jesus saves!” he proclaimed. “Why two Koreas? Take heart, not fear!” His feet were purple and swollen and cracked; for many days the temperature was well below freezing.
Only through this Word—not through greater military might—will the chaotic violence of the nations be transformed into the shalom of the new creation.

People laughed at him or avoided him or looked away embarrassed by him, and the authorities repeatedly escorted him from the subway stations. But he kept returning, and he kept preaching year after year: “Jesus saves! Why two Koreas? Take heart, not fear!” His preaching didn’t seem to change anything at all. Except for a few converts, things were pretty much the same when he died as when he started. He was a ridiculous person to almost everyone who saw him, a foolish “poet of the impossible.”

All of us who accept the calling to preach are really no different. We may dress up in fancy robes and stand behind big pulpits and preach in nice sanctuaries. But we’re still up against the powers that be with nothing but a Word. It is folly to much of the world—but not to God. For the Word of the Lord, God promises, shall go forth from Jerusalem. And “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”

Clinging to that promise, we dare to be keepers of the Word, heeding the charge of 20th-century prophet William Stringfellow:

“In the middle of chaos, celebrate the Word. Amidst babel … speak the truth. Confront the noise and verbiage and falsehood of death with the truth and potency and efficacy of the Word of God. Know the Word, teach the Word, nurture the Word, preach the Word, defend the Word, incarnate the Word, do the Word, live the Word. And more than that, in the Word of God, expose death and all death’s works and wiles, rebuke lies, cast out demons, exorcise, cleanse the possessed, raise those who are dead in mind and conscience.”

Editor’s Note: This article is an expanded version of a lecture given on the first day of the Introduction to Christian Preaching class taught by Charles Campbell.
This latter song from the days of my youth in church continues to ring in my spiritual ears down the acoustical corridors of ecclesial history. I hear the musical echo, reminding me of the connection between singing and God—or, as the African proverb notes, “The gods will not descend without a song.”

Many years before this hymn was written, an early church adage said, “He who sings prays twice.” Singing and music are at the heart of the church’s response of praise to God. How can we keep from singing?

The great reformer Martin Luther emphasized the importance of music in the church by calling music “the handmaiden of theology.” As a homiletician, if preaching is theology—as I believe it is—then one might assert that music is the handmaiden of preaching. This is crystal clear in both many high-church and low-church congregations. But I would take it one step further and add that preaching is music, and in particular song. From my perspective, I am compelled to sing the gospel in the pulpit for at least four reasons.

**A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

First, I have a personal reason. Since my earliest days on earth, my parents said I was making melodies. They said I could whistle beautifully by the age of 11 months and would do so proudly for our neighbor from the third-floor window of our home while being held in their arms. A musical inclination has never departed from me, even
1 Kings 11

And there shall stand one of thine seed after me, which shall order my coast according to all that I commanded him, and thy house, and thy kingdom shall be established for ever.

And this commandment and this statute shall be in thy hand, and in thy children’s hand.

And it came to pass, when David had finished speaking unto Solomon his son, saying, These are the words which my father David spake unto me;

That Solomon took all the journeys of Hadad, and fought with Rehoboth of the children of Ammon, and smote them:

And Solomon overcame all the rest of the kings of the Philistines, and the Arabians, and Maacah, and Zobah.

And the king made tribute payable by Hiram of Syria, by a certain rate every year.

And pure gold according to measure by the weight, for work of gold.

And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones; for there was great abundance of silver; and he brought out gold as dust, and made of the sea of cast metal vessels of mercy for the house of the Lord, and of the king’s house, and vessels for all her use.

And Solomon’s马匹s were in daily use, horsemen for his chariots, and swift dromedaries for the swift dromedaries for the king’s use.

And Solomon provided dromedaries for king Hiram of Tyre, in the rate of a talent of gold for every dromedary.

And the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at Ezion-geber, which is unto Elath over against theunt of Edom.

And Elath became an ensnarement unto the king: and Hiram brought him by sea all the ships in the age of Elath, until he had provided Dares for king Solomon.

And the rest of all the kings’ treasures, and all the great store of silver, and gold, and precious things, did Solomon have, and overpasseth the account of them of Solomon.
when I wanted to depart from it. I was born into a musical family led by a pastor-father. God, family, education, and church were key elements in the fabric of our lives, and music was the thread that held them all together. My oldest brother played the trombone. My second brother, the saxophone. Third brother, drums. The fourth child, and only sister, played piano; and I, as the fifth and last, sang and followed everyone else around. My mother played the harmonica (and my father thought he could sing!). Melodies were raised for both the majesty of God and the melancholic misery of life. All of the children sang together at home, church, and wherever my father preached. We weren’t the Jackson 5 but the Powery 5.

Singing was critical to our communal Christian spirituality, and in the bosom of this particular home the spiritual roots of song were born in my life. Yet I realize that this life history and experience are different, which is why this question came to serve as dean of Duke Chapel: “Why do you sing when you preach?”

I sing for the personal reasons just named. I sing because I must; if I didn’t, I would not only lose my voice, I would also deny my cultural ancestry.

A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Second, I have a cultural reason for why I sing the gospel in the pulpit. As I’ve described in my book Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope, the history of singing and preaching are so interwoven in the historical context of the enslavement of African peoples to such an extent that one can say that preaching sings and songs preach. W.E.B. DuBois captures this linkage when he writes in The Souls of Black Folk of how blacks brought “the gift of story and song” to the Americas. Singing (the spirituals) told a particular story of faith, suffering, community, and hope. Moreover, in the context of slavery, singing was a form of resistance against oppression. It was not art for art’s sake but a matter of life and death. Song was the soul of a people weary at heart yet resilient, creative, and hopeful. One’s vocal quality didn’t matter because singing was a mode of survival. One had to sing or die.

Take this example of Harriet “Moses” Tubman, a key leader of the Underground Railroad, who masked her plan to escape to freedom through a song, as reported in John Blassingame’s Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies:

“Good bye, I’m going to leave you. Good bye, I’ll meet you in the kingdom.”

and similar snatches of Methodist songs. As she passed on singing, she saw her master, Dr. Thompson, standing at his gate, and her native humor breaking out, she sung yet louder, bowing down to him,—

A wave of trouble never rolled Across her peaceful breast.”

Tubman disguised her intentions to escape by singing a well-known song about leaving for the kingdom but giving it another layer of meaning to also represent earthly freedom from enslavement. Singing was a matter of life and death. And from a Christian perspective this may also be true, which is why we are encouraged to “be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts” (Ephesians 5:18–19).

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

This brings me to a third reason—a biblical one—why I sing the gospel in the pulpit. The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed in many forms throughout Scripture. One of those forms, which is not often discussed, is the genre of the hymn. Of course, the psalms exhort us to sing at numerous points (see Psalm 96:1). But Scripture contains many examples of hymn forms, suggesting that the proclaimed gospel should also be sung. Walter Brueggemann is right to argue that “flattened prose” will not suffice when it comes to preaching.

The hymn genres of Scripture demonstrate how song can also preach the gospel, going beyond prose. Mary sings the Magnificat, a hymn, in Luke 1. John the Revelator, relies on hymnic material in chapters 4 and 5 in the book of Revelation when reflecting on God’s future. The story about the descent and ascent of Christ is told poetically through a hymn known as “the Christ hymn” in Philippians 2, implying that the gospel story of Christ should be sung. Singing the gospel in the pulpit reveals that it takes melody and harmony to attempt to fully grasp this holy mystery of God. The gospel is proclaimed through song in the Bible; how can today’s preachers keep from singing?

A THEO-HOMILETICAL PERSPECTIVE

These are the personal, cultural, and biblical reasons why singing the gospel is important to me. And I have a fourth reason—a theo-homiletical
one. Singing the gospel in the pulpit is essential for a fuller understanding of what it means to proclaim the incarnate Word in an enfleshed manner. Preaching the gospel should be shaped by the gospel’s form and content; preaching, therefore, includes hymning for and to Jesus through singing. It is a way of embodying the incarnational nature of the gospel story, a story grounded in the Incarnation, the Word becoming human flesh in Jesus Christ.

When we sing the gospel, we embrace the incarnational aspects of preaching and affirm that preaching requires more than words: the gospel requires all of us—hearts, hands, bodies, and voices—to express the inexpressible. The gospel is more than a word. It is an event expressed through a body, just as God’s Word took on a human body. Homiletician Tom Troeger defines homiletics as “theology processed through the body,” and singing is sound running through the body. Thus the proclaimed Word should be sung. To sing is to be human and incarnational, recognizing that preaching involves more than our intellect. Singing the gospel in the pulpit is a way to embrace the whole gospel—mind, body, and spirit.

This is why I nudge students of preaching to consider a hymnic homiletic. The preacher is not just a speaker but also a singer with breath, voice, melody, pitch, volume, pace, and so much more. Preachers sing musical notes of the gospel story, accentuating what might be called a theoacoustemology. Another way to frame this is to affirm that, in the wonderful words of James Weldon Johnson, preachers are “God’s trombones.”

The historical expressions of African American preaching have been musical, in which preachers intone or chant or sing or whoop their sermons. From chanting slave preachers to whoopers like Caesar Clark and C.L. Franklin to Martin Luther King Jr.’s musical speech to contemporary preachers with singing careers, such as Shirley Caesar, Andrae Crouch, Marvin Winans, Donnie McClurkin, and Marvin Sapp, a homiletical heritage endures of singing the gospel. Shirley Caesar, a native of Durham, once proclaimed in an interview, “I sing my sermons and preach my songs.” To play off Brueggemann, one might declare, “Finally, comes the singer!”

This singing potential for preaching, this hymnic homiletic, is not just a “black thang” or a Pentecostal proclivity, for we have seen this musical approach to expressing the gospel throughout the ages in the examples of Melito of Sardis, Romanus the Melodist, and Ephraim the Syrian. Something about the gospel of Jesus Christ beckons us to sing to, for, and of God. Singing the gospel in the pulpit is not a race or denominational thing. It is a human thing, a life and death thing.

In December 2005, I officiated at the graveside service of my 10-year-old niece, Christiana, who had suffered and died from a disease with a long name that shortened her life—juvenile dermatomyositis. For months, intravenous needles were her nails and a hospital bed, her cross. Eventually, she died. At the graveside, as her casket was lowered into the ground, seemingly Death pronounced silence. But in our tears was a tiny sprout of hope that Death did not have the final word and victory. My brother, the father of Christiana, his baby girl, stood up spontaneously with his family to go and look over the open grave. As they looked at the open grave and stared Death in its face, he began singing Christiana’s favorite worship song: “Here I am to worship, / here I am to bow down …” As he sang in the face of Death, the Spirit of life and song was intoning the final word. Death would not have the final say on that memorable day.

Death will not win. God will win. In the words of Pauli Murray, “Hope is a song in a weary throat,” so when I sing the gospel in the pulpit, I am proclaiming the hope of the ultimate death of Death. I am preaching Death’s funeral. I am singing the refrain, “Death, go to hell.”
The Courage to Preach the Gospel

The Homiletic Legacies of Richard Lischer and W.C. Turner

BY AUSTIN MCIVER DENNIS
RICHARD LISCHER AND W.C. TURNER have been teaching at Duke Divinity School for a combined total of 71 years. Lischer joined the faculty in 1979 after eight years of parish ministry. Turner began teaching in 1982 as assistant professor of theology and Black Church studies. After serving as director of the Office of Black Church Studies, he joined the preaching faculty in 1998.

As colleagues and friends through these many years, Lischer and Turner have taught thousands of students and inspired countless others through their preaching, scholarship, and pastoral ministry. Together they have helped establish Duke Divinity School as a sanctuary par excellence for serious students of preaching. Their legacies of preaching and teaching and their distinctive contributions to homiletics have transformed the ministries of a generation of divinity students.
W.C. TURNER: THE SUBVERSIVE WORD

On my first day as a preceptor for the Introduction to Preaching class, I sat toward the back of the classroom, nervously checking my watch as the students settled in. At three minutes past the hour, the door opened, and the Rev. Dr. William C. Turner Jr. made the most captivating entrance into a classroom I’ve ever witnessed. As he crossed the threshold, he began singing a hymn in a rich baritone, slowly and deliberately descending the stairs of the stadium-seating classroom, using each step to punctuate a certain word or syllable. A few students joined him as he began singing, and by the time he reached the lectern, the entire classroom had become a church choir. Even those who didn’t know the lyrics were humming, clapping, or tapping their feet. We sang the entire hymn, and concluded with a round of applause and laughter. What more inspiring introduction to the ministry of preaching could he have given us?

More than an endearing anecdote about a beloved preaching professor, this event serves as an allegorical key to Turner’s life and work as a preacher and teacher of preachers: the preacher emerges from the congregation to proclaim the word, and through such proclamation enables those gathered to achieve harmony with God and one another. The word he speaks is inherently musical, a living word with a rhythmic power that captivates even those who have never heard it before. It is a spiritual word, a surprising and enchanting word, a word of joy that engenders a celebration. This word constitutes the melodic gospel we are called to preach every Sunday.

In addition to his work in the general field of homiletics, Turner’s scholarship has epitomized and advanced the rich tradition of black preaching and African American culture. His article “The Musicality of Black Preaching” examines the mystical interplay of music and language in the performance of a sermon. He traces black preaching’s musical origins to Christian worship in slave communities, where the prohibition of African drumming gave rise to alternative forms of rhythmic expression in the proclamation of the gospel. The rational elements in the sermon pertain to both its rhetorical structure and what he describes as the “surplus portion,” when the preacher becomes an unrestrained instrument of divine inspiration. This is not a collision between the intellect and emotion, he argues, but a complementary amplification of both that allows preaching to become an imaginative manifestation of the unity of the Spirit.

Theology—specifically pneumatology, the theology of the Holy Spirit—lies at the heart of Turner’s scholarly work. In another article, “Preaching the Spirit: The Liberation of Preaching,” Turner declares it is a mistake to dismiss preaching as if it were not useful theology. He asserts the significance of the Holy Spirit’s work in elevating preaching as a central theological discipline. The Spirit is the quickening power and presence of God who dwells within the church and elevates preaching beyond “the limited domain that is supplied by human speech and culture.” Because the Spirit “touches life concretely” in preaching, the sacraments, and pastoral ministry, pneumatology is crucial for the church’s ability to grasp the complexities of Christian faith. A Trinitarian understanding of the Spirit will properly realign theology’s concern to read Scripture on its own terms, for pneumatology is the means by which we will be “carried back to the data of the Scriptures and reintroduced into its imaginary world.”

Without Spirit-filled reading and preaching, systematic theology would dwell in obscurity. Its treasures and mysteries would rarely take on fresh meaning or become incarnate in “the tissue of life.”

Turner’s preaching stands up to the tests of his own scholarship, which began with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering at Duke. He is an electrifying engineer of the spoken word. His love of proclamation spills over into the classroom, where he might begin preaching at any minute. A typical day with Turner behind the lectern will likely begin with a standard lecture or Socratic discussion, but one should expect a sudden detour into the practical concerns of pastoral ministry or—my favorite—an impromptu set piece or spontaneous homily.

What Turner has done with his life as a preacher and teacher would not surprise the congregation that raised him. One Sunday when he was away at school, a woman in his hometown church asked Turner’s mother, “How’s my preacher?” To which his mother replied, “He’s not a preacher; he’s studying to be an engineer.” The woman looked his mother in the eye and said, “Don’t pay that no mind, ’cause I told you . . . that boy’s gon’ preach.”

Whether in the classroom or in the pulpit at Mount Level Missionary Baptist Church in Durham, where he has been pastor since 1990, Turner is concerned to teach and preach what he calls “the weightier matters of the gospel.” When he reads the Scriptures, he looks for what Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann calls the subversive character of the text. “The Bible is a story that’s always suspicious of the empire,” Turner says. “It’s never the narrative of the dominant ones, except when subjected
to prophetic scrutiny... It’s the story of the downcast, the downtrodden. And if you ever miss that, you have to fabricate another gospel."

I remember seeing him address a large crowd outside the North Carolina Legislative Building in 2013. It was a humid June evening, one of the earliest Moral Monday Rallies. By that August, nearly 1,000 people—including Turner—would be arrested for protesting the agenda of a newly elected General Assembly. His speech decried the ways legislators were treating downtrodden and powerless people. His rhetoric echoed the concerns of the biblical prophets and mirrored Jesus’ mission in the Gospels.

I will never forget his final statement. As an encroaching thunderstorm threatened to dispel the crowd, he warned those who would trample the poor in words that echoed the prophet Nahum: “A storm cloud is gathering.”

The preacher emerges from the congregation to proclaim the word, and through such proclamation enables those gathered to achieve harmony with God and one another.
In his inaugural lecture as James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor of Preaching, Richard Lischer told the group of distinguished scholars and guests: “God never blunders onto the scene with obviousness but is always draped by a story or a metaphor, a dream or an ordinary experience.” He went on to describe James Cleland, the beloved former dean of Duke Chapel, as one who “knew that preachers do not build systems but illumine lives.” How fitting that Lischer holds the Cleland chair, for he could have been describing his own vocation and approach to preaching.

Though his doctoral training was in systematic theology, Lischer discovered that his education left him unprepared for the mercurial God he encountered in his first pastorate. His first memoir, Open Secrets, tells with raw beauty the story of his pilgrimage from prideful ambition to enchantment with his parish in rural New Cana, Ill. There he discovers the truth of St. Irenaeus’ claim that “the glory of God is humanity fully alive.” God’s presence is revealed to him in surprising ways. A creosote-stained trash barrel becomes the “Sacred Burning Barrel,” a place of fellowship, prayer, and confession. The church takes in a scared, pregnant teenager who had been sneaking through a sanctuary window to pray in the middle of the night. The gaze of a dying former pastor, who sits in Lischer’s peripheral view every Sunday, dissuades him from swapping gospel proclamation for “affable chatter.”

As his friend and colleague Charles Campbell recently noted in a retirement tribute at the Academy of Homiletics, Lischer has produced an extraordinary collection of scholarly works without demanding fanfare. He has always been most interested in intersections, which explains his ability to teach and write with breathtaking depth across the subjects of homiletics, theology, biblical interpretation, history, ethnography, and memoir.

A vocation puts an end to you in order to disclose your true end.
The Preacher King is an account of Martin Luther King Jr.’s preaching. Based on years of research and personal interviews, the book describes King’s theological worldview, scriptural imagination, and rhetorical style. More than an academic book for preachers, the book enables all of us to see more clearly the vision of our nation’s greatest prophet.

The End of Words is the published version of his Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale, which explore the reconciling power of gospel proclamation. Lischer challenges those with a vocation in language to contend with the futility of human speech when violence puts an end to words. “What does one say after a televised beheading?” Lischer asks. He answers that the gospel of reconciliation is the true end of words. The preacher’s task in a reconciling sermon is to seek to understand the other, including the enemy, and to “leave the door ajar to a future that no one, including the preacher, can fully comprehend.” The book contains one of Lischer’s most poignant lines: “A vocation puts an end to you in order to disclose your true end.”

The book I have shared most with family and friends is his recent memoir, Stations of the Heart, about the death of his son, Adam. We see only snapshots of Adam’s life — his adolescence, marriage, and friendship with his father. Lischer frames this within the Passion narrative, which we see unfolding in the robbery of the Langford Building, the power went out halfway into a student’s sermon. “It was pitch-black,” Lischer said, “but in the darkness, the student said, ‘Dr. Lischer, I think I can continue.’ So we sat there in the dark, and this fellow preached his sermon.” This student had already been struggling in the class, but despite his inability to see his notes, he continued on. His classmates began encouraging him: “Go on, Ted.” “That’s good.” “Say that again!” “And pretty soon,” Lischer said, “the guy gave a really fine sermon. And we all sat there in the dark and appreciated it.”

This spring, Lischer is retiring from teaching at Duke Divinity School. He will have taught nearly 4,000 students over the course of 37 years. One of the most valuable gifts he has given them is an ability to recognize the gospel and share it with others, even when it comes to them in the dark.

A COMMON LEGACY

The many scholarly and pastoral contributions of Lischer and Turner defy tidy attempts at categorization, but several overlapping facets of their legacies stand out. First, they have both emphasized the theological foundations of homiletics. Preaching does not begin with us but with what God has done. Their conviction of the centrality of the gospel and that God has spoken to us by the Son, Jesus, pervades all of their work and teaching. No homiletic element — from exegesis to rhetoric to design — can sustain itself apart from its Trinitarian origins. The practical result of this theological foundation has been to free preachers from the distractions of fashionable homiletic trends, enabling them to pursue a more rhythmic and sustainable method for enduring the demands of weekly preaching.

Second, Lischer and Turner have been agents of justice and reconciliation on issues of race and gender. Besides their teaching and scholarship, their friendship itself is a sign of God’s grace in a society that is by no means postracial. Each of them has honored and incorporated homiletic treasures from traditions different from their own. This includes their encouragement of women preachers. They have witnessed with joy as women students took courage and found their voice, sometimes despite enormous resistance to their presence in the pulpit.

Finally, Lischer and Turner have served as pastors to many of us in times of joy and sadness. They have broken bread with us at the table, prayed with us in the hallways, and spoken at our weddings and funerals. When the question has been, in the words of Isaiah 6:8, “Who will go for us?” we have put our confidence in their wisdom and eloquence. How often we have called on them to speak for us when we couldn’t find the words to say. When they too couldn’t find the words, they were simply present with us, content to let the Spirit intercede in sighs too deep for words.

We give thanks to God for Professors Lischer and Turner, for their teaching us with care and passion, and for instilling in all of us the courage never to be ashamed of preaching the gospel.
Listening to a sermon is never a time merely to engage Scripture. It is also an opportunity for the congregation to experience a performance of Christian power dynamics and to hear Christ celebrated as the ultimate source of power in Christian life. Whether a sermon takes the form of scriptural exposition, testimony, practical wisdom, or parable, it declares the end of empire and announces the reign of Christ. For that reason, the terms of the preacher’s authority matter a great deal.

Secular power often has a comfortable home in Christian sermons, which dulls the edge of the gospel message. This power is not limited to sermon content, though if a preacher regularly relies on shame or guilt, content will certainly play a role. More frequently, the problem occurs in the rhetorical atmosphere that the preacher helps to create. In an attempt to justify their authority to speak, some preachers (regardless of ethnicity) rely on power derived from colonial assumptions, white supremacy, or patriarchy.

Deriving credibility and power from these sources solidifies the current order of things rather than contribute to radical transformation.

How might sermons better demonstrate the life-giving power dynamics of the kingdom of God? A range of contemporary cultural critics might serve as apt conversation partners on this question, but since this problem is a spiritual one (as many problems of power are), I see value in consulting a contemplative who intentionally sits on the fringe of ecclesiastical power structures: Julian of Norwich. Julian was a 15th-century English anchoress.
who lived an ascetic life of prayer and devotion to God. Known for her unusual visions of Christ’s love, Julian was convinced these visions were messages for the church. She chronicled the visions in two books: *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* and *A Revelation of Love*. While Julian is rarely mentioned in histories of preaching, she is one of the church’s most beloved proclaimers. Scholar Beverly Mayne Kienzle notes that in Julian’s medieval English context, *sermon* is an elastic term that encompasses treatises, commentaries, drama, poetry, letters, and even some devotional writings that are never brought to speech. Both of Julian’s works fit under this description of a sermon.

Julian speaks as a woman and a layperson without formal theological training in a rigid world where everyone was expected to know his or her place and adhere to hierarchical norms. She dares to joggle traditional foundations for a preacher’s authority such as rank, expertise, and charisma. This feistier dimension of Julian’s voice is often overshadowed by an emphasis on the more soothing elements of her writing. But the church should not discount her nerve or her skill at negotiating forces that would attempt to censor her. Julian has a keen sense of what enables a preacher to narrate faith with credibility, and she gently exposes the spiritual emptiness of some of the most common sources of power in the pulpit.

**NOT RANK**

One common pitfall is assuming that rank confers credibility. Due to misconceptions about the ends of ordination, clergy can face pressures to speak as so-called master Christians. This thinking cheapens the ecclesial orders by lumping them in with administrative and institutional authority in secular organizations, in which it is rarely a problem if rank segregates people. In the church, however, ordination should unify rather than divide people. When preachers appeal to rank, credibility wanes. Sometimes a kind of puppetry unfolds, and the power dynamics resemble that of a stern disciplinarian scolding wayward children. In the delivery of a sermon, appeals to rank doom the preacher to speak at length and say very little, often in a stilted cadence.

Julian offers a helpful critique because she speaks from the church’s fringe. Part of her vocation as an anchoress was to stand outside of institutional power structures, even ecclesiastical ones, and speak with the uncensored voice of one who is beholden only to God. She challenges the appeal to rank by emphasizing our shared identity as children of God. And for Julian, being one of God’s children indicates belovedness as well as finitude. Regardless of age or duration of Christian experience, our souls remain in perpetual infancy. No one becomes a master in the realm of faith. Instead, we are always babes at the breast of Mother Christ. In lieu of resorting to ecclesiastical authority, a preacher might focus on what ordination is supposed to connote, such as love of community, respect for the church and its traditions, or time spent in fellowship with members of the church. These will lead to unity in the church and promote Christ-centered power dynamics.

**NOT EXPERTISE**

Speaking in the name of the omniscient God is a daunting task, and some clergy deal with the pressure by relying on expertise. This mode of power is highly cherished among postmodern people. Some clergy read scriptural exhortations to “study and show thyself approved” and assume expertise and credibility are synonymous. Yet, in her poem “What Do You Do?” Bonnie Thurston, a New Testament scholar and poet, alludes to the illusory power of expertise:

> For far too many years the teaching, velvet barred robe, mortarboard, hood, were a great cover, an ingenious disguise, a rubber nose and mustache attached to fake glasses, except the charade was so deadly serious, legitimate, respected, gainfully employing words to hide what matters most.

In a similar way, the power dynamics of the preaching event are corrupted when specialized knowledge elevates the preacher over listeners. Use of biblical languages without adequate explanation is a common culprit, as is the preacher’s canon of people deemed worthy of quotation. Do Christians in the pews matter as much as German theologians? Does the preacher prioritize academic tomes over the “classics” in the kingdom of God? Preachers should use their knowledge to contribute to the collective thriving of the people of God.

In Julian we see a skilled exegete who pored over Scripture, Christ’s body, her visions, and her social
Julian’s work reminds us that preaching is an opportunity to rethink authority in light of the gospel in the hopes that listeners will move forward with a startling new worldview.

context. But she does not do this to draw attention to her own intellect. She does not clutter her message by showing off what she has been privileged to learn. Instead, she invites others to delight in their own curiosity, love of Scripture, and passion for truth. These virtues give life to the church because more members of Christ’s body can share them.

NOT CHARISMA
Expertise is not the only way to resist the foolishness of the gospel and cling to secular norms of power and credibility. Charisma or charm has an equally sinister impact. In these cases, the gospel sings back-up to the preacher and the sermon is in service to fame. While it is easy to think of charisma as a problem for high-profile preachers and churches, any preacher who gets caught up in perfectionism is vulnerable. The underlying problem is a misunderstanding of what it means to burn with the Spirit’s fire. Celebrity does not require an anointing. Preaching God’s love to an aching world does. The Holy Spirit fills preachers so they might take risks, face resistance, bear scrutiny, and enact justice.

Rather than rely on charisma, Julian chooses humility. Christ is the only star in her visions, and her joy in him authorizes her voice. With joy as the central charism or gift of her preaching, Julian has a level of credibility that is inaccessible to preachers who rely on rank, expertise, or charisma.

DESTABILIZING THROUGH BLISS
What if a sermon is an invitation to reframe authority in light of the ethical imperatives of Scripture? After all, the gospel announces the crumbling of earthly power and the arrival of a Christ-centered understanding of the ends of power. The Christian assembly is where dimensions of God’s new ordering become visible. Allegiance to God’s new way of being undergirds Julian’s preaching. We also see this in the work of 20th-century Christian visionaries, such as Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Vernon Johns, Pauli Murray, Cho Wha Soon, Desmond Tutu, and William Stringfellow. None of these freedom fighters appeals to rank, expertise, or charisma for credibility in his or her preaching. Instead, joy validates their sermons, for it signals liberation in Jesus Christ.

Thinking of the power of joy, Evelyn Underhill describes Christians as “amphibious” creatures who straddle homes in time and in eternity. The reality of our eternal home infuses daily life with a stream of radical possibility. As a consequence, the gospel has a destabilizing effect on the powers and principalities of this age and a liberating impact on the church. The preaching encounter should offer a respite from the powers of this age and gesture toward a new way of being.

Since attempts to tame God’s new order abound, preachers benefit from imagining new power arrangements in light of Scripture. Take, for example, choreographer Bill T. Jones’ Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land, first performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company in 1990. The aesthetics of life in the Promised Land are performed in the final scene, in which company dancers are joined by around 50 local dancers of varying body types. They are male and female, young and old, and differ in skin color and skill. All are nude. Their dance is an attempt to present bodies and relationships unmarred by human domination. Since occasions for such imagination are rare, the performance inspires a mix of awe and joy. Jones is a choreographer and not a theologian, but his liberating vision of human power relationships fosters a longing for the new Jerusalem.

Julian’s work reminds us that preaching is an opportunity to rethink authority in light of the gospel, in the hope that listeners will move forward with a startling new worldview. Like Bill T. Jones’ choreography, the gospel vision is one that only a brave few are ready to perform. A sermon is part of the readying process.
Reducing the Sauce

Practical Ways to Sharpen a Sermon

BY CHRISTINE PARTON BURKETT
ne of the hardest parts of preaching is deciding what to leave out. It’s like cooking. Scholar G. Robert Jacks refers to this painful editing process as “reducing the sauce.” A few savory ingredients are minced and chopped and added to the soup pot with a huge amount of stock, cooked for half a day, until volume is reduced by half. The process is repeated. Hours pass. All the excess liquid evaporates away. What was a huge vat of liquid is now a cupful of fragrant, highly concentrated sauce.

The preacher has a similar task of distillation. She begins with every commentary in her library, every sermon she has ever heard on the text, every life experience or anecdote that might be relevant, and of course—most importantly—everything linked to at The Text This Week. The sheer volume is overwhelming. What to leave out? As Jim Harnish explains, the preacher must distinguish the “essential word for today, the fitting word, from a lot of great material, just for another sermon, another day.” Reducing that enormous volume of knowledge into the best single sermon for a particular people at a particular time requires rigorous editing for the clear, fresh perspective. No thin gruel of fillers, watering down the sermon. The goal is to say one thing well. It’s a long, hot process, but worth the effort.

In my years at Duke, nearly every sermon I have reviewed contains at least one moment that is transcendent. In that instant, something clear and bright and holy, however brief, offers a glimpse of God. But time, routine, and the week-in and week-out grind of preparing sermons make it harder and harder to find that moment. The crisp, clarion ring of the gospel gets muffled by the bubble wrap of clichés and aphorisms, deadening the reach of the call. Every preacher I know experiences, at some point early in the week, a spark of imagination, and the Word moves and breathes; ideas are rich and savory. But too often, at some point along the way—say, late Friday or early Saturday—a sermon was written instead. The spark gets watered down with church speak. The savory idea gets slapped into shape and comes out as three points and a poem.
AN AUTHENTIC WORD

The world is listening for a word that is comprehensible, authentic, and true. The world is listening for preachers who speak their language. Only a well-crafted word can bridge the chasm between the pulpit and the pew. For all of the worship wars and the talk of “relevance,” perhaps we are missing a more fundamental fact that communication is hard.

In a psychological experiment conducted at Stanford, Elizabeth Newton paired people to demonstrate a point about communication. One person picked a familiar tune, like “Happy Birthday,” and tapped out the rhythm. The second person was supposed to guess the song based only on the tapping. Those who tapped couldn't help but hear the song clearly in their heads and could not imagine why the listeners didn’t hear it. The guessers heard meaningless raps on a table in an unknowable sequence, while the tappers heard whole symphonies in their heads. The tappers grew frustrated. They tapped more vehemently. “How can they not recognize this tune!” they thought. The tappers wildly overestimated their own chances of successfully communicating the song they heard in their heads. The study called this phenomenon the “curse of knowledge.” Once we know an idea, a concept, or a tune, it becomes nearly impossible to place ourselves in the position of those who do not. This disconnect between speaker and hearer is often seen in the pulpit.

We overcome this “curse of knowledge” by using language that is tangible, clear, and comprehensible. We use story and illustrations and rich language to convey meaning rather than just to describe ideas. We clear out the secret codes and clichés and church speech. But we have to recognize it first. Boil down to the central idea, that fitting word for today.

Clichés / tropes swaddle real people and tangible concepts in opaque, vague, safe language. Preach a picture, not just ideas. Charles Campbell calls out generic phrases like “death of a loved one” or “get the pink slip” (Are they pink? That’s been a while.) and “the midnight phone call.” He encourages preachers to speak instead in pictures, to “put a face on it.” In preaching this way, the churchy phrase “wayward teenager” becomes “She went so quickly from hopscotch to barhopping all you could do is pray.” Instead of the generic “those struggling with alcohol addiction,” try “a prison made of bottles.” Can you see the faces? Can you hear the urgency in language?

“Christianish” words: “Epiclesis.” “Pericope.” The phrase “It’s all Greek to me!” doesn’t come from nowhere. Our congregations are intelligent, well-read, and often-underestimated Bible scholars. But few outside of clergy use these words in everyday talk, and the sermon should be as accessible as a conversation—not a lecture on which there will be a quiz. We may be tapping “prevenient grace” with all our hearts, but it may still be heard as Morse code. And I have never yet texted a friend to ask that we get together for “fellowship.”

Verbal throat clearing, or “idling the engine” as Richard Lischer terms it, adds words and subtracts value from every speaking moment. Skip the self-defeating introductory clauses like “needless to say” or “I don’t need to tell you that.” Odds are good that you plan to tell them anyway. Skip the self-referencing apologetic clauses like “it seems to me that maybe” or “I’d like to offer an illustration” or, worse, “if you will just bear with me for a moment longer.” Communication studies have repeatedly shown that the listener makes a judgment about whether to tune in or out within the first few seconds of a sermon. Rather than review where you are in a sermon series, start strong; engage the hearer, and save your sermon series infomercial for the second paragraph if you must have it at all.

Redundancies: “Reducing the sauce” calls for word economy. Redundant language (“gather together,” “past history,” “personal friend”) makes for canned speech rather than a conversation. “Grateful thanks” is the only kind of thanks there is. “Thanks” alone is adequate. How can you richly convey the message with the fewest words? Can your main point be tweeted in 140 characters? Edit, reduce, repeat.
Many have heard the story of *Hoc est corpus meum,* “This is my body.” People struggled in the Middle Ages to find order in chaos, hope in despair. Distrust of clergy was at an all-time high. Overreach by civil authority and riots in the streets were common. Children didn’t have enough to eat or clean water to drink. Whole families were being wiped out by pest-borne plagues. They were searching for that glimmer of God. (With the possible exception of the plague, it was a time not unlike our own.) Imagine the muck-filled streets and the unwashed masses crowding the doors of the cathedral. The people of God were desperate. They needed a miracle! And there, they are told, when bread is lifted high overhead, it becomes God!

In the heart of the Mass, the sacred words are uttered. Never mind that the presence of bread itself would be a minor miracle, but this! “*Hoc est corpus meum,*” intones the priest, and the bell is rung, and God is nigh—not just an interesting idea in our heads or a Savior in our hearts but God in our mouth, our gullet, our bodies. No wonder the hopeful and the frightened, the sick and the penitent ran from cathedral to cathedral to make it just in time for the moment, the magic words, the chiming of the bell. *Hoc est corpus meum.* “This is my body.”

The sounding of the bell fades away, the host is chewed and swallowed—and people still died in droves. Infants hardly stood a chance. The disparity in wealth between the classes ensured ongoing misery for generations. Powers of indifference or evil ruled the land. Whether by war or disease or systematic poverty or despair, the miracle for which they hoped didn’t seem to be working. It seemed to be all just so many words, a trick, sleight-of-hand, dangling hope before a desperate people. Hope turned into disappointment. Belief, by degrees, became disgust.

And, as the story goes, over time the phrase *hoc est corpus* became the phrase “hocus pocus.” Silly syllables of incantation by the illusionist, the trickster, the cad. Words of pseudomagic. An empty phrase whose promise turns to ashes in your mouth.

We live in a culture that sees through the stage patter and is looking for the real thing, a genuine glimpse of God. Craft a message that is clear and savory and true. Simmer away all the excess words that dilute the richness of the word. Preach to the mind, the spirit, the heart, and the gut. May your sermons speak into a world fed-up with hocus-pocus. Say it straight, from the One who loves us and was broken and poured out for us: Thanks be to God.
**A Vocation to Preach: A Retirement Event Honoring Richard Lischer**

To celebrate 37 years of service to Duke Divinity School, a special event to honor Richard Lischer, James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor of Preaching, will be held Sept. 19, 2016. The theme of the event is “A Vocation to Preach.”

In a new and challenging world of communication, the preacher is called to rely on the word of God, and, by the leading of the Spirit, tell the truth about human sin and divine redemption. It is a hard vocation. No wonder the apostle asks, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

The event to honor Professor Lischer will take place in Goodson Chapel and will include lectures by Tom Long, Lauren Winner, and Richard Lischer; a meditation given by W.C. Turner; presentation of the Festschrift; and a panel of TED talks on the theme “Where Does the Sermon Start?” with Will Willimon, Ellen Davis, Charles Campbell, Luke Powery, and Jennifer Copeland participating. The event will conclude with an afternoon reception.

All are invited to attend, but registration is required: http://divinity.duke.edu/events/vocation-preach

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**International Homiletics Initiatives**

Duke Divinity School has been expanding its international connections and participating in multicultural conversations about preaching, part of the cutting edge of the field of homiletics. The next meeting of the Societas Homiletica, the leading international academic group of homiletics scholars and practitioners, will be held at Duke Aug. 3–8, 2018. Approved at the March meeting of Societas Homiletica held in Steffenbosch, South Africa, the meeting will bring homiletics scholars from around the world to Duke.

A new online, peer-reviewed journal published by Societas Homiletica has launched its first issue: www.ijhomiletics.org. The vision for this journal began at a meeting of international scholars held at Duke Divinity School in 2014. The first issue includes an article by Donyelle McCray, who earned her Th.D. in homiletics from Duke Divinity School in 2014 and is now assistant professor of homiletics at Virginia Theological Seminary, and an essay by Charles Campbell, professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School.

**Th.D. Student Teaches Preaching in Latin America**

Th.D. student in homiletics Tito Madrazo, in addition to heading up the Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Initiative, has been teaching preaching in Latin America as part of the Course of Study programs run by Duke Divinity School professor Edgardo Colón-Emeric. “Over the past three years, I have had incredible opportunities to work with preachers in El Salvador, Peru, and Guatemala,” Madrazo said. “They preach across their respective regions in congregations worshipping in Spanish as well as Quiché and Quechua. Most recently, in Guatemala, we had male and female participants ranging in age from their 20s to their 80s, and a significant portion of them could neither read nor write in any language.”

The Course of Study program provides training in biblical studies, theology, and ministerial development for United Methodist local pastors. “In Guatemala, very few of the ministers received a regular salary for their work, and yet they had all taken time off from their paying jobs in order to grow as preachers. One of them, an 81-year-old lay preacher/farmer named Martín Morales, had founded four different churches over 60 years of ministry. As he began his seventh decade of ministry, he still wanted to learn more in order to fulfill his calling. Ultimately, this is what preaching requires. More than skill or style, more than learned exegesis or even literacy—preaching requires faithfulness.”

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Martin Morales and Tito Madrazo at Course of Study in Guatemala
Lilly Endowment for Preaching Digitization

Thanks to a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Preaching Digitization project is publishing more than 1,500 sound and video recordings as well as 1,347 written sermons preached at Duke Chapel from the 1950s to early 2000s. The sermons are drawn from collections residing in the Duke University Archives featuring various ministers, professors, and guests of the university. Notable speakers include Frederick Buechner, Howard Thurman, Phyllis Trible, and William Stringfellow.

The digitization project is making the collection of 7-inch reel-to-reel audio tapes, audiocassette tapes, VHS tapes, and digital audio tapes of sermons, programs, and meditations available to online users and researchers. This spring, the most basic sermon information will be made available online in the Duke Chapel Recordings Collection, which launched last year.

The five-year grant proposal was the brainchild of Charles Campbell, professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School, and Luke Powery, dean of Duke Chapel, and they have recently hired a project director, Adrienne Koch, former communication specialist at Duke Chapel. She is working closely with Valerie Gillispie in University Archives and Molly Bragg in the Duke Libraries Digital Collections Program.

“We are currently working with Pop Up Archive in the transcription and metadata phase, which ensures that all sermons include a manuscript searchable by scriptural, liturgical, and theological references,” said Koch. “It also allows us to make the sermons accessible for those with reading and hearing impairments.” Enhanced sermon information, known as metadata, will be added to the existing digital collection, and the basic website will be restructured to meet user needs. The project is set to finish after peer review and collaboration from a preaching symposium in 2018.

The availability and preservation of preaching resources is made possible through a partnership between Duke Divinity School, Duke Chapel, and Duke University Archives, and is part of Lilly Endowment’s Initiative to Strengthen the Quality of Preaching.

Watch Goodson Chapel Sermons Online

Goodson Chapel at Duke Divinity School has hosted some of the world’s most renowned preachers as well as gifted students at the beginning of their careers in the pulpit. To see examples of some of these memorable sermons and services, visit the YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/DukeDivinitySchool
Sankofa Black Alumni Preaching Series

Every Tuesday in February, the Divinity School features the Sankofa Black Alumni Preaching Series to celebrate the distinct contributions of the school’s alumni of African descent. Alumni preach during the 11:25 a.m. worship service in Goodson Chapel. The series was established in 2014 during Black History Month. The word *sankofa* derives from the Akan language of Ghana and translates as “reach back and get it.” The name was chosen to honor the prophetic and transformative ministries of so many of Duke Divinity School’s African American alumni.

Homiletics Exchange Program

Duke Divinity School has entered into an exchange program with Leipzig University in Germany that facilitates international study and research for students and faculty in homiletics. The Divinity School has hosted two doctoral students from Leipzig, and Th.D. student David Stark will study in Leipzig next year. Thanks to significant funding from the European program Erasmus+, Alexander Deeg, chair of practical theology and director of the Lutheran Liturgical Institute at Leipzig University, will teach a seminar at the Divinity School in the fall of 2016. Charles Campbell will go to Germany in January 2017 to teach a seminar. Additional funding will be available for more student exchanges as well.

Funding for Th.D. Student in Homiletics

Thanks to a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc., beginning in the fall of 2016 a full-tuition scholarship has been awarded for a Hispanic-Latino/a student in the Th.D. program in homiletics. Alma Ruiz is the first recipient of this fellowship. She earned her M.Div. from Duke Divinity School in 2013 and serves as a pastor of Fiesta Christiana, one of the congregations affiliated with Apex UMC in Apex, N.C. She is seeking ordination as an elder with the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. Prospective students interested in the Th.D. in homiletics should follow the admissions application guidelines at www.divinity.duke.edu/academics/thd.

David Stark

Alma Ruiz
**Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Initiative**

Developed by Duke Divinity School’s Hispanic House of Studies, the Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Initiative provides an opportunity for Hispanic-Latino/a (H/L) pastors to receive homiletical training in a peer group format. Each year, 10 applicants currently serving as pastors in the H/L community will be chosen to participate as preaching fellows. The peer group begins with a retreat and then meets monthly for 15 months (starting in June and ending in August of the following year). During these peer group meetings led by the program coordinator and other invited teachers, the pastors engage with homiletical, theological, and exegetical resources.

These groups are designed to be collaborative so that participating pastors can learn from each other and the broad range of traditions and denominations they represent. All participants will have the opportunity to preach within the group and receive constructive feedback on their sermons. Upon completing the 15-month program, each participant will receive official certification from Duke Divinity School’s H/L Preaching Initiative.

On April 9, the initiative sponsored the first Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Festival at Duke Divinity School. This celebration of Hispanic homiletics was open to Hispanic congregations across the region and to the Divinity School community.

Applications for the Hispanic-Latino/a Preaching Initiative are available online: http://divinity.duke.edu/hispanic-latino. Completed applications must be received on or before May 13. They may be emailed to tito.madrazo@duke.edu.

**Office of Black Church Studies Lecture Series**

The Office of Black Church Studies sponsors lecture series each year to celebrate two of the greatest preachers in the nation’s history: Gardner C. Taylor and Martin Luther King Jr. In recent years notable preachers and scholars have included James Cone, Renita Weems, and Raphael Warnock. The 2016 Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture Series was held April 5–6. The guest lecturer and preacher was the Rev. Dr. Marvin A. McMickle, president and professor of church leadership and director of the program of Black Church studies at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. The event included two sermons and a lecture delivered by President McMickle, a community lunch, and a book signing. The Gardner C. Taylor lectures will be held in September.

**Festival of Homiletics**

Three faculty members at Duke Divinity School will be speaking May 16–20 in Atlanta, Ga., at the annual Festival of Homiletics. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Lauren Winner, and Will Willimon will deliver lectures and lead worship sessions at this gathering of over 1,000 preachers. The theme for this year is “Prophetic Preaching in Times of Change.” For more information: www.festivalofhomiletics.com.
Divinity School Provides Preaching Resources

The Divinity Library has several archival collections focused on preserving sermons and making them accessible to readers.

**Duke Divinity School Bulletin/Review Archives**

Users can now access four decades of the Duke Divinity School Review, which include student and faculty reflections on the theory and practice of preaching and many other subjects.

http://divinityarchive.com/handle/11258/560

**Religion in North Carolina**

This digital collection of documents related to the history of religion and religious bodies in North Carolina contains a subcollection of published sermons.

http://divinityarchive.com/handle/11258/12644

**James Riddick Papers**

These digitized manuscripts (with transcripts) of a 19th-century Methodist minister include many sermons.

http://divinityarchive.com/handle/11258/318

**Divinity School Chapel Archives**

Users can read digitized chapel bulletins from York and Goodson Chapel services from 1985 to 2012, as well as documents related to planning worship in these venues. Currently over 1,400 bulletins have been added to the archives.

http://divinityarchive.com/handle/11258/6115

**Local Church Archives**

The Divinity Library has partnered with congregations in Durham to digitize and curate their church archives. The archives of Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, comprised of some 2,000 items, are included. Online archives from Duke Memorial United Methodist Church will be available soon. Many of these materials will be related to preaching and worship.

http://divinityarchive.com/handle/11258/13606

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In addition to the archival collections, the Divinity Library maintains several database resources.

**ATLA** is the largest religion database in the world. Users can search by subject, author, title, or even by chapter and verse of the Bible. This is a must-have database for those in ministry and those in academia. ATLA can be found on the Divinity Library's homepage. It is also available to alumni through the alumni portal.

http://library.divinity.duke.edu/alumni

**MinistryMatters** is an online database that offers pastors lectionaries, Bible commentaries, sermon collections, and worship resources, including Will Willimon’s Pulpit Resource. It also posts articles dealing with contemporary issues in popular culture. MinistryMatters can be found under “Ministerial Studies” on the Divinity Library’s database page.

http://library.divinity.duke.edu/databases

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The Divinity Library offers one of the best collections of books on the subject of religion in the world.

Beyond databases, the Divinity Library offers one of the best collections of books on the subject of religion in the world, including multiple volumes of the complete sermons of Wesley, Luther, Calvin, and others. The collection has hundreds of books dedicated to sermon preparation, sermon illustrations, lectionary aids, commentaries, and Bible translations. The extensive catalog can be searched from our homepage.

http://library.divinity.duke.edu

LESTER RUTH, research professor of Christian worship, published a book on how to preach on the sacraments like a fourth-century preacher: Creative Preaching on the Sacraments, co-authored with Craig A. Satterlee (Discipleship Resources, 2001).

LUKE POWERY is the dean of Duke Chapel and associate professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School. He has published three books that explore the intersection of preaching, Black Church studies, theology, and music: Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching (Abingdon, 2009); Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope (Fortress, 2012); and Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place (Fortress, 2016), which he co-authored with Sally A. Brown.

RICHARD LISCHER is the James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor of Preaching. His numerous publications include many books about preaching, including A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel (Abingdon, 1981; revised, 2001); Theories of Preaching: Selected Readings in the Homiletical Tradition (Labyrinth Press, 1987); The Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching, which he edited with Will Willimon (Westminster John Knox, 1995); The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word That Moved America (Oxford University Press, 1995); Blessed Are the Debonair: James Cleland as Preacher and Homiletician (Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, 2000); The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present (Eerdmans, 2002); The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence (Eerdmans, 2005); and The Eloquence of Grace: Joseph Sittler and the Preaching Life, which he edited with James M. Childs (Chalice Press, 2012).


JACKSON CARROLL, Williams Professor Emeritus of Religion and Society, published God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations (Eerdmans, 2006) and As One With Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry (Cascade, 2011).

ELLEN DAVIS, interim dean and Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology, has published two books on preaching: The Luminous Word: Sermons and Essays on Biblical Preaching (Eerdmans, 2016), and Wondrous Depth: Old Testament Preaching (Westminster John Knox, 2005).

And among the many other publications by Duke Divinity School faculty, preachers will have special interest in the commentaries produced by our faculty, including the Gospel of Matthew by Stanley Hauerwas; Gospel of Mark by Joel Marcus; Gospel of Luke and Acts by Kavin Rowe; the Gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John by D. Moody Smith; Romans by Douglas Campbell; 1 Corinthians and Galatians by Richard Hays; Revelation by James “Mickey” Efird; 1 Samuel by Stephen Chapman; Ecclesiastes and Job by James Crenshaw; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs by Ellen Davis.

Additional books that preachers have identified as helpful resources include The Art of Reading Scripture by Richard Hays and Ellen Davis; Wearing God by Lauren Winner; and Reading the Parables, by Richard Lischer.
Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity
By Norman Wirzba, Professor of Theology, Ecology, and Agrarian Studies
HarperOne, 2016
272 pages, Hardcover, $25.99

IT’S OFTEN SAID that God is love, yet the message of compassion and caring for others is often overshadowed by political, cultural, and religious battles. In his book *Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity*, Norman Wirzba asks: Why does Christianity matter if it’s not about love? He asserts that Christianity has slid from its rightful foundation. Faith can make sense and be healthy only when it is based on love and has the mission of training others in the way of love. Extensive theological training cannot replace the way of love that transforms and connects each of us to God and to each other through faith. Wirzba uses illuminating testimonials, historical references, and Scripture to reveal how love allows people to move into the fullness of life. In a book that both encourages and exhorts, he proclaims, “To fail to love is to lose God.”

1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary
By Stephen Chapman, Associate Professor of Old Testament
Eerdmans, 2016
384 pages, Paperback, $36.00

IN THIS THEOLOGICAL commentary on 1 Samuel, Stephen Chapman probes the tension between religious conviction and political power through the characters of Saul and David. Saul, Chapman argues, embodies civil religion, a form of belief that is ultimately captive to the needs of the state. David, on the other hand, stands for a vital religious faith that can support the state while still maintaining a theocentric freedom. Chapman offers a robustly theological and explicitly Christian reading of 1 Samuel, carefully studying the received Hebrew text to reveal its internal logic. He shows how the book’s artful narrative explores the theological challenge presented by the emergence of the monarchy in ancient Israel. Chapman also illuminates the reception of the David tradition, both in the Bible and in later history; even while David as king becomes a potent symbol for state power, his biblical portrait continues to destabilize civil religion.

One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions
By C. Kavin Rowe, Professor of New Testament
Yale University Press, 2016
344 pages, Hardcover, $40.00

IN THIS GROUNDBREAKING, cross-disciplinary work of philosophy and biblical studies, C. Kavin Rowe explores the promise and problems inherent in engaging rival philosophical claims to what is true. Juxtaposing the Roman Stoics Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius with the Christian saints Paul, Luke, and Justin Martyr, and incorporating the contemporary views of Jeffrey Stout, Alasdair McIntyre, Charles Taylor, Martha Nussbaum, Pierre Hadot, and others, Rowe suggests that in a world of religious pluralism there is negligible gain in sampling from separate belief systems. This thought-provoking volume reconsiders the relationship between ancient philosophy and emergent Christianity as a rivalry between strong traditions of life and offers powerful arguments for the exclusive commitment to a community of belief and a particular form of philosophical life as the path to existential truth.

Religious Congregations in 21st Century America
By Mark Chaves, Professor of Sociology, Religious Studies, and Divinity, and Alison Eagle
Duke University, 2015

THE LATEST REPORT from the National Congregations Study (NCS) helps to provide an answer to the question “What is religion in the United States like today?” Based on three nationally representative surveys of congregations from across...
the religious spectrum, most recently in 2012, the NCS findings reveal what trends in American religious congregations have remained consistent and what has changed. Both those with only a passing interest in religion and those with deep interests in the state of American congregations—small-town clergy to megachurch pastors to seminary presidents to denominational leaders—will discover that what communities of faith do together as congregations says something important about the state of American religion.

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**Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels**
By Richard Hays, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament
*Baylor University Press, 2016*
524 pages, Hardcover, $49.95

**THE CLAIM THAT** the events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection took place “according to the Scriptures” stands at the heart of the New Testament’s message. All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms mysteriously prefigure Jesus. This raises important questions: Why do the Gospel writers read their Scriptures in such surprising ways? Are their readings coherent and persuasive interpretations of those Scriptures? And does Christian faith require the illegitimate theft of someone else’s sacred texts? In this book, Richard Hays chronicles the dramatically different ways the four Gospels interpreted Israel’s Scripture and reveals that their readings were both complementary and faithful. He highlights the theological consequences of the Gospel writers’ distinctive interpretive approaches and asks what it might mean for contemporary readers of Scripture. In particular, he describes the Gospel writers’ use of figural reading—an imaginative and retrospective move that creates narrative continuity and wholeness by using scriptural echoes to narrate Israel’s story both to assert that Jesus is the embodiment of Israel’s God and to prod the church in its vocation to engage the pagan world.

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**Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place**
By Luke Powery, Dean of Duke Chapel and Associate Professor of Homiletics, and Sally A. Brown
*Fortress Press, 2016*
176 pages, Paperback, $34.00

**PREACHING, AND THE** discipline of preaching, is at a crossroads. The changing realities of church and theological education, the diversity of classrooms, and increasingly complex communities require a search for tools to train a rising generation of preachers for an uncertain future. The questions they face are immense: How do we support preachers in diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural contexts, both inside and outside the church? How can students take seriously these diverse contexts as they are formed as leaders? In *Ways of the Word*, two master preachers bring much needed help. Though different in race, gender, age, and tradition, Sally Brown and Luke Powery share the belief that preaching is a Spirit-empowered event; it is an embodied, vocalized, actively received, here-and-now witness to the ongoing work of God in the world.

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**I’m Not From Here: A Parable**
By Will Willimon, Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry
*Cascade, 2015*
114 pages, Paperback, $15.00

**WITH I’M NOT FROM HERE**, popular writer Will Willimon returns to fiction with a story of spiritual discovery set in a Southern town. On a Don Quixote–like journey, young Felix Goforth Luckie learns a great deal about the world, other people, and a God who shows up in the oddest places, in the strangest times, and among the unlikeliest people. On a quest to discover himself, Felix is discovered by the grace of God. In homage to Dostoevsky, Cervantes, and the Bible, Willimon creates a world that is thoroughly believable, realistic, and ordinary, yet at the same time fantastic, strange, and funny. In Galilee, Georgia, young Felix finds that things are not as they first appear, people are wonderfully mysterious, and God is unavoidable. At times odd, frequently very funny, and both satirical and poignant, *I’m Not from Here* is a rollicking tale, a light-hearted parable with serious intent.

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**A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Annotated**
By John Wesley, Edited by Randy Maddox, William Kellon Quick Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies, and Paul Chilcote William Kellon Quick Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies
*Beacon Hill Press, 2015*
160 pages, Paperback, $15.99

**“WHAT I PURPOSE”** in the following papers is to give a plain and distinct account of the steps by which I was led . . . to embrace the doctrine of Christian perfection.” So begins John Wesley’s classic work on the central emphasis of his theology. In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* this Anglican priest and founder of Methodism brings to the forefront what he considers the goal of the Christian life: the fullest possible love of God and neighbor. Drawing from several of his earlier writings, Wesley thoughtfully presents his understanding of perfect love, which he termed Christian perfection. Although published in many versions, this edition of Wesley’s foundational text has been annotated by two leading Wesleyan scholars who identify Wesley’s sources and clarify his citations and allusions. His original notes are also included.
The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament  
Edited by Stephen Chapman, Associate Professor of Old Testament, and Martin Sweeney  
Cambridge University Press, 2016  
504 pages, Paperback, $39.99

This Companion offers a concise and engaging introduction to the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Providing an up-to-date snapshot of scholarship, it includes essays—specially commissioned for this volume—by 23 leading scholars. The volume examines a range of topics, including the historical and religious contexts for the contents of the biblical canon, critical approaches and methods, and newer topics such as the Hebrew Bible in Islam, Western art and literature, and contemporary politics. This companion is an excellent resource for students at university and graduate level, as well as for laypeople and scholars in other fields who would like to gain an understanding of the current state of the academic discussion.

Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love  
By William Willimon, Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry  
Abingdon, 2016  
112 pages, Paperback, $14.99

Willimon invites readers to consider the biblical command to love (and not merely tolerate) those considered to be “other” who are outside mainstream Christian culture. Rooted in the faith of Israel and the Christian story and vision, Willimon brings a Wesleyan perspective to what may be the hardest thing for people of faith to do: keeping and loving the “other” as they are, without any need for them to become like us. The book exhorts people of faith to receive the differences of others as gifts of the grace of God. It also critiques privileged people who often rush to speak of reconciliation while evading the antagonism, injustice, and inequality that confronts foreigners and strangers. Rooted in the New Testament understanding of Gentile outsiders grafted into the covenant community, Willimon invites readers to remember that God comes to us again and again through so-called outsiders, strangers, immigrants, and those without status. Beyond welcome, Christians must become “other” to the world, shaking off the dominant culture’s identity and privilege through practices of listening, humility, and understanding.

Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness  
By L. Gregory Jones, Senior Strategist for Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School and Ruth W. and A. Morris Williams Jr. Professor of Theology and Christian Ministry  
Abingdon, 2016  
130 pages, Paperback, $16.99

Everybody Seem interested in innovation and entrepreneurship these days. Start-ups are generating new jobs, creating wealth, and providing solutions to longstanding problems. Old-line social institutions need innovative approaches that provide renewal, re-establish trust, and cultivate sustainability. Faith communities have their own need for innovation, demonstrated in a growing interest in starting new churches, developing “fresh expressions” for gatherings of community, and discussions about how to cultivate a renewed sense of mission. But do faith communities have anything unique to contribute to conversations about innovation and entrepreneurship, especially in “social entrepreneurship”? At first glance, the answer seems to be “no.” Literature on social entrepreneurship barely mentions the church or other faith-based institutions—and when it does, they’re often described as part of the broken institutional landscape. Too many people in faith-based organizations become preoccupied with managing what already exists rather than focusing on innovative renewal of their organizations and entrepreneurial approaches to starting new ones. In this book, Jones argues that Christian social innovation, at its best, depends on a conception of hope that acknowledges personal and social brokenness. Further, faith communities have embodied perseverance, often bringing people together across generations and diverse sectors to imagine how common effort and faith might overcome obstacles. For Christian social innovation, faith is not held at a distance from the activities of life but is instead its vital force, providing the imagination, passion, and commitment that lead to transformation.
**JEREMY BEGBIE** published “Learning from Teaching: Theological Education in the Light of James Torrance,” in *Participatio* (supp. vol. 3, 2015). He delivered a number of lectures: the Northcutt Lectures at Baylor University on April 7 on “Desiring God in Worship: A Musical Perspective on a Contemporary Theme”; the Ryan Lectures at Asbury Theological Seminary Feb. 23–24 on “Fighting Over the Same Space? What Music Can Bring to Trinitarian Theology”; the Staley Lecture at Whitworth University (Spokane, Wash.) on Nov. 19 on “Out of This World? Why the Arts Matter to Faith”; the McDonald Lecture at St Mellitus College (London, U.K.) on Nov. 2 on “The Spirit and Christianity’s Upside-Down Future”; a performance lecture titled “The Sound of Hope” at the Church of the Incarnation in Dallas, Texas, on Nov. 15; and the lecture “Eliot at Ground Zero” at Hiroshima University on Nov. 12. He spoke on music and freedom at the Trinity Forum’s “Evening Conversation” in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 6; preached the university sermon at Great St Mary’s, The University of Cambridge, on Oct. 21–23; “Neither Metamorphosis, nor Evolution, nor Emergence: On the Temporal, Moral, and Political Significance of Conversion” for the Department of English at Duke University on Feb. 26; and “Read by Love: The Ethical Dimensions of Reading the Bible” on Oct. 10 at Middlebury College in Vermont. He presented two papers: “The Task of Christian Ethics and the Role of Ethnography” on Nov. 21 at the AAR Annual Meeting and “Sovereignty and Consociational Democracy” at the political theory colloquium at Duke University on Jan. 28. He also participated in a workshop on theology and community organizing for the South West Industrial Areas Foundation in Dallas, Texas, Feb. 5–6.

**LUKE BREHTERTON** published “Poverty, Politics, and Faithful Witness in the Age of Humanitarianism,” in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* (69.4, 2015). Responses to a roundtable forum on his book *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge University Press) were published online in *Syndicate Theology* in February (syndicatetheology.com) and at The Immanent Frame (blogs.ssrc.org/tif), part of the Social Science Research Council’s program on Religion and the Public Sphere. He delivered several lectures: “Hospitality, Holiness, and the Kingdom of God” for the Society of Vineyard Scholars, April 21–23; “Neither Metamorphosis, nor Evolution, nor Emergence: On the Temporal, Moral, and Political Significance of Conversion” for the Department of English at Duke University on Feb. 26; and “Read by Love: The Ethical Dimensions of Reading the Bible” on Oct. 10 at Middlebury College in Vermont. He presented two papers: “The Task of Christian Ethics and the Role of Ethnography” on Nov. 21 at the AAR Annual Meeting and “Sovereignty and Consociational Democracy” at the political theory colloquium at Duke University on Jan. 28. He also participated in a workshop on theology and community organizing for the South West Industrial Areas Foundation in Dallas, Texas, Feb. 5–6.

**J. KAMERON CARTER** delivered the Annie Kinkead Warfield Lecture series March 28–31 at Princeton Theological Seminary on “Dark Church: Meditations of Black (Church) Assembly.”


**MARK CHAVES** published *Religious Congregations in 21st Century America* (Duke University Press) with Alison Eagle. This latest report from the National Congregations Study is also available online (soc.duke.edu/natcong). With co-author David Voas, he published “Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?” in the *American Journal of Sociology* (121.5, 2016). He delivered the lecture “The National Congregations Study (USA): Methodology and Findings” at the

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**KATE BOWLER** received a Louisville Institute Sabbatical Research Grant for 2016–17 and an AAR Travel Research Grant. The Conference on Faith and History held a roundtable discussion on her book, *Blessed*, and the proceedings were published in *Fides et Historia*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2015). Her article “Death, the Prosperity Gospel, and Me” was published in the *New York Times Sunday Review* (Feb. 13, 2016), and her interview with *Christianity Today*, “On Dying and Reckoning with the Prosperity Gospel,” was published online in February.
Congregational Studies Worldwide conference March 21–23 in Schmitten, Germany, jointly sponsored by the Protestant Academy in Frankfurt and the Social Sciences Institute of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

JAMES CRENSHAW received the 2015 Vanderbilt University Distinguished Alumnus Award for the Graduate Department of Religion on Oct. 30. The previous day an Old Testament seminar was held in his honor, with him offering a response to each lecture, including one by ANATHEA PORTIER-YOUNG. He taught the class “The Hidden Books of the Biblical World” for Vanderbilt’s Lifelong Learning Institute in the fall.


ELLEN DAVIS delivered several lectures: the H. Orton Wiley Lecture Series at Point Loma Nazarene University, Oct. 12–14; “The Bible in China” in Shanghai, China, Nov. 16–20; and the David I. Berger Lectureship in Preaching at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, March 28–29. She preached and led a seminar for the Great Lakes Initiative Leadership Institute held Jan. 6–17 in Kampala, Uganda.


MARIA TERESA GASTON, with Brigid Riley and Sharon Neuwald, presented “Evaluation Basics” as a ToP Network of Facilitators webinar Nov. 19 and again at the ToP Network annual gathering in Phoenix, Ariz., Jan. 8–11.

STEPHEN GUNTER published “A Methodist View of Life and Learning: Conjoining Knowledge and Vital Piety,” in Liberal Learning and the Great Traditions, edited by Gary W. Jenkins and Jonathan Yovan (Pickwick Publications), and “From Arminius (d. 1609) to the Synod of Dort (1618–1619),” in Perfecting Perfection: Essays in Honor of Henry D. Rack, edited by Robert Webster (Pickwick Publications). He gave a lecture on “Arminianism after Arminius” and preached at an Advent service at the Evangelical School of Theology in Wroclaw, Poland. His book Arminius and His “Declaration of Sentiments”: An Annotated Translation with Critical Notes and Commentary (Baylor University Press) was nominated for the Wesleyan Theological Society’s annual book award.

AMY LAURA HALL delivered the 2015 Women in Church and Ministry Lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary under the title “The Bloody Truth: Seeing with Julian of Norwich.” She published “Love in Everything: A Brief Primer to Julian of Norwich,” in the Princeton Seminary Bulletin (vol. 32, 2015), and an article on heroism in a special issue on masculinity by Word & World (36.1, 2016). She taught a course for the Trinity College fall 2015 Focus Program on Global Health and this spring is teaching another Trinity course, “Science and Masculinity,” as part of the Duke Initiative for Science & Society. She remains on the faculty advisory boards of both the Graduate Liberal Studies Program and the Duke-North Carolina Central University initiative and continues to publish a monthly column on faith and politics for the Durham Herald Sun.


RICHARD LISCHER published “Writing the Christian Life” (Aug. 24, 2015) and “Into the Dark with Dante” (Jan. 27, 2016) in The Christian Century. He contributed the essay “Prophesy to the Bones” to the forthcoming volume Questions Preachers Ask, in honor of Thomas Long, Candler School of Theology. He gave two lectures: “Spiritual Memoir as a Subversive Act” at the Association of Theological Schools Conference for Seminary Presidents in San Antonio and “Martin Luther King: Semper Reformanda” at Lenoir-Rhyne University. He preached three sermons at Trinity Church, Boston, for Tre Ore (the Three Hours) on Good Friday and participated in the Copley Square Processional. In the spring he served as chaplain for the Feagin Leadership Forum sponsored by the Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans Center for Health Education at Duke. He will retire June 30 after 37 years at Duke Divinity School. A celebration is planned for Sept. 19.
RANDY MADDOX, in his role as general editor of the Wesley Works project, oversaw the publication of volume 27, a collection of letters, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley. Volume 12: Doctrinal and Theological Treatises 1*, which he edited, was given a Smith-Wynkoop Book Award by the Wesley Theological Society in March. He also designed and launched a website connected to the project (wesley-works.org) and co-edited a new edition of Wesley’s *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Beacon Hill).

DAVID MARSHALL co-edited, with Lucinda Mosher, *The Community of Believers: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (Georgetown University Press). He contributed an essay to *A House Divided? Ways Forward for North American Anglicans* (Wipf and Stock), a volume edited by Isaac Arten and William Glass that presents a series of public conversations held by the Divinity School’s Anglican Episcopal House of Studies in 2013. He spoke at the Center for Christian Study at the University of Virginia and presented on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at several Episcopal churches, including Christ Episcopal Church, Charlottesville, Va., and St. Matthew’s, Hillborough, N.C., in November; Trinity-by-the-Cove, Naples, Fla., in January; and St. George’s, Nashville, Tenn., in February.

SUJIN PAK presented a paper, “The Function of Metaphor in Old Testament Prophecy in Luther and Calvin and Later Lutheran and Reformed Exegesis,” on Jan. 9 at the American Society of Church History Winter Meeting in Atlanta. She gave a plenary lecture, “Scripture, the Priesthood of All Believers, and Applications of 1 Corinthians 14,” on April 7 at “The People’s Book: Reformation and the Bible,” the 2016 Wheaton Theology Conference. She will serve on the editorial advisory board for the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation* (Cascade Books).


RUSSELL RICHEY has received a project grant for researchers from The Louisville Institute for his study “Why Methodism’s Broken Heart? Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Indiana: 1816–1876.” The project will examine various denominational, conference, and school archives to answer the question of how Methodism (especially the UMC) came to be divided organizationally, geopolitically, structurally, and attitudinally in the places it proved most successful—the heartland states from Delmarva to middle America—so that contemporary United Methodism might better understand how to confront its continuing racial dilemmas.

MEREDITH RIEDEL presented two conference papers: “Citizens of Heaven, or of Hell? Byzantine Political Identity in the Novels of Leo VI” at the Southeastern Medieval Association Annual Conference in Little Rock, Ark., Oct. 22–24, and “Heresy from the West: The Byzantine View of Transubstantiation” at the Midwest Medieval History Conference in Terre Haute, Ind., Oct. 9–10. She participated in a medieval history workshop at the National Humanities Center and a medieval history colloquium on Byzantine-Islamic borderlands and culture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She was ordained as a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in January.

BETH SHEPPARD published “By the Numbers: Bibliometrics and Altmetrics as Measures of Faculty

WILL WILLIMON published How Odd of God: Chosen for the Curious Vocation of Preaching (Westminster John Knox Press), Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love (Abingdon), and his second novel, I’m Not from Here: A Parable (Wipf and Stock). He delivered several lectures: the Grenz Lectures at Vancouver School of Theology; a series of lectures at Wycliffe College, Toronto; a lecture on the religious significance of 19th-century French art in Paris, France; and a series of lectures in Tucson, Ariz., on the work of a bishop for the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He had numerous preaching engagements, including Cannon Memorial UMC in Atlanta; Marble Collegiate Church in New York City; the Episcopal Cathedral in Columbia, S.C.; Grace Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.; a series of sermons at Jarvis Memorial UMC in Greenville, N.C.; and a Bible study group at Centenary UMC in Winston-Salem, N.C. His periodical Willimon’s Pulpit Resource is now published online at MinistryMatters.com.


LAUREN WINNER’s book Wearing God (HarperOne) was named 2016 book of the year in the spiritual formation category by Christianity Today.

NEW DEAN APPOINTED FOR DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL

ELAINE A. HEATH, a theologian, preacher, teacher and writer, will be the next dean of Duke Divinity School, appointed by President Richard H. Brodhead and Provost Sally Kornbluth of Duke University. Heath is currently the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University’s Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. “Elaine Heath is a leading scholar of emergence, the process by which religious faith finds new life outside familiar institutional forms,” Brodhead said. “At a time when the religious life of mainstream Protestantism is undergoing profound change, she will be a perfect leader for helping Duke Divinity School retain traditional strengths while creatively responding to new challenges.”

Heath said she looks forward to joining the Duke community. “The church needs leaders who can guide congregations and other organizations through culture shifts toward a vibrant future,” she said. “As part of one of the top research universities in the world, and because of its robust, historic grounding in the church, Duke Divinity School is well positioned to develop rigorous new forms of contextualized theological education while continuing its renowned intellectual tradition. I am deeply honored to have been invited to serve as the next dean of Duke Divinity School.”
60s

GEORGE THOMAS D’68 published God Is Not Fair, Thank God! Biblical Paradox in the Life and Worship of the Parish (Wipf & Stock, 2014). The book was reviewed as the book of the month in the November 2015 issue of The Expository Times in the article “A Paradoxical God and a Pastor’s Pilgrimage.”

70s

PATRICK WELCH D’71 has retired from 32 years of ministry in the Western North Carolina Conference. Patrick and wife, Gail, served churches across North Carolina and served under special appointment as the director of the Center for Growth and Development. He also served as a pastoral counselor. He lives near Asheville, N.C.

80s

JONATHAN STROTHER D’86 was married to Catherine Thompson in December 2014 in Raleigh, N.C. They currently reside in Greenville, N.C., where he is senior pastor at Jarvis Memorial UMC.

90s

SHANE STANFORD D’94 published What the Prayers of Jesus Tell Us About the Heart of God (Abingdon Press, 2015). He is the senior pastor of Christ UMC in Memphis, Tenn.

HAROLD EUGENE VANN D’96 graduated from Claremont School of Theology on May 19, 2015, with his doctor of ministry degree. He serves as senior pastor of New Name Baptist Church in Los Angeles, Calif.

BARRY ALLEN D’98, ‘99 earned a Ph.D. in biblical studies in September 2015 from Atlantic Coast Theological Seminary in Daytona Beach, Fla. He pastors Elloree UMC in Elloree, S.C., and Jerusalem UMC in Santee, S.C.

MARTY CAULEY D’99 published Dying To Go on Vacation (Marbles Press, 2015), a story of faith, hope, and struggle as a father receives a diagnosis of terminal cancer in the middle of his most productive years and explores how to live positively even when bad things happen to good people. He lives in Rocky Mount, N.C., where he serves as director of coaching and content for the North Carolina Conference.

00s


10s

ANGELA PARKER D’10 graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary in May 2015 with a Ph.D. in Bible, culture, and hermeneutics with a focus on the New Testament Studies as well as World Religion Studies at Pitt Community College at Greenlawn in South Bend, Ind.
Testament. She is assistant professor of biblical studies at The Seattle School of Theology & Psychology.

**CHRIS BRESLIN D’11** and wife, Rachel, announce the birth of their daughter Emett Ruth Breslin on July 7, 2015. She joins big sister Noa and big brother Titus.

**RON BEATON D’12** and **KASEY BEATON D’12** announce the birth of daughter Hannah Kathryn in February 2016; she joins big brother Isaac. Ron and Kasey both serve United Methodist churches in Missouri.

**MINDY MAKANT D’12** published *The Practice of Story: Suffering and the Possibilities of Redemption* (Baylor University Press, 2015). She is assistant professor of religious studies at Lenoir-Rhyne University.

**TYLER WILLIAMS D’12** and wife, Lauren, announce the birth of their first child, Gabriel Henry, in October 2015. He is an associate pastor at First UMC in Rocky Mount, N.C.

**WILL HASLEY D’13** and wife, Amanda, announce the birth of their daughter, Emogene Hasley, on Jan. 1, 2016. He is the pastor of discipleship ministries at Edenton Street UMC in Raleigh, N.C.

**SAMI PACK D’14** collaborated with three other United Methodist clergy women serving in Montana to create the podcast, *Chicks Know Church*. The biweekly podcast encourages and informs women in church leadership and in ministry as the hands and feet of Jesus.

**DANIEL WILLSON D’14** was installed as the 30th senior pastor of Williamsburg Baptist Church in Williamsburg, Va., which was established in 1828.


**GOT NEWS? STAY IN TOUCH!**
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THOMAS E. RUTLEDGE JR. D’46 of Winston-Salem, N.C., died Sept. 23, 2015. He met his wife, Mary Luke, while attending Duke Divinity School, and the two were married in Duke Chapel in 1945. He was superintendent of the Jesse Lee Home, a United Methodist Children’s Home in Alaska. He served as a United Methodist minister for many years until early retirement. After retiring, he continued his ministry and social work in many ways, including sending daily devotionals to many in his community and beyond. He is preceded in death by his wife, MARY LUKE RUTLEDGE D’45, and is survived by their five children, 13 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

ZANE NORTON D’52 of Harrisburg, N.C., died Oct. 27, 2015. He served as a United Methodist minister from 1952 to 1990. He served in the Navy during World War II and graduated with two degrees from Duke University. He was a member of the Western North Carolina Conference and served churches in Shelby, Crouse, Winston-Salem, Huntersville, Gastonia, Mooresville, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Statesville. He is preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth, and three children. He is survived by his son and four grandchildren.

WILLIAM GOODRUM D’54 of New Orleans, La., died Sept. 20, 2015. He earned two degrees from Duke University and as an educator taught at many schools across the United States and published several articles. He is remembered by his family, friends, and students.

THOMAS ETTINGER D’78 of Lakemont, Ga., died Aug. 26, 2015. He was a United Methodist elder in the Florida Conference. He served churches and campus ministries and most recently was the United Methodist campus minister at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. He is survived by his wife, HELEN NEINAST D’78, an elder in the New Mexico Conference.

ELDRIDGE PENDLETON D’92 of Somerville, Mass., died Aug. 26, 2015. After teaching at several universities and directing a museum in Maine, he joined the Society of St. John the Evangelist in 1984. He served in many capacities, including archivist, senior brother of St. John’s House in Durham, N.C., and director of the Fellowship of St. John. He was a life member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. He is survived by his sister.

DEATHS

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The Sermon Chrysalis
THE MYSTERY, “GOO,” AND TRANSFORMATION OF PREACHING

BY MEGHAN FELDMEYER BENSON

LAST SUMMER I learned something new about butterflies. For years I thought that when caterpillars built their cocoons, they then went inside, lost a few pounds (in comparable caterpillar weight), grew some pretty wings, and—presto—butterfly! But I discovered that is not how the metamorphosis of a caterpillar happens. The caterpillar doesn’t simply become lean and grow wings. Instead, the caterpillar is completely transformed. This stage is called a chrysalis, in which the caterpillar’s body basically disintegrates—or, to our eyes, melts—and becomes a mass of goo that is completely restructured to become a butterfly! The whole of the caterpillar is broken down into a strange, indiscernible, mysterious substance (that looks nothing like a caterpillar or butterfly), and this goo waits for the signal to transform.

In his Introduction to Preaching class, Professor Charles Campbell asks students to reflect on a metaphor for preaching. The classic butterfly image, so common in Christian circles, resonates with me. The chrysalis metaphor captures the component of gestation, when all the words and thoughts and stories seem to melt into a gooey mass (I nearly always wonder if anything will ever emerge from it!), as well as the delicate process of restructuring and refashioning and ultimately the delight of finally breaking free. It also hints at the mystery involved.

I have yet to be in an appointment where preaching is a primary responsibility. I spent nearly a decade at Duke Chapel, where I was routinely exposed to great preaching, but I only preached a couple times each year. Shifting over to the Divinity School means I continue to be exposed to masterful preaching, with a similar pattern of preaching about once a semester. The gift of regular exposure to amazing sermons is that it sets a high standard and keeps me on my homiletical toes. Shifting over to the Divinity School means I continue to be exposed to masterful preaching, with a similar pattern of preaching about once a semester. The gift of regular exposure to amazing sermons is that it sets a high standard and keeps me on my homiletical toes. The challenge is that is can be paralyzing. I’ve often felt a bit like the discombobulated caterpillar, sensing little shape or vision for what will emerge from the melty mass. The gestational “goo” of my preaching usually contains a variety of ingredients—God’s grace (foremost), scriptural reflection, faculty voices (so many voices!), prayer, and no doubt a dash of insecurity about saying something ill-informed to a people who are especially equipped to notice any possible heresy or scriptural misrepresentation.

But at the center of my cocoon is the community I serve. As most pastors can attest, offering pastoral care puts me in close proximity to suffering and anxieties as well as surprises and joys that touch the hearts of the community here. This web of relationships forms the place from which my sermons emerge.

One of my mentors, former dean of Duke Chapel Sam Wells, suggests that preaching should leave a mark in four categories: head, heart, hands, and gut. Being a chaplain puts me in touch with the heart/gut part. Being a chaplain at Duke Divinity School ensures that the head and hands aren’t left behind.

Some years ago I had a friend say his approach to preaching was to find the thing in the text that most caught his attention, either because it was perplexing or interesting or inspiring—whatever it was that stuck out—start there, and dig deep. At the time that struck me as a rather narcissistic process. I have had a change of heart, however. Usually if something pricks my imagination or stirs my spirit, I’ll have the most energy delving into the text to discover what God is trying to teach me. And I’ve discovered that the things God is teaching me often carry power for others, too. One thing I’m learning is that the things that often catch my attention grow out of my conversations with students. The tears, laughter, questions, and hugs—these are all part of the mushy mass in the homiletical cocoon. And this melted goo eventually (and sometimes mysteriously) emerges with form, and color, and life—ready to take flight! My prayer is for God’s grace to be in both the breaking down and the re-formation, so that the chrysalis season of preaching will lead to new life.
Preaching that is boring is preaching that talks first about us and then only tangentially about God. Preaching that is faithful is preaching that talks first about God and then only secondarily and derivatively talks about us. The God of Scripture is so much more interesting than we are.

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Over almost 33 years of working with graduates and friends, I’ve helped many to realize their dreams of making a difference for Duke Divinity School while also being good stewards of their families’ financial future. I am glad to assist you with bequests, gift annuities, plans for giving retirement funds, or charitable trusts.

Please contact me to learn more: Wes Brown, M.Div. ’76, at 919.660.3479 or wbrown@div.duke.edu.