

## Meet Some of Duke Divinity School's Recent Doctor of Ministry Graduates



### **Kate Davelaar**

International Programs Coordinator, The Center for Reconciliation, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC

**Thesis Title:** Embodied Attention: Learning from the Wisdom of the Desert and Saint Augustine in an Age of Distraction

**Synopsis:** My thesis argues that an embodied, present attentiveness is foundational to a relationship with God; furthermore, given the patterns of attention developed around Wireless Mobile Devices (i.e., smartphones) and the strong pull on its users for their constant interaction, I argue that the

practices created around these devices do in fact hinder one's ability to connect with God, despite their other potential for good. Throughout the life of the Church, certain habits have been cultivated to shape the identity of its community and deepen our communion with God. The thesis draws upon the wisdom, writings, and practices of the Desert Fathers and Saint Augustine. Rather than simply "sounding the alarm" that technology is detrimental to our spiritual formation, however, I hope my thesis helps the Church have a more nuanced understanding of why and how the use of Wireless Mobile Devices affects our ability to be attentive, as it examines to what end (*telos*) our attention is being drawn.

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### **Ken Evers-Hood**

Pastor of Tualatin Presbyterian Church, Portland, Oregon

**Thesis Title:** Playing Church: Toward A Behavioral Understanding of Church Growth

**Synopsis:** I explored the intersection of behavioral economics, behavioral game theory, and practical theology. Just as behavioral economics takes into account how cognitive heuristics and bias shape actual human behavior in ways that aren't always rational, I examine these cognitive dynamics in light of our full humanity. Then, building off previous research regarding the evolution of cooperation, I studied 98 elders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) playing two versions of a public goods game. I analyzed the results of these games in terms of the

growth and decline patterns of the congregations they served looking for a link between cooperative behavior and church growth.

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**Suzanne G. Michael**

Pastor, New Hope United Methodist Church, Winston-Salem, NC

**Thesis Title:** To Serve the Present Age: A Critique of 19<sup>th</sup> Century New Measures and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fresh Expressions

**Synopsis:** My thesis identifies, examines, compares, and contrasts applicable and historically consistent and effective practical practices employed by “new measures” and “fresh expressions” church movements of the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. I included an interview with Elaine A. Heath of Perkins School of Theology about her missional community work and how it connects Finney, Palmer, and fresh expressions to our day and time. I discussed the opposition to

fresh expressions as a means of understanding orthodox theology and accepting innovation as Holy Spirit empowerment. I demonstrated how revivalists such as John Wesley, Charles Finney, Phoebe Palmer, and Elaine Heath passed the torch of church growth and leadership through several centuries, to this present age and forward.

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**Kevin Murriel**

Associate Pastor, Cascade United Methodist Church, Atlanta, GA

**Thesis Title:** Unveiling Racism: Racial Reconciliation and a Heterogeneous Model for American Christian Life

**Synopsis:** My dissertation studied the leadership of Rev. Ed King as a model for racial reconciliation from 1946 to the Mississippi Church Visits of 1963. It argues that Ed King’s efforts in the Civil Rights Movement model a way of racial reconciliation that includes Spiritual and Social Conviction, Intentional Planning, and an Eschatological Perspective on Diversity in the Church.

The thesis outlines what led Ed King to pursue civil rights, why he did not abandon the cause, and how he promoted the message of Christ in an attempt to desegregate white churches in Mississippi and to bring about racial reconciliation and justice in the South. It seeks to answer the question “Why does racial reconciliation matter in American Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?” Primary source material emerged from interviews with Ed King. Other sources include speeches of Ed King and documented interviews. My thesis asserts that pastors, students, church and civic leaders should apply Ed King’s model to promote racial reconciliation in American Christian life as our communities today become more diverse.

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**Mark Reamer**

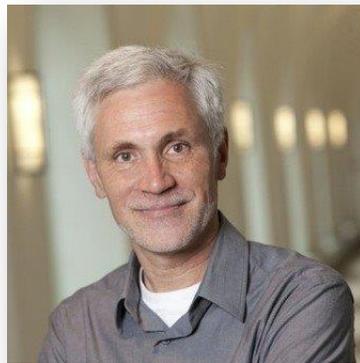
Guardian of St. Bernardine of Siena Friary, Siena College, New York

**Thesis Title:** Pastoral Leadership in the Roman Catholic Church through the lens of Bowen Systems Theory

**Synopsis:** My thesis studies Bowen Systems Theory from the perspective of leadership in light of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the half-century since the time of the Second Vatican Council, new insights have matured among researchers studying how families and organizations function, particularly around the role that self-differentiated leadership plays in promoting healthy functioning on the part of organizational leaders. Much has been written about Bowen Systems Theory and its application to church/synagogue leadership in other ecclesial communities, and yet little has been written from a Roman Catholic perspective. By looking at the Catholic Church's theology of ordained ministry in light of Bowen Systems Theory, I draw parallels that ground a robust pastoral theology of leadership within the Roman Catholic tradition.

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**Chris Rice**

Mennonite Central Committee Country Representative for China, North Korea, and South Korea  
Senior Fellow for Northeast Asia, Duke Divinity School

**Thesis Title:** Toward a Framework for a Practical Theology of Institutions for Faith-Based Organizations

**Synopsis:** My thesis concerns the recovery of the "faith" dimension of faith-based organizations. U.S. faith-based organizations (FBOs) founded by Christians have gained wide influence both nationally and internationally and have become

the de facto bearers of contemporary Christian mission in an increasingly post-denominational landscape. Yet this thesis argues that FBOs suffer from a separation between missiology, ecclesiology, and theological reflection in ways that inhibit their participation in the mission of God, or *missio Dei*. The thesis draws on history, sociology, and missiology to provide a critical framework for an interdisciplinary analysis of FBOs that illuminates the problems they face and describes what is required for a recovery of faithful witness. The thesis concludes with a constructive missiology that proposes marks of the practice of missions, not primarily as activism, but as participation in the *missio Dei*. These marks are displayed through case studies from three FBOs.

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**Steve Runholt**

Pastor of Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church, Asheville, NC

**Thesis Title:** Gashes Creek: Christian Leadership and Ministry Through a Narrative Lens

**Synopsis:** My thesis is a piece of fiction. Literally. Set in the Black Hills of South Dakota, *Gashes Creek* is one part family saga and one part morality tale. It is a story of loyalty and faith, secrets and betrayals, failure and forgiveness. In an age in which the creedal formulations and propositional truth claims that have traditionally defined the Christian faith are under intense scrutiny, it is my hope

to show that a traditional form of narrative may be an effective way to convey the content of Christian faith and the nature of Christian practice to a skeptical audience of readers.

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