

# DIVINITY

DUKE UNIVERSITY | Fall 2016

## RENEWING LIFE

*How the Church Can Thrive  
in Unexpected Ways*



### PREPARING LEADERS TODAY FOR THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW

*By Elaine A. Heath*

### SEEING GOD IN PRISON

*By Louis Threatt and Kaye B. Ward*

### THE ART OF TENTMAKING: CHRISTIANS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

*By Luke Bretherton*



Brandon Hudson T'06, D'13 and Maranatha Wall D'13

# *Participate in* **EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION** *through Divinity Annual Fund*

When Brandon Hudson decided to attend Duke Divinity School, he was looking for rigorous theological formation and a way to deepen connections with people and the place of Durham, N.C. He found all that, and more. Through his M.Div. and prison studies certificate, he developed a theological imagination rooted in the experience and revelation of God among the poor and marginalized. His field education experiences in Baltimore and Houston gave him a vision of empowerment for black and Latino youth. And he met his wife, Maranatha, through their study community group.

Today Brandon serves as executive director for Urban Hope in the Walltown neighborhood in Durham. In this ministry, his theological and practical training now helps to empower young people through spiritual, economic, and education resources.

Brandon and Maranatha also participate in transformation by giving financially to the Divinity Annual Fund. "We believe Duke has shaped us in profound ways and believe it can profoundly shape generations to come. We encourage our fellow alumni to participate in God's work at Duke Divinity School by intentionally investing in the institution so that it may continue."

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# DIVINITY

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and Pastoral Theology

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Divinity School with important topics  
and invites friends, supporters, alumni,  
and others in our community to participate  
in the story of what is happening here.

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**ON THE COVER:**

A flower blooms through an  
ancient stone wall in St. Andrews, Scotland.  
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**KAYE B. WARD** retired from the State of North Carolina and now works with the Interfaith Prison Ministry for Women in Raleigh, N.C. While incarcerated at the honor grade unit of the North Carolina Correctional Center for Women in Raleigh, she took six Duke Divinity School classes, and she is now enrolled at the University of Mount Olive to train as a prison chaplain. She has been recommended for licensure as a minister in the Original Free Will Baptist Church.



**DAVE ODOM** is the executive director of Leadership Education at Duke Divinity. Previously he served as founder and president of the Center for Congregational Health in Winston-Salem, N.C., and adjunct professor at Wake Forest Divinity School. He has also had a leadership role in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He has published numerous articles on congregations, leadership, and healthy institutions for *Faith & Leadership*, available at [www.faithandleadership.com](http://www.faithandleadership.com).

# Renewal that Transcends Barriers

**IF YOU'VE READ** anything about contemporary trends for the North American church, you've seen dire predictions, alarming statistics, and grim warnings. The current narrative could be summed up in one word: decline. Denominations are likely to be feuding and certain to be shrinking. Churches are graying, with the average age of membership rising each year. Seminaries and divinity schools face increasing costs and decreasing enrollments. Millennials increasingly identify as "nones"—having no formal religious identification.

This narrative of decline is supported by top scholarship, such as the excellent research by our own Mark Chaves, professor of sociology, religious studies, and divinity, which examines the National Congregations Study. Across the spectrum of religious congregations, the consistent thread emerges: contraction, shrinking, decline. The force of these trends might be felt most acutely in mainline Protestant denominations, but it also affects Roman Catholic and evangelical/Pentecostal churches.

And the problem goes beyond distressing data: many in the church feel under existential threat. They've adopted the defensive posture of people under emotional and psychological strain. They sense the ship (as they know it) is going down and wonder whether all that's left is to rearrange the deck chairs.

As we survey these trends, we believe this is an exciting moment to be at Duke Divinity School. No, we have not been exempt from the difficulties of funding and enrollment. Yes, we are aware of the challenging congregational landscape confronting our students. Ours is neither a mindless optimism nor a naïve faith. Our mission is to prepare future leaders for the church, training them as people of faith to address the challenges confronting our world. Few places are better equipped than Duke Divinity School to form ministers who will make a difference in the world, who will lead the church through these tumultuous waters, and who will embody faith, hope, and love.

*May we be willing to offer  
the gifts of community  
and God's love that will  
transform lives and restore  
the mission of the church.*

The theme of renewal has permeated the work of our new dean, Elaine A. Heath. Her scholarship and ministry has been intent on discovering and unleashing the ways that the people of faith can draw on the traditions of the church in order to participate in the fresh ways that God's Spirit is working today. Dean Heath brings years of vital experience, from leading groups through a process of spiritual renewal to launching the Missional Wisdom Foundation to teaching in churches and seminaries. She offers scriptural insight, theological perspective, and practical wisdom to the endeavor of renewal for the church.

The question for us as a divinity school is how we will participate in this work of God. How will we train leaders for the church to participate in this work? How will we use our resources here at Duke Divinity School to promote prayer and hospitality and community? We explore those questions in this issue of *DIVINITY*, beginning with an article by Dean Heath describing essential elements for preparing the leaders of tomorrow's churches and communities.

This issue also features articles by our faculty members Luke Bretherton and Norman Wirzba as well as several personal accounts of experiencing God in unexpected ways and nontraditional places. Gifts of community and transformation sometimes happen within the walls of the church and sometimes surprise us inside the walls of a prison. Finally, an article on domestic violence and the church by Dina Helderman, our events management director, reminds us that the work of participating in God's healing requires us to see the suffering in our midst and to support those who are hurting and often ignored or marginalized.

We hope that this issue inspires your ongoing journey of reflection and renews your sense of mission. May we be willing to offer the gifts of community and God's love that will transform lives and restore the mission of the church. ■

By **HEATHER MOFFITT**, editor of *DIVINITY* magazine and associate director of communications at Duke Divinity School



# PREPARING LEADERS *Today* FOR THE CHURCH OF *Tomorrow*

BY ELAINE A. HEATH

About a decade ago, I began to notice a trend in the seminary classes I taught. Every semester, I would encounter students who longed to learn how to lead the church beyond the walls of the church. Some wanted to work with people living in poverty, so they were interested in bi-vocational ordained ministry. Some were uncertain about ordination, seeing it as a potential hindrance to ministry beyond the traditional programs of the church. Others were drawn toward a group that the Pew Research Center now calls “the nones”—the growing mass of mostly young adults who have no particular religious affiliation. My students knew they would have to do

ministry differently from anything they had experienced, but they had few local models from which to learn.

Soon I found myself in the middle of what has become a national trend in theological education: young adults sensing a call to ministry and coming to seminary but feeling ambivalent toward traditional ministry. They could more easily tell me what they were not called to do than what they were called to do. I could have chalked up their uncertainties to immaturity, or not actually having a call, or having a bad attitude—but these were often the most gifted and grounded students.

The other story I heard repeatedly was that these students felt pressure from denominational leaders to save



failing institutional systems within the church. But they felt no such urgency themselves. Instead, they wanted to be out in the world where people suffer and greatly need the presence of the church. Again and again they asked me, “Dr. Heath, will I have to leave the church to answer the call?”

#### MISSIONAL VOCATION

Leadership expert Simon Sinek tells us that the “why” of an organization should always lead the “what” and the “how.” The central task of theological education, the “why,” is to equip people to lead the church to fulfill its missional vocation. By “missional” vocation I mean the church’s call to be the “sent out” body of Christ in the world. (*Missio* means “sent out.”) The church must embody and enliven the healing, reconciling, and forgiving love of Christ among its neighbors, so that proclamation of the gospel is grounded in missional practice.

In missional churches, the people outside the building significantly shape what goes on inside the building, such that the ethos of the church expresses the love of Jesus for those neighbors. Loving neighbors well, regardless of their religious affiliation (or lack thereof), is a core value for the missional church. The posture of missional Christianity contrasts sharply with colonizing forms of the church or

church as a consumer activity. Humility, compassion, and a rejection of any form of exploitive, manipulative evangelism characterize missional practice.

When I began to hear students express their need and desire to learn how to be missional church leaders, I knew I had to respond, because their need had everything to do with the “why” of theological education. They needed real-world opportunities to test and clarify their call. And those experiences needed to be part of their theological education. Through listening to students, I heard God’s call to create new learning contexts beyond the classroom but connected to what we learned within the classroom. Three critical questions from that time continue to guide my work:

- What kind of leaders does the church of tomorrow need so that it can fulfill its missional vocation?
- What kind of learning experiences can best prepare leaders for the church of tomorrow?
- How can we best provide those experiences for our students?

#### NEW COMMUNITIES

Because of my students’ questions, my research took a new direction. In addition to focusing my research on culture shifts and various emerging streams in the church, I began two experimental, multicultural faith communities in

Dallas, Texas, with a handful of these students. We launched a residential new monastic community for women in a mixed income, predominantly Latino/a neighborhood. And with a racially and theologically diverse team of students, I launched a multicultural, missional house church called New Day that soon became involved in refugee resettlement work.

Both of these initiatives quickly provided rich learning opportunities. We offered ministry in two neighborhoods grappling with systemic injustice. Students learned to organize their lives around a fivefold Wesleyan rule of life based on spiritual and justice practices of prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness. They also learned how to start and lead small faith communities anchored in the local church and how to practice deep hospitality in their own neighborhood.

Within a year a new student, Larry Duggins, who had been a successful banker prior to coming to seminary, joined us. These experimental communities connected precisely with Larry’s call to offer leadership development to young adults in emerging expressions of church. Larry soon became directly involved with me in mentoring young adults and resourcing and leading the initiatives in other ways.

As word spread about our experiment with new communities as part of



Just a tiny degree of openness allows God to work with us—like dandelion seeds. They blow on the wind, fall into every crack in the asphalt—and before you know it a parking lot is in full bloom.

—from *God Unbound* by Elaine A. Heath

my students' education, pastors began to contact me from across and beyond Texas. I began to receive invitations to teach and speak at regional and then national gatherings of clergy, lay leaders, and leaders from multiple denominations. As national interest grew, Larry and I gathered a team and formed the nonprofit Missional Wisdom Foundation (MWF) to administer the growing network of communities and other initiatives as they developed. I was receiving more invitations than I could accept to teach, preach, lead continuing education events, and deliver keynote addresses to UMC Annual Conferences across the nation.

Today, MWF includes a network of several multicultural new monastic and missional faith communities, including a residential community for persons with and without disabilities, a small social enterprise operated and managed by East African refugees, two co-working businesses that repurposed mostly unused space in two church buildings, a training program to equip laity and clergy to launch and lead new faith communities, a coach-training program, summer immersions in vocational discernment for college students, and several pilgrimage experiences. MWF now has four regional hubs across the United States, each of which has a unique

local shape but also includes multiple forms of emergence Christianity that provide learning labs as well as vibrant ministries. All of these are connected to local churches, nonprofits, and other Christian institutions.

#### LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

Driven by economic and numeric decline, the church is increasingly eager to learn how to be fruitful in the 21st century. The majority of people I encounter across the nation and around the world know that the church needs to change in order to fulfill its vocation in the future. But they are not sure how to make the change. A sea change is under way in how the church relates to its neighbors and how it understands its own vocation. Congregations need leaders who are trained to guide the church through this time of radical culture shift.

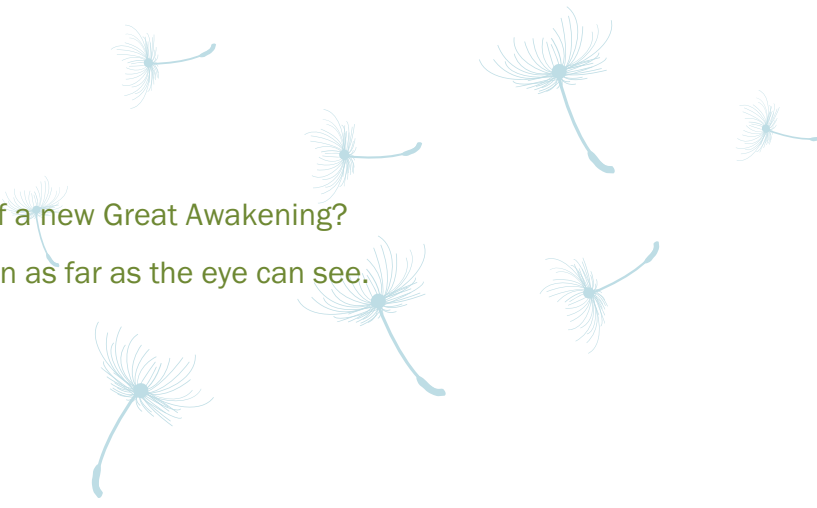
As Dan Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), has stated, the impact of the sea change on theological education will be profound. The great majority of mainline seminaries will experience hardship over the coming decade because of the struggle to adapt to culture shifts.

Adaptation will require us to provide both classical and new forms of theological education, some of which we have yet to imagine. Not

only must we adapt to changing needs for graduate programs in theology, but we must increase and substantially improve continuing education for clergy and laity. Emerging church leaders need to learn how to be agile leaders who can lead their congregations to be nimble, to be willing to experiment in order to find the best ways to reach people in their context.

Another challenge for theological education is to make it affordable and accessible for all who are called to ministry. Consider the burden of student loan debt, with the average United Methodist seminary student graduating with a student loan debt of \$49,303. That amount of indebtedness straightjackets graduates who typically go to low-paying, entry-level ministry positions. Student loan debt can also funnel graduates into appointments in established churches that provide a salary for traditional forms of ministry but where innovative, missional leadership may not be welcome. For graduates whose call is to develop missional ministry, this kind of situation can generate a vocational crisis.

In the future we will face an increasing enrollment challenge, partly for financial reasons, partly because of the shrinking traditional church, and partly due to the need for more options beyond the M.Div. degree to equip leaders for nontraditional



Church, do you realize we are on the cusp of a new Great Awakening?  
And it looks like spiritual dandelion explosion as far as the eye can see.

—from *God Unbound* by Elaine A. Heath

ministries. Although 40 percent of ATS-accredited institutions—including Duke—have grown in enrollment the past few years, the trend across all ATS-accredited schools is a decline in M.Div. enrollment.

It is tempting during times of deep change such as the culture shift in which we find ourselves to allow anxiety about institutional survival to drive decisions. It is easy to lose sight of the “why” of theological education and, out of fear, stifle the creativity and experimentation necessary to adapt successfully to our new environment. We must continually remember that we are here to equip leaders who can help the church of tomorrow to fulfill its missional vocation. The core practice that will help us to guide theological education through the culture shifts is to remember the “why” of theological education.

#### **FOCUS ON NEIGHBORS**

To help us remember our purpose, we should reflect on the question that George Bullard, a strategic leadership consultant, asks in his recent blog post about disruptive theological education: “Who is our client?” Our client is not ourselves but the world beyond the divinity school, beyond the university, and beyond the church—the world for which we are preparing leaders who will need to guide us into a future in which

we and the rest of creation can flourish.

Paradoxically, the greatest challenge to theological schools at top-ranked research universities such as Duke is—to use the language of Jesus—to become like little children among our neighbors. That is, we need to be open, curious, teachable, agile, and humble in the middle of our anxiety-producing culture shifts. Indeed, if we make the mistake of seeing the challenge of financial stress and enrollment trends as episodic problems rather than indicators of culture shift, we could miss our opportunity to lead theological education into a vibrant and effective future.

If we listen to our neighbors as to the kind of Christian leaders the world needs, this is what we will hear.

First, the escalating violence that marks our society is becoming intolerable. This includes all aspects of war, gun violence, terrorism, domestic violence, sexual violence, racial violence, and hate crimes. Our neighbors cannot bear any more violence done in the name of religion. We must prepare leaders who can help congregations and institutions bring an end to violence. We must prepare leaders who can help all of us move toward Isaiah’s vision of the peaceable kingdom.

Second, we are driving our planet toward catastrophic destruction, and

we are long past a time when we can look the other way or dismiss climate change as a political agenda. We can no longer act as if salvation has nothing to do with this life and this world. We have to act now to heal our common home, and it will require all of us working together across religious, political, and ideological lines and across disciplines. We need leaders who can help us do that.

Third, poverty does not have to be inevitable for large numbers of people. Poverty is caused by human greed and the abuse of power. It is a complex problem that affects all of us, and it will require all of us working together across divisions and disciplines to heal the root causes. Our neighbors are telling us that we have a responsibility to nurture Christian leaders who will help us collectively change unjust systems that create and perpetuate poverty.

Fourth, our neighbors are suffering from all the institutionalized hate that marks our world—racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, Islamaphobia, xenophobia, and more. Their suffering reveals that bias and hate fuel violence. It will require all of us working together to move from hate to hospitality and from fear to wonder in order to build a world in which diversity is cause for celebration. We need leaders in the church who can help us do that.

In short, our neighbors are asking us to nurture leaders who will guide us to a future in which we become the answer to Jesus' prayer: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. For as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor, theologian, and martyr of the Third Reich, taught, the church is only the church to the extent that it is the church for others. It is our responsibility and sacred call in theological education to nurture leaders who lead the church to be the church for others.

This is the orientation from which I endeavor to lead in the church, in academia, and elsewhere throughout my professional and personal life.

#### **A PERSONAL CALL TO VOCATION**

As I consider the "why" of my own vocation, I know that God's call to equip leaders for a missional church has emerged from the context of my own journey. Throughout most of my childhood, my family lived in poverty. Because of the aftermath of my father's service in World War II, our family suffered alongside him as he struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder. Our home was not a safe place, despite my mother's hard work to keep us clothed and fed. We moved numerous times, living mostly in the Pacific Northwest, Montana, and Alaska.

Along the way, Christian neighbors welcomed my siblings and me to eat with their families, play games, or go to Sunday school. These dear people were the face of Christ to me. I don't know where I would be without them. I learned in their homes what it means to be a community for our neighbors.

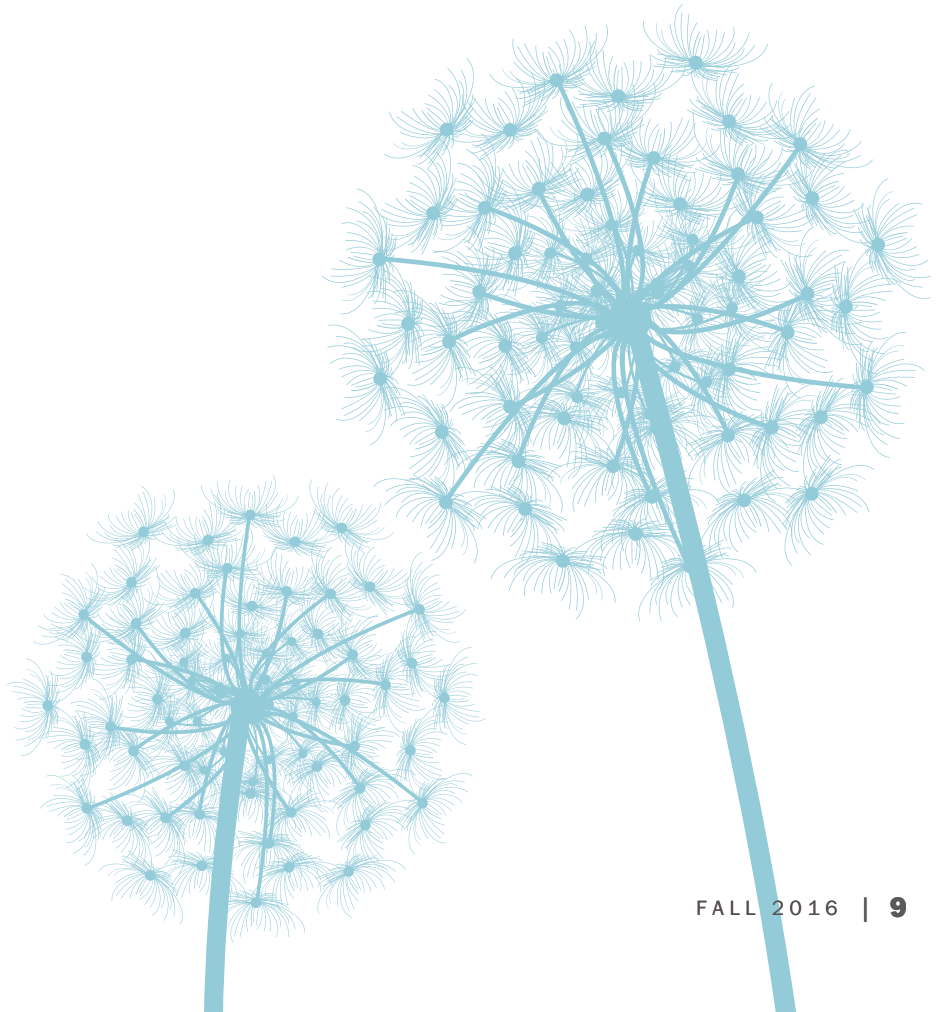
Later in life, when I was working through some of the trauma of my childhood, I realized one day that I had been one of "the least of these"

about whom Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me." This was a turning point in my movement toward shalom and in my theological development. I experienced the astounding truth that Jesus had been with me and in me during the violence. I saw that he is with and in all who are vulnerable, small, disempowered, and at the mercy of others. Learning from Mother Teresa, I have come to see that Christ thirsts in our neighbors who thirst. Christ suffers when we suffer.

My theological focus emerges from my own experience of God's call, God's mercy toward me, God's healing of much sorrow in my life, and God's reconciling love in my family. All my family members have come to faith, including my father before he died. At age 95, my mother is a strong

intercessor and follower of Jesus. My academic work and pastoral work, along with my history of transforming grace, have brought me to this position of leadership in one of the top divinity schools in the world. Words cannot convey the wonder and the sense of deep responsibility I feel toward God as I assume the role of dean of Duke Divinity School.

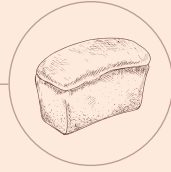
I am certain that God has called me here at this time because of the need to prepare leaders today for the church of tomorrow: the church that must heal the wounds of colonialism masked as mission; the church that must learn anew what it means to bear the gospel in an increasingly violent world. I am confident that as we seek the wisdom and direction of God, we will indeed fulfill our calling to prepare missional leaders for God's church. ■











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# *The* **RADICAL** **POLITICS** *of* **FELLOWSHIP**

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BY **NORMAN WIRZBA**

**T**he day of Pentecost illustrated that when the Holy Spirit descends upon people, radical things happen. Suddenly people discovered themselves to be speaking clearly and intelligently in languages they had not previously known. The book of Acts records that people “from every nation under heaven” (2:5) were present in Jerusalem and heard Galileans—folks from a region not especially renowned for cosmopolitan culture—speaking in the diverse languages of their native lands. This was a powerful sign that God wants nothing to stand between people sharing life with each other. If you can’t speak the language of the people you are with, fellowship and friendship can’t go very far.

But God didn’t just give these people new languages to speak. God also gave them new table manners. Near the end of the same chapter, we are told, almost as an aside, that these early converts “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42). Their practice of coming together to eat was no small thing; as a time-honored tradition says, the best way to keep different ethnicities, races, genders, sexual orientations, classes, and political orientations (the list goes on and on!) apart is to prevent them from eating with each other. When people eat together, a space opens in which friendship becomes possible.

## EATING TOGETHER AND CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

The Holy Spirit is not content with surface alterations, merely changing a few of our opinions and thoughts. Instead, the Spirit of God enters into us through our mouths, transforming our speaking and our eating, and then goes viscerally and deeply into our hearts and guts so that our whole manner of behaving is made new. It is the powerful wind that reanimates our movement through the world. Think of it: when eating together under the Lordship of Christ, these early Christians shared their possessions with each other, gave what they had to those who were in need, were glad and generous with each other, and had the goodwill of all the people. “There was not a needy person among them” (4:34). No doubt, “great grace was upon them all” (4:33). People witnessed their fellowship in amazement and awe.

Eating together is a big deal, for when people eat with one another, the ignorance, suspicion, and fear that compel us to segregate people into the categories of Jew/Gentile, white/black, safe/dangerous, rich/poor, suburbanite/farmer, documented/undocumented, friend/foe, and acceptable/unacceptable begin to fade away. Sitting around tables, sharing food and stories, listening, and entering into the lives of one another, the feared “other” can gradually become known and appreciated as a fellow human traveler, entitled to the same respect and care that God promises to all.

Welcoming others to our tables is not just a nice idea. It goes to the heart of our faith as people who worship a hospitable God. When John of Damascus, one of the most revered theologians in the early church, searched for a way to describe the work by which God creates and sustains the world, he opted for the

language of hospitality. God “makes room” for what is other than God, and then God nurtures and empowers this other into the fullness of its life. That is what love does: it seeks the good and the flourishing of the beloved. And God does all of this as one intimately, yet noncoercively, involved in the struggles and opportunities that each person faces. When Christians practice hospitable fellowship with others, what they are doing is participating in, extending, and witnessing to the practical love of God still at work in the world.

### THE RADICAL ACT OF EATING TOGETHER

Today’s divided America suggests that we have a long way to go if we want to practice the hospitable love that is the foundation of life together. Longtime observers of political life have noted that politicians make less time to eat and socialize with peers from across the aisle. In our suburbs and on main streets, ordinary citizens self-segregate as well by living in neighborhoods and sticking with people that make them feel safe and comfortable. Though saturated with information and data of every kind, our views of the world and of others have narrowed and hardened, because we prefer to access the news and media outlets that only ever confirm the viewpoints we already hold. This is a world in which people are rarely in a position to do the political and economic work of helping each other or building a shared world together, because they hardly know each other.

Christian churches often don’t do much better than the culture around them. Depending on the size of your church and the style in which you conduct worship, it is possible that you will rarely have to sit down with anyone unlike yourself. You may have even picked your church based on its demographic: the folks gathered there look,

talk, and think pretty much like you. How will you ever know what life is like for people deemed scary and “other”? More importantly, how will you be able to help them in their need? We should ask whether some of America’s painful and violent past would have worked out differently if people, Christians especially, had been in the habit of eating with the people they didn’t know or considered suspicious.

Consider the early days of the civil rights movement. When the Greensboro Four entered the Woolworth store, purchased a few school supplies, and then asked to be served at the food counter, they dared to challenge the edifice of Jim Crow laws and tradition. White storeowners were quite happy to take the money of black folks—so long as it did not require whites to eat with blacks. Eating together crossed a line that few people dared to cross, because to do so was, especially if you were black, to put your life at risk.

Many years later, Franklin McCain, one of the Greensboro Four, gave an interview in which he recalled being anxious about their attempt to be served at the food counter. He wondered if he would be killed or jailed for his actions. He also remembered noticing a little old white lady sitting at the counter, eyeing him and his friends. Did she mean them ill? When she finished her doughnut and coffee, she got up, walked behind them, and placed her hands on their shoulders. What she said surprised him: “Boys, I am so proud of you. I only regret that you didn’t do this 10 years ago.”

Looking back on those words, McCain said he learned a very important lesson that day: “Don’t you ever, ever stereotype anybody in this life until you at least experience them and have the opportunity to talk to them. I’m even more cognizant of



**WHEN CHRISTIANS** practice hospitable fellowship with others, what they are doing is participating in, extending, and witnessing to the practical love of God still at work in the world.

that today—situations like that—and I’m always open to people who speak differently, who look differently, and who come from different places.” We, along with McCain, are left to wonder what might have happened throughout the nation if whites and blacks had been eating together at lunch counters and dining rooms all the years before.

#### **EATING TOGETHER, LEARNING TOGETHER**

Eating together is still a lesson we need to learn. Though we do not have signs at restaurants that say “Whites Only” or “American Citizens Only” or “Undocumented Folks Go In Back,” fear, suspicion, and separation still dominate our life together. To eat with “the other” is still a radical act. When it happens, people are again amazed.

It happened earlier this year in Wichita, Kan., when a Black Lives Matter (BLM) event expanded into a cookout with police officers. When the BLM organizers met with police chief Gordon Ramsay, they agreed that lines of communication didn’t

exist and that trust between people needed to be built. They decided that white, black, and Hispanic residents from the community needed to share a meal together. Some of those gathered reported that they had never eaten with the people they feared or reviled. But sharing food and conversation was a good way to begin to bridge the divides and heal the hatred that is destroying communities in this country. As one attendee noted: “It makes me feel good about the community. It makes me feel good about Black Lives Matter. It just makes me feel good inside. Period.”

Some might dismiss a cookout like this as a useless, perhaps even cynical, gesture by police to “buy off” blacks. Some of those who attended, and likely many more who did not (including a Black Lives Matter chapter in Washington, D.C.), thought so. Only time will tell if this initial effort by some in Wichita to come to mutual understanding and make a commitment to mutual help will lead to greater

healing and transformation in the community. Overcoming one’s fear, suspicion, and bias is extremely difficult and risky work. It takes patience and wise leadership, not to mention a spirit of mercy and a resolute commitment to justice, to turn hatred into a desire to heal. It takes serious work and much time to remake institutions and economies that have been built on the premises of exclusion and violation.

#### **CHURCHES, FOOD, AND HEALING**

Would it not be a good thing if churches were to take a leading role in fostering the kind of food fellowship that brings shared understanding and mutual healing to our divided land? Congregations are certainly well positioned. They have the inspiration of a hospitable God, who welcomes and nurtures everyone so that together they can realize the fullness of their lives. They have the example of Jesus, who ministered to and ate with outcasts and those at the margins, and who offered himself as the “bread of life” (John 6) that both feeds and transforms us so that we can nurture a hungry world. And they have the power of the Holy Spirit, who, as on the day of Pentecost, rushes in to break down the barriers that keep people apart and then knits them into a community of glad and generous hearts.

And churches have buildings and kitchens and yards. Too much of the work of the church is happening behind walls and closed doors. What if congregations took their fellowship outside and modeled what acceptance and hospitality actually look like? What if they hosted community leaders and welcomed community members of all kinds and said: “We are here to offer space and help and food. We are ready to listen and serve in whatever way we can. Help us to be a help.” That would be a wonderful, God-glorifying thing. ■

# WE ARE ONE IN THE SPIRIT... *or are we?*

A PERSONAL STORY OF CHURCH, SEXUAL AND  
GENDER DIVERSITY, AND BELONGING

BY JANIE LONG

I was a kid who was different. It was the early 1970s, and I lived in a small town in western North Carolina. I didn't fit the gender identity I was supposed to have until the fourth grade, when my teacher forced me into playing with the girls at recess instead of playing ball with the boys (because I was getting too red in the face) and made me sit like a lady in class.

That was the beginning of several years of strict gender indoctrination and sometimes brutal policing by my peers, my teachers, and to some extent my parents. But giving in on the outside did not change how I felt on the inside, and I knew on the inside that I was different. I was not allowed to be who I was because girls were not supposed to act like boys. I knew also that I liked girls a lot, but I had no clue what sexual orientation meant, and I had no role models around to inform me. My gender identity was forced into a box, and my sexual orientation was simply nowhere to be found. I chose to act like everyone else because I did not know any different.







I attended the First United Methodist Church, and in my junior year I was the president of the United Methodist Youth Fellowship. My church was one of the largest in town, second only to the Baptists, and we had all been saved by Billy Graham four years earlier when he came to our town as part of one of his crusades. Church was all about getting saved and repenting of your sins. There wasn't much talk of living a faithful life.

Nothing else had really challenged our church until we received a new minister the summer before my junior year. He was a quiet man, not prone

to fire and brimstone. Instead, he spoke of service and treating others respectfully and with love, especially those different from us. The sermon I remember best focused on acceptance of others, and he integrated the plot of the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* into the sermon. I had never heard a minister refer to popular culture in a sermon, and he had my full attention.

He had the idea that the young people needed a director of Christian education. I feel sure the Pastor Parish Relations Committee thought we would be hiring someone who

would have us studying the Bible and memorizing verses. Instead, he hired a young woman fresh out of college who had us listening to *Jesus Christ Superstar* and talking about what faith in action would mean, what loving one another meant, and what we could do to make change happen locally. I remember singing often, "We are one in the Spirit ... and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, they will know we are Christians by our love."

For the first time I wanted to go to church, not just on Sunday but every day. It was a place where we could

HOW DO WE BECOME THAT WELCOMING PLACE THAT IS LIFE-SUSTAINING  
RATHER THAN LIFE-DRAINING? IF WE CANNOT CREATE THAT ENVIRONMENT IN  
THE SPACES WHERE WE TRAIN OUR FUTURE LEADERS, HOW WILL WE  
EVER CREATE THOSE SPACES IN LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITIES?

make things happen, where we could take action—and take action we did. We formed an interfaith City Youth Council with representatives from the black churches and the white churches (we had no integrated churches in our town in that day), and we came together to talk about what we could do to address racism in our community. We took on two major projects that year, both focused on bringing blacks and whites together. One was a tutoring program involving early elementary students and high schoolers that paired black teens with white children and white teens with black children. Another was a campaign to open our town's first interracial pool. The city council did not think we could get the 500 signatures they required for our petition, but we joined together—black and white—and walked door-to-door. That experience solidified for me that one could work through the church and with other churches for social justice. I decided that year that I too would prepare myself to enter the ministry in order to help people put their beliefs into action for social change in which all were included and valued.

I decided to study religion in college and began learning about Barth, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, and Whitehead, and I started to question what I believed as I never had before. My senior honors thesis was focused on the use of Kohlberg's theory of moral development within the church to create a community based on justice, care, and respect. Upon graduation, I accepted a position as director of

Christian education in a midsized Methodist church and quickly learned that members were much more concerned that I fix their marriages and families than that I spend time working for social justice. It was now the late 1970s, and divorce was on the rise. Rebelling against authority was the new norm. Couples and families were struggling and looking to the church for help.

After three years, I decided to go to divinity school to prepare myself for ministry and to find out if I could really be in the church in a way that kept me focused on addressing issues of injustice. What better place to attend than Duke Divinity School, where in the 1960s professors had helped lead campus protests in support of black staff members. I took courses such as "Liberation Theology" with Professor Herzog, "The Social Gospel" with Professor Newsome, and "The Pastor as Spiritual Guide" with Professor Westerhoff. I was still asking questions and not certain I wanted to even be in ministry because I wasn't in agreement with some of the United Methodist doctrine.

I did end up serving in two churches after seminary. Both were larger churches with multiple ministers, and I focused mainly on counseling and education, not on preaching and leading worship. I was able to keep my own inner struggles with church to myself. But I did preach occasionally and often assisted in baptism. My Lenten meditation about turning swords into plowshares and my plea

to the United Methodist Women to quit sending money overseas to "save" people who already had their own faith beliefs and to spend it instead on the homeless who slept outside our doors on the street were often not warmly received. I eventually decided to leave ministry to pursue a degree in marriage and family therapy so that I would be prepared to help those couples and families who had been seeking my help during all those years. I would make a positive difference in people's lives in a different way and one that did not come into conflict with my values. I no longer felt welcome in a place that had been my solace during important years of my life, and I no longer could sing, "We are one in the Spirit."

While getting my Ph.D., I was asked to teach the undergraduate course in human sexuality because I had led sexuality weekends in the church for junior-high students and their parents. As I taught the class, I learned more about sexual orientation and how it was different from gender identity. I began to meet with students who came to my office to talk about their identity. My own eyes began to open, and in helping them to accept themselves, I also helped myself. They were depressed and fearful and angry at the faith communities who taught them and their parents that they were an abomination.

I taught marriage and family therapy on several university campuses around the country, and everywhere I went, young people were suffering. Some had been banned from their homes



and their places of worship. Some had attempted suicide. Many had been very active in their faith communities and were seen as leaders—until they revealed this aspect of who they were. Many churches were failing to live out that song: “They will know we are Christians by our love.”

And then the day came when I returned to Duke as the director of what was then called the LGBT Center (now the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity). I reached out to students, faculty, and staff across campus, including Duke Divinity School. I found seminarians who were living in mortal fear that some of their faculty, fellow students, and Boards of Ministry/Ordination would find out who they were.

I’ll never forget the Divinity student who said, “Can you imagine suddenly losing not only your family but your church family, to no longer be able to go where you’ve always found solace, to feel as though your entire

spiritual core has been ripped out of you?” They had grown up in a faith community and wanted to serve, they wanted to remain faithful, they wanted to be accepted in their spiritual homes. And yet many would not be welcome if they lived openly. Some went on to find more welcome spiritual homes, some left behind the idea of ministry, and some left faith communities altogether. Alas, they were depressed, fearful, and angry. They also found the place where they had come to study to often be a hostile environment. I am happy to say that new leadership will foster an environment that reflects the great strides made by Duke University at large over the past 10 years.

How do we all create that welcoming place that is life-sustaining rather than life-draining? If we cannot create that environment in the spaces where we train our future leaders, how will we ever create those spaces in local faith communities? If faculty and staff do not feel free to openly be who they

are, if research focused on support and understanding is not valued, if we continue to treat some members of our faith community as inferior, how will we ever be one in the Spirit?

I am thankful for the journey I have traveled and the people along the way who have helped me become who I am today. I’m still friends with the daughter of my high-school minister, and the young woman who came to work in my church and inspired me, and with dear classmates from seminary. I carry as a part of me those lessons and insights I gained during college and seminary from the professors who challenged me. Many members of the faith communities I served also molded me, and I remain close to some of them today as well. While I did not find my community within the church, I did find community among its people. I hope one day all young people in their faith communities can truly sing, “We are one in the Spirit.” ■









# THE ART *of Tentmaking*

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN LOVE THEIR NEIGHBORS THROUGH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

BY LUKE BREThERTON

**O**n an unusually hot autumn evening, I sat with 250 others in Brixton Town Hall for an assembly organized by South London Citizens. South London Citizens is a chapter of Citizens UK, a broad-based community organizing coalition made up of churches, mosques, synagogues, Gurdwaras, trade unions, schools, universities, residents associations, and other civil society organizations. Its banners and literature proclaim that it “reweaves civil society” and that it is “building powerful communities to work together for the common good.”

As part of the opening of the event, a bishop from the Pentecostal New Testament Church of God and a Muslim leader from a local mosque read aloud a passage from Nehemiah 5. This was followed by presentations on and votes about whether the coalition would work on certain issues. We discussed a campaign for a living wage, a call for a cap on usurious interest rates, and regulation on pay-day loans and other forms of exploitative lending. At one point, two representatives from the U.K. Border Agency were garlanded and applauded for their cooperation with South London Citizens in improving conditions for asylum seekers at the

main administrative center, which is based in South London. At the end of the assembly, the lead organizer of Citizens UK, Neil Jameson, gave a reflection on the Nehemiah 5 passage that had been read earlier. He noted that what we had just participated in echoed Nehemiah 5, where an assembly held those in power accountable and called on the rich to pay back what they had extorted from the people. This was not politics as usual.

#### **CHANGING SECULAR SPACE**

The assembly represented a very different staging of the relationship between religion and politics than is generally experienced today. Explicitly

religious symbols, language and practices were not tucked away into a private sphere. But neither was the space dominated by religious discourse of one kind or another. Religious voices did speak “religiously” by reading a text from Nehemiah in what was a public, overtly political assembly. Explicitly religious ways of speaking and acting together were present, but these were only one among a number of points of reference.

The relationship between the religious groups and the innovative forms of democratic citizenship that South London Citizens represents is not new. In American and British history, forms of popular, local self-organization and common action emerged within the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements, the Chartists, the suffragists, and the temperance movement—all of which were aligned and had a symbiotic relationship with popular forms of religious belief and practice. In Britain, whether it was Methodism or working-class Catholicism, popular forms of religiosity were a key social force generating the practices and common values vital for grassroots activism.

The convergence between popular piety and democratic citizenship I witnessed that night in Brixton runs counter to how the relationship between religion and politics is often portrayed today. Yet it is not unusual or exceptional. We live in an age in which belief and unbelief mix in numerous ways to form varied expressions of what secular means and how religion in public is experienced. Internationally, what secularity looks like in India is different from the form it takes in France or Argentina or Nigeria. How secularity is experienced in the United States in, for example, hospitals, is different from how it is experienced in the military or prisons or universities.

With increasing globalization and changes in religious demography, the place of religion in the public sphere is being reconfigured. Today the relationship between religious groups, the state, and the market is undetermined and ambiguous. At the same time, those from many different religious traditions, as well as contemporary “nones” or nonreligious actors, are encountering each other in new and deeper ways within these shared spaces.

Political elites, the media, and many in the church still assume what I call a showerhead model of secularity. The flow is steady and moving in the same direction, and the bath we stand in will gradually fill up with a religionless form of secularity. A consequence of the bath filling up with this kind of secularity is that theology and the church is displaced



The South London neighborhood of Peckham is bound together by a strong multicultural and diverse population and its dedication to the way its citizens live together as a community. This was evident in an unprecedented event on July 9: a free lunch, including various child-oriented activities, at the Center Venture Playground. The event was organized by the recently founded Peckham Citizens, an alliance of local churches, schools, and charities that have worked together as part of a yearlong campaign to make the park clean and safe.

or washed away. But in reality the contemporary context is more like a hot tub or Jacuzzi, with everything bubbling up from everywhere. So whether you are Richard Dawkins or Franklin Graham, there’s a sense that the world isn’t going your way. Everyone feels as if their way of doing things is contested and under threat. Calling this secularism is a misnomer. The defining feature of our context is plurality. Everyone has to confront the fact that his or her way of life or worldview is not necessarily normal or normative for the public sphere. This may, in some contexts, lead to relativism, but not necessarily. We see myriad responses around the world.

#### **A FAITHFULLY SECULAR LIFE**

In place of mistaken notions of secularization, Christians need a historically attuned concept of secularity that can encompass the interaction of multiple forms of belief and unbelief. Theologically understood, these

moments are not new. By drawing on Augustine’s conception of the *saeculum* as that time after Christ’s resurrection and before Christ’s return, secularity can be understood as an ambiguous time, a field of wheat and tares, neither wholly profane nor sacred. The church, on its pilgrimage, seeks to bear faithful witness within the ambiguous, undetermined time of the *saeculum*. Within the *saeculum* or time of secularity, Christians and non-Christians are capable of good and evil, pride and humility, and there is often a hazy boundary between what is church and what is nonchurch.

On this account the church should neither be for nor against what is secular. The public sphere should, normatively, be “faithfully secular.” In a faithfully secular public sphere theological beliefs and ecclesial practices are interwoven with other patterns of belief and practice in order to constitute a genuinely plural common life. This common life emerges

WE HAVE TO CONSTANTLY LEARN HOW TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR AND HOW TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR. NEIGHBOR LOVE IS ALWAYS A WORK IN PROGRESS, NEVER A WORK OF PROGRESS.

through the interaction of particular and overlapping forms of association, and the ad hoc integration of their different visions of the good. This was exactly the kind of space I witnessed at the South London Citizens assembly. It was neither a simplistically secular event nor a straightforwardly religious one; rather, it was faithfully secular and aimed to model and to generate a common life.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AS NEIGHBOR LOVE**

How is the church to navigate this pluralistic, faithfully secular context? One way to frame this question, particularly as it pertains to religious groups involved in broad-based community organizing, is as a tension between the duties and responsibilities of being a member of a *community of faith* and those that come with membership in a *community of fate*. In a multifaith, multicultural, morally diverse context, you do not choose who lives next door or who lives in the next block or neighborhood. You find yourself living among neighbors who may be very different from you. They may speak a different language, have different eating habits, or look at the world very differently. But like it or not, you share the same fate as them. If the electricity is cut off, everyone loses power. If the sea rises, everyone is flooded.

Living in an area shaped by global population flows and diverse patterns of life presents challenges to religious and nonreligious constituencies alike. Not least is the profound sense of disjuncture between group life,

where cherished beliefs and practices are upheld, and the common life all residents of an area inescapably share. Some respond to this tension with gated communities, “white flight,” and de facto segregation. Others respond with community organizing and other ways of building a common life.

Politics as practiced by Citizens UK is a way to pay attention to others and step beyond one’s own limited perspective. This allows new ways of understanding oneself in relationship to others to emerge.

Community organizing might be thought of as a form of tentmaking, in which a place is created for hospitality to be given and received between multiple traditions. Some issues heard in the tent can be collectively acted upon and some cannot. But the encounter with others and their stories informs the sense of what it is like to live on this mutual ground, to dwell together in a shared space. We hear others’ interests and concerns in the context of ongoing relationship and the recognition that everyone in the tent occupies mutual (not neutral) ground. In this way, community organizing helps foster the sense that in each other’s welfare we find our own (Jeremiah 29:7).

Understood as a tent, forms of participatory democratic politics such as community organizing are mobile, provisional spaces where faithful witness is lived in conversation with other faiths and those of no faith. But we don’t go camping all the time. Tentlike spaces, such as those created by community organizing, thrive best in relationship with

*temples*—authoritative traditions of interpretation and practice— and *houses*—local, contextually alert places of worship and formation (such as a congregation).

Tentmaking practices like community organizing are a way that Christians can cultivate neighborliness. Being a neighbor is not a condition or state of being or a pre-assigned role. It is a vocation. We discover who is our neighbor within contingent and contextual relationships that require us to listen to who is in front of us. This requires being attentive to the conflicts and differences between “us” and “them.” Unlike such things as family, class, ethnicity, or gender, I cannot predetermine who is my neighbor. Neighbors have neither assigned social identities (e.g., father, sister, etc.) nor institutionally constructed roles (e.g., doctor, IT officer, etc.). On occasion, the call of the neighbor supersedes prior commitments and loyalties—whether professional, religious, social, or political—and we can encounter a neighbor in any one of our roles.

We have to constantly learn how to be a good neighbor and how to love our neighbor. Neighbor love is always a work *in* progress, never a work *of* progress. Encountering fellow citizens through such practices as community organizing can be a vital part of the curriculum of neighborliness, particularly in the highly charged and polarized political climate of the day. Moreover, we should never forget that the quickening presence of the Holy Spirit may be encountered in the tent as well as in the temple or the congregation. ■



## SEEING GOD IN PRISON

*Two Perspectives on How God Breaks through Prison Walls*



# A THEOLOGY OF INCARCERATION

BY LOUIS THREATT

**B**efore my ordination and installation as senior pastor at Messiah Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Winston-Salem, N.C., some of the first hands laid on me were those of my incarcerated brothers at the Federal Correctional Complex in Butner, N.C. When they heard about my next steps in ministry, many brothers of different races, ages, and prison-security levels surrounded me during a worship service in the medical-unit chapel, stretched out their hands, and prayed for me. In this moment, these blessed hands that were laid on me further introduced me to love that reaches beyond our faults and issues. This love of God reaches beyond labels and biases. By God's grace, through the Holy Spirit, I was commissioned into ministry.

Since then, my involvement in prison ministry has increased and my understanding has been deepened. This movement in my life reaffirmed two things. First, I can expect to find God on the margins. Second, good theology is essential to healthy relationships with those that are incarcerated.

### SEEING GOD IN PRISON

According to research from the U.S. Department of Justice, over two million people are housed in our nation's federal and state prisons and local jails. Another 4.7 million individuals are currently on probation or parole. Given that millions of people are incarcerated or in some stage of moving through our criminal-justice system, eventually we are bound to know someone who has been in prison. This is especially true for African Americans, who together with Hispanics made up 58 percent of

all U.S. prisoners in 2008, even though African Americans and Hispanics made up approximately one quarter of the adult population. In addition, we must be mindful that most of these brothers and sisters behind bars will eventually return to society. One study on re-entry trends reveals that a full 95 percent of prisoners will make the transition from incarceration to our communities.

I have seen without a doubt that God is present in the prison, certainly as much as if not more so than in the church. This may surprise some, but whenever people are hurting, isolated, confused, broken, abandoned, and in need, we would be naïve to think God is not present there. Scripture tells us that these are the places where God seems to do his best work: with the unexpected, the unlikely, the unchosen or marginalized. "The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in



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times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9).

Engagement with Scripture behind the prison walls transforms our understanding of how God works and renews our mind and outlook on life. Anytime we read the text amid oppression and damaged identity, anytime we find ourselves surrounded by locked steel doors and jangling keys, barbed wire fences and cold cell rooms with no windows or privacy, anytime we are surrounded by death and injustice, our eyes will be opened to new viewpoints on things we might not otherwise see. On the margins, we will see God in new ways.

In his book *The Word on the Street*, Duke Divinity School professor Charles Campbell says that reading Scripture in these contexts “not only unmask reality but is an act of resistance.” In other words, when Scripture is opened with sisters and

brothers in these spaces, it instigates a direct confrontation with the powers that be, both powers in this world and powers within us. Only by naming and exposing these powers can we learn to do theology well. (We do well to remember that Paul was a theologian before he was a servant of Christ. Theology abstracted from seeing Jesus will never save us.)

#### **THEOLOGY SHAPED BY PRISON**

Theology that is embedded in prison ministry has to be relational. It requires us to view those who are incarcerated as brothers and sisters rather than adhere to an “us versus them” or hierarchical model that privileges ministers over prisoners. Prison ministry cannot be fully effective if it is attempted as a linear, one-directional project. It must be understood in a multifaceted, holistic

way, recognizing that ministry is not restricted to the prison. It also requires us to reach out to all who are affected by incarceration.

Why do people get involved in this type of ministry? Some get involved because it is personal; they might know someone in prison or may themselves have been incarcerated. Others are involved because it is scriptural; they seek to obey texts such as Matthew 25:26, Luke 4:18, or even Isaiah 40:28–29. But whatever brings us to this ministry, we ought to have a relationship with these brother and sister that affirms their dignity and worth. People in prison are not a project or an assignment. They are children of God.

We can be confident that God is already doing a great work behind prison walls. When we have this faith, mission becomes true ministry. It is less about our efforts and more about how we can live together; less about ministering *to* and more about ministry *among*; less about what we have done and more about what God has done.

Jesus calls us into prison, but not primarily to help others or even to help ourselves. Jesus calls us into prison to have a closer relationship with him. Anytime we engage in ministry, it is about relationship with God and one another. We desperately need the Spirit of the Lord—the Holy Spirit—to help us preach, proclaim, serve, and live within those spaces in between the neat categories of good and bad. Prison, I have found, is an ideal space to get to know the true and living God. ■

## SEEING GOD IN PRISON

*Two Perspectives on How God Breaks through Prison Walls*



# LIVING THEOLOGY: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE PRISON

BY **KAYE B. WARD**

**T**he goal of Christian theology is to better understand God as revealed to us in the Bible. My entire perception and understanding of God was changed dramatically by participating in the prison ministries offered to me while I was incarcerated at the North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women in Raleigh, N.C. I took Duke Divinity School courses and learned with the help of my professor Lauren Winner, our chaplain, Sarah Jobe D'06, and Alice Noell of the JobStart program sponsored by Interfaith Prison Ministries for Women, where I am now employed. On the day that I went to prison, I was stripped naked except for one thing—my Bible. Once God was all I had, I learned that God was all I needed.

I had a distorted view of God as I grew up. Both my grandfather and my

uncle were Free Will Baptist ministers, and we lived with them for part of my childhood. This was during a time when many preachers preached a “hell, fire, and brimstone” doctrine. They preached that the God of the Bible was a God of wrath and vengeance who poured out that vengeance on people. I was afraid of that God. It was not out of the ordinary to hear someone say, “Well, that’s what he gets for doing so-and-so!” when something bad happened.

I had the feeling that I had to do everything right, and if I sinned, God would punish me by causing something bad to happen to me. If I worked hard enough, I, and those I loved, would be safe from anything bad. Today I know that this is not true; it is a false belief always lurking in the background of this view of a wrathful God. I was like the apostles on the road to Emmaus: I walked beside God for years, but I never really knew who he was.

I broke from my relationship with God when my heart strayed, and I embezzled from my employer. I looked for acceptance outside of God. Like a child separated from her mother in a department store, I let go of God’s hand in search of something else. For that and for breaking the law, I paid the price of 44 months of incarceration. It was a horrible experience, being separated from everyone and everything I loved. But as horrible as it was, it was one of the best things that could have happened to my Christian theology and to me. I experienced many epiphanies, and I would like to share some of my most important ones.

### **GOD IS A GOD OF LOVE**

It was hard for me to understand the awesomeness of God’s grace—that, no matter what, God loved me and had a plan for my life. The wonderful truth is that God does love us with an





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everlasting love, but he also desires our devotion and love in return. The will of God is wrapped up in our relationship to a loving God who has only the very best in mind for each of us. God loves me the same today as yesterday and tomorrow. Love is so important to God that Jesus says in Matthew 22:36–40 that love is the greatest commandment. If we lived by this commandment, what a beautiful world this would be. God wants us to love one another so that the world may believe in the reality of this amazing, gracious, everlasting love.

#### **GOD IS A FRIEND**

This attribute of God was the most important to me as an inmate. God went to prison with me and was there with me 24/7 as my friend. Jesus commands us to love as he loves (John 13:34; 15:12; 17:23), and he says in John 15:14, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” God

does not go home for the night after the day is done. He does not take vacations or time off or sick days. He is never too busy for me—so how could I be too busy for him? God has promised to never leave us. It may appear that we have left him, but we are never really out of God’s sight, just out of God’s will.

#### **GOD IS A GOD OF HOPE**

Our hope comes from God. We can conquer anything through Christ, but change has to come from within. When I was in prison, I came to appreciate the real things in life—my relationship with God, my family, and my friends. We can live without new cars and big houses and designer clothes, but we cannot live a life of true joy without God and the gift of our family and friends. It is so tempting when you are in prison to give up hope. It is tempting to define yourself by your sentence.

But God gave me hope that greater things were to come. My favorite verse was Jeremiah 29:11, “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

#### **GOD IS A GOD OF PURPOSE**

We all need people in our lives who raise our standards, remind us of our essential purpose, and challenge us to become the best version of ourselves. This happened to me in my JobStart classes, a 16-week program that prepares incarcerated women for life outside prison. I learned that our pain has a purpose. Our problems, struggles, heartaches, and hassles cooperate toward one end—the glory of God. Our faith in the face of suffering cranks up the volume of God’s song. God does not exist to make a big deal out of us; we exist to make a big deal out of God. When our deepest desire is not the things of God, or a favor from God, but God himself, we cross a threshold; we focus less on ourselves and more on God.

The Catholic women from Sacred Heart who served as religious volunteers in prison helped me to understand that the measure of greatness is not position, power, or prestige; it is service. I am a work in progress, and new to this service thing. I feel called to Christian ministry but unworthy of this calling. I love God with my whole heart, and I know that he will mold me into the woman that he wants me to be. A strong woman knows her past, understands her present, and moves forward to her future. Today I am celebrating that I have someone in my life who’s worth living and dying for—a God of love, hope, and purpose who has dared to be my friend. ■



BECOMING A PLACE OF  
*Safety and Support*

**DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE**  
*and the*  
**CHURCH**

BY **DINA HELDERMAN** | ART BY **SHERRILL KEEFE**



**I**n North Carolina alone, 53 people died in 2015 as a result of domestic violence. Thirty-nine women, six children, and eight men murdered. Fifty-three children of God ranging from five months to 70 years old. An additional 16 lives were lost because the perpetrators committed suicide.

The list of 53 names, compiled by the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, is a chilling reminder that too often we have believed that domestic violence is a family issue, not a public one. We've asserted that it's not a problem in our churches. Seminarians can complete years of study without exploring their misconceptions about intimate partner violence, their theological and moral convictions about abuse, and their responsibility to break silence and speak truth.

#### **WHY DOESN'T SHE LEAVE?**

When I left seminary, I believed that, if the abuse was that bad, a woman would leave. I became a caseworker at a small nonprofit that served as an alternative to prison for nonviolent women who were addicted to drugs and in trouble with the law. I assumed that the women mandated to this program had been foolish enough to use drugs and were bad parents. I knew

nothing of these women, but I had already written a story about them. That's what the uneducated do.

Over time, I listened to their voices telling their stories. Each woman had a history of violence at home, most often beginning in childhood. They were not the violent ones; they had been the recipients of violence. Each came to be addicted to drugs as way of surviving the trauma and abuse they had experienced. They were surviving however they could. Many had escaped one violent relationship only to be held hostage in the next. Born into systems that were already broken, drugs became a coping mechanism for dealing with family dysfunction. For many, what they were born into offered them little chance to be anything other than who they became as adults.

As I got to know these women and their children who lived with them, I learned to love them and their children. In their children's eyes, I saw their mothers' lost innocence. This began my journey into the truth and consequences of domestic violence.

In my work at the Durham Crisis Response Center and in co-facilitating groups at the North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh, I have continued to listen to those who have been covered in shame and secrecy by society. I have learned that victims of intimate partner violence come in all shapes and



sizes. They are believers and nonbelievers. They live in mansions and they live in their cars. They are white; they are black. They are straight; they are gay. They are me. They are you. And the abusers? I have learned that they are doctors, lawyers, police officers, pastors, elders, husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends, brothers, sisters. They are in our families. They cannot be typecast by their looks in order to maintain perceptions of safety. They are me. They are you.

#### **CHURCHES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Sadly, churches traditionally have erred on the side of the powerful in cases of intimate partner violence. They have relied on an interpretation of Scripture—often out of context—rather than trusting the

whispered words of a survivor. They have quoted, “Wives, be obedient to your husbands,” rather than protecting the vulnerable and afraid. Pastors have protested to me, “We don’t have domestic violence in our church.” To which I respond: if you never speak of it from the pulpit, you choose not to see it in your church. If you never preach about the Scripture that speaks of violence against women, women will never share their stories of violence with you. You do not see what you choose to ignore, and what you ignore, you silently support.

Those of us in helping professions desire to come alongside and support those in pain and fear. But in the case of intimate partner violence, our greatest intentions can exacerbate a dangerous situation into a lethal one.

It surprises many to learn that victims are at their greatest risk of physical attack and homicide at the time when they choose to leave the relationship. It’s little wonder why it takes a survivor an average of seven attempts to leave an abusive relationship. Not only can we place the victim and the children in greater danger, but we can also put our families and ourselves in the line of fire. Without specific training on how to respond most safely to intimate partner violence, we can create risk and vulnerability for ourselves and our churches. Seminaries must make training in how to respond, care for, and work alongside local communities a priority. Otherwise, church leaders who do try to support victims are often left to guess at the best ways to help.

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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Dina Helderman recommends a variety of resources to support church leaders in understanding and responding to domestic violence. To contact her about workshops and training, email [dhelderman@div.duke.edu](mailto:dhelderman@div.duke.edu) or call (919) 613-5329.



#### **ORGANIZATIONS**

Become familiar with the resources and support offered by local shelters and agencies in your area. The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence provides a wealth of information, including articles about domestic violence, a directory of service providers in each county, and a list of training events and webinars. [www.nccadv.org](http://www.nccadv.org)

#### **ARTICLES**

The FaithTrust Institute website provides numerous helpful articles and other resources.

##### **“Forgiveness: The Last Step”**

By Marie M. Fortune

This article helps to address a challenge frequently encountered in ministry with domestic-violence survivors. What

is forgiveness, and what is its role in domestic abuse situations? Fortune explores both the theological and practical aspects, with an emphasis on pastoral care. [www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/Forgiveness.pdf](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/Forgiveness.pdf)

##### **“What a Faith Community Can Do to Respond to Domestic Violence”**

This list of practical steps can help move congregations toward meaningful support and ministry to those who have suffered from domestic and sexual violence.

[www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/What-Faith-Community-Can-Do%202014.pdf](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/What-Faith-Community-Can-Do%202014.pdf)

##### **“What Religious Leaders Can Do to Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence”**

With 15 concrete examples of actions that clergy and church leaders can take,

**THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE:  
RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

After years of ministry with survivors of domestic violence, I am asking that you—you and your lay leaders and your clergy colleagues—receive training. Receive theological training. Learn to wrestle with difficult questions about forgiveness and accountability. Learn to answer the plea of a child wondering why God could allow this to happen to her family.

In addition, receive training from your local crisis center. Learn about their resources. Learn which agencies provide classes to abusers. Learn from them how your church community can support these local resources. Bring their staff into your church to speak to your people. Clergy must reach out and work alongside other community

programs to provide victims with a well-rounded support system to keep them safe, both while in the relationship and when they choose to leave the relationship.

Speak the truth about family violence from the pulpit. Teach our teenagers how to have respect and healthy dating relationships. Remove secrecy. Let it be clear that violence has no part in how God directs us to be family. No one can respond to this violence alone. It takes a communal effort, and that must include churches.

Let's return to my original belief: Why doesn't she just leave? I now know to change the question: Why doesn't the abuser stop? Why don't we, as a community, provide adequate resources and safety for the survivors and accountability for the abusers?

Why don't we, as a church, in our sacred places declare these behaviors incompatible with the love of God and provide ways in the church for the continued support of both parties? Why do we instead blame the victim, asking "why doesn't she just leave?" Too often, we assume we would leave. Too often, we assume that we wouldn't be with an abuser in the first place.

We tell ourselves these lies in order to have a false sense of protection and to limit our compassion for those in pain. Now is the time to stop telling false stories. Now is the time to proclaim the truth—especially in church.

Let us tell the truth, the whole story no matter how ugly or ungodly it may appear. There, in the truth, we will find our Healer, and we will be healed. ■

this list provides guidance on how to address the issues of domestic and sexual violence in ways that will make a difference in their communities.  
[www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/What-Religious-Leaders-Can-Do.pdf](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/What-Religious-Leaders-Can-Do.pdf)

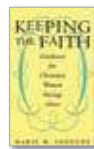
**"When the Abuser Is Among Us:  
One Church's Response to a Perpetrator"**  
By Carol J. Adams

No congregation wants to think that a perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence could be its midst. This is wishful thinking, however. This helpful case study describes how churches can respond either positively or negatively when it's revealed that someone in the church has been a sexual or domestic abuser.  
[www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/When-the-Abuser-Is-Among-Us.pdf](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/articles/When-the-Abuser-Is-Among-Us.pdf)

**BOOKS**

***Keeping the Faith: Guidance for  
Christian Women Facing Abuse***

By Marie M. Fortune



This practical guide addresses issues of faith for women who have suffered from domestic abuse and offers important tools for counselors and others who support them.

***We Were the Least of These: Reading the  
Bible with Survivors of Sexual Abuse***

By Elaine A. Heath



As a theologian and survivor of abuse, Duke Divinity School dean Elaine Heath handles this sensitive topic with compassion and grace,

offering a close reading of several biblical passages that have brought healing for

her and for other survivors. It is helpful for those who have suffered from abuse as well as for pastors, counselors, therapists, and others who minister to them.

***Domestic Violence:  
What Every Pastor Needs to Know***

By Al Miles



Often, pastoral caregivers have the same misconceptions about domestic violence as does the uninformed public. This book addresses the issues related to inadequate pastoral response to this pervasive problem and describes what clergy members can do to provide healing, support, and care. ■



## Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

Fifty-five scholars, practitioners, clergy, and denominational leaders from China, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and the United States gathered in Hong Kong May 23–28 for the third annual Christian forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia, sponsored by the Duke Divinity School Center for Reconciliation in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee. Seven Duke Divinity School participants included Interim Dean Ellen Davis, Professor Xi Lian, Associate Dean Dan Struble, and four students: Cory O’Neal, Jaron Cheung, Caitlin Tremper, and Aaron Griffith. The focus of the 2016 gathering was “The Lament that Leads to Hope.” The Rev. Sue Park-Hur, a

pastor and Korean-American participant from Los Angeles, said she was moved by Dean Davis’ plenary teaching, which helped her see that “lament is a spiritual practice that does not come naturally. [Her] insights gave us a framework to lament the pain and despair we see in Northeast Asia and provided a guideline to trust that the one we cry out to hears and transforms us.”

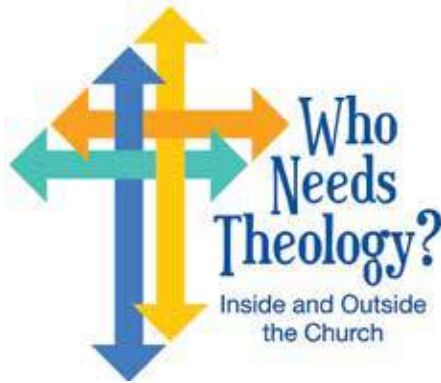
The forum is part of a wider Northeast Asia Reconciliation Initiative focused on nourishing Christian leadership, theology, mission, and collaboration to pursue God’s peace throughout Northeast Asia. For more information, see the forum website at [www.neareconciliation.com](http://www.neareconciliation.com).



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## Convocation & Pastors' School Focuses on "Who Needs Theology?: Inside and Outside the Church"

The 2016 Convocation and Pastors' School was held Oct. 10–11 at Duke Divinity School to explore the following questions: What difference does theology make for the church, the university, and society at large? How can critical theological thinking make a practical difference in our local communities? What if we don't share common beliefs? Featured speakers included Duke Divinity School Dean Elaine Heath; Norman Wirzba, professor of theology, ecology, and agrarian studies at Duke Divinity School; Brian Combs, founder and pastor of Haywood Street Congregation in Asheville, N.C.; Kenneth Carter Jr., resident bishop of the



Florida Conference of the UMC; and Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School. Panelists and seminar leaders with backgrounds in medicine, business, science, art, youth ministry, and community organizing also participated, and Duke Divinity School alumni and initiatives hosted numerous receptions. Convocation & Pastors' School is an annual event held at Duke Divinity School and is supported by the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences of the UMC, The Duke Endowment, and the Parish Ministry Fund.

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## Divinity School Faculty Contribute to Duke Task Force Report



Three members of the Divinity School faculty served on the Duke University Task Force on Bias and Hate Issues: Edgardo Colón-Emeric, assistant professor of Christian theology; Luke Powery, dean of Duke University Chapel and associate professor of homiletics; and Abdullah Antepli, chief representative of Muslim affairs and adjunct faculty. The task force was charged by President Richard Brodhead with a broad review of Duke's policies, practices, and culture as they pertain to bias and hate in the Duke student experience. After months of research and meeting with students, staff, and faculty across Duke, they presented their report earlier this year. Their recommendations will guide the university in ensuring that the Duke community lives up to its values of inclusion and respect for all of its members. The task force website (<https://spotlight.duke.edu/taskforce/>) will be regularly updated so that the full picture of this important work—from the inception of the task force through the implementation of recommendations—is visible in a single place. "We encourage you to learn more and participate in this conversation so that we can move together toward creating the university we all want," said President Brodhead.

## Not Your Average Graduation



Barbara Stager was presented with a Certificate of Achievement in Theological Education from Duke Divinity School during Closing Convocation, an award recognizing the nine classes she has taken over the past four and a half years through Duke's Project TURN program. She is only the second student to receive this certificate, and only the second incarcerated student to be recognized by Duke University for her academic achievements. Unlike most other programs offered inside of prisons,

Project TURN provides graduate-level theological education to students in an unusual format: classes include both incarcerated students and graduate students at Duke Divinity School. Project TURN's goal is to create spaces where incarcerated and non-incarcerated students can learn with and from each other, breaking down stereotypes on both sides. Some of Barbara's favorite classes included "The History and Practice of Prayer," "Poetic Imagination," and "Domestic Violence and the Bible."

Sarah Jobe D'O6 is chaplain at the North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women (NCCIW) and one of Barbara's teachers. "Barbara sets an example for other women as they begin their studies, bringing a depth of insight into class discussions and helping to create an environment of inquisitive learning at our facility." At the certificate presentation, several of Barbara's past Project TURN teachers joined her onstage as Interim Dean Ellen Davis presented the award, and the entire audience of faculty, staff, and graduating Divinity School students recognized her achievement with a standing ovation.

Project TURN is a partnership between Duke Divinity School, the N.C. Department of Public Safety, and the School for Conversion. Representatives from each of these institutions were present to celebrate the occasion, including Warden Kenneth Royster of NCCIW and Chaplain Betty Brown, director of chaplaincy services for the N.C. Department of Public Safety. To read more about Barbara and Project TURN, see [www.schoolforconversion.org/not-your-average-graduation/](http://www.schoolforconversion.org/not-your-average-graduation/).

## Reimagining Health Summer Gathering

Duke Divinity School welcomed congregational teams from the Reimagining Health Collaborative July 13–16 for the Reimagining Health Summer Gathering. Representatives from the eight participating congregations have been working for the last year to develop new programs and projects related to health and health care. An additional 60 people from four states, including North Carolina, participated in sessions focused on efforts to envision and implement new responses to mental health and mental illness. Guest speaker Brandon Appelhans represented the organization My Quiet Cave, which provides resources, connection, and workshops to individuals living with depression or bipolar disorder. "We need to create a safe space where people are trusted and where the terms don't have to be explained," he said. "When that's there, there's a chance for people to rest." Reimagining Health Collaborative is an initiative of Theology, Medicine & Culture at Duke Divinity School.

## Commissioned Painting Installed



*Riven Tree*, by Bruce Herman, Lothlórien Distinguished Chair in Fine Arts at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., and the Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts spring 2016 artist-in-residence, was created at Duke Divinity School. The painting is based on the resurrection of Jesus and hangs in the York Room. To learn more about Herman and *Riven Tree*, see <http://divinity.duke.edu/news/divinity-school-installs-commissioned-painting>.



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## Students Say Pastoral Formation Shaped by Israel Tour

Meredith Riedel, assistant professor of the history of Christianity, and Beth Sheppard, director of Divinity Library and associate professor of the practice of theological bibliography, led a group of Divinity School students on a trip to Israel. It was the main learning experience for the course “War in the Land of Shalom.” This course was co-taught by Professors Riedel and Sheppard and cross-listed as both a New Testament and church history course. Students read Josephus’ account of the first-century Jewish War, studied selected episodes of Crusader history, and visited sites associated with both of these areas of history, as well as many biblical sites.

The itinerary included Jaffa, Caesarea Maritima, Acre/Akko, Haifa, Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, Montfort Castle, Zippori, Belvoir Castle, Magdala, the Golan Heights, Gamla, the Valley of Tears/Valley of Death, Nimrod Castle, Capernaum, the Dead Sea, Masada, Qumran, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. When traveling through the Judean desert toward Masada, one student described how the trip was a formative experience: “I could really understand the complaining of the Israelites. I think if I was out

in that heat and in that desert with no water for more than a day I would be complaining and perhaps angry with God, too. The harsh conditions that the Israelites experienced as explained in Exodus came to light and life for me. I realize that we need to have more grace when telling those stories. I have heard many pastors read and sermonize about them in such a negative light. But when you are there, when you see the harsh conditions for yourself, I think you will think differently about it all. My preaching and teaching of the word will forever be changed by my journey to Israel.” Another student noted: “I know this trip has changed me. I will look back at this trip as perhaps the most formative and instructive experience in my time in seminary. To see how the land has been changed and built upon by war and its strategic considerations is impressive. To sense that the society that is built there today feels the presence of the threat of war is something that we back home do not have to experience in our little bubble. And I think it’s because of that that there is a richness and an appreciation of life that we also lack.” To read more about the trip and see photos, visit [www.caitlinmcalhany.wordpress.com](http://www.caitlinmcalhany.wordpress.com).





**JEREMY BEGGIE** delivered the Northcutt Lecture, “Desiring God in Worship: A Musical Perspective on a Contemporary Theme,” at Baylor University (Waco, Texas) on April 7, and a performance lecture titled “Encountering the Trinity in Music” as part of the Pusey House Trinity Conference (Oxford, U.K.) on June 29. He presented “Being Known and Knowing: Trinity, Music, and Newbigin” for the Newbigin Summer Institute (Cambridge, U.K.) July 13–14, and May 29 he preached at Sidney Sussex College (Cambridge, U.K.). He invited professional instrumentalists to Duke for an evening of “Theology and Improvisation,” an Aug. 31 event in which he also performed that was part of a two-day series of Theology and the Arts events organized in conjunction with Opening Convocation.

**LUKE BRETHERTON** published “Democracy, Society and Truth: An Exploration of Catholic Social Teaching,” in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (69.3, 2016), and “Blasphemy,” in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, 2nd ed., edited by Martin Davie (InterVarsity Press). He presented plenary papers at several events: the Annual Society of Vineyard Scholars Conference (Raleigh, N.C.), April 21–23; the conference “Everyday Ethics: A Future for Moral Theology?” (University of Oxford), May 26–27; and “The Future of Theology,” a consultation at Yale Divinity School, June 9–10.

**DOUGLAS CAMPBELL** delivered the Bishop Selwyn Lecture, “Sex, Gender, and Marriage: Paul’s Advice for the Modern Church,” at Holy Trinity Cathedral (Auckland, N.Z.) on May 19, where he was presented

with a *pounamu taonga* (greenstone treasure, a traditional honor in New Zealand) by the bishop of Waikato and Taranaki. He also gave several other lectures: “Prison Ministry: Do’s and Don’ts,” for “The Feast,” a discipleship gathering of the Anglican Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki/*Te Hahi Mihinare ki Aotearoa, ki Niu Tireni ki Nga Moutere o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa*, (Hamilton, N.Z.), May 17; “Covenant or Contract in the Interpretation of St. Paul,” at The College of St John the Evangelist/*Hoani Tapu te Kaikauwhau i te Rongopai*, (Auckland, N.Z.), May 18; “Who Will Be Resurrected?” at the University of Otago (Dunedin, N.Z.), May 23; and “Apocalyptic Epistemology: The Sine Qua Non of Pauline Epistemology,” for the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Otago (Dunedin, N.Z.), May 24. He was named a National Humanities Center Fellow for 2016–17.

**STEPHEN CHAPMAN** published the *Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, co-edited with Marvin Sweeney. He is on leave this year to complete a writing project on the theology of the book of Joshua.

**MARK CHAVES** and Alison J. Eagle published “Congregations and Social Services: An Update from the Third Wave of the National Congregations Study” online in *Religions* (7.55) on May 19. He published “The Price of the Calling: Evidence from the Current Population Survey,” with Cyrus Schleifer, in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (55, 2016).

**FARR CURLIN** co-edited the April 2016 issue of *Christian Bioethics*, which included two of his essays: “Setting Medicine in the Context of

a Faithful Christian Life,” with Keith Meador, and “What Does Any of This Have to Do with Being a Physician? Kierkegaardian Irony and the Practice of Medicine.” He gave the Mekhjian Lecture on Medical Ethics at The Ohio State University on Sept. 15.

**ELLEN DAVIS** delivered lectures for “The Biblical Short Story: Not as Simple as It Seems,” an event at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd (Lexington, Ky.) on May 20, and at the Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia (Hong Kong), May 23–26. She was the facilitator of the Center for Reconciliation’s Summer Institute program, June 6–10, and the plenary speaker at the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics Annual Conference (Cambridge, U.K.), Sept. 8–13.

**CRAIG DYKSTRA** received the General Assembly Award for Excellence in Theological Education at the June meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The award is given biennially “to honor a person who has made an outstanding lifetime contribution to theological education in and for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).”

**SUSAN EASTMAN** presented “It’s Personal: Paul and Neuroscience on Personal Action and the Intersubjective Self” for the Duke Institute for Brain Sciences Neurohumanities Research Group on Sept. 9. At the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at the University of Cambridge, she participated in a workshop on artificial intelligence, robotics, and the human and presented “Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Pauline Anthropology” for an interdisciplinary

short course on “Reality, Robotics, and Religion: Human Identity in an Age of Machines” held Sept. 15–18. She gave the Lund Lectures in New Testament at North Park Theological Seminary (Chicago), Sept. 28–29, and presented a paper, “Paul and the Person: Perspectives from Cognitive Science and Philosophy,” for the North Park Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture, Sept. 29–Oct. 1. She published “Grace and Transformation,” a review of *Paul and the Gift* by John M.G. Barclay, online in *Marginalia Review of Books* on May 9.

**MARY MCCLINTOCK FULKERSON** published “Ethnography in Theology: A Work in Progress,” in *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy*, edited by Charles Marsh, Peter Slade, and Sarah Azaransky (Oxford University Press), and “Reformation and Bodily Proprieties: Disrupting Rituals of Hospitality,” in *Always Being Reformed: Challenges and Prospects for the Future of Reformed Theology*, edited by David H. Jensen (Pickwick Publications). She presented the paper “Colorblind Faith, Hope, and Love: The Effect of Implicit Bias” at “Faith, Hope, and Love: Challenges & Opportunities Today,” a conference at Claremont Graduate University, April 15–16. She moderated a panel and church discussion on race at New Creation UMC (Durham, N.C.) on May 21.

**JENNIE GRILLO** published “Is Patristic Exegesis Good for Old Testament Scholarship? Jerome and Gregory of Nyssa on Ecclesiastes,” in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom*, edited by John Jarick (Bloomsbury), and “Wisdom Literature,” in *The Hebrew Bible: A*

*Critical Companion*, edited by John Barton (Princeton University Press). She received an honorable mention from the 2016 SBL David Noel Freedman Award for Hebrew Bible Scholarship for her essay “Afterlives and Otherworlds in the Tales of Daniel.”

**RICHARD LISCHER** retired on June 30, after 37 years of teaching at Duke Divinity School. At the event to mark the occasion, “A Vocation to Preach,” he was presented with a Festschrift, *Preaching Gospel*, edited by **CHARLES CAMPBELL**, Jennifer Copeland, Clayton Schmit, and Mary Hinkle Shore.

**DAVID MARSHALL** co-edited, with Lucinda Mosher, *Sin, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (Georgetown University Press). Working with Georgetown University’s Berkley Center, he facilitated the 15th annual meeting of the Building Bridges Seminar for Muslim and Christian scholars, held in May in Washington, D.C., and Warrenton, Va., on the theme “Monotheism and Its Complexities.”

**RUSSELL RICHEY** co-led the Summer Wesley Seminar at Duke’s Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition. In June he was named to another four-year term on the UMC’s Committee on Faith and Order, and he drafted its study “United Methodist Doctrine and Teaching on the Nature, Mission, and Faithfulness of the Church: A Resource Paper from the UMC Committee on Faith and Order.” His book *Methodism in the American Forest* (Oxford University Press) was judged the outstanding book on United Methodist history or a related subject published during 2015 at the conference of

the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church, May 23–26. He was named to the editorial board of New Room Books, a new publishing imprint of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

**LESTER RUTH** published “Dear, Jesus?” in *Worship Leader* (25.2, 2016).

**BETH SHEPPARD** published “The Fourth Gospel, Romanization, and the Role of Women,” in *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament*, edited by Adam Winn (Society of Biblical Literature).

**ROSS WAGNER**, with **ISMAEL RUIZ-MILLAN**, taught the course “Filipenses y la Forma de Discipulado Cristiano” for the Methodist Course of Study in Ahuachapán, El Salvador, April 17–21. He delivered the 2016 New Testament Lectures on the topic “Faith, Hope, and Law: From LXX Isaiah to the Letters of Paul” at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Ill.) on April 27. The lectures were “‘My People, in Whose Heart Is My Law’ (LXX Isa. 51:7): Trust in God and Fidelity to the Law in the Septuagint Version of Isaiah” and “‘The *Telos* of the Law Is Christ’ (Rom. 10:4): The Role of Septuagint Isaiah in Shaping Paul’s Understanding of the Law.”

**LACEYE WARNER** served as a workshop leader on “John Wesley and Evangelism” for World Methodist Council (Houston, Texas) on Sept. 1, as a panelist for Duke Endowment’s “UM Convocation on the Rural Church” (Hilton Head, S.C.) on Aug. 10, and as an instructor on “Women and Evangelism” for the Advanced Summer Course of Study at Duke Divinity School, July 4–15. She

## FACULTY & STAFF NOTES

also gave numerous talks at UMC events: “Baptism and Covenant,” Texas Youth Academy, Southwestern University, June 28; “Resurrecting the Word: Evangelism,” South Georgia Annual Conference, June 9; “Spreading Scriptural Holiness: Reclaiming Wesleyan Evangelism,” North Texas Annual Conference, June 6; “Spreading Scriptural Holiness: Then and Now,” Southeast District Clergy Retreat, Texas Annual Conference, May 2–4; and “Lead Like a Girl,” Clergywomen’s Retreat, North Texas Annual Conference, April 11–12. She was an elected clergy delegate from the Texas Annual Conference to both the General Conference (May) and the Southcentral Jurisdictional Conference (July).

**WILL WILLIMON** published “Why Leaders Are a Pain,” in *The Christian Century* (Feb. 6), and “The Preaching of Karl Barth,” in *A Legacy of Religious Educators* (Liberty University Press). He was a featured preacher at

the Festival of Homiletics (Atlanta, Ga.) in May, lectured on “The Future of Preaching” at the Carey Baptist College Seminar for Pastors and Church Leaders (Auckland, N.Z.) in July, and taught the course “Theology of Preaching” for Fuller Theological Seminary’s learning center in Atlanta in August. He also preached and conducted workshops at First Presbyterian Church (Hamilton, Ont.) in May, spoke to Michigan District Nazarene pastors (Detroit, Mich.), talked on the church and racism at the Sojourners Summit for Justice Leaders (Washington, D.C.), and preached at the national leadership conference for the Church of the Resurrection (Leawood, Kan.) in Sept. In service to the UMC, he participated in the General Conference (Portland, Ore.) in May and the Southeastern Jurisdictional meeting in July, conducted a seminar on “Preaching on the Anniversary of 9/11” for the North Carolina Conference, and led a reflection on “Seasons of Ministry” for pastors of that conference on Sept. 15. He is currently serving on

the Dean’s Advisory Council of Yale Divinity School.

**BRITTANY WILSON** published “Hearing the Word and Seeing the Light: Voice and Vision in Acts,” in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (38.4, 2016). She received a Wabash Center Fellowship for her project “Bodies Matter” and attended a workshop for pre-tenure faculty in theological schools held in Crawfordsville, Ind. She was honored at an awards ceremony and colloquium in Heidelberg, Germany, as a recipient of the Manfred Lautenschläger Award for Theological Promise for her book *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford University Press). She participated in an invited panel discussion of *Unmanly Men* at the British New Testament Society in Chester, England. She is on research leave for the 2016–2017 academic year to work on her current project on embodiment in the book of Acts thanks to a grant from the Louisville Institute. ■

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## NEW BOOK FROM DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL DEAN ELAINE A. HEATH

**HOW CAN THE CHURCH** stay in step with the Spirit during a time of unprecedented change? The apostle Paul led the Galatians



**God Unbound:  
Wisdom from  
Galatians for the  
Anxious Church**  
By Elaine A. Heath  
Upper Room Books, 2016  
108 pages, Paperback  
\$9.99

the church. He was able to lead them through this time of great change because of his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road, an experience in which his view of God was completely upended.

through a massive cultural shift in which they had to radically expand their ideas of who God is, who they were, and God’s mission for

Today Christianity is undergoing a cultural shift just as challenging as the situation confronting Paul and the Galatians. As many churches decline, congregations and pastors feel uncertain and anxious about how to continue their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Elaine Heath extends an invitation to broaden our view of God by moving beyond the walls of buildings and programs to become a more diverse church than we have ever imagined. While deeply honoring tradition, she calls the church to boldly follow the Holy Spirit’s leadership into the future. Heath offers practical advice and hope for how the church can move through anxiety to courageous, culturally sensitive, and Spirit-led engagement in our rapidly changing world. Each chapter of the book has reflection questions for small-group discussion, which enables the book to be used for leadership development over several weeks or months. ■



## 60s

**ROBERT E. LEVERENZ D'62** has published *There Is Nothing New Under the Sun* (Wipf and Stock). The book draws on the theme of Ecclesiastes 1:9 to capture the progress and absence of change in modern history. Robert is a United Methodist minister and social worker living in Portland, Ore., with his wife, Melanie.

## 70s

**JIM R. BAILES D'74** serves as president, with **TROY FORRESTER D'06** serving as vice president, of Disciple Bible Study Outreach Ministries of Tennessee (in the Holston, Tenn., and Memphis Annual Conferences of the UMC). The aim of Disciple Bible Study Outreach is to develop and strengthen Bible study ministries in local churches and in outreach settings (especially prisons) that will transform lives, make disciples, and empower Christians for outreach ministry. **MICHAEL SLUDER D'86** and **TIM BEST D'14** are board members.

## 80s

**PAUL DOUGLAS JOHNSEN D'83** completed a D.Min. in Biblical Preaching at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., in May 2016. His thesis was "Exploring the Effectiveness of Field-Preaching Evangelism in the United Methodist Church." He is pastor of First UMC in Hartford, Wis.

**MICHAEL PASQUARELLO III D'83** is now the Lloyd J. Ogilvie Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., having taught at Asbury Theological Seminary for 14 years. He has also served as a UMC pastor for 18 years.

## 90s

**JO ELLA HOLMAN D'94** graduated with a D.Min. with distinction from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. A minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), she currently serves as a mission coworker to the Caribbean and is based in the Dominican Republic.

**DAVID E. BRANNOCK D'95** has published *Fulfill Your Created Purpose*, which focuses on guiding the choices high-school graduates make after they leave home. He and his family reside in Greeneville, Tenn., where he serves as a full-time writer and speaker.

**KRISTEN G. VINCENT D'96** worked with The Upper Room to make prayer beads for all delegates, bishops, staff, and

volunteers at this year's United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Ore. She has also been traveling to Eisenhower Army Medical Center at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Ga., to work with veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. They create prayer beads and discuss prayer as a healing tool. She writes and teaches full-time about prayer, spiritual formation, and the use of prayer tools and is working on her third book.

**REGINA HENDERSON D'97** presented the lecture "A Christian Response to Religious Extremism: A North American Perspective" at the 2016 Christ at the Checkpoint Conference in Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine. She serves as the associate general secretary for justice & relationships at Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in New York City.



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## CLASS NOTES

She lives in Hackensack, N.J. and is an elder in the North Carolina Conference.

**JULIUS L. MCCARTER D'97** has published *The Fire and the Rose: A Christian Evangelical Universalism*. The book is part spiritual autobiography and part theology that explores the question of who will be saved. He is a minister, educator, and writer residing in Loudon, Tenn.

### 00s

**ROMAL TUNE D'00** has been named senior advisor to the president of The Mission Society, which is based near Atlanta, Ga. The focus of this new role will be to help guide The Mission Society to become a fully diverse and inclusive organization. In addition to his work with The

Mission Society, he is a speaker, author, and strategic consultant.

**JEFFERY O. RAINWATER D'02** was named district superintendent of the Wyoming District of the Rocky Mountain Conference. He and his wife, **LAURA RAINWATER D'02**, live in Cheyenne, Wyo., where Laura is the pastor of Grace UMC.

**JOHN E. ANDERSON D'06** is now assistant professor of religious studies at Presentation College in Aberdeen, S.D.

**BRYAN W. LANGDOC D'07** was mentioned in the March 2016 issue of *Esquire* magazine. The article tells the story of two parents in his parish community and their journey to find the necessary resources to help their sons, who struggle

with mental illness. The article mentions his ministry to the family throughout this journey. He is the pastor of Gobin UMC in Greencastle, Ind.

**SILAS M. MORGAN D'08** earned a Ph.D. in theology from Loyola University Chicago. His dissertation focuses on the function of ideology critique in political theology and was defended with distinction. He lives in Minneapolis, Minn.

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## DEATHS



**ARTHUR M. CARLTON D'44** died April 28, 2016. A United Methodist minister in the Alabama/West Florida Conference, he served parishes in Ramer, Columbia, Dothan, Mt. Vernon, Hurtsboro, Opp, Atmore, Demopolis, and the Selma District. He was later selected as district superintendent of the Selma District. In his retirement, he and his wife, Mabel Caley Kelley, spent 25 years providing staff and leadership for Blue Lake Camps for intellectually and physically challenged adults. He is survived by eight children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and a special friend.

**DONALD J. WELCH D'55** of Spartanburg, S.C., died Jan. 22, 2016. Ordained in the Kentucky Conference, he served in parish ministry for several years. He worked in higher education at Duke Divinity School and Wofford College and served as president of the Scarritt Graduate School for Sacred Music and Religious Education

and as vice president of Wesleyan College in Macon, Ga. In retirement, he served as pastor to Presbyterian churches and the Seven Lakes Chapel, an ecumenical congregation in the Sandhills region of N.C. His wife of 61 years, Nancy Wilder Welch, two daughters, a son, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren survive him.

**LOUIS W. HODGES D'57, G'60** of Lexington, Va., died Feb. 8, 2016. He was the Knight Foundation Professor Emeritus of Journalism Ethics at Washington and Lee University, where he served on the faculty for 43 years. He held fellowships at Duke University, the University of Virginia, the Hastings Center, and the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and had a Fulbright professorship teaching at Osmani University in Hyderabad, India. Among many publications, he co-authored *The Christian and His Decisions: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* with

Harmon Smith. He was an ardent advocate for civil rights and fair housing and an ordained United Methodist minister. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Helen Davis Hodges, two sons, three grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and four great-great-grandchildren.

**ROBERT CHRISTOPHER BARRETT D'01** died Feb. 24, 2016. A fourth generation United Methodist minister, he spent most of his life in his native South Carolina, where he served as a United Methodist pastor to churches in Manning, Blacksburg, Charleston, and Spartanburg. During his nearly four-year battle with lymphoma, he inspired hundreds of people through writing about his experience and sharing the lessons of faith learned from his illness. Survivors include his parents, his wife, **ELISE ERICKSON BARRETT D'04**, three children, his mother- and father-in-law, a sister, three brothers-in-law, and two sisters-in-law. ■



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# Economics and the Future of Congregations

BY DAVE ODOM

**THE PASTOR** of a new church in an economically challenged community recently shared with me a quandary. His community is achieving its mission, which includes bringing together young adult and homeless members. But the church is not able to sustain itself. He was hoping I might help him find a meaningful part-time job.

I have heard many stories about committed people making a difference in their community in ways that are not economically sustainable. They have created places where the abused and the privileged worship side by side, where all people are welcomed as members of a community. Yet many of the congregations are struggling to pay their own bills. They don't have full-time pay or appropriate benefits for the staff. They borrow buildings that are barely suitable for ministry. Many congregations dream of being places of radical welcome but find that vision unsustainable with the tithes and offerings of those who participate in the community. They are trapped by the American view of sustainability—to be self-supporting.

Twenty years ago, Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen proposed a theory called disruptive innovation. He began by studying how new products can disrupt established products by entering the market in a place no one would expect. Initially, the new products were often cheap, low-quality, and sold to customers who were not buying the older, established products. But when an innovation is successful, its economic model begins to win over the customers that the industry does care about.

Churches tend to be the opposite. Their outreach is prized as a sign of faithfulness and hope, but not much thought is given to the economics. In fact, church leaders often assume that the money will come if the ministry is faithful.

More than 10 years ago, I asked a pastor in the emergent church movement about the economic model that supported his ministry. He said that his congregation did not and could not contribute enough money to pay all their bills and the salary of a person in midlife with family responsibilities. He wrote books and consulted with established congregations about how to reach new

members. The fees for this work supported the pastor and his family. Because he sensed that the demand for his services would wane over time, he was also working on a Ph.D. to make him more marketable as a consultant in the future.

One economic model for these ministries depends on a leader who can develop different sources of revenue to support the leader's work. This approach puts a lot of stress on the leader. Another model treats such churches as mission outposts, dependent on a larger organization for support. Both models do work, but each has difficulties being replicated and scaled.

Instead of starting communities that require extensive leadership, space, and more, what if we focused on the work that needs to be done? The economic model would focus on the mission rather than the creation of yet another congregation that would need to be self-supporting. The efforts that prove to be effective and sustainable over time would be models that others could replicate in places where the work is needed.

In such cases, the pastor would not be looking for part-time work. The pastor and others would begin by considering what needs to be done in a community. Do people need housing? Do those trafficked into slavery and prostitution need to be freed? Do children need to be educated? Donors would be attracted to projects that change lives. Microindustries might be started to create needed products and jobs. A community would likely form that has many of the attributes of a congregation but with a different type of work at the center.

Those of us who care about the future of congregations must have a sustained conversation about economics. We need to look at the ministries we most admire and work in partnership with them to explore their sustainability. As we find great ideas that are succeeding, we need to share the news with others, spreading a new way of thinking about how to accomplish our missions. ■

—The original version of this article was published July 26, 2016, in *Faith & Leadership*, [www.faithandleadership.com](http://www.faithandleadership.com).

Bless these crosses, O God,  
and all those who will hold them close to their hearts.  
Deepen them and us in your wisdom,  
May all our desires be shaped by your desires for us.  
Enfold us in your heart,  
strengthen us in courage,  
and keep our eyes ever on your cross. Amen.

—A prayer of blessing and commissioning for graduates of Duke Divinity School during the Senior Cross Service in April 2016.





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