Deep and Wide: Dimensions of the Renewal of the Church
Going Beyond Numbers to Mission

BY LACEYE WARNER

Hospitality, the Stranger, and Renewal of the Church
BY ISMAEL RUIZ-MILLAN

A Sociologist Looks at the Church in America
BY MARK CHAVES
Every year, Duke Divinity School receives applications from some of the brightest and most faith-filled prospective students from across the country. Every year, we admit individuals who show great promise for ministry and scholarship. And every year, we hear a similar refrain: “I want to come to Duke Divinity School, but I don’t know how I can afford it.” Here’s where you come into the story.

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You Can Transform Worry into Possibility

Financial aid has allowed me the opportunity to fully invest in my academic studies without the burden of worrying about where the money for tuition would come from. I also had the opportunity to participate in a field education placement in my home conference with a vibrant and thriving congregation. My summer there was profoundly formational to my vocational identity. I cannot thank you enough.

~ Joe Varner, D’14

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Renewal of the Church: Why We Care

BY RICHARD B. HAYS

FOR THE PAST YEAR, I have been telling everyone who will listen that the mission of Duke Divinity School is to promote “scriptural imagination for the sake of the renewal of the church.” Our last issue of DIVINITY focused on the theme of scriptural imagination. With this issue, we turn attention to the second part of the message: renewal of the church. What does that mean, and why should we care about it here at Duke?

Many of the essays in this issue will describe the remarkable, imaginative ways that our faculty, staff, students, and alumni are working to promote church renewal. But before delving into the accounts they offer, we might do well to pause to ask why we, as a university divinity school, care about the task of renewing the church.

It is not hard to think of objections to this description of the purpose of our work—not hard, because we sometimes hear such objections voiced. Here are three of them:

(1) For a divinity school to pursue church renewal reflects a confusion of roles: the divinity school is an academic institution, not an ecclesial agency. Indeed, to focus on the church’s practices may compromise the school’s scholarly integrity and its obligation to pursue disinterested research.

(2) The church—the established institutional church as we have known it in recent generations—is hopeless; it is a dying institution that belongs to the past, not the future. To invest energy in seeking its renewal is futile.

(3) If the Divinity School cares about transforming society, its important contribution would be to train leaders for social entrepreneurship and political advocacy. In order to understand why these objections are misguided, we need to grasp the roots of our identity and calling. Institutions such as Duke Divinity School exist, most fundamentally, to interpret the word of God for the people of God. And God’s revelation, first to Israel and then to the wider world, has always aimed at the formation of a people—a community that embodies God’s healing and transforming power. That is why the Letter to the Ephesians can remarkably declare that “the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” is that “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” (Ephesians 3:9–10 RSV). The wisdom of God cannot be discerned through disinterested scholarly inquiry. It is most deeply grasped through participation in the life of the community that God calls and shapes. This has long been true, from Israel led out of Egypt to the Jerusalem church after Pentecost to the vibrant churches of the Global South today. And that is why the task given not only to apostles and prophets but also to pastors and teachers is “building up the body of Christ [i.e., the church], until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:12–13).

If the church in North America seems listless and discouraged, then that highlights the urgency of our vocation in the Divinity School to teach the Word faithfully so that God’s breath/spirit can reanimate the dry bones strewn about the landscape. If the church in North America seems listless and discouraged, then that highlights the urgency of our vocation in the Divinity School to teach the Word faithfully so that God’s breath/spirit can reanimate the dry bones strewn about the landscape. But it is an illusion that such reanimation can occur apart from the church, whether through other sorts of social or political institutions or through the enlightenment of disparate individuals. God, for reasons known only to himself, has chosen to create a community of “living stones … built into a spiritual house” in order to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

The church may indeed take on fresh creative forms as God’s Spirit works among us. Our task at Duke Divinity School is partly to imagine and to encourage such creative institutional forms. But that reinforces the declaration that what we are seeking is the renewal of the church, the community of people called together and addressed by God’s word: “Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:10).

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DEEP and WIDE:
DIMENSIONS OF THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

Renewal is about more than attendance and budgets—it’s about growth in mission, too

BY LACEYE WARNER
If you read *The Christian Century*, or participate in denominational meetings, or scan the list of book titles in a publisher’s catalog, you know that renewal of the church has become a hot topic. Evangelical and nondenominational churches often discuss church-growth strategies; traditional Protestant denominations talk about church-renewal ideas. It’s not hard to understand why: the so-called mainline denominations have lost members, money, and momentum in recent decades.

Duke Divinity School trains the future leaders of churches and faith-based institutions, and we believe that the renewal of the church is part of the mission to which we are called. We certainly think it is important to maintain the academic rigor of our program, and we value the ways that participation in the broader institution that is Duke University enriches our own work in the Divinity School. But we also think that these things—academic work and university engagement—support our fundamental mission: to train leaders who are shaped by a scriptural imagination for the renewal of the church. We believe that God works through the church, and we want to align our priorities accordingly.

It is important to articulate and describe what we mean by renewal. Are we training the next generation of leaders to focus only on more members and money? The answer is no. As the children’s song declares, “Deep and wide / Deep and wide / There’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.” We believe that the dimensions of renewal are both wide and deep, and that God is already working in this world to stir people, churches, institutions, and communities to a renewed vision of loving both God and neighbor.

"THERE’S A WIDENESS IN GOD’S MERCY"

Church-growth strategies swept through American churches in recent decades. Many a pastor, congregation, or denomination looked with a measure of envy at churches that ballooned from a few dozen worshipers to a few thousand. Some churches became so large that they filled professional sports arenas; others began a multi-site model with one lead pastor presiding over services held in multiple locations. Books were written and seminars were held to instruct churches and their leaders how to grow their church. We might describe this growth in attenders and budgets as the “wide” dimension of church renewal.

But a focus only on having more members (or attenders) at Sunday services or on seeing overflowing church coffers tends to miss the point of why these resources matter for the renewal of the church. Enjoying an increase in worship attendance and receiving financial resources to match budget projections are not ultimate goals. They are penultimate at best. The focus of our Christian ministry is participation in God’s reign in this world by sharing the saving love of Jesus Christ in our individual and communal practices. More participants in worship should demonstrate more people worshipping God and accepting God’s invitation in Jesus Christ to participate with the work of the Holy Spirit. Having more financial resources can and should enable a church to serve outside its own walls. People and money are intended to be resources for the church to serve God in a variety of creative, holy ways.

Here is one example of how this wide dimension plays a role in the renewal of a church. The Rev. Lance Richards D’10 began serving as senior pastor at Lexington United Methodist Church in Lexington, Texas, in June 2010. The church is in the heart of this small town of 1,200 people, but when he arrived weekly attendance at worship services had dwindled to about 50 people. Over the last three years, Lexington UMC has experienced an 84 percent increase in worship attendance because of new outreach programs and recent changes to the worship service.

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AT THE TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE gathering this year, Richards received the Eric Anderson Evangelism Award, an award presented to a young clergyperson in memory of the Rev. Eric Anderson, who was fatally shot in 1986 by a church member who had come in for counseling at First United Methodist Church in Houston. “I dedicate the award to the faithful laity of Lexington UMC, whose faithfulness to God and response to the leading of the Spirit have led to extraordinary ministry with our community and to more people being transformed by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ,” said Richards.

FOR MORE DETAIL on the state of the church in America, see the research from sociologist Mark Chaves on page 10.
increase in worship attendance and an 80 percent increase in giving. This has allowed the congregation to hire two staff persons to help with communications and youth ministry. By almost any measure, these are impressive numbers. But when you talk to pastoral staff, they don’t focus on these numbers. They talk about what that growth has meant for the capacity of the church for ministry. “I wish I could say this growth is because of something novel or revolutionary,” Richards says. “The truth is, it came from making spiritual formation the center of our life together, strengthening the core practices of the church, and intentionally focusing on four areas: prayer, purpose, preaching, and participation.”

Prayer anchors the heart of Lexington UMC. The prayer team receives prayer requests not only from congregation members but also from the community, which gives them a sense of the broader needs around them and helps them discover how God is calling them to serve. The prayer ministry is supported by an ongoing study of prayer in the Scriptures, and these Scriptures shape their reflections on how they can minister to one another and to the community.

A visioning team composed of key leaders in the church gathered to discern the ongoing purpose of the congregation in light of their history, gifts, and God’s calling for them. As the senior pastor, Richards intentionally locates his preaching within a broader context of worship, which is intended to connect the church to God’s narrative of salvation offered in Scripture and to invite hearers to go deeper in their discipleship and faith in Jesus Christ. Drawing upon their Wesleyan heritage and its doctrines, the weekly sermons encourage disciples to participate in God’s reign through ministries of compassion in the community. This means more than mere membership on a committee; it includes serving others—from reading Scripture during a worship service to volunteering in an after-school program that serves 65 children.

Lexington UMC is encountering some of the challenges that accompany this “wide” dimension of renewal. As the number of people who are part of the life of the church—including members, attenders at worship, and people being served in the community—has grown, the church facilities have become increasingly cramped. The church is acting in faith to build a mission center so that they can extend their capacity to invite more people to participate in ministries offered by the church family. One of the oldest members describes the project in this way: “This new building isn’t for those already attending—it is to reach a new generation for Jesus Christ.”

**“O, THE DEEP, DEEP LOVE OF JESUS”**

Unlike the number of participants or the dollars available to facilitate ministries, not every aspect of church renewal can be counted. Renewal happens when people discover through Christian community that they are beloved and have gifts that God will use in the world. We might describe this as the “deep” dimension of church renewal, the working of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, churches, and communities in ways that exceed our expectations.

Westbury United Methodist Church is located in south west Houston, an area where several neighborhoods connect to create a significant community of overlapping ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The worship and community life of the church reflects this diversity, with songs in many languages and from many traditions being sung. But Westbury UMC wanted to engage more deeply with the people around them. The church invited Hannah Terry D’12 and another young couple to move into one of the hundreds of apartment complexes in the Southwest Fondren neighborhood. Terry now shares life
with neighbors who are refugees or immigrants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Nepal, Bhutan, and Central America.

The senior pastor, the Rev. Taylor Meador Fuerst D’06, hosts weekly gatherings where words sometimes have to be translated into as many as three languages, but where playing with Frisbees and bubbles and sidewalk chalk overcomes the linguistic barriers. Through these gatherings, the Spirit’s presence binds people of disparate backgrounds into one body in Christ. They share weekly meals, songs, and prayers, which allows the community to grow in relationships with each other. The gospel is transforming the neighborhood.

Seven years ago, a team from St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Houston’s museum district heard the Spirit’s prompting when they were visiting its sister church in Cochabamba, Bolivia. As a result, a young woman from Bolivia, Nataly Nagrete Lopez, came to the United States to work with St. Paul’s UMC to reach out to the Hispanic community. At that time the church offered an after-school program, and they could see the rapidly changing demographics in their neighborhood.

Today, that after-school program is composed entirely of Hispanic children from recent immigrant families who live in small apartment communities tucked amid new sparkling single-family houses and townhomes. Lopez knew that the church needed to reach out not just to children but to whole families that were struggling at the margins of society.

Families now gather weekly for activities ranging from worship to workshops on immigration law to parenting seminars to community meals and family game nights. The children not only receive tutoring after school but participate in the arts, learning music and dance. People of all ages are hearing the story of Christ and the promise of a world in which all people are beloved children of God, regardless of ethnicity, social position, or citizenship.

St. Paul’s UMC has also offered space for a Spanish-language congregation to grow out of this community. Some 20 to 30 adults and about 50 children now worship together as Fe y Esperanza (Faith and Hope).

Houston Dramatically demonstrates the trends that are rapidly reshaping the social and political landscape of urban America. With urban centers growing every year, Houston is a fascinating place to imagine church renewal. Houston’s rapid growth during the past three decades is attributable almost exclusively to the influx of Latinos, Asians, and African-Americans. In 2010 the U.S. Census counted 4.1 million people in Harris County, of whom 33 percent were non-Hispanic whites, 41 percent were Hispanic, 18 percent African-American, and 8 percent Asian or other.
It can be tempting to think that the work of renewal goes only one direction: from the church to the community, for instance. And St. Paul’s UMC has provided the foundation for a ministry that is transforming the Hispanic community in their neighborhood. But how is it transforming St. Paul’s UMC? “The decision to start working with these families was easy as long as it was tied to the after-school program,” Chapman says. “As it has evolved, and as it has come to require more resources and space in the building, there have been more challenges and confusion about this new community.” In addition to the language barrier, economic differences and different cultural norms can be roadblocks in the way of mutual fellowship. When Anglo members of St. Paul’s UMC visit Fe y Esperanza services, they are shocked at how noisy the children are—and the parents don’t even take them out of the service!

But there are signs of the slow process of renewal taking root even within the congregation of St. Paul’s UMC. As Chapman notes, “As of yet, we see it on a small scale—in our after-school program, volunteers learn what it means to grow up in poverty; congregation members are expressing a desire to learn Spanish; people are offering to support Fe y Esperanza families with college applications, employment, and other needs. The biggest thing so far is that it has opened the eyes of our large, upper-middle-class congregation to the incredible changes going on in our city and to the plight of our immigrant friends.”

St. Paul’s UMC illustrates that renewal can come from unexpected places and that what begins as a mission might in fact become a source of transformation. “For a growing number of our leaders and members, it’s a new way of thinking about church that is pushing us and challenging us to receive all the gifts that come from being in this huge, diverse community,” Chapman says.

**DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL AND RENEWAL**
The stories of Lance Richards at Lexington UMC, Hannah Terry and Taylor Meador Fuerst at Westbury UMC, and Emily Chapman at St. Paul’s UMC are distinctive but not unique examples of the numerous Duke Divinity School graduates in many denominations in a variety of ecclesial settings across the nation, as well as the world, practicing Christian ministry for the renewal of the church. Duke Divinity School forms students to participate in God’s work of church renewal. This formation prepares them to serve in places where they are participating in the renewal of the church.

These are not simply stories of churches experiencing rapid membership growth. They are stories about God’s people learning what it means to be communities of faith and of crossing boundaries to meet Christ in their neighbors.

One of the challenges the church is facing is its failure to engage younger people in the life of the church. Youth and young adults of this generation expect diversity. They want to engage with the world around them in a real way. They want a living faith that is rooted in something much larger than them. Each of the ministries in this article engages people of all ages while also giving younger generations a vision for a renewed church that is not irrelevant and unnecessary but a vital and living community of faith.

The dimensions of church renewal, both wide and deep, are evidence of the full scope of God’s mercy and love extended to people in all times and all places. This renewal brings transformation. This renewal of the church provides evidence of God’s reign here and now—in people, congregations, and communities—and invites us to participate in God’s work. ■

**STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY** those enrolled in the M.Div. program, participate in a deep formation of spirit and intellect for faithful and effective practices of ministry for church renewal. Spiritual formation, immersion in Scripture, and the study of the great texts of Christian tradition cultivate theological lenses through which students see the world and their participation in the reign of God in new and meaningful ways. Students use these lenses in field education through a variety of settings.
A Sociologist Looks at the Church in America

The data don’t look good for the North American church

BY MARK CHAVES

American Religious belief and practice has remained remarkably stable in the past 40 years. In 2008, for instance, 93 percent of people said that they believe in God or a higher power, compared to 99 percent of Americans in the 1950s. But this background continuity makes changes that are occurring stand out more than they otherwise might. Every indicator of traditional religiosity is either stable or declining—nothing is going up.

American religion is experiencing neither a dramatic resurgence nor a dramatic decline. The evidence does point to some important issues in the church, however, that will affect congregations, denominations, and seminaries in coming years.

30% of regular attenders in the average congregation were older than age 60, up from 25% in 1998.

Average age of clergyperson in the average congregation was 53 years old, up from 48 in 1998.

Only 62% of congregations have a head clergy person who graduated from seminary or theological school.

37% of congregations have a head clergy person who holds another job in addition to clergy responsibilities.

Only 37% of congregations offer classes in religious education for young adults or college students.

Most congregations are small: 90% have 350 or fewer people.

Most people attend large congregations: the largest 10% of churches contain half of all churchgoers.

The average congregation has only 75 regular participants and an annual budget of $90,000.

The average person is in a congregation with 400 people and a budget of $280,000.

Most seminarians come from large churches, but most clergy jobs are in small churches.
The National Congregations Study (NCS) is based on two nationally representative surveys of congregations from across the religious spectrum, the first in 1998 and the second in 2006–07. The NCS examines what people do together in congregations, not simply individual religious beliefs and practices. Nearly 80 percent of congregations identified by the General Social Survey (conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago)—some 2,740 congregations—participated in the NCS.

For more information, see American Religion: Contemporary Trends by Mark Chaves (Princeton University Press, 2011).
In chapter 12 of his letter to the Romans, Paul includes a series of practical exhortations (vv. 9–21). The translators of the New Revised Standard Version added the subhead, “Marks of the True Christian” to this passage; the New International Version titled it, “Love in Action.” The first phrase urges believers to “let love be genuine,” and then just a few verses later Paul says one example of practical love—a mark of the true disciple of Christ—is extending “hospitality to strangers” (Romans 12:13). Similarly, the author of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of hospitality, warning us not to neglect offering “hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2).

One of the failures of the church has been the reluctance to offer genuine love by extending hospitality to strangers. The church is often perceived as a hostile place where not everyone feels welcome, especially those who are tagged as the “marginalized,” the “undeserving,” the “wrong people,” or “the stranger.” The New Testament is filled with examples of Jesus and then the early church reaching out to society’s so-called misfits. In the 21st century, the renewal of the church will come as a result of identifying the stranger and extending true hospitality to strangers—the kind of hospitality that empowers and transforms lives.

In order for the church to experience renewal through true hospitality, we must first understand what hospitality is and grasp its implications for the individual and communal life of those who make up the church. Hospitality is not a modern concept; in fact, hospitality was a fundamental practice in the ancient world and a vital characteristic of God’s people, the Israelites. As Christine D. Pohl states in her book *Making Room*, etymologically, the Greek word for hospitality has its roots in two Greek words, *phileo* and *xenos*, which include notions of “love” and “the stranger” respectively. The word connotes the sense of extending love not only to
those of the faith but also to strangers. Scripture is filled with depictions of God’s hospitable nature and the desire for God’s people to offer hospitality as a testimony of God’s genuine love for humanity.

JESUS’ EXAMPLE OF HOSPITALITY
Jesus Christ is the embodiment of true hospitality—and genuine love. He welcomes everyone, especially those often disregarded by society: women, children, prostitutes, thieves, murderers, lepers, tax collectors, etc. Even more significantly, Jesus is not only the graceful and generous host, but also someone who empties himself and becomes a slave out of love for humanity (Philippians 2:7). Put differently, Jesus becomes a vulnerable guest in need of hospitality—in need of genuine love. Sadly, Jesus often received hostility instead of hospitality. Even at his birth he was a stranger in need of hospitality, but he was not welcomed—there was no place for him in the inn (Luke 2:7).

The challenge for the church today is to recognize the stranger in her midst. Who is the stranger? The immigrant? The undocumented immigrant? The rich? The poor? The uneducated? The highly educated? The atheist? The non-Christian? The homosexual? The fundamentalist? The list could go on. In short, the stranger is the outsider in need of genuine love. Going further, the stranger is the one who often does not look, think, talk, behave, understand God, and live life our way. One indication of how the church has failed to recognize the stranger in its midst, especially here in the United States, is how very few churches reflect the diversity of their communities. Consequently, most churches do not reflect God’s diverse creation. The only way to overcome this sad reality is by embracing the practice of hospitality.

Even more, the church needs to seriously consider how to follow Jesus’ model of hospitality, in which one not only extends hospitality but also becomes a recipient of hospitality. We need to demonstrate genuine love for those around us, especially those in need or crisis. True hospitality grows not only from extending hospitality but also by receiving hospitality and loving others just like Jesus loves us.

If hospitality is about offering genuine love to the stranger, especially those who are vulnerable and experiencing a crisis, then we must also be willing to be vulnerable and acknowledge our own crisis before others. We in the church have to admit that we are also in crisis and in need of love. True hospitality requires mutual vulnerability, mutual accountability, and mutual love. Jesus made himself vulnerable by emptying himself. Jesus opened his life to the disciples for them to share in his suffering and his glory. He made himself accountable to the Father. Jesus was willing to give love and to receive it.

HOSPITALITY AND RENEWAL
When the church is able to welcome the stranger in its midst with love and is able to extend true hospitality, the church experiences renewal. The mechanism is simple: the church is renewed because the lives of the people who are recipients of true hospitality are renewed. I can testify to this truth. I came to the United States 10 years ago. I came as an immigrant, but more significantly, I came as a stranger. I had recently left behind my people, my land, my culture, and my language—everything that was familiar. I came to a land that was unknown to me. I came to be a part of a people who did not look like me. I came to be immersed in a culture and language that was not my own. Not only was I a stranger, but I was also surrounded by strangers.

What made the difference in my life during this time was the church. Both the Hispanic/Latino and the
Anglo congregations I interacted with embraced and welcomed me. Both congregations went beyond the superficial kind of hospitality that has to do only with making you feel welcome for one hour on Sunday morning during worship. Rather, they reached out to me and wanted to share life with me every day of the week. They helped me get a job. They helped me find English classes. They gave me rides. They told me how to get a driver’s license. Although I could neither speak nor understand English at the time, the common language I had with my English-speaking brothers and sisters was our desire to grow in Christian maturity.

The greatest gift of all was that as I experienced genuine love and hospitality from my brothers and sisters, my call to ministry was revealed. It was the church who affirmed this call and guided me throughout the whole process. As a recipient of hospitality, I experienced renewal and empowerment; I was no longer a stranger, but a member of the body of Christ.

**Being Guest and Host**

I have also witnessed the power that comes when the church offers true hospitality to strangers during pilgrimages I have led to the border between Mexico and the United States. One of the goals of these pilgrimages is to expand the participants’ imagination about how ministry with immigrants and with Hispanic/Latino people can look. Both pastors and students who participate in these pilgrimages have the opportunity to encounter face-to-face those affected by the immigration issue on both sides of the border.

During these pilgrimages, participants also have the opportunity to learn about Jesus’ model of true hospitality by both opening themselves to receiving hospitality and also offering hospitality.

The challenge for participants is to reframe the “mission trip” mentality—thinking you need to build something or do something concrete: build a church, offer a health fair, solve a problem. The “concrete” in these pilgrimages is to practice hospitality. The way hospitality is offered by the people we encounter is not at all conventional. What is beautiful and difficult in these pilgrimages is that very often we find ourselves welcomed into the private spaces of immigrants, spaces that are often full of pain and suffering. That is the reason why the harder task for participants is usually receiving this kind of hospitality. The way hospitality is offered by the people we encounter is not at all conventional. What is beautiful and difficult in these pilgrimages is that very often we find ourselves welcomed into the private spaces of immigrants, spaces that are often full of pain and suffering.

As one learns to be a good guest, one is ready to offer true hospitality. Participants in these border pilgrimages initially extend hospitality by serving a meal to immigrants. But pastors and students both soon discover that the best way to be a good host is by offering hope through listening attentively to guests and praying for them—letting them know that, as pastors and future leaders of the church, they care about immigrants and the suffering in their lives. The truth is that most of the organizations that effectively offer assistance to immigrants are faith-based. And it is precisely the gestures of hospitality offered by these faith-based organizations and churches that make the difference in the lives of these hundreds of strangers who arrive daily to the border.

In our pilgrimages, we have encountered many good hosts. For instance, Gilberto, who runs a faith-based shelter, described his mandate for hospitality in this way: “I do not care where they are coming from, if they are immigrants. They are my neighbors, and they are welcome here.” Or our guide through the desert who said: “I do not care if the immigrants who cross have documents or not. What I care about is my call to preserve life.”

What is remarkable about these two good hosts is that they risk much for the sake of offering true hospitality to complete strangers.

If the church wants to experience renewal, we must rethink and re-embrace the practice of hospitality—true hospitality. Renewal of the church will come by taking risks for the sake of truly welcoming the stranger. Renewal of the church will come by opening ourselves to welcoming hospitality even when that includes sharing in pain and suffering. Renewal of the church will come by learning how to be good hosts through becoming instruments of hope. Ultimately, the renewal of the church will take place when the stranger is seen by the church not only as a mission field, but as a source of renewal. ■
A MISSION OUTPOST

Reversing Decades of Decline at Duke Memorial United Methodist Church

BY L. ROGER OWENS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOBAN PENNER
n 1886 the tobacco magnate Washington Duke helped to found a new Methodist congregation in Durham, N.C. “We have Trinity Church; why do we need another?” a friend asked Duke, referencing the so-called mother church of Methodism in Durham. “Yes, but we need one for the masses,” Duke replied.

By 1960 the church that started in a tobacco warehouse would indeed be a church for the masses in one respect—it was one of the largest churches in the North Carolina Conference, with over 600 people packing the beautiful sanctuary each Sunday.

In 2008 when my wife, Ginger Thomas, and I were appointed the co-pastors of Duke Memorial, people had been wondering for years where the masses had gone. The population of Durham had nearly tripled since 1960, but worship attendance at Duke Memorial had declined by 60 percent. Two traumatic staff reductions in the previous decade and five consecutive years of dipping into endowment funds to make up budget shortfalls had disheartened leaders. And one of the reasons two young, relatively inexperienced pastors were being appointed to share one position was that the senior pastor’s salary was being cut by $20,000. The church could no longer afford the older pastors they had been used to.

“Do your best,” one district superintendent told us. “But if you can’t turn the church around, don’t feel too bad. The inertia of decline may be too strong.”

Five years later members of the church are no longer using words like decline to describe their congregation. They are using words of life—revitalized, renewed, resurrected—to name the increase in worship attendance and the slowly growing diversity of the congregation, both racially and socio-economically. They are using these words to describe four years of budget surpluses, the nearly 200 adults each spring and fall in small groups, new ministries that encourage members of the church to get to know their neighbors, and new ministry partnerships that cross the lines of race and class.

These words describe seeing for the first time in many years adults confessing faith in Jesus Christ and receiving baptism. They refer to the feeling that in worship people have encountered the living God who welcomes and forgives, sustains and sends them.

“We are so glad we lived long enough to see the rebirth of our

If we are to be a sign of God’s kingdom, then we can’t ever stop exploring the landscape that is Jesus Christ, whose own life and mission is God’s kingdom among us.

needed a wider context, something more like a landscape. And what we did for five years, together as leaders and as a congregation, is explore the landscape of God’s kingdom and imagine our place in it. Before we arrived, the church had adopted a vision statement that declared that the church aspires to be “a sign and foretaste of God’s kingdom in downtown Durham.” As the preacher, I took up the job as tour guide, leading weekly expeditions into the landscape of God’s kingdom so that we could inhabit its varied terrain.

Mainline churches have tended to use language of the kingdom of God as a way to avoid embarrassment about Jesus. The discovery that the preaching of Jesus consisted of announcing the kingdom of God gave us a way to look to something other than Jesus himself; his “kingdom” language could represent universal truths with which we all agree—justice, equality, and kindness. We didn’t have to get more specific than that.

The theological vision that contributed to Duke Memorial’s renewal, however, involved pointing again and again to the comforting, infuriating, and perplexing life and message of Jesus himself—the one who is the kingdom of God in his very person. If we are to be a sign of God’s kingdom, then we can’t ever stop exploring the landscape that is Jesus Christ, whose own life and mission is God’s kingdom among us. Only within that landscape
will we find our own particular voca-
tion, our own unique vision.

The great gift to this tour-guide
preacher was that people were ready
for an expedition. They were excited
to discover that Jesus’ welcome is
wide enough to include more than
we might have imagined, and Jesus is
interesting enough to pay attention to
week after week.

A BIAS FOR ACTION
Postliberal theology, the theological
movement that has most influenced
me, frequently speaks of “imaginatively
entering the world of the biblical
narrative.” I hope that’s what my
preaching helped us to do.

But this language can imply that
entering the world of the biblical
narrative is something we do with
our minds alone. The gospel does not
proclaim that we enter the world of
the biblical narrative but that we’ve
been welcomed into the life of the
Triune God so that the mission of
the Triune God to redeem a fallen
humanity and restore a broken
creation—a mission made known to
us through the stories, poems, and
images that make up the Bible’s narra-
tive landscape—can shape our living.

As New Testament scholar Stephen
Fowl notes, when Paul says to “let the
same mind be in you that was in Christ
Jesus” (Philippians 2:5), he didn’t
mean “mind” in a narrow, rationalistic
way. He meant, “Let the same way of
thinking, feeling, and acting be in you
that was in Christ Jesus.”

Duke Memorial, over the past five
years, has been learning to have a bias
for Christ-shaped action. That doesn’t
mean, though, that we became aimless
busy-bees.

About two years into our pastorate,
I began to worry that we weren’t doing
enough and that our ministries weren’t
well focused. I started saying that we
needed an annual mission theme to
focus our action in the community, a
theme the whole church could rally
around. Since my gifts include thinking
things up but don’t include making
things happen, I went to our minister
of adult discipleship and witness and
said: “Make this happen. We’ve got
to get the community’s attention; make
a difference; do something.”

He thought about that for a while,
and then said, “Maybe we should do
it the way Jesus did, by spending time
with our neighbors, by learning to
simply be with them.”

So we launched our first annual
mission theme: “Who Is My Neighbor?
Living, Learning, and Listening with
Our City.” That theme moved us away
from the paternalistic assumptions that
we know the hopes and needs of our
neighbors and that we are the ones
who could show up and do for them—
assumptions that drove so much of
20th-century mission work. Rather, we
hosted dinners where we listened to
the hopes and needs of our community.
We sponsored a local Pilgrimage of Pain
and Hope where we learned about the
ongoing legacy of racism in Durham
and our part in that. We had cookouts
on the lawn to which we invited our
neighbors so that we could begin living
with them without an agenda. Our
action was not simply a hubbub
of activity but a response directed
by God’s choice to be with us in the
incarnation of Jesus Christ.

A story illustrates the effects of this
new focus.

One Christmas our men’s morning
small group volunteered to give toys
away at the rescue mission’s annual
Christmas toy distribution. At the
event, the men (all white) from our
church stood behind a plastic orange
fence handing toys to parents (mostly
African-American and Hispanic) who
couldn’t afford to buy Christmas pres-
ents for their children. The parents
weren’t allowed to choose the toys;
we distributed them according to each
child’s gender and age. Many of us left
feeling uneasy. Our “service” seemed
to be replicating the divides of race
and class that have plagued Durham,
and we remained strangers to those we
thought we were helping.

Six months later, Reynolds Chapman
D’11, our adult discipleship minister,
suggested an alternative to participa-
tion in this Christmas toy giveaway. He
said we should host our own Christmas
market. Members of the church and
community could donate new toys,
and we would set up a market at the
church, selling them for very little
so that our guests could have the
dignity of choosing and purchasing
toys for their children. Because we’d
been listening for several months
to the community and imagining a
different way of mission, the congre-
gation quickly embraced the idea.

We collected thousands of gifts, and
local agencies referred families to the
market. Our youth played with children
while parents shopped. Others helped
to wrap the presents. Over 180 chil-
dren had someone shopping for their
presents, and members of the church
had the chance to get to know some of
the families. All the money raised was
given back to the organizations that
referred the families. And the agency
dignity of the parents was honored.
Best of all, there were no orange fences.

A bias for action can easily devolve
into what Parker Palmer calls “func-
tional atheism”—the unstated belief
that if anything good is going to happen
around here, it’s up to us to do it. But
this year of listening and learning
created the space for us to discern how
God’s Spirit was leading us to embrace
actions that might, by God’s grace,
become sacraments of the kingdom.

GOOD MANAGEMENT
There’s nothing glamorous about
management, and its being done well
is rarely lauded. And yet management that focuses on small things makes the difference between excellence and mediocrity, health and dysfunction. Management is the necessary support for renewal. Maybe the leadership gurus are right when they say that most organizations are “over-managed and under-led,” but I doubt this is true for many declining congregations. They are likely under-led and under-managed, or at least poorly managed. Even with an inspiring vision, without someone offering day-to-day accountability to keep actions in line with that vision, conflict is inevitable and renewal unlikely.

If I was the theological tour-guide, Ginger was the primary manager, and the most important thing she did was to guide the staff into vision-centered action and to foster healthy teamwork. When we arrived, the staff lacked current job descriptions and had no mechanisms to ensure that they were working toward the same vision. We read old evaluations that suggested areas for improvement, yet there was no accountability to enable follow-through. Furthermore, as in most Methodist churches, since the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) was involved in the annual staff evaluations with the senior pastor, the staff were unclear about to whom they were accountable. When serious conflict erupted in our first year, we knew things had to change.

We needed two things: specific job descriptions and clear channels of accountability.

Ginger and the SPRC began to work with the staff to rewrite job descriptions to align with the church’s vision, for only with good job descriptions can useful evaluation happen. After that, the committee entrusted Ginger with the job of leading the staff. The staff needed one person for guidance and support—the same person who would be doing their annual evaluations.

Ginger began to have twice-yearly meetings with each staff member, first to review goals for the year and then to ask how each goal fit into the church’s overall vision, what support was needed from her and others to accomplish that goal, and how they would know when the goal had been accomplished. At the end of the year, each staff person’s evaluation was based on progress toward these goals.

Clear lines of communication were established, ambiguity about expectations disappeared, and staff work began to align with the church’s vision to be a sign of God’s kingdom.

Much of this work happened behind the scenes. No one is going to sell books or pack seminars teaching how to rewrite staff manuals, update job descriptions, fill out goal-planning sheets, and conduct annual evaluations. Yet this work, hidden as it was, when coupled with a focus on creating healthy relationships among the staff (no more talking about one another at the water cooler!), was undoubtedly a key factor contributing to what those long-time members called Duke Memorial’s “rebirth.”

When Washington Duke and others began to advocate for a new congregation, they said Durham needed what they called a “mission chapel” in the western part of town. Eventually that chapel became something more like a cathedral—beautiful, large, important. Fifty years of decline gave that church the opportunity to rediscover who it is and why it’s here: to be a “mission chapel,” an outpost of God’s kingdom, acting in ways shaped by God’s own mission to be incarnate among the people. Duke Memorial should be a “church for the masses”; not just a church for a lot of people—the church is far from that—but a church for all kinds of people, where the dividing lines that have come to define cities like Durham are broken down and the landscape of God’s kingdom becomes visible.

What a gift to be a part of this rediscovery and the new life that has resulted.
COFFEE SHOPS, GUITARS, AND A RUNNING TRAIL

THE CHALLENGE OF church planting might be compared to the intensity of a physical battle, at least when it’s described by the Rev. Greg Moore. “When you’re in the trenches, you need friends,” he says.

A group of eight recent Duke Divinity alumni has offered Moore that kind of friendship. They’ve all planted new churches in the Triangle region, and they meet as often as they can to talk and encourage each other. Some are new missions from the big denominations—two United Methodist churches, one Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and a Nazarene community. The others are nondenominational evangelical or emergent churches.

These pastors describe church renewal as a sort of molting process. Often, they’re helping lifelong Christians to shed old skin—styles of Sunday dress and music, the 11 o’clock meeting time, even the comfort of having their own buildings. And while they may grow new skin—replacing a pipe organ with guitars, or penny loafers with running shoes—they remain at the core communities of faith centered around Word and Sacrament. In many cases, growing new skin means recovering old weekly Communion that had been discarded by previous generations.

Advising the group are Duke Divinity faculty Douglas Campbell, Curtis Freeman, and Will Willimon, the latter well-known for trying to preserve historic liturgy as central to Christian life. “They’re not simply planting missional communities and congregations but visible expressions of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church,” says Freeman. “All of them shared a common theological formation (at Duke), which focused their attention on the church as the locus of theological reflection and action. … For far too long ministers have been trained to be managers rather than missional leaders. Church planters can reconnect us with the apostolic mission of making disciples. My hope and prayer is that their ministries can become a catalyst for the programmatic churches to reclaim the missional mandate.” These church planters see themselves running spiritual laboratories of sorts, trying to identify new movements of the Holy Spirit and to join in.
COFFEE SHOPS AND A CLERICAL COLLAR

The Brier Creek area of northwest Raleigh, just past the Durham border, is named for a country club. At one time, the club was there and not much else. Now, Brier Creek is a burgeoning exurb of chain stores and megachurches a few miles from Raleigh-Durham International Airport. One congregation meets in a movie theater. There’s nothing you would call a downtown, nor any stately old churches. You could be anywhere in the country, and that’s sort of the point.

“The reason you buy in Brier Creek is you’re here for the airport,” says the Rev. Greg Moore D’03, who planted All Saints’ United Methodist Church there almost six years ago. “They’re all sales people. They’re all selling something—mostly their soul; that’s what they’re selling. We are here in exile. Release for the captives looks a lot different here.”

But, as Moore points out, he’s no different: he also came to Brier Creek for a job. When the former bishop of the North Carolina Conference, Al Gwinn, called him in 2006, Moore was an associate pastor at Christ UMC in Chapel Hill. It was a spired church at the center of Southern Village, a neo-urban development built to look like an old Main Street with locally owned businesses and walkable neighborhoods—a suburb without the suburbia.

“People move to that community planning to die there, to retire there; they want to put down deep, steady roots there,” says Moore. “Our people are here in Brier Creek because they work at IBM, and as soon as they get promoted, they’re gone. We’re here for a good time, not a long time.”

What does it mean to plant a church for a transient people? People who might be traveling for business over a lot of Sundays? People who won’t live in your town a year from now? People who buy their coffee at Starbucks and shop at Target and eat at Johnny Carino’s and will do the same when they move to Seattle or Chicago or Austin before their kids reach kindergarten?

When Gwinn sent him to Brier Creek, Moore thought he would start by forming a launch team of core members from nine nearby Methodist churches. While
church planters will tell you that starting as a mission of an existing church is often crucial, most of the other churches weren’t willing to take the risk of losing some of their own.

“It looked so good on paper. I don’t know how it didn’t work,” Moore laughs. “What did work is I wore my collar to Caribou Coffee every day. I had the strangest conversations. People talk. Suburbia is wildly disorienting. You don’t know where you are. I mean, there’s Target and Bed Bath & Beyond, and you literally could be anywhere. There’s something about visible manifestations of faith that helps to orient them. That’s how I met people.”

Moore says attracting new members in the suburbs usually follows this formula: perfectly polished programs, simple self-help preaching, therapeutic worship experiences, and plenty of parking.

“That requires very little investment from the people involved,” says Moore. “I’m asked to show up, consume, and pay for my show. That formula works, and it sells. We’re not calling that the kingdom of God. The cancer that is killing us here is consumerism. I can’t offer salvation from that cancer while feeding the tumor. The lifespan of a mall is 30 years, and the lifespan of a megachurch is 30 years. I want to plant an oak tree, not a pine tree.”

Moore has found that exceedingly “churchy” things like his clerical collar, weekly Eucharist, piano or string-quartet music, and lectionary preaching have helped him to build a congregation of nearly 200 members in half a decade, mostly former Baptists and Catholics.

“We are a place where people kind of fall in love with God, maybe for the first time,” says Moore. “If you hang out at All Saints’ long enough, you not only learn the eucharistic prayer but you learn that you should be living it out day to day in community.”

A NEW CHURCH BORN FROM TWO DWINDLING CONGREGATIONS

Last year, Durham Church rose from the grave of two Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations that had dwindled to fewer than 25 people between them. Renewal might not be strong enough a word. This was resurrection.

“The Rev. Amanda Diekman D’10, co-pastor of Durham Church. “St. John’s already knew that we were going to die, so we were waiting to see new life.”

St. John’s Presbyterian had been the larger of the two congregations, with about 20 members left by the end of 2011. Diekman and St. John’s lead pastor, Franklin Golden D’08, had been helping that church toward its own renewal, which, perhaps ironically, had contributed to its

“Renewal feels like life after death,” says the Rev. Amanda Diekman D’10, co-pastor of Durham Church. “St. John’s already knew that we were going to die, so we were waiting to see new life.”

St. John’s Presbyterian had been the larger of the two congregations, with about 20 members left by the end of 2011. Diekman and St. John’s lead pastor, Franklin Golden D’08, had been helping that church toward its own renewal, which, perhaps ironically, had contributed to its
decline in numbers. Diekman says St. John’s had taken some “faithful stances” in its 25-year history at the far northern edge of Durham: to support women in ministry and actively reach out to people with disabilities, for example. They lost some members over those decisions, she says, shrinking to fewer than 20.

“Renewal wasn’t something we could ignore,” says Diekman. “We needed new life. I think there’s something really precious about the small and weak and vulnerable church that knows it needs Jesus to survive.”

The congregation tried to figure out how to meet Durhamites where they are at. They started a community garden, where members and neighbors would work together, sometimes right before a worship service.

“At least we were starting to have conversations with our neighbors, which is a great source of renewal,” says Diekman. “We had something to do together,” she says. “The only one we all had in common was ‘Great Is Thy Faithfulness.’ ”

What brought renewal was hearing others’ stories about why a particular song was meaningful to them. Where there had been conflict—some of it across racial lines in this aspiring multi-ethnic church—peace was made. “Those stories changed the way that we sang,” Diekman says.

Still, she says, the new members insisted on more change. Golden had already shed his collar and then his stole for more casual dress. The growing church wanted guitars, not organ. They wanted to meet in the round, not in rows of pews. They wanted weekly Communion. Diekman was still a student-pastor at Duke when she was the first to articulate what became the vision for Durham Church. She and other interested Duke students had gathered with members of St. John’s to brainstorm a plan for renewal.

“I said something that night that I had never said before. I said that I felt called to something that didn’t exist,” she says. “That language became a signpost that we might need to create something new together. The newness that was happening in our midst was too much for the structure that was there.”

If that was true at St. John’s, it might have been truer at the other merging congregation, Northgate Presbyterian. That church had just a handful of empty-nesters, mostly senior citizens. They needed new life but hadn’t gone through the same preparatory process of renewal that St. John’s had done.

“You’re not ready,” an elder at St. John’s told them. “It’s going to be more painful than you can imagine. You’re not going to make it unless you believe in life after death.”

The music, the skin tones, the Sunday dress all changed when Durham Church opened in the building that Northgate had called home. Just one middle-aged woman remained from the previous Northgate congregation.

“It was going to mean everything that they loved was going to have to die,” says Diekman. “for us, renewal was about mourning.”

But Durham Church also gained Iglesia Emanuel, a thriving Latino congregation of about 100 people that shares the building. While Emanuel and Durham Church remain distinct, the congregations try to participate in each other’s worship and mission and share what ministries they can, such as the youth program.

“I love speaking Spanish because I experience that humbling feeling of struggling through an unfamiliar language for the sake of friendship and community,” says Diekman. “Emanuel teaches me every day about the community life that we have together as Christians. The doors are always open— for the food pantry, prayer services, music lessons, and computer classes.”

Diekman and Golden now are co-pastors of Durham Church. Sometimes people assume that since he is a man, Golden is the lead pastor. “We smile and

I FELT CALLED TO SOMETHING THAT DIDN’T EXIST. THAT BECAME A SIGNPOST THAT WE MIGHT NEED TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW TOGETHER. THE NEWNESS THAT WAS HAPPENING IN OUR MIDST WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE STRUCTURE THAT WAS THERE.

— AMANDA DIEKMAN

Diekman. “We had something to do together during the week which was physical, emotional. The whole church smelled like basil. The smell of new life brought us new life.”

Renewal was also painful, though. Like in so many transitioning churches, members new and old fought over music.

“We learned to sing songs that some people had hated. Someone said, ‘That’s my favorite song,’ and we had to learn to

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love and forgive,” Diekman says. “Our mutuality teaches us to give and receive correction, listen and learn constantly, and to have humility and dependence at the heart of our job description—all things that point us toward Jesus.”

Cross-ethnic partnership. Shared leadership. Casual dress. Contemporary music styles. Weekly eucharistic liturgy. All these things were new for the prior congregations. Diekman says planting a new church in place of two old ones created space to experiment.

“I don’t know that I could go back to an established church. I love the freedom of not being scared,” she says. “There can be a lot of energy spent worrying about keeping the ship sailing, and I don’t think that’s very energizing or renewing for the congregations or the pastors. Maybe new churches help their congregations live without that fear.”

**RUNNERS BECOME WORSHIPPERS**

In 2008, the North Carolina diocese of the Episcopal Church had more aspiring priests than it had need for ordained clergy. The Rev. George Linney D’08 had planned to pursue ordination but realized he would need another job after graduation. An avid runner, he took a job at Bull City Running, a high-end sneaker store at the south end of the American Tobacco Trail, about seven miles from downtown Durham.

“As I would commute via bike and the American Tobacco Trail, God spoke clearly: ‘Gather out here and pray,’ ” Linney says. “So a few months later, despite my sense that this could not possibly be what God wanted for me to do in south Durham, we started. I was filled with visions, heard affirmations, was laughed at—all the sort of biblical stuff I had read about for those who are a part of something different.”

Durham, like many creative-class cities, has a large running community, and running had been a big part of Linney’s spiritual life for years. As a Duke student, he ran six laps (nearly a marathon) around Raleigh’s Central Prison in prayerful protest of an execution happening there. This summer, he led runs around the North Carolina State Legislative Building to protest budget cuts to programs helping the poor and minorities. Linney says it’s the church’s job to help its people see how God is already at work in their own particular gifts, careers, and passions. For his Tobacco Trail Community (TTC) church plant, it’s running, but it could be almost anything.

“They know that this other thing that they do (outside church) has something to do with God,” he says. “This is not just about physical fitness. Gardening could be your prayer life. Computer programming matters in the life of God. A life well-lived is when you start to recognize, hey, God is in all of this.”

Runners commune with God because they commune with creation—the air, the trees, the dirt, the animals, and especially their own bodies. But not every runner articulates it that way, and Linney feels called to help them do that. Some seem to think it’s all about beating the other guys or topping your best race time.

“You’re dangerously in an idolatrous, narcissistic world,” says Linney. “Most of the people you run with think that running is their god. If they lose and they don’t run well, there’s nothing left.”

Running doesn’t have much to do with TTC’s liturgy; it’s just that the congregants happen to be runners. Linney has met many of them as the store manager at Bull City Running.

“There’s ordained clergy in their running store. That validates their running,” says Linney, whose childhood church, Myers Park Baptist in Charlotte, ordained him to ministry. “Most days I really enjoy my job. I help people find great running shoes every day. Helping people to run leads to conversations about Jesus that are more interesting. You quickly—as you’re tying someone’s shoes—get to the nuts and bolts of their life. I do a lot of counseling.”

What appeals to runners is that the church meets outdoors, in revolving open spaces adjacent to the trail. If you want to attend worship with them, TTC’s website tells you to go “between 5 and 5.25 mile marker” or “just north of Woodcroft Parkway.” Linney sounds almost like St. Francis of Assisi when he talks about children chasing rabbits or birds chirping praise as part of his church’s worship.

“There’s music being played and Scripture being spoken without anyone opening a Bible or strumming a guitar.”
Linney says incarnational ministry goes beyond just preaching to runners in the great outdoors. The idea is to name God in all the good things already going on in people’s lives.

“These people need to listen to Thelonious Monk in worship. Why? Because their context for worship is in central North Carolina,” he says. “We go to Nana Tacos afterward. We have some margaritas. You get to hold the baby you didn’t get to hold during worship.”

Linney, who recently self-published his own book of poetry, says TTC caters to an educated, creative demographic in Durham and Chapel Hill, people who might have left the church after adolescence because they found traditional worship boring.

“We are for the poets and the artists,” Linney says. “We can teach you how to take your liberal arts degree and really think not just about how to make more money with it but how to serve the poor with it.”

“I’m not sure that people will come. I’m not sure that we’ll get rich. I want to be the suffering church,” says Linney. “It’s not really what some people might call successful. I’ve been at this project for three years and it brings in $17,000 a year. But the Word says that God is in our suffering. That’s not always a popular message. It often leads to small churches.”

Linney says it’s hard for some people to take a runner’s church seriously. “I can always tell they’re kind of making fun of us, but I like that because people were always kind of making fun of Jesus, to his death,” says Linney, whose gathering often totals as few as 10 people.

“Being understood immediately is highly overrated,” he says. “Folks outside your particular context do not need to understand all of what you are in one quick tagline. I think TTC can be a catalyst for wider church renewal by its simplicity. We are low cost and low tech. There is no reason we can’t be doing a version of what we are doing today a decade from now. TTC is in a fourth year of steady, slow growth. We do count on stability and patience, but I don’t plan to go anywhere, and there are other folks who seem to feel the same way about practicing their faith in Durham.” ■
Resurrection Power and the Black Church

An interview with Eboni Marshall Turman, director of the Office of Black Church Studies and assistant research professor of Black Church Studies
How did you experience your call to ministry?
I had always known that there was something special calling out to me in my life, but I don’t think I ever articulated in my childhood that I felt a call to ministry. I didn’t have any real models of women in ministry that would make sense of my desire to articulate a call. For the most part, everyone was male. It didn’t necessarily make sense for me to think that I could be in that kind of space. When I got to college, my first theology teacher was an African-American woman, the Rev. Dr. Joy Bostic. Also at that point, I had started attending Abyssinian Baptist Church, and soon thereafter, the first woman ever joined the ministerial staff full-time. And so I had gone from seeing a black woman in the classroom engaging in theological reflection to seeing how that translated to a black woman engaging in ministry on the ground. And I said: “This makes sense to me. This is what God has been saying to me.”

You’ve written extensively about how black women in the church are subject to hierarchies of race and gender. What are some ways this manifests itself?
In black churches, sexism and discrimination against black women emerge in misogynistic preaching, specifically preaching that women should be silent, that man is the head, that women are the helpmeets, that women are second-class citizens within the context of the church. You also have patriarchal practices where women are not allowed to preach, are not affirmed as suitable for the pastorate, are even not allowed to preside as laypersons over certain kinds of ministries, or are excluded from the diaconate. Women are silenced by all-male boards or internal structures, so that although the pews are filled with 90 to 95 percent women, they have no real voice in terms of managing the leadership of the church.

We also find black women experiencing patriarchy in black churches by way of what I’ve called labor exploitation. Women are running the Sunday schools, they’re running the Christian education, they’re singing in the choir, they’re caring for the male pastors, they’re writing the curriculums, they’re in the kitchens, they’re running the children’s programs—doing everything for free. So they’re volunteers, and then you have black men who are being compensated most of the time and showing up to preach on Sunday, spurred on by the cathartic responses of black women and black women’s suffering.

You also have the containment of black women’s bodies. The black woman’s body is often interpreted as inherently deviant or broken. And we see that acted out in black church practices that call black women to cover up in ways that will hide or contain this deviance. In the black church, we are subject as women to an ethics of appearance that is rooted in this mythology of black women’s embodied deviance.

What does “renewal of the church” mean to you? Would you apply any distinction or clarification when describing renewal of the black church?
It’s a very interesting question for the black church tradition, this idea...
of renewal, because the black church emerged at the interstices of abolition and enslavement. And so it was born out of deeply racialized violence and hatred against black personhood. So how is that “renewed”? I’m not so sure if that’s the right word. I think what’s probably more appropriate for the black church tradition as I see it is the idea of resurrecting the church, which for me points not to just a dusting off, cleaning up, or a polishing of the original object, but it suggests to me a newness.

What I would like for the black church of the 21st century to embrace is this sense of resurrection, that the body has to be raised anew. And in order for the church to be the church God has called us to be, we need resurrection power.

What are some ways that you see black women working toward a resurrection of the church?
Black women in many ways are flooding institutions of theological education. So, now more than ever, we are seeing black women engaging to be theologically prepared to lead religious communities. More black women are asserting a call to ministry and are actively working toward ordination in their respective denominations. Women are boldly approaching black churches with their skill sets as trained theologians and pastors and seeking ministerial placements more than ever before. And lay women are now becoming more open to being pastored by a woman. Even though the struggle continues, now little girls and little boys have models of women as pastoral leaders. So 30 years from now, 35 years from now, it won’t be so odd for a little girl to say “I want to be a pastor” when she’s 7. That all allows for a change in culture, a more affirming culture for women in black churches, even though it takes some time.

What is the role of Scripture in the renewal or resurrection of the church? Black church tradition is by and large a Bible-believing tradition. We emerge from an oral tradition where Scripture continues to be memorized. There’s a great love for the ability to recite, to remember, and to hold close to the heart the word of God. And so we will have to produce Bible scholars who are looking very deeply at how we understand what the word of God is saying in the 21st century, how the Spirit continues to speak to us through the Word. Also, preachers must read their work and proclaim it in ways that are life-affirming to our communities. For as much as Scripture has been beloved of the tradition, Scripture has always been deeply contested by the black church because it has been historically interpreted in ways that have denigrated black people and situated them as dishonorable, bestial, and ungodly. And yet historically the black church has interpreted Scripture in ways that have been life-affirming to persons who have been marginalized. And so we have to re-enter into that space of understanding and interpreting Scripture on the side of the oppressed.

What role can the seminary have in the renewing or resurrecting the church? I think, in order for the seminary to remain a relevant and life-giving bridge for the parish, that the seminary must deeply consider and intentionally engage how we negotiate difference on multiple levels. This means the seminary must engage the classical disciplines in ways that prepare pastors and those who seek to serve and lead in religious spaces to confront and to transform the -isms that haunt us. In other words, we can’t do Bible the same way. We need to do Bible, but we need to be able to allow the Bible...
to speak to who we are today. Yes, we need the classical and traditional, but we need to be thinking in ways that prepare pastors to do theology in spaces of multiplicity. Because the 21st century is a time that requires us to live together, and we’re all different; how do we do that in a way that is pleasing to God?

What do you hope to bring to the Office of Black Church Studies?
What I hope to bring to the office is a fresh vision and a fresh word and voice about who the black church is and who we are called to be. I think that I bring a very precise lens to the work, to understanding what the church needs in the leaders of today. I think because of some of my more provocative perspectives on the direction of contemporary black churches, I see the office almost standing as a mouthpiece for black churches in the academy.

I know that Duke Divinity School has one of the youngest student populations among seminaries and divinity schools, and I want to help young people, to affirm in them what God has placed in them and let them know it’s OK to be young and to be called and to desire “to serve God in the days of your youth.” I want to be a sounding board for issues and concerns that are critical for a new generation of believers, of black believers specifically—like HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and class. I want to delve into issues of race and mixed race and gender. I want to allow the black church and persons who love the black church space to think creatively and progressively about those things.
During his second year in the M.Div. program at Duke Divinity School, Zack Christy took a course taught by the Rev. Dr. Will Willimon. This essay is adapted from his reflections on how that class shaped his views on pastoral ministry.

I am currently a third-year student at Duke Divinity School. This past spring semester I had the opportunity to take a class taught by the Rev. Dr. Will Willimon called “Local Church in Mission.” I believe that God has called me to ministry in the rural church, and I believed that I had a good grasp on how to engage the church in missional activities, so naturally I believed that taking Professor Willimon’s class would just be a refresher in what I already knew. God has a funny way of putting us in situations that are uncomfortable, however, and he has a way of knocking us down a peg when we believe we have it all under control. That was my experience in Willimon’s mission class. I can tell you now that I have never been more frustrated, terrified, challenged, excited, and humbled before by one class or experience.

I had never heard Willimon speak before this class. I believed that if I was really nice to my congregation, and if I took really good care of them first, the mission would follow. From my untrained observation of my father, this is how I saw mission beginning. As part of this class I was able to interview my father and was somewhat astonished to learn that this was not the case—even though Willimon had been practically yelling it for the better part of a month.

CLERGY: Called to More than Caregiving

BY ZACK CHRISTY
This class frustrated me because it confronted me with this truth: if the church is not in mission then it is not the church. This was something I needed to hear. Somehow I had gotten in my mind that first and foremost my responsibility as pastor was to take care of my congregation. As Willimon stressed over and over again in class, this is not what it means to be the body of Christ. Mission is never something that is easy; it is mostly messy. Mission is not something that is at the periphery of Christian life; a missional life is Christian life. Mission is the result of well-trained Christians, and it is done out of recognition of baptismal vocation.

I was terrified by this class because it made me realize that God has called me to help train these Christians. This class stressed to me that God has called me to be one of the ones that reminds people of their baptismal vocation. I am still terrified, because ministry would be so much easier if we were not called to work for the kingdom of God. Ministry would be so much easier if we were called to maintain the status quo. Willimon reminded me that God will not let anyone off this easily. As Professor Willimon stated repeatedly, he didn’t know how most clergy don’t just die of boredom from being congregational caregivers.

As much as I was terrified by this class, I was excited by it as well. How amazing is it that we don’t worship a dead God? How amazing is it that through participating in the Christian life we are never allowed to be bored? Coming into this class, I fear that I was dangerously close to falling into a belief that I was entering the clergy profession. I believe that this is easy to do when we are within the walls of the academic kingdom that is Duke Divinity School. We begin to think that when we get out of school we will have some special tools to give congregations what we have and they need. But as was stressed to me over and over again in this class, we are not called to be professionals; we are people called and willed by God. We are people sent on a mission.

I am thankful for the ways this class challenged me. I am grateful for the ways I have been shaped and called through this class. More than anything, though, I am glad for the ways this class reoriented my view of the ministry. I was very close to being a congregational caregiver, and while that is a part of the ministry, it is not the only part. I hope that my colleagues felt the same call in their lives.

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**RENEWAL OF THE RURAL CHURCH**

**THIS SUMMER** Zack Christy served at Solid Rock UMC in Harnett County, N.C., as part of his field education. Solid Rock was launched by the Rev. Gil Wise D’88 in 2001 after he shuttered his storefront church, The Rock. The little church in a rural county has now grown to five campuses with ministries that include high-quality day care, food pantry, clothing distribution, and showers for the homeless. Solid Rock now has over 400 members, some 200 of whom worship at the main site in Spout Springs. The church was a partner congregation in the Thriving Rural Communities program, an initiative supported by Duke Divinity School, The Duke Endowment, and the United Methodist annual conferences in North Carolina. Wise became district superintendent for the Beacon District on June 25, but he leaves behind a thriving community committed to serving the Lord and the people around them.

To learn more about Solid Rock, read an article in Faith & Leadership: www.faithandleadership.com/features/articles/rock-solid
Convocation & Pastors’ School
Renewing the Church
Duke Divinity School • October 14–15, 2013

Convocation & Pastors’ School is an annual intensive two-day conference that offers lectures, worship, and seminars for Christian leaders of all traditions. This year’s lectures and seminars will focus on how to look beyond narratives of declining attendance, anemic giving, and social controversy to explore how thriving Christian communities are meeting the deep needs of the world and in the process breathing new life into the church. At the heart of each vibrant Christian community are imaginative people shaped by Scripture, working together to cultivate spaces where God’s Spirit can take root.

Keynote Speakers
James K. A. Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College
James Smith will deliver the two James A. Gray Lectures. Informed by a long Augustinian tradition of theological and cultural critique—from Augustine and Calvin to Edwards and Kuyper—Smith’s interests lie in bringing critical thought to bear on the practices of the church and the church’s witness to culture.
Read more: www.faithandleadership.com/people-news/writers/james-ka-smith

Jorge Acevedo, lead pastor of Grace Church in southwest Florida
Jorge Acevedo will deliver the Franklin S. Hickman Lecture, through which he will examine the identity of the church and the task of theological education.
Watch an interview: www.faithandleadership.com/multimedia/jorge-acevedo-we-have-all-we-need

Laceye Warner, executive vice dean of Duke Divinity School
Laceye Warner’s research interests in the historical theology of evangelism seek to inform and locate contemporary church practices within the larger Christian narrative.
See essays: www.faithandleadership.com/sermons/prayers-god

Jeremy Troxler, pastor of Spruce Pine UMC in Spruce Pine, N.C.
Jeremy Troxler will serve as Convocation preacher during the event’s two worship services. Troxler served for the last six years as director of the Thriving Rural Communities initiative at Duke Divinity School, an effort to help divinity students, rural pastors, and churches take the lead in creating sustainable communities across North Carolina. Read his sermons: www.faithandleadership.com/people-news/writers/jeremy-troxler

Seminar Topics
- Clergy Health & Theology of the Body
- Ministering to Millennials
- Scriptural Imagination
- Sacramental Youth Ministry
- Contemporary Worship
- Writing and Work
- The Intercessory Congregation
- Lessons from the Book of Acts
- The Holy Spirit and Thriving Churches
- Hope in the Face of Illness
- Reclaiming Jesus in the Old Testament
- And many more!

To Learn More:
Information about Convocation & Pastors’ School: www.divinity.duke.edu/cps2013
Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel
By Kate Bowler, assistant professor of the history of Christianity in the United States
Oxford University Press, 2013
352 pages, Hardcover, $34.95

How have millions of American Christians come to measure spiritual progress in terms of their financial status and physical well-being? How has the movement variously called Word of Faith, Health and Wealth, Name It and Claim It, or simply prosperity gospel come to dominate much of the contemporary religious landscape? Kate Bowler’s Blessed is the first book to fully explore the origins, unifying themes, and major figures of a burgeoning movement that now claims millions of followers in America. Bowler traces the roots of the prosperity gospel: from the touring mesmerists, metaphysical sages, Pentecostal healers, business oracles, and princely prophets of the early 20th century; through midcentury positive thinkers like Norman Vincent Peale and revivalists like Oral Roberts and Kenneth Hagin; to today’s hugely successful prosperity preachers. Bowler focuses on such contemporary figures as Creflo Dollar, pastor of Atlanta’s 30,000-member World Changers Church International; Joel Osteen, known as “the smiling preacher,” with a weekly audience of seven million; T. D. Jakes, named by Time magazine as one of America’s most influential new religious leaders; Joyce Meyer, evangelist and women’s empowerment guru; and many others. Bowler offers an interpretive framework for scholars and general readers alike to understand the diverse expressions of Christian abundance as a cohesive movement bound by shared understandings and common goals.

Longing for Jesus: Worship at a Black Holiness Church in Mississippi, 1895–1913
By Lester Ruth, research professor of Christian worship
Eerdmans, 2013
187 pages, Paperback, $24.00

The Church at Worship is a series of documentary case studies of specific worshipping communities from around the world and throughout Christian history that can inform and enrich worship practices today. In this third volume, Longing for Jesus, Lester Ruth vividly portrays a prominent African-American holiness church in Jackson, Miss., in the early 20th century. Ruth’s rich selection of primary documents presents readers with a vibrant snapshot of this dynamic church and its pastor, Charles Price Jones, caught between factors that threatened the existence of the congregation itself: Jim Crow racism, conflicting visions for the church, appropriate Christian piety, and social aspirations. In the midst of conflicts inside and outside, the church fought to create a space where it could worship Jesus as it saw fit.

Incarnation: The Surprising Overlap of Heaven and Earth
By William H. Willimon, professor of the practice of Christian ministry
Abingdon Press, 2013
112 pages, Paperback, $13.99

The Church uses the concept of Incarnation (from the Latin word for “in the flesh”) to help us understand that Jesus Christ is both divine and human. The Incarnation is the grand crescendo of our reflection upon the mystery that Christ is the full revelation of God: not only one who talks about God but the one who speaks for and acts as God—one who is God. Jesus defies simplistic, effortless, undemanding explications. To be sure, Jesus often communicated his truth in simple, homely, direct ways, but his truth was anything but apparent and undemanding in the living. The Gospels are full of folk who confidently knew what was what—until they met Jesus. In this book, Willimon presents the Incarnation in a clear, understandable way that is appropriate for group study or individual reflection. ■
**JEFFREY BEGBIE** published “The Future of Theology amid the Arts: Some Reformed Reflections,” in *Christ across the Disciplines: Past, Present, Future*, edited by Roger Lundin (Eerdmans). Extracts from his book *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge University Press) were included in the recently published *Modern Theologians Reader*, edited by David Ford, Mike Higton, and Simeon Zahl (Wiley-Blackwell). In the spring he delivered a Howie Lecture titled “Music and the Shape of Hope” at Union Presbyterian Seminary (Richmond, Va.), taught a class on “What’s So Spiritual about Music?” at the Duke Forward event in New York City, and participated in a panel discussion on art and faith at Gordon College (Georgetown College, Kentucky).


**STEPHEN CHAPMAN** published “Martial Memory, Peaceable Vision: Divine War in the Old Testament,” in *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*, edited by Heath A. Thomas, Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan (IVP Academic). For a May conference at the University of Göttingen (Germany), he presented “Joshua 8:2, Covenant and Divine Concession,” and in June he taught and preached on the Old Testament and violence at Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. During July he spoke on “The Old Testament and the Church after Christendom” at the international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (St Andrews, Scotland) and the annual gathering of the Younger Baptist Scholars in the Academy (Georgetown College, Kentucky).

**MARK CHAVES** delivered two invited lectures in April: “Continuity and Change in American Religion,” as part of the Encore Program for Lifelong Enrichment at North Carolina State University, and “The Triangle Clergy Compensation Study: Preliminary Results and Interpretations,” at a meeting convened in Indianapolis, Ind., to discuss the Lilly Endowment initiative Economic Challenges Facing Indiana Pastors.

**MARIA DOERFLER** received the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History’s* 2013 Eusebius Prize for her article “Entertaining the Trinity Unawares: Genesis 18 and the Trinitarian Imagination in Late Antiquity” (forthcoming). She was also named a Summer Fellow for Byzantine Studies at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, where she was in residence for June and July.

**CRAIG DYKSTRA** gave a plenary address on “Communities of Vocation and Practice” at the biennial conference of the Network on Vocation in Undergraduate Education held March 14–16 in Indianapolis, Ind. At its May commencement, Wabash College (Crawfordsville, Ind.) awarded Dykstra an honorary doctorate for his contributions to the college during his tenure at Lilly Endowment.

**CURTIS W. FREEMAN** gave the paper “The Early English Baptists and the Radical Puritan Underground” at the Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wis., last November. At a National Association of Baptist Professors meeting in Chicago, Ill., he convened a symposium on the theology of James Wm. McClendon Jr., whose recently republished *Systematic Theology* (Baylor University Press) includes a critical introduction written by Freeman. In early April he gave an invited lecture, “Mediating Ministry: Ethical and Pastoral Identifiers for Ecclesial Transformation,” at an international symposium celebrating the installation of Professor Henk Bakker to the Chair of Baptist Identity, Theology, and History at Free University in Amsterdam. While in Holland, he also led a seminar at the Baptist Seminary in Barneveld. In June he gave the plenary address “Robinson Crusoe: Teaching Theology and Handing on the Faith” to the College Theological Society at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. *American Baptist Quarterly* named Freeman its co-editor, and the Baptist World Alliance asked him to serve as chair of the Baptist delegation for the international Baptist-Methodist dialogue.

PAUL GRIFFITHS published a review of Metaphysics, by Adrian Pabst, in International Journal for Philosophy of Religion (72.2, 2012) and provided the foreword for Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development, edited by David Werther and Mark Linville (Continuum). During the spring semester he delivered several lectures: “What Remains in the Resurrection? A Broadly Thomist Argument for the Presence of Nonhuman Animals in Heaven,” as the annual Thomas Aquinas Lecture at Blackfriars, Cambridge, and at a symposium on teleology and eschatology in Thomas Aquinas at Blackfriars, Oxford; “The End: An Eschatological Assay,” eight lectures delivered at the invitation of the University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity over the Lent term as the 2013 Stanton Lectures; “On Mary’s Mortality, in Conversation with John Henry Newman,” at a symposium on Catholic Mariology at the University of Dayton (Ohio); “The Impossibility of Owning the Immaterial and the Natural Right to Ownership: Resolving a Tension in Catholic Thought,” the keynote address at a symposium on intellectual property at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, Minn.; “Did Mary Die? John Henry Newman on Mary’s Mortality,” the annual Newman Legacy Lecture at the National Institute for Newman Studies, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa.; and “The Song of Songs and the West’s Grammar of the Flesh,” at a symposium on the Song of Songs at Harvard Divinity School sponsored by the Center for the Study of World Religions.

RICHARD HAYS delivered “The Creed as Hermeneutical Lens for Reading Scripture— and Vice-Versa” on June 6 at the Ancient Evangelical Future Conference at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., and “Intertextual Fusions in Matthew’s Use of Scripture” during the 68th general meeting of SNTS (Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas) in Perth, Australia, July 23–26.

RICHARD LISCHER’s “A Book’s Life” was the cover story for the spring books issue (May 1) of The Christian Century, and a 2012 contribution to that magazine, his devotional essay “Stripped Bare,” received an Award of Merit from the Church Associated Press. Lischer served as one of the preachers in Duke Chapel for Good Friday and, in September, as lecturer for the Faith and Life Series at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport, Iowa.

RANDY L. MADDOX published “Introducing the Wesleyan Theological Tradition” as the preface to The Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology (Beacon Hill) and “James Erskine’s Critique of John Wesley on Christian Perfection,” in Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society 59 (2013). In August he delivered a plenary address on Charles Wesley’s eschatology to the annual meeting of the Charles Wesley Society at Durham University, England, and participated in the 13th meeting of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, which he serves as secretary.

DAVID MARSHALL published Tradition and Modernity: Christian and Muslim Perspectives (Georgetown University Press), a volume he edited and introduces. He also published two articles in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations: “Muhammad in Contemporary Christian Theological Reflection” (24.2, 2013) and “Roman Catholic Approaches to the Qur’an since Vatican II” (24.3, 2013). In May he facilitated the 12th annual Building Bridges Seminar for Christian and Muslim scholars in Doha, Qatar, on the theme “The Believing Community: Christian and Muslim Scholars.” In June he addressed the clergy conference of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham, England, on Muhammad and the Qur’an and also ran a three-day course on “Understanding Islam” at St Stephen’s House, Oxford, a Church of England seminary.

CHRIS RICE’s book Reconciling All Things, co-written with Emmanuel
Katongole, was translated for distribution in South Korea, where he traveled in August to lead a retreat on the theme of Christian community for 200 faculty and administrators of Seoul Foreign School. In May he gave a plenary address, “God’s New We: From Caregiving to Community,” at a Christian Community Health Fellowship conference in Atlanta, Ga., attended by 400 Christian health professionals working in marginalized communities. At the end of the month, he and Edgardo Colón-Emeric co-facilitated the fifth annual Duke Summer Institute: “The Ministry of Reconciliation in a Divided World.”

Russell E. Richey published Denominationalism Illustrated and Explained (Cascade). He presented his resource paper on ecclesiology in United Methodism to the UMC Committee on Faith and Order in United Methodism to the UMC Connectional table in Nashville, Tenn., on March 17, and then his resource paper on ecclesiology in United Methodism to the UMC Connectional table in Nashville, Tenn., on March 17, and then to the UMC Connectional Table in Chicago, Ill., at the end of April. He also delivered “Theological Education in American Methodism,” the opening plenary address for the consultation “The UMC after Tampa: Where Do We Go from Here?” that convened April 4 at Emory University. Richey served as co-chair for the Wesley/Methodist Historical Studies working group at this summer’s Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies and as co-director of Asbury Theological Seminary’s Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar. The Historical Society of the United Methodist Church recently elected him president for the 2014–17 term.


Lester Ruth published Longing for Jesus (Eerdmans), which considers worship at Christ Temple, an African-American Holiness Church in Jackson, Miss., at the turn of the 20th century. In June he lectured on a theology of worship at the Worship Symposium of the Methodist School of Music in Singapore, and in August he presented a paper comparing classic evangelical hymnody and contemporary worship music at the Christian Congregational Music Conference at Ripon College in Cuddesdon, England.


Lacey Warner was preacher and plenary speaker for June 17 at the Duke Youth Academy in Durham, N.C., and gave the July 1 talk “Wesleyan Roots” at the Texas Youth Academy, held at Southwestern University in Georgetown. At the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC in May, she served on a panel reporting on theological education. Warner spoke July 7 and 14 as part of the Summer Scholars Series at Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., and in September gave a talk at New Creation UMC in Durham, N.C., titled “Saving Women.”

Will Willimon is editing a series on Christian theology for Abingdon Press that will be introduced this fall with his book Incarnation: The Surprising Overlap of Heaven and Earth. He published “Making Ministry Difficult,” his thoughts on moving from the episcopacy to seminary teaching, in The Christian Century (Feb. 4, 2013). In the spring he spoke at pastors’ schools in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Ohio, North Dakota, and Canada. He met with Florida UMC pastors during Holy Week for a preaching workshop and preached at First UMC in Pensacola, Fla., on Easter. In April he gave lectures on preaching at Sioux Falls (S.D.) Seminary; spoke on new church development and on preaching and the principalities and powers at a national assembly of Free Methodists in Canada in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; co-led, with Chris Seitz, the College of Preachers in Dallas, Texas; and gave the Dillard Lectures at St. Paul UMC in Richmond, Va. He preached and lectured at the national Festival of Homiletics in Nashville, Tenn., May 14–15, and in July preached at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in metro Kansas City. In June he was appointed pastor of Duke Memorial UMC in Durham, N.C.

Brittany Wilson was appointed assistant professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School as of July 1. She delivered a lecture titled “Incarnation” at the Duke Youth Academy in Durham, N.C., and served
on the honorary committee for Beverly Gaventa’s retirement ceremony in Princeton, N.J.

NORMAN WIRZBA made presentations on food and faith at Queen Anne UMC in Seattle, Wash., in May and at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, N.C., in June. He also participated in June at a “Theology, Science, and Evolution” colloquium hosted by the Colossian Forum. July 1–5 he taught “On Soil and Salvation: Reconciliation and the Land” at the Vancouver School of Theology. In September he presented “Justice and the Land” at the University of Florida and, at the end of the month, hosted a national event he organized, “Summoned Toward Wholeness: A Conference on Food, Farming, and the Life of Faith,” at Duke Divinity School.

LAUREN WINNER gave the May commencement address at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich.; served as faculty for the Preaching Excellence Program of the Episcopal Preaching Foundation, held May 26–31 in Richmond, Va.; and preached in June at the Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Ore., and at the consecration of Anne Hodges-Copple, bishop suffragan of the (Episcopal) Diocese of North Carolina.

DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL is grateful for recent gifts and financial support from friends, alumni, and foundations.

Recent gift commitments from generous supporters of the Divinity School include a $1.5 million bequest intention from Sandra Rainwater-Brott (T‘75) of Rockville, Md., which will fund the Rainwater Family Scholarship in memory of her parents, Zillah Merritt Rainwater (WC‘43) and Roland W. Rainwater (D‘43); $850,000 from Bill (E‘62) and Renie (WC‘62) McCutchen of Westport, Conn., through the Ruth Lilly Philanthropic Foundation for staff support for the Center for Reconciliation; $250,000 from Morris (T‘62, G‘63) and Ruth (WC‘63) Williams of Gladwyne, Pa., for the Williams Challenge matching new scholarship gifts from Divinity graduates and their families at a 1:3 ratio; a $100,000 bequest intention from Ed (T‘58) and Kathie (WC‘61) Gauld of Los Angeles, Calif., for the Gauld Family Scholarship; $75,000 for the Christian Witness in the City program from Roy and Laura Nichol of Houston, Texas; $25,000 for the Dean’s Initiative Fund and $22,500 for Divinity Field Education from Gaston (D‘99) and Laceye (D‘95) Warner of Durham, N.C.; $25,000 as a Charitable Gift Annuity for Scholarships from Keith (T‘51, D‘54) and Frances Glover of Raleigh, N.C.; and $10,000 from Stephen and Ruth Gunter of Durham, N.C., for a new Oklahoma Scholarship. Also, the Divinity Annual Fund has received $12,500 from Jeffrey and Leann Black of New York, N.Y., and $10,000 from the Soderquist Family Foundation of Rogers, Ark.

The Divinity Annual Fund achieved a record total of $692,383 this year with 1,658 participants. These funds were dedicated entirely to financial aid for Divinity School students.

Foundation support for the Divinity School continues to come from many sources. The Duke Endowment, based in Charlotte, N.C., has announced an additional commitment of $5.7 million for the next phase of the Clergy Health Initiative; the Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church has committed $300,000 for the Christian Witness in the City program in Houston; the Issachar Fund of Grand Rapids, Mich., has provided $109,360 for exploring new interdisciplinary programs; a grant of $37,860 from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina is supporting the Baptist House of Studies; the McDonald-Agape Foundation of Birmingham, Mich., is giving $21,000 for the Revelation Conference; and $10,000 has been given by the Magee Christian Education Foundation of Lebanon, Ohio, for Scholarships.
60s

DONALD K. HANKS D’60 was recently honored by a bequest in the amount of $2 million dedicated to the Donald K. Hanks Endowed Scholarship Fund in Philosophy. The gift from the late Carl E. Muckley provides scholarships for worthy majors in the Department of Philosophy at the University of New Orleans, where Hanks is professor emeritus and where Muckley was a distinguished student. He continues to teach and is currently a member of the philosophy faculty at Western Nevada College in Carson City.

GLEN H. STASSEN G’67. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., is the 2013 recipient of the Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award from the Baptist World Alliance. He is the author of Just Peace Making (1992), Kingdom Ethics (with David Gushee, 2003), and A Thicker Jesus: Incarnational Discipleship in a Secular Age (2012). A distinguished scholar and peace-maker, he was greatly influenced by his late father, Harold Stassen, president of the American Baptist Convention in the 1960s, governor of Minnesota from 1939 to 1943, and nine-time candidate for president of the United States.

CHARLES SCHUSTER D’69 of Lakewood, Colo., has retired from the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church.

70s

DALE C. ALLISON JR. G’79, G’82 has been named the Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. He recently completed a full-length commentary on the book of James and is the author of The Luminous Dusk, a book on religious experience in the modern world. He was previously on the faculty at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

JOHN PATRICK COLATCH D’79 is the university chaplain at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa. He arrived at Bucknell in August 2012 after serving as chaplain at Lafayette College.

80s

GREGORY WILLS T’84, D’89 has been named dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

TODD OUTCALT D’85, lead pastor at Calvary United Methodist Church in Brownsburg, Ind., has written four new books in 2013: Husband’s Guide to Breast Cancer (Cardinal), Before You Say “I Do” (3rd Edition, Perigee), For the Love of God (Health Communications), and The Ten Things Every Breast Cancer Husband Should Know.

90s

JIM MARSH JR. D’94 is a United Methodist extension minister in Washington, D.C., appointed through the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. In June he wrote an op-ed piece that The Washington Post published about the theological issue of standing up for the song “God Bless America” during Major League Baseball games.

JAY KIEVE D’94, D’95 is the new coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina. Before receiving the call to serve the CBFSC, he served eight years as pastor of Crosscreek Baptist Church in Pelham, Ala. He previously served as pastor in South Carolina and on the national Coordinating Council of CBF. Jay and his family reside in Anderson, S.C.

HARRIET BRYAN D’95, senior pastor at Salem United Methodist Church, in Clarksville, Tenn., will serve as the new superintendent for the Nashville District of the Tennessee Annual Conference.


GLORIA AGHOGAH D’99 completed her D.Min. degree at The Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in May 2013. Her project was “From Maintenance to Mission: Changing the Paradigm of a Small Church.” She and her family reside in Durham, N.C. She is currently the manager of the Department of Volunteers at United Hospice, teaching and providing palliative and end-of-life care to hospice patients.

90s

FRED BAHNSON D’00 is the author of Soil and Sacrament: Food, Faith, and Growing Heaven on Earth (Simon & Schuster, 2013). He describes it as part spiritual autobiography and part immersion journalism. The Bahnsoms live in Brevard, N.C.

ABBY W. KOCHER T’00, D’06 has recently joined the boards of the Duke University Alumni Association and the National Alumni Council of the Divinity School. Her husband, CRAIG T. KOCHER D’01, is chaplain at the University of Richmond and former “voice of the Lady Tar Heels.” They welcomed Caroline Rebecca on August 30, 2012. The Kochers reside in Richmond, Va.

CAROLYN H. BURRUS D’02 is the new chaplain for the Hospice of Alamance/ Caswell in Burlington, N.C.

STEPHANIE PATTERSON D’02 serves currently as minister to students and families at Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson, S.C.

CANDICE MARIE PROVEY T’04, D’10 and REN PROVEY T’04 welcomed a son, Elijah Martin, on April 20, 2013. The Proveys reside in New Haven, Conn., where she is associate chaplain at Yale University.

J. DANA TRENT D’06 anticipates her first book, Saffron Cross: The Unlikely Story of How a Christian Minister Married a Hindu Monk, to be published in October by Fresh Air Books, an imprint of Upper Room Books. She is a nonprofit consultant and adjunct faculty member at the Art Institute of Raleigh-Durham. She lives in Raleigh with her husband, Fred, a devout Hindu.

OWEN E. BARROW D’07 and Chambless H. Barrow announce the birth of Frances Hawks on April 19, 2013. Owen is pastor at 519Church and Apex (N.C.) United Methodist Church. Congratulations also to grandparents Rochelle and NED HILL D’80.
TINA PETERMAN HUBERT D’07 and JOSH HUBERT D’08 announce the February 10, 2013, birth of Hannah Lee. Josh is associate pastor and Tina is minister of children and families at Wildwood United Methodist Church in Magnolia, Texas.

SARAH ARTHUR D’09 of Lansing, Mich., has written her eighth book, *Mommy Time: 90 Devotions for New Moms* (Tyndale House, 2013), which was featured in a front-page story of the *Lansing State Journal* on Mother’s Day. Her husband, TOM ARTHUR D’08, is pastor of Sycamore Creek United Methodist Church, which recently launched a new venue in a diner on Monday nights.

JESSICA SQUIRES D’09 and Nelson Colwell were married June 8, 2013, in Richmond, Va. She serves on the board of directors for the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries and chairs the Advance Committee. She is an associate minister in Newport News, Va.

10s

DANIEL L. BENNETT D’10 is a newly appointed associate minister at Hyde Park United Methodist Church in Tampa, Fla.

KELLY GILSON D’10 will begin missionary service in Lesotho in September 2013. She and her husband, Tom, will both be teaching at church-related institutions. They have two children, Percival and Aaralyn. Their home base is Stuart, Va.

DANIEL CORPENING D’12 and JESSICA KING CORPENING D’12 announce the birth of Anna Faye on January 26, 2013. The Corpenings live in Charlotte, N.C., where he serves as the associate pastor at Assurance United Methodist Church.

GOT NEWS? STAY IN TOUCH! You can email magazine@div.duke.edu or go online at www.divinity.duke.edu/update to submit class notes or update your information.

DEATHS

ROBERT C. HOWARD D’47 of Jackson, Minn., died May 16, 2013.

JACK WILLIAMS SR. D’53 of Corinth, Miss., died April 20, 2013. He was an Army Air Corps veteran from World War II and a United Methodist pastor for 53 years, serving churches across Mississippi. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Vetrice Moore Williams, a son, two daughters, three grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.


JAMES F. THOMPSON D’61 of Laurinburg, N.C., died March 26, 2013. A United Methodist pastor, he served churches in the North Carolina Conference until his retirement and later as an insurance agent and a chaplain of the Scotland County Highland Games. His wife, Priscilla McDougald Thompson, a daughter, two grandchildren, and two step-grandchildren survive him.

JOE A. LAW D’63 of Winston-Salem, N.C., died December 15, 2012. He was a United Methodist pastor in the Western North Carolina Conference. He is survived by his wife, Judith Overby Law, and a son.

F. ALVIN EMBRY JR. D’66, D’67 of Round Rock, Texas, died March 1, 2013. He was a chaplain. His wife, Patricia H. Embry, survives him.

G. STEVEN SALLIE D’76 of Knoxville, Tenn., died May 2, 2013. He was an innovative parish minister in large churches across the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church and he co-authored *Growing New Churches*, a guide for new church development. He also received the the Denman Award in 2008 for excellence in evangelism, and he was a pioneer in contemporary-style worship. His wife, Lynda Sallee, a son, and a granddaughter survive him.

E. MICHAEL JONES D’78 of Mt. Vernon, Ill., died June 22, 2013. He was a pastor who served more than 35 years in the Illinois-Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. In addition to parish ministry, he was a chaplain at Chaddock and Cunningham Children’s Homes, and he was dean and teacher for the Extension Course of Study. He is survived by his wife, CYNTHIA ANNE JONES D’78, and two daughters.

RICHARD W. ANDREWS D’84 of Rockville, Md., died July 3, 2013. He was a United Methodist pastor who served parishes across the Baltimore-Washington Conference and a faithful participant-leader for Divinity School events. His wife, Susan Andrews, two sons, two daughters, including SARAH ANDREWS SCHLIECKERT D’05, and a granddaughter survive him.
Hidden in Plain Sight
Historical Resources for Church Renewal

By Grant Wacker

We Live in Troubled Times. To be sure, all times have been troubled. But today’s challenges confronting the church, the ones that we may be able to deal with and perhaps even to heal, should prompt us to look to America’s Christian history for wisdom for the present and guidance for the future. One place to look is the stories of the great revivalists.

The list of possible players is long. Revivalism as we know it began in the early decades of the 18th century. The Great Awakening emerged with thunder from the lips of Jonathan Edwards in New England and his friend George Whitefield throughout the colonies. The first third of the 19th century—the era of the Second Great Awakening—heard the Arminian preaching of Charles Finney and the Restorationist preaching of Alexander Campbell. The middle decades were enriched with the Wesleyan expositions of Phoebe Palmer, and the last third with Holiness sermons from the black globetrotting evangelist Amanda Berry Smith. Without question Dwight L. Moody—rotund, urban-oriented, and theologically expansive—dominated the Gilded Age.

The 20th century, perhaps surprisingly, proved to be revivalism’s golden era. The first three decades included the ministries of the Pentecostals Aimee Semple McPherson and William J. Seymour, the Indian Anglican immigrant Pandita Ramabai, and the barnstorming, sort-of-Presbyterian, former baseball player Billy Sunday. After World War II, Billy Graham effectively defined the genre by speaking face-to-face to 215 million people, more than any other person in history. The postwar years also witnessed the divine healing ministry of Oral Roberts, the social gospel focus of Canadian transplant Leighton Ford, and, more recently, the prosperity-oriented preaching of the television celebrity Joel Osteen. The roster could be extended at length to include Kathryn Kuhlman, T. D. Jakes, and Rick Warren—all voices of our own times.

The great revivalists displayed many differences. Ranging over three centuries, they included men and women, many ethnicities, and all socioeconomic backgrounds. By any reasonable measure of things, Edwards was an aristocrat, Seymour was an African-American man of humble origins, and Ford a serious-minded intellectual. Their styles too were dramatically varied, running from sedate to flamboyant.

Yet important continuities showed up, and those continuities remain instructive. With the unlikely but possible exception of McPherson, all maintained lives of impeccable integrity in private as well as in public. Though some prospered handsomely, more often than not they lived comparatively modestly, and there is no evidence of personal dishonesty for any of them. All were known for the consistency of their devotional lives of prayer and Scripture reading. All used the media venues of their day effectively. They knew that revivals were worked up as well as prayed down. And all focused on the big picture: the work of God to transform people and communities.

They sensed that God’s Spirit was less concerned about ethnic, regional, and denominational divisions than most Christians were.

All focused on the big picture: the work of God to transform people and communities. They sensed that God’s Spirit was less concerned about ethnic, regional, and denominational divisions than most Christians were.

Church history requires the characteristic of any good conversation: not only listening to the words spoken but also hearing them by taking them deep into the heart. That means allowing ourselves to change in the process—asking new questions and thinking new possibilities, just as we would in any real conversation with any real person we respect.

My colleague David Steinmetz used to say that church history might provide answers we never thought to give and, perhaps more important, pose questions we never thought to ask. It requires resurrecting the dead and letting them speak with all the pathos and power of their original voices.

Granted, it is dangerous to press the materials of the past to say things they were never meant to say. But it is even more dangerous to overlook the potential riches of their theological and renewing power. ■
The small stained glass window in the Prayer Room was designed by Les Wicker and was inspired by Psalm 141:2: “May my prayer be as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!” In the bottom center of the window, on a field of green, there is a censer, an incense burner that is shaped like a flower blossom. Wisps of white smoke spiral silently upward toward deep blue heavens dotted with stars that seem to pulse with life. The stars hang like sentinels in the sky and even suggest heavenly eyes gazing down on the fragrant offering that is rising upward.

You are invited to spend a week at Duke Divinity School, where you can audit classes, engage in self-directed study, participate in community worship, and take time to relax and recharge for ministry. The week is yours to design and can cost as little as $100.

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