



2021 Sprunt Lectures

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# Sharon & Brook

CONNECTING THE UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY COMMUNITY

ISSUE 8 / SPRING 2021

## Loving Each Other

### The Reign of God Coming Into this World



Like millions of Americans on Inauguration Day, Dr. Rodney Sadler was moved and encouraged by the words of a 22-year-old African American poet named Amanda Gorman. “She said what we hoped to hear, what we were feeling,” says Sadler. “She talked about a new America.”

*“...a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man...”*

*“Being American is more than a pride we inherit; it’s the past we step into and how we repair it.”*

For Dr. Sadler, associate professor of Bible and director of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation in Charlotte, the words resonated with his own views on ministry. He shared those views in a recent Facebook post, “Jesus is Love.”

“We need to remember who Jesus was and what he was about,” says Dr. Sadler. “His was an ethos of love...with fundamental principles that must be transformative.” Those principles, Dr. Sadler insists, do not speak only about

an individual who is experiencing hunger or disease or poverty, but to systemic realities that create and maintain those conditions.

“Faith,” says Sadler, “is not just a feeling on Sunday—not just for introspection and a sense of piety. We are intended to help each other, to care for each other, to show love.”

“That is the reign of God coming into this world.”

#### “Jesus is Love” by Dr. Rodney Sadler

There was a moment at the end of our meeting with our Beloved Community group that we call RAP:TRACC (the Reimagining America Project: Truth, Reconciliation, and Atonement Commission Charlotte) on Wednesday when I postulated that Jesus was just trying to get us to Love each Other.

Yes, it was at the end of a meeting that included Jews and Christians and Muslims that I wondered out loud, “What if this good Jewish

*continued on next page*

“Faith is not just a feeling on Sunday—not just for introspection and a sense of piety. We are intended to help each other, to care for each other, to show love.”

Dr. Rodney Sadler, Associate Professor of Bible and Director of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation in Charlotte

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Loving Each Other *continued from page 1*

boy really wasn't trying to start a new religion, but was, in accordance with the tenets of his faith, just trying to get people to Love each Other? Yes, what if this prophet the Muslims call Issa was just trying to get people of all backgrounds and types to realize that the best way to worship Allah, to worship G-d, was to Love each Other?"

Because, you see, that is the heart of what Christianity was all about. When Jesus talked about the Greatest Commandment in his day, he said that it was, in essence, to "Love YHWH your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and Love your neighbor as yourself." He kept it really simple. It was all just about Love.

Then he went further to say that "all the Torah and Nevi'im," all the "Law and Prophets"—code for all of Scripture—was fulfilled by just showing this kind of Love. Yes, that was it. The whole of his teaching—the core of the faith that he espoused, the essence of the way that he saw Judaism, the core of what he would deem submission to Eloah/Allah, the heart of what some would deem the Jesus Movement or Christianity—was just about Love.

Now, this was not just some warm fuzzy feeling. Love was about action. When Jesus talked about Loving our neighbor as ourselves, he meant that we were called to "do to others the same thing" that we do for ourselves. He literally meant, it seems, that if we are hungry, we eat; thirsty, we drink; naked, we clothe ourselves; homeless, we house ourselves... You get the point. Love is doing that good that we do for ourselves to or for others/Others who find themselves in similar need.

Imagine the interpersonal relationships that would develop if we just followed this instruction. Each of us as individuals would work to alleviate the needs and suffering of others/Others with the same commitment, the same tenacity, the same determination we would work with to address our own needs and suffering. It would mean living life in a way that embodies working to move beyond the needs and suffering that others/Others experience premised on the fact that we find such needs and suffering untenable for ourselves. So, in part, it is about fostering personal relationships of mutual responsibility.

But if we further imagine the social relationships that evolve from this interpersonal commitment, we begin to see the real payoff of this thesis. For if we socially lived in this way, we would not allow as a society any of our members to have unmet needs and suffering. We would collectively work to eliminate poverty, homelessness, racial disparity, illness, alienation, and "Othering" as a response to the imperative that we all would find such lack and pain to be unacceptable. Writ large, we would work collectively

as a society to end the kinds of issues that make for human brokenness and corporate despair.

Yes, perhaps that was what this Jesus was on about.

Yes, consider for a moment that this might be what Jesus lived and died for. This was what Jesus exemplified and taught. This was the heart of the movement of motivated peasants and aliens and outcasts and oddballs that Jesus assembled was all about. It was less about rituals and creeds and doctrines and statements of faith practiced on our particularized Sabbaths or Sundays or selected Holy Days (those things over which we argue, that divide us, that we fight about) and more about learning how to Love each other/Other as the basis of how we live each and every day! Yes, it really was just about the Love!

And maybe if we focused more on Loving each other/Other as the basis of all that we did, we would have less time to worry about what we called each other/Other based on our "race" or ethnicity or religion or nationality or class or caste—or whatever we have conceived to divide ourselves against ourselves—and realize that we really are just...One. Yes, we really are just One people, created in One image, sharing One blood, expressing One soul, reflecting One God. It really is about recognizing, as Robert Nesta Marley said, "One Love." "Let's get together and feel all right!"

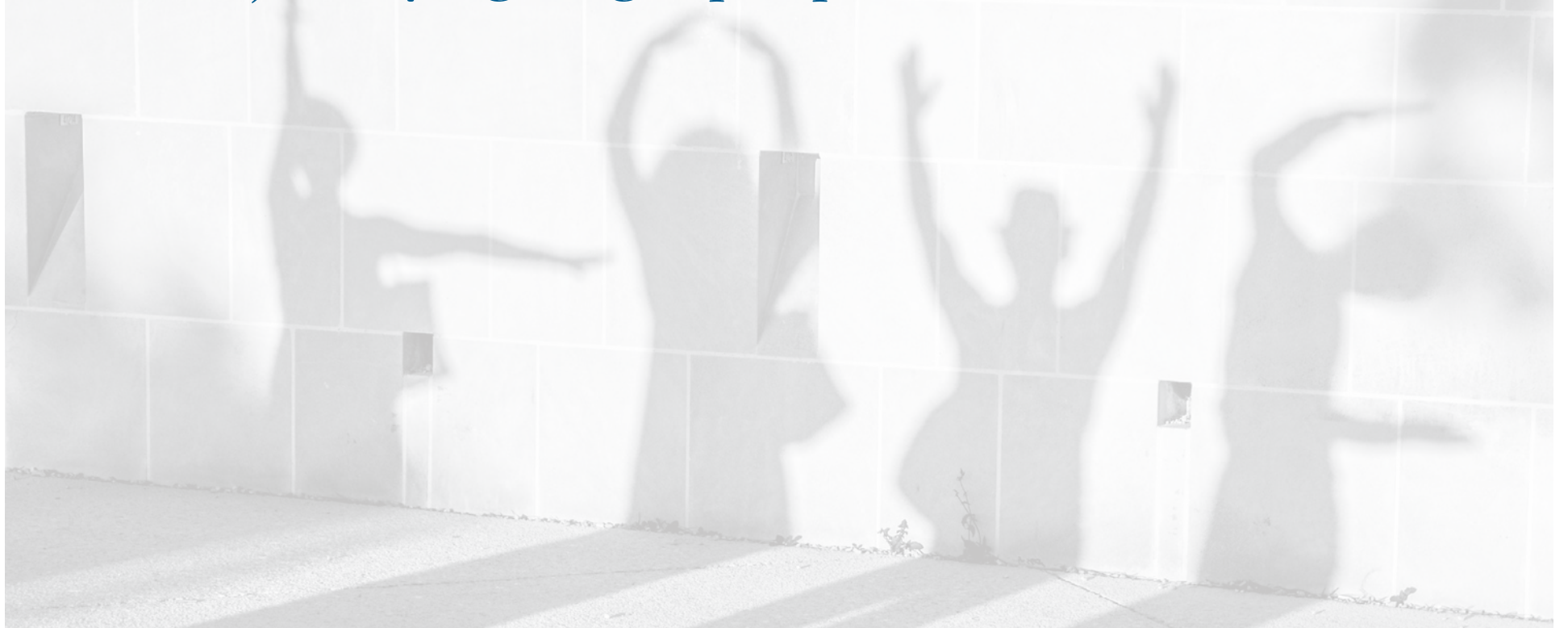
What if we focused this year on Jesus's central ethical instruction? What if we focused on Love? Love, not as a set of complex "religious" beliefs that foster different faiths...but Love as a simple way to live that bonds us as a single expression of common humanity working toward a larger collective mutual responsibility to each other/Other.

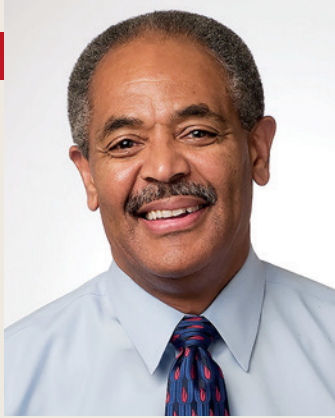
As Third World has postulated, "Let's give Love a try; let Jah [Yah, YHWH, Allah, God] control our destinies." In fact, Jesus suggests that not only is this the best way to relate to each other/Other, but it is also the best way to show that we Love God (Matthew 25:31-46).

Let's Love unabashedly beyond limits and recognize that this is the heart of what Jesus taught. Let's move beyond ideological and political partisan and theological modes of difference and find the heart of Jesus in the bonded unity of mutual responsibility manifest as just community by means of Love.

Yes, let's Love—and thereby complete and fulfill and manifest all the commandments and all the instructions that all of our faiths were created to teach us all along. Let's Love, "for all the rest is just commentary" anyway. Let's forget all the rest and just worry about Love. As The Beatles suggested, "All you need is Love, Love; Love is all you [we] need."

“What if this good Jewish boy really wasn't trying to start a new religion, but was, in accordance with the tenets of his faith, just trying to get people to Love each Other?”





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brian K. Blount

## Prophetic Hope and Engaged Love: God Talk in a Time of Pandemic

God Talk is our talk about who we are as a people of God in this difficult moment in the history of our world. What does it mean to live as a people of God in a world where a virus threatens both our ways of living and our very lives? Who we are, what we believe, and how we live can make a difference now, just as it has always made a difference when Christ's believers live out their faith in times of societal trauma.

We start from the trauma of African American enslavement. The enslaved African Americans of the antebellum United States knew the power of prophetic hope. It was this hope that sustained so many of them across centuries of human bondage. Prophetic hope. For a freedom coming. The freedom promised was in the future.

Trusting the hope for that future transformed the way enslaved African Americans lived in their present. It was a hope that encouraged endurance and rallied resistance. A hope in Jesus that was as historical as it was spiritual. A hope in and for a liberated existence even in the midst of an enslaved circumstance. A trust that God was, even though they could not see it, working God's purpose out.

Enslaved African Americans knew how to talk about God and talk to God in the midst of their horrific circumstances. What is our God Talk in the midst of our tragic time? How do we talk about God? How do we talk to God? How do we talk to each other about how we live in relationship to God in such a monstrous moment? I would submit that, like the enslaved African Americans, we engage the talk of prophetic hope.

Does living such trust and hope in God make a difference in times such as ours? One answer to that question lies with the earliest Christians. In the years 165 and 249, two great pandemics

swept the Roman Empire. A quarter to a third of the population died from the first. During the worst of the second, a reputed 5,000 people died each day. Operating from a prophetic hope that God was working God's purpose out, and that that purpose was benevolent for human life even if that life was to be secured ultimately with God in transcendence, these early Christians transformed hope into engaged love.

Unlike the leaders and devotees of the other major religions of the time, and unlike even the great physicians of the time, these hopeful Christians, hoping in and for life, even in the midst of such suffering and death, risked their lives to nurse not only their believing loved ones, friends, and colleagues, but also strangers, near and far. They followed the lead of Jesus, who went out of the way to engage those who were infected with all sorts of brokenness and sought out the sick and the infected, and nursed them.

"I was sick, and you took care of me," was not just a scripture verse; it was a mandate for living. Love proclaimed became love lived. Love lived created an infrastructure of caring that was unparalleled in its time. Indeed, the emperor Julian hated these "Galileans" because they loved even those who did not love them by risking their lives to care for them. And as one historian notes, Julian recognized that their love in action created a "miniature welfare state in an empire which, for the most part, lacked social services."

Imagine that. Love fueled by hope, willing not only to envision an alternative reality to the one assaulting us, but determined to change that reality by putting that love into deliberate, dangerous action.

Does what they lived then have implications for how we live now? Another historian thinks

so. "We can spend time in prayer, lamenting the death toll and devastation, but also praying that God's wisdom and strength would comfort or challenge those who need it. We can exercise our compassion by looking after the vulnerable and marginalized among us and even those who are far from us... We can remind ourselves of our future hope and confidence in God's restoration of all things, and that can shape us here and now as we live lives characterized by compassion and care, as well as justice, through this pandemic, but also beyond it."<sup>1</sup> In other words, we can live out our love, grounded by our hope that God is on the move, and engage our spirituality in ways that impact our world and the frightened people living in it.

The enslaved African Americans hoped and, leaning upon that hope, transfigured their world, even while they remained in bondage. That hope gave them power. That hope gave them life. Their hope gives us a glimpse of how we can hope today. Such hope changes us. In the midst of great difficulty such as we experience now, such as the early Christians experienced in their pandemics, hope waters the ground upon which love sprouts and grows. The early Christians risked love because they maintained hope. Such love changed their world.

Hope and Love. Perhaps they are the spiritual vaccine that inoculates us from our fear so that we can boldly anticipate the breaking in of God's Reign by living with and for each other as if God's Reign has already come. The early Christians did it amidst plague. The enslaved African Americans did it amidst bondage. We can do it now.

1. du Toit, Sean. "Cyprian's Response to an Epidemic." *The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice*, Vol. (2020): 87-90.

The lecture "Prophetic Hope and Engaged Love: God Talk in a Time of Pandemic" was delivered by Dr. Blount on Founder's Day at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) in Kingston, Jamaica. UTCWI is an international partner of the Syngman Rhee Global Mission Center for Christian Education.

## Sharon&Brook

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## SUPPORTING EDUCATORS' MINISTRIES

## New Initiative Helps Christian Educators Reach Out

A six-month pilot of an initiative to support Christian educators has not only received rave reviews from its “beta group” participants—it has also been a lifesaver for them during the pandemic.

The project is titled Presbyterians Supporting Christian Education (P.S.C.E.), its initials honoring the legacy of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. Its purpose: “...to support and encourage educators’ ministries through engagement in critical and theological thinking...to enhance the teaching of Christian education.” It is the brainchild of a planning team convened by Carson Rhyne ('75) that met in Charlotte in March 2019.

Rhyne retired as general presbyter and stated clerk of the Presbytery of the James in December 2018 and has served on the adjunct faculty of Union Presbyterian Seminary, teaching polity and practical theology, since 2005. His colleagues established the Carson Rhyne Fund for Christian Education, which now supports the new P.S.C.E. initiative.

“Biblical illiteracy is rampant,” says Rhyne. “Christian education needs a higher profile in the church, and we need a support group for Christian educators.” Participants in the project’s three beta groups experienced immediate benefits and saw significant advantages for Christian educators and for the church as a whole.

“The cohort group has provided a place for me to listen and to learn,” says Mary Todd Peters, director of Christian education at New Hope Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She says she and others have been forced to think outside the box in the time of COVID-19, learning from colleagues what tactics they are employing to “bring educational ministry into the home.”

“I couldn’t have imagined 20 years ago what we’re doing now,” says Peters. She talks about how Zoom meetings, care bags, and “takeout church” in a pizza box have become a part of Christian education. Educators are working hard to find ways to reach out, and the stakes are high. “One member of our group had three young adults commit suicide,” says Peters.

“This initiative was extraordinary because of the time in which we did this—the pandemic, the protests,” says Sue Harris, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Howard County in Columbia, Maryland. “We didn’t see it coming. Union didn’t see it coming. It ended up as the frame for the whole experience.”

“Biblical illiteracy is rampant. Christian education needs a higher profile in the church, and we need a support group for Christian educators.”

— CARSON RHYNE ('75)

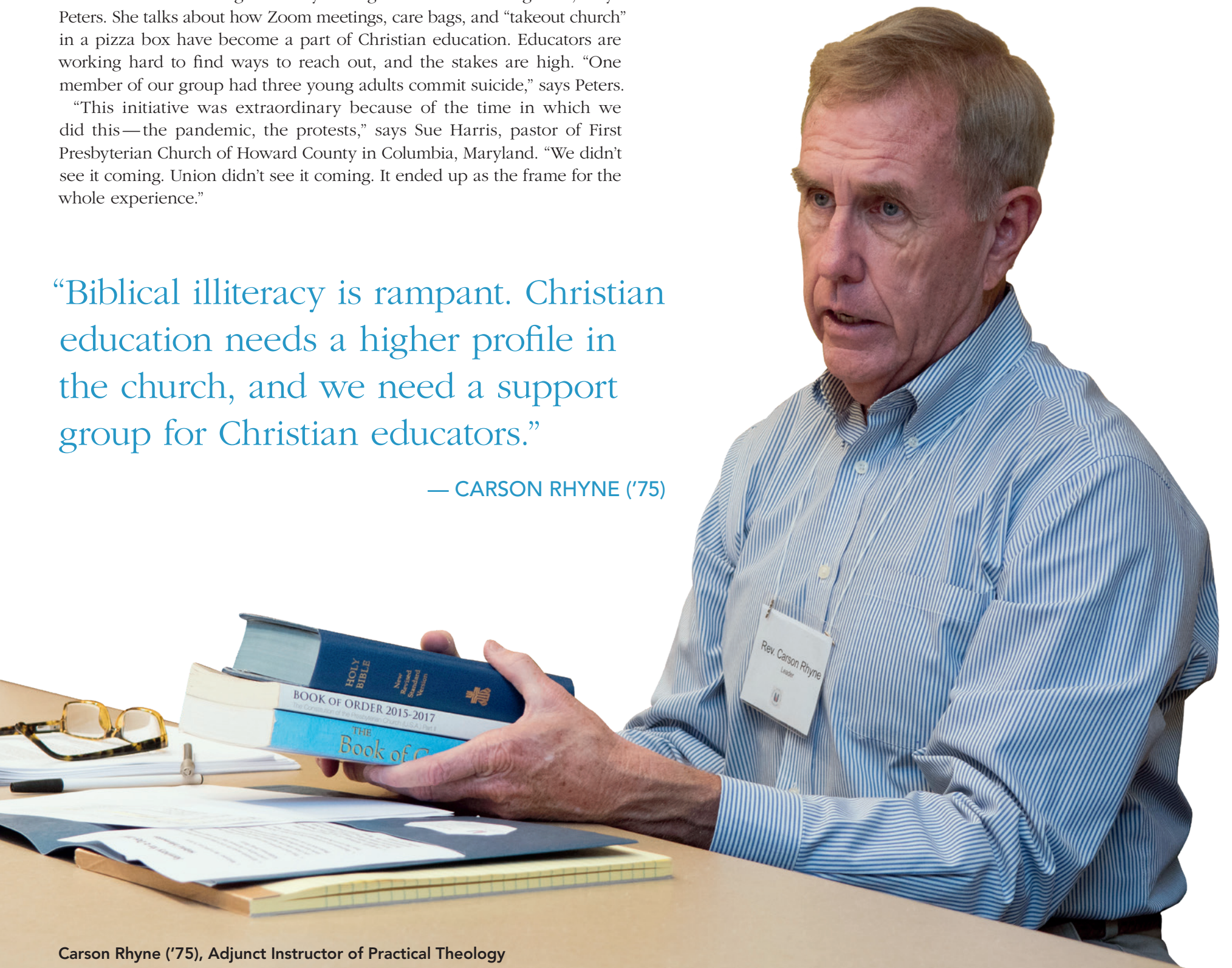
Among the activities pursued by cohort participants was the selection and study of books that could inform Christian education. These included *Canoeing in the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* by Tod Bolsinger and *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone.

“There was important learning from this process,” says Harris. “We should be delivering cohort groups of all kinds for the church...with faculty members meeting with alums who are out there doing their jobs. What are we going to do with this opportunity?”

“There’s not enough conversation that goes on where we talk to each other as colleagues,” Harris adds. “Any time you get pastors of churches—ministers of word and sacrament, teaching elders—together with professional educators in the Presbyterian church to have a conversation about the good of the church that starts from the point of Christian education, it’s a good thing.”

“From the beta groups, we got tremendous insights on how to move forward, especially during COVID,” says Carson Rhyne. “For the 29 participants, it was a lifesaver for a number of them... a safe place to say whatever they wanted and to get collegial support for it.”

The first full-year session of the Christian education cohort initiative begins in May 2021, with the creation of five cohorts with eight participants per group meeting online once a month. The groups will be made up of certified educators, volunteer educators, and ministers of word and sacrament. The application deadline for the session is March 15. Applications are available online at [www.upsem.edu/psce](http://www.upsem.edu/psce).



Carson Rhyne ('75), Adjunct Instructor of Practical Theology



## THE GARGOYLE SPEAKS

Professor Carson Brisson

## Mortal Reach

Anglican bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. The description for this honor cites his inspired and courageous role “as a unifying leader in the non-violent campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa.”

Drawn to his writings and to articles about him, I was fortunate recently to rediscover a 12-word observation attributed to him: **“Without memory, there is no healing. Without forgiveness, there is no future.”** These words from Bishop Tutu create their own light, and they cast light on two moments of perennial importance in the ancient story of Joseph in Genesis.

In the first of these moments, 10 of Joseph’s brothers have arrived in Egypt to purchase grain during a famine. Things are not going well. The official from whom they need to buy the grain accuses them of being spies. He is, in fact, their brother Joseph—the brother they had callously sold into slavery to an Egypt-bound caravan years earlier. He recognizes them. They do not recognize him.

In the midst of their troubles, the brothers—unaware that this hostile official is in fact Joseph in royal Egyptian robes—remind each other of their past evil; they recall selling the very brother in whose presence they now unknowingly stand. Telling each other the terrible truth, they specifically remember not heeding Joseph when he cried out to them for help. “We saw his anguish,” they say to each other. “When he pleaded with us, we would not listen.”

Ironically—or, more to the point, providentially, given the theological horizon of this account—Joseph is listening. He understands the truth of their words far better than perhaps they ever will. And the truth matters. Difficult as it is to face, the truth has not passed beyond mortal reach. It moves Joseph. It appears to be moving even his heretofore heartless brothers. Healing, reconciliation, is at this juncture in the narrative still a long, difficult ways away, but the balm essential for it is even now being prepared by truthful memory. **“Without memory, there is no healing.”**

Pulse forward a few years to another moment in the Joseph story on which Bishop Tutu’s words cast light. Joseph and his brothers, now all sojourning in Egypt, stand in the ambiguous shadow of their father’s death.

The generations are turning. The brothers believe they are in danger now that their father is gone. They expect that, at long last, Joseph will exact revenge for their obscenely cruel treatment of him many years before. They approach Joseph and plead for leniency.

They are in for a shock. Leniency is far less than their brother has in mind. Joseph, unlike his brothers, when years earlier he had cried out to them, is listening. He bases his response to their plea and to the searing fact and memory of their brutality to him not on the expected sequitur of revenge and its various degrees, but, miraculously, on a transcendent warrant.

“Am I in the place of God?” he asks his guilty brothers. It is a rhetorical question. In this story, no one save God alone resides “in the place of God.” And that “place,” it turns out, is not some spiritual realm of sublime splendor far beyond mortal reach. It is a living reality—an active and engaged presence. It makes all the difference. In this case, as in many others, it makes possible a future that would otherwise be utterly impossible.

Note further that it is Joseph—the one despised, deceived, beaten, robbed, rejected, sold, and separated for long, aching years from home, friends, and family—who here providentially speaks of God’s place, on behalf of all. It is not his brothers. They are included in the goodness that is named, but it is not their place to name it.

As the scene leans toward a conclusion, we listen with them as Joseph begins “speaking kindly” to them, reassuring his brothers that his care will extend even beyond them into the next generation. **“Without forgiveness, there is no future.”**

In Bishop Tutu’s words—and more so in his life and work, as well as in the story of Joseph—memory and forgiveness are named as essential to healing and to the future. Both are providentially possible. Both are providentially within reach.

In our own story, dear beloved Gargoyle reader, generations after that of Joseph and his brothers, is providence still making possible and still placing within mortal reach truthful memory and forgiveness? I suspect so. Both of these, and therefore much, much more.

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## Alumni Notes

### TRANSITIONS

**Hannah Altman (M.A.C.E.'20)** has accepted a call as Children and Youth Program Director at Massanutten Presbyterian Church in Penn Laird, VA.

**Glen Bell (M.Div.'88)** has accepted a call as a Senior Vice President of the Presbyterian Foundation.

**Benjamin S. "Ben" Brannan (M.Div.'19)** has been called as Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults with Second Presbyterian Church in Roanoke, VA. He will begin serving there in March 2021.

**Heather Woodworth Brannon (M.Div.'19)** has been called as Pastor and Head of Staff of Wyoming Presbyterian Church in Millbern, NJ.

**Kelley M. Connelly (M.Div.'20)** serves as UKirk Campus Minister and Pastoral Resident with Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA.

**Leah E. Epps (M.Div.'16)** has been called as Pastor with Fairview and United Presbyterian Churches in Lenoir, NC. She was ordained by the Presbytery of Western North Carolina on December 5, 2020.

**James C. Goodloe (D.Min.'79)** was honorably retired by the Presbytery of the James on October 17, 2020, effective December 31, 2020. He serves as Executive Director of the Foundation for Reformed Theology and as Covenant Pastor of Mattoax Presbyterian Church in Amelia Court House, VA.

**Roger E. Horne (B.D.'62, D.Min.'78)** will formally retire, for a second time, as Stated Supply Pastor of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church in Lillington, NC. Since his official retirement in January 2000, Roger served as an interim pastor for various churches before accepting the call to Cape Fear in May 2011.

**Wilson Kennedy (M.Div.'20)** serves as Covenant Pastor for Discipleship with First Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA.

**Russell M. "Russ" Kerr (M.Div.'18)** has been called as Associate Pastor with Rumble Memorial Presbyterian Church in Blowing Rock, NC, where he was ordained and installed on November 15, 2020.

**Kelly S. Lindsay (M.Div.'16)** was called as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Monticello, IN, effective January 1, 2021.

**Kim Ruth Nofel (M.A.'92, M.Div.'93)** is now serving as Temporary Supply Lead Pastor for Greater Greene County Presbyterian Ministries in Jefferson, Grand Junction, and Paton Churches in Iowa.

**Samuel A. Shields (M.Div.'19)** was approved for ordination by the Presbytery of the James on October 17, 2020, for Validated Ministry as Resident Chaplain for University of Virginia Health System in Charlottesville, VA.

**Molly Smerko (M.Div. candidate '21)** will begin serving as Pastoral Resident for Education/Young Adults with Covenant Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC, upon her graduation in May.

**Nathan L. Taylor (M.Div.'17)** was approved for ordination by the Presbytery of the James on October 17, 2020, and called as Associate Pastor for Youth and Families with Salisbury Presbyterian Church in Midlothian, VA.

**William Guy Webb (D.Min.'76)** a retired Georgia and Virginia Baptist pastor, now 85, has re-entered retirement after 20 years as a historical interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, VA.

**George P. Whipple (D.Min.'84, Th.M.'92)** was honorably retired by the Presbytery of the James on October 17, 2020, and retired as Covenant Pastor of Hawkins Memorial Presbyterian Church in Ford, VA, effective September 30, 2020.

### CELEBRATIONS

**Stephen Emick (M.A.'89, M.Div.'90)** marked several celebrations in 2020: his 30th ordination and wedding anniversaries; his 25th anniversary serving as a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Allentown, PA; and serving as moderator of Lehigh Presbytery.

**Leah E. Epps (M.Div.'16)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by the Presbytery of Western North Carolina and installed as Pastor of Fairview and United Presbyterian Churches in Lenoir, NC, on December 5, 2020.

**Isabella Fagiani (M.Div.'20)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament and installed as Associate Pastor for Youth by the Presbytery of Western New York and the Presbytery of the Peaks at Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church on September 20, 2020.

**Wilson Kennedy (M.Div.'20)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by the Presbytery of the James on December 3, 2020.

**Russell M. "Russ" Kerr (M.Div.'18)** was ordained and installed as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by Salem Presbytery at Rumble Memorial Presbyterian Church in Blowing Rock, NC, on November 15, 2020.

**Sarah Pugh Morgan (M.Div.'13)** and **Andy P. Morgan (M.Div., M.A.C.E.'13)** welcomed the birth of their second son, James Miller Morgan, on November 19, 2020. Robert Morgan is James's big brother. Sarah is Associate Pastor with Second Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, TN, and Andy serves as Pastor of Fountain City Presbyterian Church in Knoxville.

**Samuel A. "Sam" Shields (M.Div.'19)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by the Presbytery of the James in a virtual service of worship at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, VA, on December 13, 2020. He serves as Chaplain Resident for UVA Health System.

**Nathan L. "Nate" Taylor (M.Div.'17)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by the Presbytery of the James in a virtual service of worship and was installed as Associate Pastor for Youth and Families of

Salisbury Presbyterian Church in Midlothian, VA, on November 22, 2020.

**Heather Woodworth Brannon (M.Div.'19)** was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament by New Hope Presbytery in a service held at Hudson Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, NC, on December 6, 2020. She has been called as Pastor of Wyoming Presbyterian Church in Milburn, NJ.

### IN MEMORIAM

**O. George Aichel (B.D.'56, D.Min.'75)**  
May 29, 2020

**Evelyn Bannerman**  
[widow of Glenn Q. Bannerman (M.R.E.'57)]  
November 16, 2020

**Glenn Q. Bannerman (M.R.E.'57)**  
October 30, 2020

**H. Thomas Baugh III (M.Div.'82)**  
December 6, 2020

**James T. "Jim" Buschong**  
[spouse of Diane K. Prevary (M.Div.'84)]  
November 26, 2020

**Jean G. Edwards (PSCE'46)**  
November 4, 2020

**Albert G. "Al" Harris, Jr. (Th.D.'59)**  
December 2, 2020

**Jocelyn Hill (M.A.'49)**  
December 13, 2020

**Elizabeth L. "Liz" Hill-Sainio (M.Div.'68)**  
January 15, 2021

**Suzanne R. Jenkins**  
[wife of David B. Jenkins (M.Div.'57)]  
November 4, 2020

**Peter Jorgensen (B.D.'65)**  
December 10, 2020

**Mae Sun Kang**  
[wife of Edwin E. Kang (B.D.'66; D.Min.'83)  
and mother of Jayoung JP Kang ('07)]  
October 13, 2020

**William R. Long (B.D.'58)**  
November 5, 2020

**Daphne C. McCord (B.R.E.'49)**  
December 30, 2020

**Alexander M. "Sandy" McGeachy (B.D.'58)**  
September 17, 2020

**John N. Miller Sr. (B.D.'52, D.Min.'83)**  
October 5, 2020

**James H. Monroe Sr. (M.Div.'57)**  
November 3, 2020

**Alice Ann K. Morgan (M.R.E.'58)**  
[wife of Richard L. "Dick" Morgan (M.Div.'53,  
Th.M.'56, Ph.D.'66)]  
October 6, 2020

**H. Gudger Nichols Jr. (D.Min.'74)**  
September 23, 2020

**William C. "Bill" Norris Jr. (B.D.'58)**  
September 27, 2020



## GREETINGS

W. Clay Macaulay

## Grace and peace to you in this season before us!

What a season and year it has been, as our nation and world continue to shelter in place as needed, work from home when possible, wear masks in growing variety and color schemes, and practice social distancing as a more or less common endeavor. These are words and practices that, just one year ago, were not common to our thinking.

And it was one year ago that we, out of necessity, decided to offer the annual Sprunt Lectures virtually, in a historic year of renewed understanding of global community in the midst of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic. The planning team and I were delighted that more than 300 alums and friends of the Seminary registered and attended the virtual lectures in early May 2020.

This May 3, 4, and 5, we plan to offer the lectures completely virtually once again. Our Sprunt Lecturer is Rev. Dr. Ted Smith, Professor of Preaching and Ethics at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Dr. Smith also teaches in the Graduate Division of Religion at the Candler School and directs the Theological Education Between the Times study.

The title of this year's lecture series is "No Longer Shall They Teach One Another: The End of Theological Education." The four individual lectures have simple titles that we hope will prove evocative: "Consolidation;" "Dispossession;" "Renunciations;" and "Affordances."

Preaching in our two services of worship are Rev. Meg Peery McLaughlin (M.Div., M.A.C.E.'05) and Rev. Jarrett McLaughlin (M.Div.'05, M.A.C.E.'06), who serve as co-pastors for University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Doug Brown, Adjunct Instructor of Music at UPSem-Richmond will assist as worship and music leader.

Come join us online for the Sprunt Lectures, May 3–5, 2021. All events are offered at no charge, but you must register in order to attend at [na.eventscloud.com/ehome/608547](https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/608547)

See you in May!

Yours faithfully,

W. Clay Macaulay (D.Min.'85),  
Director of Alumni Development  
[cmacaulay@upsem.edu](mailto:cmacaulay@upsem.edu)  
(804) 436-7471 (mobile and text)  
(804) 278-4382 (study)

**GET IN TOUCH** We love hearing from you! We encourage you to send news of your life and ministry to our Alumni Associate, Nicole Smith, at:



[alumni@upsem.edu](mailto:alumni@upsem.edu)

Also, check out our alumni web page at:



[upsem.edu/alumni](https://upsem.edu/alumni)

Alumni Notes *continued*

**Stratton L. Peacock (M.R.E.'49)**  
December 27, 2020

**Christopher Ellis Rigby III (M.A.'64)**  
February 14, 2019

**Jane D. Rourk (former chair of Union-PSCE board, 2002–2005)**  
January 3, 2021

**Samuel B. "Sam" Shumate (M.Div.'69)**  
September 8, 2020

**Willie Woodson (M.A.'84, D.Min.'08)**  
December 4, 2020

**Layne K. M. Wright (B.R.E.'45)**  
January 23, 2021

**Louis H. Zbinden Jr. (B.D.'62)**  
September 11, 2020

## ON THE SHELF

**Amelia Richardson Dress (M.Div.'06)** has a new book titled *The Hopeful Family: Raising Resilient Children in Uncertain Times*, which was released in January 2021 by Church Publishing.

This list reflects notes received by the Alumni Office as of January 29, 2021.

**Roland L. England Jr. (M.Div.'75)** has written a book on Revelation titled *Worthy Is the Lamb: The Book of Revelation as a Drama*, published by WestBow Press. It is available in hardcover, paperback, and e-book.

**Barry R. Huff (Ph.D.'17) and Patricia "Tricia" Vesely (Ph.D.'17)** have co-edited a Festschrift honoring Dr. Samuel E. Balentine, UPSem Professor of Old Testament and Director of Graduate Studies Emeritus, titled *Seeking Wisdom's Depths and Torah's Heights: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Balentine*, published by Macon: Smith & Helwys in 2020. The collection features the writings of several UPSem faculty and former colleagues, as well as many former students of Dr. Balentine.

**Merwyn S. Johnson (B.D.'63, Th.M.'64)** has a new book titled *Bedrock for a Church on the Move*, published by In Christ Supporting Ministries in October 2019. Johnson has served as visiting professor of theology at the Charlotte campus intermittently since 2005.

**J. Eric Killinger (M.Div.'88)** has written a book titled *Adoration in Secret: An Uncommon Book of Prayer*, published by Intermundia Press. It is available on Amazon.com.

**Thom M. Shuman (D.Min.'86)** has a new book titled *How Shall We Pray This Morning? For What Shall We Pray This Night? A Month of Worship Resources for a Time of Pandemic*, published by Wild Goose Publications/The Iona Community in December 2020. He has also contributed to Wild Goose Publications' *Voices Out of Lockdown* and *The Adventure is Beginning*, a book for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

## AWARDS

**Jeannie DeMotte Ford (M.A.'83)** has been named as the recipient of the 2021 ENRICH Educator of the Year Award by the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE).

**MORE ONLINE** For a complete and updated list of transitions, retirements, in memoriam, and publications of our UPSem alums, visit:



[bit.ly/UPSem-Alumni-Notes](https://bit.ly/UPSem-Alumni-Notes)

# UPCOMING EVENTS



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## Pathways to Learning and Leadership 2021 Online Courses

Pathways to Learning and Leadership is an online program of nine courses offered over a two-year period to provide educational preparation toward leading a congregation as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE). Courses are open to all; one does not need to be pursuing to become a CRE in order to participate. Visit Pathways online for more course offerings.

### Worship & Sacraments

April 5 – May 12

Led by Dr. Rebecca Davis  
CE Certification Course with weekly Zoom synchronous meetings and asynchronous coursework

### Storytelling Masterclass: Becoming a Better Communicator

Tuesdays

10:00 am – 11:30 am

April 13, 20, 27

Led by Christen Kinard  
Online workshop, 3-part series

### Social Media Deep Dive for Churches

Thursdays

10:00 am – 11:15 am

April 15, 22, 29 and May 6

Led by Christen Kinard  
Online workshop, 4-part series

 [bit.ly/PathwaysOnline](https://bit.ly/PathwaysOnline)

## The Sprunt Lectures Issue

Special insert with schedule, speakers, and registration information

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## SPRUNT KEYNOTE LECTURE

# “No Longer Shall They Teach One Another”

When Ted Smith speaks in his May 2021 Sprunt lectures of profound “shifts” in the relationships of individuals and institutions, he will be focusing mainly on what those shifts mean for ministry, but his lectures will be informed by his intriguing observations of fields as broad based as music, publishing, politics, and civil rights. The provocative title of his series, “No Longer Shall They Teach One Another: The End of Theological Education,” is rooted in Jeremiah 31:31–34.

Dr. Ted Smith is professor of preaching and ethics and director of the Theological Education Between the Times project at Emory University in Atlanta. He is a frequent speaker and author of numerous books and articles for both scholarly and general audiences. Dr. Smith holds a Ph.D. with distinction from Emory University, an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, an M.A. with first class honors from Oxford University in the Joint Schools of Philosophy and Theology, and a B.A. *summa cum laude* from Duke University. He describes his work over the years as being located “at the intersection of practical and political theology.”

“I have been a pastor, and I care a lot about the arts of ministry,” explains Dr. Smith. “I see practical theology as being about the core practices of church life—preaching, worship, pastoral care, education—the internal practices of church life. Practical theology has expanded, but it still has that core.

“By ‘political’ [theology], I don’t just mean deriving norms from Christian teaching that we then apply to political situations, but, rather, theological conceptions of the political sphere—thinking theologically about the core questions of politics, like the relationships of individuals and collectives.

“When we see a decline in church numbers, for example, we often assume a kind of secularization—a decline in religious belief and practice,” Smith continues. “However, as we look across the landscape in America, we see all kinds of religious beliefs and practices, almost bursting out at the seams. But it’s not mediated by institutions—not mediated by congregations, in particular—the signature American voluntary form.”

Dr. Smith sees a range of analogies and a breaking down of mediating institutions in his study. “Think about the ways music reaches people,” he says. “It doesn’t have to be mediated now by a label, a gatekeeper. You can reach people directly, through SoundCloud or Bandcamp.”

He sees the same phenomena in online resources like Substack, which has drawn writers away from traditional old-line media, and in politics, with both Donald Trump and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez running against individuals who were “anointed” by their parties and instead talking directly

to their bases through social media. Dr. Smith contrasts the 1963 March on Washington, in which leaders were legitimized by years of work within institutions like labor unions and Black congregations, with the more decentralized Black Lives Matter movement, in which leaders emerge through community organizing rather than identification with prominent institutions.

There are lessons here for the church and for theological education, Dr. Smith says, and, in his Sprunt Lectures, he will offer four approaches for understanding and acting on societal shifts.

His first lecture, titled “Consolidation,” will describe the ways that religion in the United States came to be mediated through voluntary societies like congregations, denominations, and mission and service agencies. The seminary has been at the hub of that network, training leaders for every part of it. “The mediation of religious lives through voluntary societies can seem so natural that it’s hard to imagine things any other way. But this model emerged in time.”

His second lecture, on “Dispossession,” will describe how that model is coming unraveled. “All of these voluntary societies—congregations, denominations, and seminaries at the center of it all—are experiencing deep stress right now as people are increasingly living their religious lives in other ways,” says Smith.

Lecture number three focuses on “Renunciations.” “There are things we just have to give up, that we have to renounce—things we have to let go of—to have open hands to receive what God is giving,” Smith explains. “One renunciation is the idea that theological education sets one apart. The M.Div. is conceived as a professional degree, a differentiating degree, like law or medicine. That is deep in its DNA. It is meant to distinguish not only pastors from parishioners, but also learned clergy from ‘you know who.’ ‘We’re not like *them*. . .my pastor has an M.Div.’ But what if theological education were for everyone?”

The fourth lecture looks at “Affordances.” Like contours of a rock on the face of a cliff, Smith says, the contours do not dictate. “You might grab with a hand, get a foothold, or avoid it for a successful climb,” he explains. Affordances are opportunities. . .possibilities.

With all of these opportunities and possibilities, Smith points to a sense of urgency. “People really want to live authentic lives, and seminary feels like a place where you could do that kind of work—an accessible workshop of the soul where people come together to do this deep work for the sake of Christian discipleship, not just for ordained ministers, but for the whole body of Christ.”

## SCHEDULE

All lectures, worship, and events will be held virtually.

### Monday, May 3

2:00 pm Memorial Service for Dr. S. Dean McBride (Watts Chapel [family and close friends] and Live-Stream)

6:00–7:00 pm Opening Lecture: Dr. Ted Smith

### Tuesday, May 4

9:00–10:00 am Lecture II: Dr. Ted Smith

10:15 am Break

11:00 am–12:15 pm Worship: Rev. Meg Peery McLaughlin and Rev. Jarrett McLaughlin, preaching

12:30–1:30 pm Virtual Alumni Gathering  
Presentation of the BAA Trailblazer Award to Rev. Richelle B. White (Ph.D.’11)

2:00 pm Planned Giving Webinar

6:00–7:00 pm Lecture III: Dr. Ted Smith

### Wednesday, May 5

9:00–10:15 am Lecture IV and Q&A: Dr. Ted Smith

11:45 am–12:45 pm Closing Worship & Necrology:  
Revs. Meg Peery & Jarrett McLaughlin,  
preaching

1:30 pm Black Alumni Association Annual Meeting

Lectures, worship, and gathering are open to all at no charge.

### REGISTER ONLINE

Registration for all events is required. To register, please visit:



[na.eventscloud.com/ehome/608547](https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/608547)



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Rev. Dr. Ted Smith

Rev. Dr. Ted Smith is professor of preaching and ethics at Emory University's Candler School of Theology. He also serves as director of Theological Education Between the Times, a project that gathers diverse groups of people to think together about the meanings and purposes of theological education in a time of great change.

Dr. Smith works at the intersections of practical and political theology. His first book, *The New Measures: A Theological*

*History of Democratic Practice*, tells a history of preaching that gives rise to eschatological visions of modern democracy. His second book, *Weird John Brown: Divine Violence and the Limits of Ethics*, works through memories of the raid on Harpers Ferry to show the limits of social ethics for thinking

about systemic racism and violence. Dr. Smith has also edited collections of essays on sexuality and ordination, contemporary issues in preaching, and economic inequality.

At Emory, Dr. Smith also teaches in the Graduate Division of Religion and is affiliated with the Center for the Study of Law and Religion. Beyond Emory, Smith serves as a senior fellow with the University of Virginia's project on Religion and Its Publics and as a member of the editorial boards for *Political Theology* and *Practical Matters*. He recently completed service on the steering committee of the Political Theology Network and two terms on the board of the Louisville Institute.

Before joining Emory, Dr. Smith taught at Vanderbilt Divinity School, where he served as founding director of the Program in Theology and Practice. Ordained to ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Dr. Smith served two congregations in upstate New York before beginning his doctoral work. He continues to preach and teach widely.



## 2020 TRAILBLAZER OF THE YEAR

### Rev. Richelle B. White, Ph.D.

A lifelong learner and educator, Rev. Richelle B. White, Ph.D., serves as professor of youth ministry and director of ministry leadership internships at Kuyper College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is also a part-time instructor of church education at Calvin Theological Seminary, an ordained itinerant elder in the Michigan Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and associate minister at First Community A.M.E. Church in Grand Rapids.

Dr. White is the founder and author of the nationally recognized curricula *Daughters of Imani: Christian Rites of Passage for African American Young Women* and *Daughters of Imani: Young Women's Bible Study*. In addition, she is the creator and director of "In Pursuit of Identity," an after-school program for upper elementary school girls of color at the Gerald R. Ford Academic Center in Grand Rapids. The program's emphases include self-esteem-building, identity formation, character education, and leadership development.

Rev. White is a regular contributor to Abingdon Press's intergenerational Vacation Bible School curriculum that utilizes African American culture, history, music, and art to teach biblical truths. She has more than 25 years' experience in working with children and youth as a public school teacher, after-school program coordinator, Sunday school teacher, advocate, youth pastor, mentor, teen counselor, program director, workshop leader, curriculum writer, life coach, and ministry consultant. Her latest book, *Repertory with Roots: Black Youth, Black History, Black Culture, Black Music and the Bible*, is a teaching/learning resource that sees, hears, reaches, and engages Black youth in a manner in which they can understand.

Teaching, preaching, learning, writing, consulting, and mentoring are Richelle's passions, and she feels fortunate that her passions coincide with her life's calling, work, and ministry. The words of historically renowned educator Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune are foundational in her approach to ministry for, with, and by youth: "We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."

## WORSHIP PREACHERS

### Rev. Jarrett McLaughlin ('05, '06) Rev. Meg Peery McLaughlin ('05)

Revs. Jarrett and Meg Peery McLaughlin currently serve the same church in Chapel Hill where they met nearly 25 years ago in Presbyterian Campus Ministry. They both attended Union Presbyterian Seminary as dual M.Div./M.A.C.E. students before taking their first call as associate pastors at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas.

After serving in the nation's heartland for seven years, the McLaughlins moved to Northern Virginia, where they served as co-pastors at Burke Presbyterian Church. On their second Sunday at Burke, they got to inform the congregation that their family of three would be expecting twins later that spring.

After accepting a call to University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in the summer of 2019, they (mercifully) did not repeat that pattern. Instead, the spring of 2020 brought a pandemic that would dominate their first year in ministry, and now they have spent far longer



serving their congregation in Chapel Hill virtually than in person. All the same, both Meg and Jarrett are grateful to be able to serve the church in such a time as this, when doing theology publicly is as important as ever.

## REGISTER ONLINE

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