

## UPCOMING EVENTS



For the Church in the World

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### Visions of Strategic Planning: Navigating a Way from Mission to Impact

October 23–October 24  
9:00 am–4:30 pm each day  
Charlotte Campus

Participants can expect to depart from this seminar with new perspectives on how to craft a strategic plan to facilitate substantive and enduring change.



[bit.ly/strategic-planning-seminar](https://bit.ly/strategic-planning-seminar)

### Faith in the Public Square

November 4 / Greensboro, NC  
Sermon: 11:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Guilford Park Presbyterian Church  
Public Lecture: 5:00 pm–7 pm  
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Join President Brian Blount as he explores how Christian faith might best offer its voice to pressing contemporary issues.



[bit.ly/Blount-Preach](https://bit.ly/Blount-Preach)  
[bit.ly/Blount-Lecture](https://bit.ly/Blount-Lecture)

### Pulling Out All the Stops with the Seraph Brass

November 27 / 7:00 pm–9:00 pm  
Richmond Campus

The second in a series of concerts to raise awareness about the need for a new pipe organ in the Seminary's Watts Chapel. Join us and help ring in the holidays.



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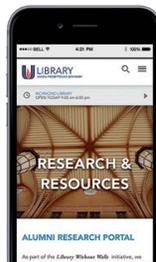
Alumni Travel  
to Scotland  
Set for  
June 2019

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Beloved Professor  
Dies

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Alumni Research  
Portal Launches

PAGE 4

"The Gargoyle Speaks"  
Remembers Dr. Towner

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# Sharon & Brook

CONNECTING THE UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY COMMUNITY

ISSUE 1 / FALL 2018

## Be Relevant

Step out. Seek social justice and make peace!



### Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation Will Provide Opportunities for "Prophetic Dimension" of Ministry

Charlotte, NC—Dr. Rodney Sadler's vision for Union Presbyterian Seminary's new Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation in Charlotte, North Carolina, is focused but ambitious. It is also deeply grounded in an understanding of ministry that is mandated in the Old and New Testaments.

The Professor of Bible explains it this way: "You cannot read Matthew 25:31-46 ('...as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren,

you did it to me...') and not see God's concern for the widows, the orphans, the aliens."

Dr. Sadler serves as director of the Center in addition to his teaching responsibilities.

The Center, which will be housed on the Charlotte campus, has two main goals, Sadler says. "First, we want to remind people who are in seminary of the significance of social justice work as part of ministry. Pastoral ministry has a

prophetic dimension. We need to step outside the doors of the sanctuary and engage the larger community."

"Second, the Center can bring the activist community *into* the Seminary. Social activists in the city of Charlotte are beginning to get out of 'single-issue silos' and are recognizing the need to come together and address systemic issues."

"The Center can play a convening role," explains Sadler, "across issues, across identities, across faiths, and across standard ways of working in the past."

That vision is compelling for students on the Charlotte campus.

#### Filling a Void

Cheri Dennis is working on her M.Div. A former medical secretary and accountant, she was challenged by Dr. Sadler, who told students, "You need to get out there and work for social justice."

"The Center is the church stepping into where it should be," Dennis explains. "Our faith is not just a spiritual call. I believe our call is to be part of reconciling people on Earth now. That's about social justice, immigration, systemic racism, and domestic violence."

Dr. Sadler sees the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation filling a void at seminaries through intentional training for clergy on involving themselves in activism and advocacy. "I like to say it this way sometimes: 'If Jesus is great enough that we celebrate Him every day, then we need to introduce Him to the world.'"

The Center, which was made possible by an anonymous and generous gift to the Seminary, will bring heightened visibility to Union Presbyterian Seminary in the Charlotte community. "We want people to know we're here," says Sadler.

*continued on next page*

#### JOIN US ONLINE

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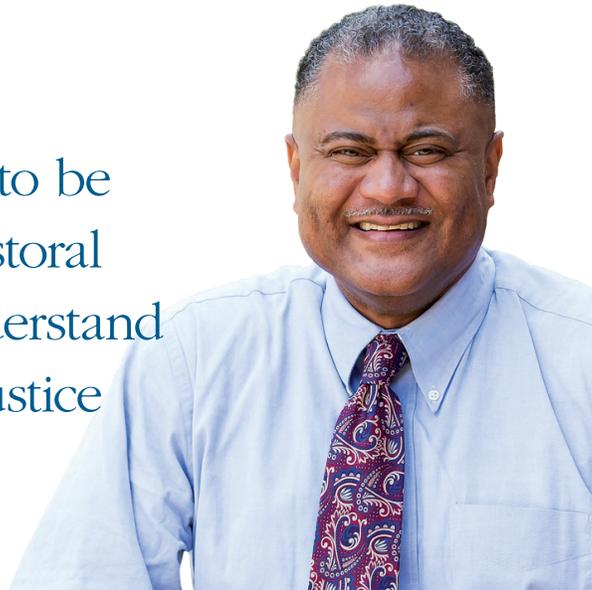


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“Ultimately, we want the Center to be a witness for the fullness of pastoral ministry, helping the world understand that the ways of God include justice for all God’s people.”



Dr. Rodney Sadler, Professor of the Bible, Charlotte

**Fostering Conversations**

The Center will also advance appreciation for black church studies and the rich prophetic character of African American preaching. It will create opportunities for students to engage with issues such as racial disparity, housing, education, and health—not only in Charlotte, but also, through travel, at some of the most important sites in civil rights history, in cities like Montgomery, Birmingham, and Atlanta.

“We hope to foster student conversations about race and about disparity,” Sadler explains. “We also want it to be a place where local clergy can go for workshops.” He also envisions a publication in the Center’s future.

**Understanding Systemic Issues**

The Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation’s first year will feature a series of lectures that attempt to answer the question, “Why should a seminary focus on social justice?” The initial lecture in October 2018 will approach engagement in social justice from a biblical perspective. A second lecture in February 2019 will explore what it looks like when people of faith engage in politics. A third and final lecture in May, to be delivered by a national figure, will address the living out of faith “in the public square.”

Sally Herlong, a 2018 graduate who has served on the Center’s Steering Committee, expressed her hopes for the Center. “I want to see congregations and the public get engaged



Richmond Students gathered at the Standing Together Rally sponsored by the Islamic Center of Virginia, the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, and the Interfaith Center for Public Policy.

at the grassroots level,” she says. “We need to educate people so they can go beyond what they read in the paper and begin to understand and tackle the systemic issues of the community.”

Richard Boyce, Academic Dean for the Charlotte campus, says the Center will also help the community consider practical applications of faith. “Biblical faith has always been grounded in concrete practicalities,” he explains. “You can’t love God and neighbor without worrying

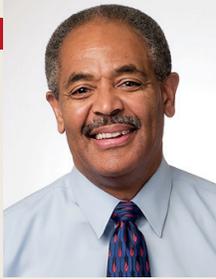
about things like property lines, fair weights, and whose fig trees belong to whom. Our challenge is to translate these biblical practices into the economies of our current context.”

“We could find no better leader for this project than Rodney Sadler,” says Dr. Boyce. “He lives and breathes the rhythms and syntax of biblical faith. And he, with the Spirit’s help, has had the courage to put such faith into practice—in Charlotte, in Raleigh, and in the nation’s capital.”



“The city of Charlotte is the perfect place to think about issues of banking and medicine and education from the perspective of the Reformed faith...Our dream is for the seminary to become partners in such conversations...”

Richard Boyce, Academic Dean, Charlotte Campus



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brian K. Blount

The earliest sense of connection I can remember to the biblical materials—way back as an elementary school-aged child in Sunday School—was through stories of prophetic social justice. Of course, as a child back then, I didn't operate with the mental construct of "social justice." I was simply fascinated by the stories. Particularly the stories of the prophets standing up for God's struggling and hurting people. And Jesus.

In the lessons of my Sunday School teachers, the Jesus of the gospel stories exploded into the life circumstances of the spiritually, physically, and socially broken people of first-century Palestine. Even as my Sunday School teachers described how Jesus transformed those first-century lives, they assured me and my classmates that he could and would positively alter life for the spiritually, physically, and socially broken people of twentieth-century Smithfield, Virginia.

He had done it for my slave ancestors. Changed their world. He was doing it for my African American contemporaries, who were in those days crying out for Civil Rights. Changing

our world, right before our eyes. Our prayers, our songs, our worship services, our revival moments, our Sunday School lessons—all of them, for me, were as much about building appropriate and just relationships with our fellow human beings as they were about building a better, sin-free relationship with God. The two went together, it seemed.

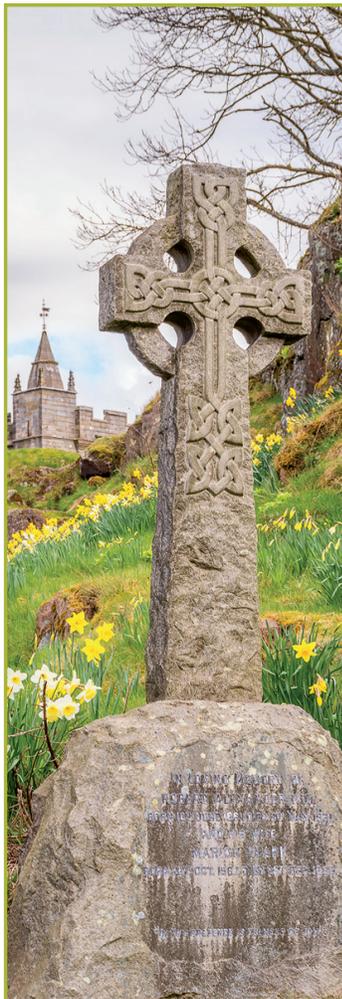
That's why our Sunday School teachers told us that we couldn't claim to love God if we didn't love our neighbor. And our neighbors couldn't claim to love God if they didn't love us. God was on the move right before my Sunday School eyes. In my church. In my world. Helping me respond so that I might be in a more right relationship with God. Encouraging me to act with God's Holy Spirit so that I might be part of God's movement to create a more right relationship with God's people.

Even the people who considered me inferior because of the color of my skin. My Sunday School teachers talked about that. About skin color and God. About people of color and God. About how God was engaged in the fight that people of color were waging for equality in

American society. About how God was working to bring reconciliation between people of all colors and all social situations through the work of Jesus' disciples like us. Like those of us sitting in those Sunday School chairs with our eyes wide and our mouths agape at what we were hearing about what God was doing and about how God was expecting us to respond.

Where there is social injustice and communal brokenness, God still expects us to respond. That is the message I look forward to infusing in the work of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation on the Charlotte campus and the Center for Womanist Leadership on the Richmond campus. I look forward to being schooled again. About prophetic social justice. I look forward to sitting once again with my eyes wide and my mouth agape as I hear what God has done, is doing, and will do to transform our world for the better. And as I hear how God expects me to respond.

Join me. Listen for the programs and the work of these two new UPSem Centers. It's time to get back to school.



High and Holy Places

A Spiritual Journey to the Highlands and Cathedrals of Scotland

June 6-17, 2019

The 11-day tour begins in Glasgow and moves to the Scottish Highlands and coastal cities to explore the spiritual and historic roots of the Christian faith. Itinerary includes Stirling, Loch Lomond, Glencoe, Inverness, Aberdeen, St. Andrews, and Edinburgh.

Cost: (all inclusive except airfare and airport transit) \$4,700 per person, double occupancy. Single room, add \$1,530.

June 17-21, 2019

Optional tour extension

A 4-day spiritual renewal retreat in the Celtic Christian tradition on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne at the Open Gate Retreat Center.

Cost: \$500

Union Presbyterian Seminary is partnering with Academy International Travel Services to provide a professional tour guide and an exceptional travel experience. The tour is open to all supporters, alumni, and friends of the Seminary. Space is limited.

For more information, please contact Tim Moore: tmoore@upsem.edu or Clay Macaulay: cmacaulay@upsem.edu

To learn more or book your trip, visit and login at www.aitSAT.com. Use group ID: unionscotland19 and password: journey

Sharon&Brook

Sharon & Brook is published by Union Presbyterian Seminary for alumni and friends of the Seminary.

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Send us your updated information: Please send us the news of your life and ministry that we may share with others. The Seminary also welcomes updated email and mailing addresses, with current phone numbers. The Alumni Office would love to hear from you!

Send news and contact updates to Jill Wright at alumni@upsem.edu or (804) 278-4228

@2018 Union Presbyterian Seminary

## UNION ALUMNI

## On the Move and Making a Difference for the Church in the World

The Reverend Amantha Barbee was one of three recipients of the Presbyterian Mission Agency's 2018 Women of Faith Awards



The Reverend Amantha Barbee

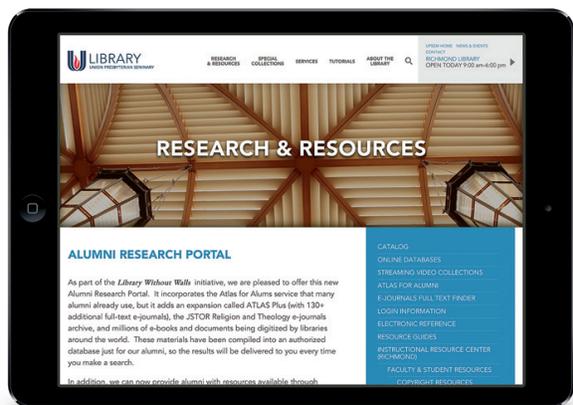
The Reverend Amantha Barbee (M.Div.2011), a member of Charlotte Presbyterian, was among three women honored at the Women of Faith Awards Breakfast on Sunday, June 17, during the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in St. Louis. This year's Women of Faith Awards recognized clergywomen who are "woke" and challenging systemic racism and oppression.

Barbee serves as pastor for Statesville Avenue Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. On the night of the tragic shooting of Keith Lamont Scott by a Charlotte police officer in September 2016, she stood between protesters and police officers along with several of her ecumenical colleagues and was a voice of calm in the midst of racial tension and unrest.

Barbee currently serves as chairperson of the Charlotte Clergy Coalition for Justice. In recognition of her work for reconciliation and justice, she received the 2017 Charlotte City Center Partners Special Achievement Award. She has also served as moderator for the Mission, Justice and Outreach Committee and on the Racism Task Force for the Charlotte Presbytery.

The Rev. Karen Hernandez-Granzen, of New Brunswick Presbytery, and the Rev. Liz Theoharis, of New York City Presbytery, were also recognized.

From "Women of Faith Awardees Named by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board," by Rhshell Hunter, Special to Presbyterian News Service



### HAL TODD LIBRARY WITHOUT WALLS

## Alumni Research Portal

As part of the *Library Without Walls* initiative, the Seminary library launched a new Alumni Research Portal in early September. Accessible from the "Research and Resources" section of the library website ([library.upsem.edu](http://library.upsem.edu)), it incorporates the *ATLAS for Alums* service that many alumni already use, plus adds an expansion of ATLAS called ATLAS Plus, the JSTOR Religion and Theology database, the *Hermeneta* Commentary Series in electronic format, thousands of high-quality audiobooks that can be accessed through a smartphone app, and millions of e-books and electronic documents that are being digitized by libraries around the world.

Alumni with library accounts can log into the new portal with existing credentials (a barcode and PIN), and alumni without library accounts can create accounts for free online or via phone or email.

### MORE ONLINE

For more information or to log in, visit the Alumni Research Portal page at [library.upsem.edu](http://library.upsem.edu)



[bit.ly/alumni-research-portal](http://bit.ly/alumni-research-portal)



## GREETINGS

Grace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We are pleased to present to you, as alumni and friends, the latest edition of our news tabloid, "Sharon & Brook."

We have combined the content of our "Focus" magazine with the same name. The economy of printing a tabloid will allow us to deliver our news in a more timely manner. The name of this publication is drawn from the two roadways that border our campuses in Richmond and Charlotte (*Brook Road* and *Sharon Road*).

This late summer has been the season for services of ordination and installation for many of our 2018 graduates of UPSem! I had the privilege of attending one such ordination service recently in Western North Carolina, and I hope to attend two other services in Virginia and North Carolina in the coming days! There is nothing quite like attending an ordination to remind each one of us of the calling we have received by grace, and of the charge we bear as followers, ministers, educators, and leaders for the church of Jesus Christ.

We hope you will enjoy the reading here and also share your news with us!

W. Clay Macaulay (D.Min.'85)  
Director of Alumni Development  
[cmacaulay@upsem.edu](mailto:cmacaulay@upsem.edu)

We hope to list all ordinations and installations of our recent graduates in the next issue, so please send that news to my Alumni Associate colleague, Jill Wright, at [alumni@upsem.edu](mailto:alumni@upsem.edu), or call (804) 278-4228 to leave a message.

## Alumni Notes

### TRANSITIONS

**Margaret Wilson-Stayton (D.Min.'70)** was honorably retired by the Presbytery of New Hope on July 1, 2018.

**Lynn Jostes (M.A.'77)** retired on June 30, 2018, after 43 years in educational ministry for the PCUSA. She lives in Black Mountain, NC.

**Michael Vaughn (D.Min.'77)** was honorably retired by the Presbytery of Los Ranchos on December 31, 2017.

**Tom Tate (D.Min.'78)** was honorably retired by the Presbytery of Charlotte on May 31, 2018.

**Jim Moseley (M.A.'79)** has been called as the pastor of Campbell Memorial Presbyterian Church in Weems, VA.

**Susan Moseley (M.A.'80)** has been called as the first minister of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock in White Stone, VA.

**Rosalind Banbury (D.Min.'80)** is serving as interim pastor at Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church in Fishersville, VA.

**Charlie E. Brown (UPSem faculty '87-'18)** retired from UPSem on June 30, 2018.

**Matt Matthews (M.Div.'90)** was called as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, IL.

**Rob Cely (M.Div.'02)** was called as pastor of Cherokee Presbyterian Church in Gilbert, SC.

**Clarke Scalera (M.Div.'07)** began serving as Advocate for Congregations & Clergy at the Presbytery of the Cascades in Portland, OR.

**Jenny McDevitt (M.Div.'09)** will be installed as pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City on September 23, 2018.

**Roger Hull (M.Div.'11)** has been called as pastor of the Lutheran Church of The Atonement in Wilkesboro, NC.

**Mike Watson (M.Div.'11)** was called as pastor of Oglethorpe Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA.

**Jill Isola (M.Div.'12)** was called as pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church in Hickory, NC.

**Andrew Whitehead (M.Div.'17)** was called as the associate pastor at River Road Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA.

### CELEBRATIONS

**Ken McFayden (D.Min.'86)** was installed as president of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) in February 2018.

**Rebecca L. Davis (M.Div.'91, M.A.'90, Ph.D.'07)** has been named associate professor of Christian Education on the Charlotte campus starting July 1, 2018.

**James Taneti (Ph.D.'12)** has been called as the director of the Syngman Rhee Global Mission Center on the Richmond campus starting July 1, 2018.

**Sarah Grace Montgomery (M.Div.'15)** was ordained as minister of the word and sacrament by the Presbytery of Western North Carolina and installed as associate pastor of Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church in Brevard, NC.

**Elnoria Harrison (M.Div.'16)** was ordained as a minister of the word and sacrament by the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia on April 29, 2018.

### IN MEMORIAM

**Colleen Dent Bentley (B.R.E.'47)**  
March 11, 2018

**Virginia Gibbins Barksdale (M.A.'51)**  
January 26, 2018

**Lewis Lancaster (B.D.'51, Th.M.'64)**  
February 13, 2018

**Elmira Whitely Whetstone (M.R.E.'51)**  
March 6, 2018

**Joe W. B. Brooks (B.D.'52)**  
June 30, 2018

**Jo Anne Chambliss (M.A.'52)**  
December 31, 2017

**Patricia Murray Bales (M.A.'53)**  
March 14, 2018

**Frank Davison (M.Div.'53)**  
May 1, 2018

**Ragland Fletcher (B.D.'53)**  
February 21, 2018

**Bettye Killgore (B.R.E.'53)**  
January 18, 2018

**Larry Avent (B.D.'54)**  
April 25, 2018

**Samuel Rainey Hope (B.D.'56, D.Min.'78)**  
February 7, 2018

**Fred Albright (Certificate'58)**  
February 3, 2018

**David Voss (B.D.'58)**  
February 25, 2018

**Robert Keever (Th.M.'60)**  
April 30, 2018

**Edgar Mayse (B.D.'60, Th.M.'70, Ph.D.'74)**  
March 2, 2018

**Frank Mansell Jr. (Th.M.'67)**  
December 22, 2017

**Jim McKinnon (B.D.'67)**  
March 11, 2018

**Thomas Pinner (D.Min.'75)**  
November 25, 2017

**Sib Towner (professor emeritus of biblical interpretation, UTS '76-'02)**  
May 22, 2018

**M. René Minshew (D.Min.'81)**  
February 7, 2018

**Donna Coffman (M.Div.'97, M.A.'97)**  
March 28, 2018

**Philip C. Holladay (former trustee of PSCE '93-'97 and Union-PSCE '97-'99)**  
June 13, 2018

**Cheryl Sumner (M.Div.'04)**  
June 14, 2018

**Shasta Bode-Brown (M.A.C.E.'13)**  
April 6, 2018

**Lenore Orr Branham (PSCE)**  
February 15, 2018

**Henry Bridges Jr. (UTS)**  
March 20, 2018

**Norris P. Moses (former trustee of PSCE)**  
February 22, 2018

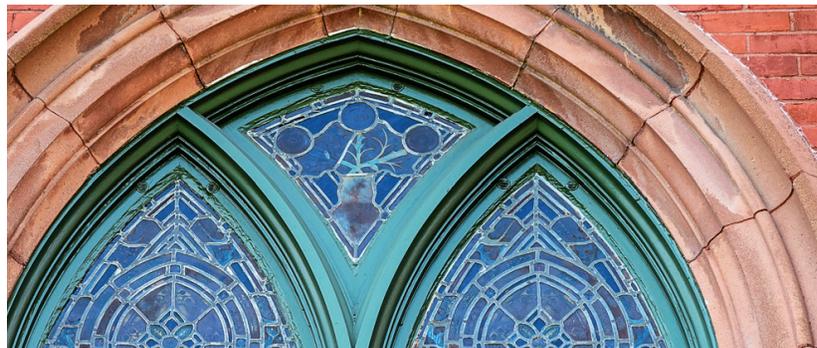
### PUBLICATIONS / BOOKS

**Cathie Stivers (M.Div.'04)** published her first book, *Reviving our Indigenous Souls: How to Practice the Ancient to Bring in the New*. See "Indigenous Soul Revival" on Facebook.

### MORE ONLINE

For a complete and updated listing of transitions, retirements, in memoriam, and publications of our UPSem alums, see the Alumni Notes at

 [bit.ly/upsem-alumni-notes](https://bit.ly/upsem-alumni-notes)



PROFESSOR KATIE CANNON

## First Black Woman Ordained in the PC(USA) Dies at 68

The Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Presbyterian Seminary, first African American woman ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and a foremost scholar of the womanist movement, died on August 8, 2018 after a brief illness. She was 68.

“Dr. Cannon was greatly admired and loved by the entire Seminary community as a scholar, teacher, and friend,” said Brian K. Blount, president of Union Presbyterian Seminary. “This is a difficult moment; our resurrection faith sustains us.”

Cannon announced in June she had been diagnosed with acute leukemia, a medical condition that caused her to become transfusion dependent. Union responded by sponsoring a blood drive in which many faculty, staff, alumni, and students gave blood in recognition of her treatment.

The founder of the Center for Womanist Leadership at the Seminary, Cannon was a pioneer in the study and work of womanist theology and ethics. She lectured nationally and internationally on womanist theology and social ethics and is the author and editor of numerous articles and books.

In April, on the 44th anniversary of her ordination, she co-organized a womanist conference that critiqued the complex cultural locations and histories of today’s political domain. Fourteen African American women scholars attended the conference, including Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, activist, and author of *The Color Purple* Alice Walker.

In March, Cannon told the Seminary’s “Union Matters!” podcast why the conference mattered. She reflected on the conference’s purpose and agenda in the context of her own challenges growing up black in racially segregated Kannapolis, NC, in the 1950s. “I knew I had to get out of



North Carolina because I hated segregation,” she said. “I couldn’t go to the library, couldn’t go to the swimming pool, couldn’t go to the YWCA. Everything was forbidden, outlawed, and you didn’t want to risk doing it, knowing somebody might get killed.”

She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Barber-Scotia College, her Master of Divinity from Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and her Master and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Cannon began teaching at Union Presbyterian Seminary in 2001 and received many awards for her work. She was the Lilly Distinguished Visiting Professor of Religion at Davidson College and the Sterling Brown Visiting Professor in Religion and African American Studies at Williams College. She received the distinguished professor award from Spelman College, the Lucy Craft Laney award at the Black Presbyterian Bicentennial Celebration, and was a Professor-Scholar honoree at the National Black Church Summit at Emory University. In 2011, she received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the American Academy of Religion. The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference bestowed its Beautiful Are Their Feet award to her in February.

In June, Cannon received the Excellence in Theological Education award at the General Assembly of the PC(USA) in St. Louis in recognition of her many achievements. “Teaching is my ministry,” she said in a video played at the award ceremony. “I love teaching to empower, to equip, to set people free.”

“Dr. Cannon was greatly admired and loved by the entire Seminary community as a scholar, teacher, and friend. This is a difficult moment; our resurrection faith sustains us.”

Brian K. Blount  
President, Union Presbyterian Seminary



## REMEMBRANCES

“Katie Geneva Cannon was prophetic, witty, and kind. She described her early years on the topic of racism: ‘During the first two decades of my life, my overarching sociocultural reality was a world where black people were surrounded by death-dealing dominating whiteness...a fixed system of racial segregation.’ In a sense, she found her calling as she dedicated her life to thoughtful, groundbreaking scholarship and liberative action.”

Sam Adams, Faculty

“Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon was my rock in seminary. As a black Baptist at an all-white Presbyterian seminary, I often turned to her for strength. She never failed to support, love, comfort, and guide me. I am Rev. Amantha Barbee, PC(USA), in great part due to this great woman of God. Dr. Cannon, I love you and miss you. Rest in eternal peace, my sister.”

Amantha Barbee, Alumna

“Hardly a day goes by when I don’t remember something Dr. Cannon taught me. ‘Be gentle with yourself,’ she said, after I made a mistake that made me feel stupid. ‘What is it that you’re doing when you’re doing something you love?’ she asked me, as I tried to discern what I wanted to research and write about as a Th.M. student. ‘To thine own self be true, and you’ll never be wrong.’ ‘We all have clay feet.’

“Her impact on this world is unquantifiable. The universe weeps this day. The heavens rejoice. Freedom fighters all over pause. So much honor, so much appreciation, so much grief. Thank you for everything, Dr. Cannon. Rest in power.”

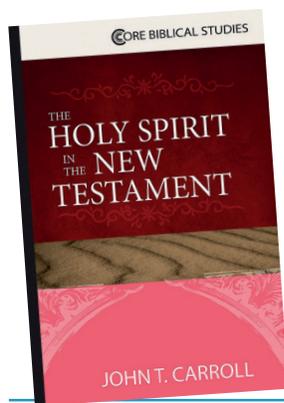
Jamie Thompson, Alumna

## PROFESSOR JOHN CARROLL

Fresh Insight into  
the Understanding  
of The Holy Spirit

In an area of study that is sometimes neglected and often debated, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, by Union Presbyterian Seminary Professor of New Testament John T. Carroll, offers readers fresh insight through careful attention to the different ways the New Testament writings present and interpret the Spirit of God.

"An excellent and essential introduction to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, this book is the work of a seasoned scholar with a love for the church and a knack for teaching," said Jack Levison, W.J.A. Power Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Biblical Hebrew, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.



With Carroll's guidance, readers will gain a sense of the identity and activity of the Spirit manifest in the cultures and literature that informed the New Testament and its earliest audiences. They will also discover that for the writers of the New Testament, all of life is touched by the Holy Spirit.

For human beings, this life is lived in the awareness of God's presence, sustained in hope through adversity and pain, open to change and new possibilities, and equipped and empowered to act boldly and speak prophetically by wise Spirit-shaped discernment. The Spirit in the New Testament is a creative force sustaining, fostering, and restoring life—the first and last word both whispered and even shouted as the divine breath animating embodied human life and community.



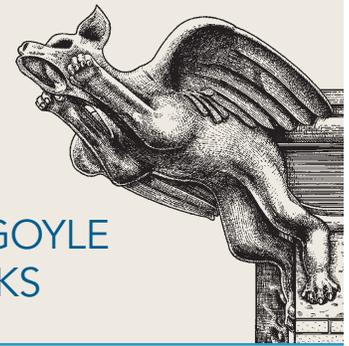
## PROFESSOR RICHARD VOELZ

Lessons in Dealing  
with Reproductive Loss  
and Adoption

Those who are in positions of leadership in the church sometimes fail to respond to their congregation's needs—or they may seem insensitive to them—simply because they have no idea what to say or do. We have protocols in the church for traditional holy days and major life transitions, but how do we make theological sense of the more private hardships and joys experienced by some members of our community?

If we are to be effective at serving as an extended family for one another, we cannot limit ourselves to talking about, celebrating, and mourning the expected events. We need to be able to connect with those who are mourning any kind of loss.

In the second edition of his book *Tending the Tree of Life: Preaching Worship Through Reproductive Loss and Adoption*, the Rev. Dr. Richard W. Voelz, Union Presbyterian Seminary Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship, shares his expertise and personal experience in preaching and worship with regard to issues of reproductive loss and adoption in a way that can help bring healing to individuals and the community. The book speaks strongly to pastors and other church leaders, especially those who are part of small groups. It also builds understanding and lays the groundwork for making these life events part of our continuing concern and plan to bring wholeness and healing to our churches and the world.

THE  
GARGOYLE  
SPEAKS

Dear Beloved Gargoyle Reader:

In May of this year, Dr. W. Sibley Towner "crossed over Jordan." This poetic euphemism for death arises not out of Christian narratives, but out of the story of the Israelites crossing *through* the Jordan River in order to enter the promised land.

The worldview behind this Israelite story of crossing *through* the Jordan is not antithetical to its Christian appropriation, but neither is it identical with it. There are many nuances, but, in short, the Israelite story "leans" toward a temporal, earthly realization of God's good promises for all of humanity and creation, while the Christian appropriation of that story "leans" toward an eternal, heavenly realization of those same promises.

One of the manifest beauties of the life of the late W. Sibley Towner—and I count myself most fortunate to have known him—was that he refused, gently but firmly, to settle for a simple binary between the temporal and the eternal promises of God. He was always "crossing *through* Jordan" until he finally "crossed *over* Jordan."

Loving and Holy One, Name Above Every Name, all thanks and praise to you for the beautiful life of W. Sibley Towner. Amen.

Professor Carson Brisson



Dr. W. Sibley Towner

The Rev. Dr. W. Sibley "Sib" Towner, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Interpretation, who was valued and cherished for his wisdom, humor, and remarkable capacity to relate the Bible to the creative arts and the art of living, died on May 22 this year.

Dr. Towner authored and edited numerous publications. His latest book, *Prayers that Sing & Stir the Heart*, a collection of his public prayers delivered from the heart, was published this past January. "The Gargoyle Speaks," Towner's widely read column of essays on life of faith, appeared in the Seminary's *Focus* magazine for decades.