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# Sharon & Brook

CONNECTING THE UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY COMMUNITY

ISSUE 7 / FALL 2020



## Theology, Ethics, and the Pandemic

*Dr. Rachel Baard is Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics at Union Presbyterian Seminary. She is the author of multiple articles and has delivered scholarly presentations around the United States and South Africa on feminist theologies, Reformed confessions, Protestant perspectives on Mary, and the concept of Augustine through the lens of the African philosophy of ubuntu. Her current research focuses on the responses of German theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich to Nazism. Dr. Baard's book, Sexism and Sin-Talk, received the 2020 Andrew Murray-Desmond Tutu Prize, the highest honor for a theological book on South Africa.*

The perspectives on social justice that Dr. Rachel Baard brings to her teaching at Union Presbyterian Seminary during the turbulent year of 2020 date back to her resistance to apartheid, which started when she was just 13 years of age. “My political beliefs were shaped by my faith from the start,” says the South African native. “My mother had a great influence on me—not only in shaping my faith, but also in emphasizing how central love of neighbor is in the Christian faith.

“As a white person, I was privileged by apartheid,” Baard explains. “When I first realized that there was no high school for children of color in my hometown (in a time when they were not allowed to attend the white school), I realized that as a Christian I could never support apartheid. To take away a person’s opportunities for education is to rob them for a whole lifetime, and this is simply not compatible with the command to love your neighbor as yourself. That central belief has shaped my entire theology.”

Dr. Baard grew up in South Africa, first studying law, and then theology, at the University of Stellenbosch. She came to the United States 23 years ago with her husband, who was engaged in pastoral care training at the time. She applied to Princeton Theological School to pursue a Ph.D. in ethics before switching to systematic theology. After six years at Princeton and teaching for 15 years at Villanova University in an interdisciplinary program in humanities, she joined Union in 2020.

She notes that the transition to remote teaching this past year has meant the lost camaraderie of running into others on campus, informal coffees, and attending chapel together. “That has all been very sad,” she says. “The pandemic and the need for social distancing has, of course, challenged

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Theology, Ethics, and the Pandemic *continued from page 1*

“The pandemic and the need for social distancing has, of course, challenged everyone to utilize technology, but the deeper challenge lies in rethinking the question, ‘What does it mean to *be* church, and not just go to church?’”

Dr. Rachel Baard, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics



everyone to utilize technology, but the deeper challenge lies in rethinking the question, ‘What does it mean to *be* church, and not just go to church?’

“I think the role of the church has always been the same,” she adds. “To be a community with God’s values in the world. When we are not confronted and not challenged by the world, we fall back into a comfort zone.”

Dr. Baard’s thoughts on current events have led her to offer a series of issues and questions posed in part by the pandemic that can serve to challenge the church now and may be even more significant in the future:

- What does it mean, in these days when *being* the church actually means not going to church in order to protect the vulnerable in our congregations as well as in the broader community?
- Theologically, this might be a time to think about the church’s relationship to science—not in the traditional sense of the battle between religious fundamentalism vs. evolution, but rather in the sense of guiding congregants toward an embrace of God’s greater truths.
- We need to confront the realities of climate change, which are making pandemics more and more likely.
- The church needs to consider the truth of medical research as opposed to conspiracy theories.
- Do we trust science?

“We need to address these issues head on,” she warns, “or the church risks becoming an irrelevant club.

“My own interest lies in the intersection between theology and ethics,” Dr. Baard explains. “My theology tends to ask the question, ‘How do doctrines about God, humanity, and the nature of the world influence and shape our actions?’ This leads to ‘rhetorical theology’—an examination of doctrines in light of the praxis to which they tend to give rise and the language that persuades us to action.

“We were talking about racism in our classes before George Floyd’s murder,” she adds, “but that event and the protests that followed have sharpened the church’s realization that social issues are not separate from

the church. These issues are integral to the church’s prophetic message. I am very curious to see how students talk about this in the fall semester.”

Dr. Baard’s interests and influences include Second World War-era theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich, as well as feminist theologians like Elizabeth Johnson, Martin Luther King, and Jewish thinkers—all of whom in various ways engage the world in their theology. She recalls Barth’s injunction to “...take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both.” “Ministry is always political,” she says. “Theology is always public theology.

“The question is, ‘What kind of witness do Christians have?’ If we say we are rooted in God’s grace and live by the ethic of what God wants for us, what does that mean for our practical lives? What does it mean to live the gospel publicly? What does it mean for the church to have prophetic witness without becoming politicized and co-opted?

“Christian theology is decidedly political—not in the sense of party politics and convention speeches (when it does that, it easily becomes distorted), but in the sense of offering a different value system, a new way of being in the world. But that also calls the church to direct public action, not withdrawal from the world.

“In classical political thought, only the elites had citizenship, and you still see that legacy in the first versions of the United States Constitution. But Christianity can help turn such elitism around by emphasizing the idea that all people are made in the image of God. Within the Christian message, the idea of the image of God in all humans works like a Trojan horse by overturning hierarchies and insisting on full human rights for all humans.”

Dr. Baard recalls Mary’s Magnificat, which she calls “a revolutionary song about how God reverses the values of this world.” Mary is, she says, a young girl in an obscure place whose life, echoing today’s language of protest, “does not matter.”

“Christianity, even in its imperfect practice, points us to a future in which a new reality can be imagined, time and time again—a reality in which the first shall be last and the last first.”

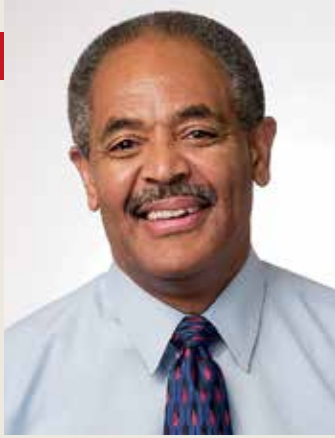
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brian K. Blount

**"When there is blood in the streets, buy property."**

It's a cynical line, meant to incite cynicism. And profiteering. Interestingly enough, I'm not sure that the idea behind the quote—not the quote itself, but the idea behind it—didn't come from God. See "the Word of the Lord" (Jeremiah 32:15): "When there is blood in the streets, devastation in the land, buy property."

When the Word of the Lord arrives to Jeremiah, prophet of Judah, Judah and its capital of Jerusalem are being besieged by King Nebuchadnezzar and his armies of Babylon. The future welfare of the people—indeed, their entire future existence—is imperiled. The blood of Judah is flowing through the streets, and there is absolutely, positively, certifiably nothing the people of Judah can do about it—unless, you're thinking, be captured, be killed, or be hauled off into foreign exile. They can do that. They are a dead country, dying.

But God has a Word. A Word that glimmers with hope. Not cynicism. Hope. And promise. Around the buying of property. When there is blood in the streets.

"Don't sell. Buy!" God tells Jeremiah. As witness to an unlikely promise. "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land. The people being struck from this land will one day return to it, will one day reclaim it, will one day flourish in it."

Jeremiah's odd investment in Judah's neighborhoods is a metaphor for God's sure investment in Judah's future. Even as Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon are demolishing the city and slaughtering the people, Jeremiah buys into God's promise of restoration, renewal, and rejoicing. Jeremiah takes what has to be one of the greatest financial risks of all time because he is certain that—even now—God invests in God's people.

**God keeps investing.**

Centuries later, the author of the fourth gospel declares, in one of the most famous Christian passages of all time (John 3:16), that God so

loved this crazy, mixed-up, violent, destructive, misguided world that God sent God's only son as a symbol of hope and promise. God's Word to us was like God's Word to Jeremiah. "Buy property," God told Jeremiah. "Buy in," God told the people reading John's gospel. "Buy into my plan that will live itself out through the person of my son."

When it appeared that humankind had strayed far away from God's intentions, so far that it could never find its way back—hopelessly lost, fighting against God, fighting against each other, blood metaphorically and literally pouring out all over the first-century Roman streets—God staked a claim. God bought into the possibility that humankind could and would thrive, and that we should trust in the promise of that possibility.

God invested in us by sending the man from Nazareth. Jesus's coming was God's way of buying property when there was blood running through the streets. God bought in. Through Jesus. For us.

It is our turn now. To buy in. To promise. Despite all the stuff that might be swirling around us.

That seems to me to be the full, contextual meaning of John 3:16. People quote it in isolation all the time—spiritualizing its meaning, paralyzing its power as they do so. Verse 16 is followed up by verses 17–21. God's saving isn't spiritualized; it is materialized. In verses 17–21, it is clear that standing in eternal life is connected with actions in temporal life. Deeds of light or deeds of darkness. Deeds done in evil or deeds done in God.

God's action anticipates human response. In quantity and in kind. God intervened as an example of how we should intervene, in spite of how things looked, with hope and promise. In a world of darkness, God intervened with the light. Not so we could have the light. But so we could shine the light.

What better time to hear such a promising Word? "When there is blood in the streets, Jeremiah, buy property." "When there is darkness in the land, Christian, shine your light."

I speak, of course, within the context of twin plagues currently ravaging our land: racism on the one hand, a pandemic on the other. Or, as the great preacher Dr. Otis Moss III observes, the unholy pairing of the COVID-19 biological virus and the COVID-1619 racial virus. Both of them running amok. Both of them—because of the uncertainty they bring, the devastation they cause, the anxiety in which they force us to live—like metaphorical and literal blood running down the streets.

Perhaps God is speaking now. Not through the pandemic. But in spite of it. Not through the racial injustice. But in spite of it. Because of it. Perhaps now is the time to put our ears to biblical texts, to theological discussions, to historical church narratives, to the movement of the Holy Spirit—and listen for a Word from the Lord.

Now is not the time to opt out. Now is the time to buy in. To go all in—to the darkness with the brightest light you can faithfully muster, with the most promising actions you can spiritually spark.

The words you write. The voice you raise. The people you help. The causes you champion. The protests you voice. The challenges you construct. The witness you wreak. They are your way of allowing God to invest in hope and promise through you. Just as God invested in hope and promise through Jeremiah. Through God's own son.

We are God's own beloved, are we not? Why should we be surprised that God would expect as much of us as God expected of those who came before us?

Buy! Shine!

After all, you are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:16)

P.S. Therefore I ask you now to invest in our Seminary and in the future of our church. Let our light shine in a world filled with darkness. You may give online [www.upsem.edu/give](http://www.upsem.edu/give)

Blessings.

## Sharon&amp;Brook

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

**Editors**

Richard Wong, *Vice President of Advancement*  
Michael Frontiero, *Director of Communications*  
Clay Macaulay, *Director of Alumni Development*  
Tim Moore, *Director of Donor Relations*

**Copywriter** Joe Slay

**Copy Editor** Susan Stewart

**Designer** Edith Ridderhof

**Richmond Campus:**

3401 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23227  
(800) 229-2990

**Charlotte Campus:**

5141 Sharon Road, Charlotte, NC 28210  
(980) 636-1700

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## IN MEMORIAM

## Lamar Williamson Jr.

*The following statement was made by President Brian K. Blount upon learning of the death of Union Presbyterian Seminary Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies Lamar Williamson Jr.*

Dear Union Presbyterian Seminary Friends,

I have learned that on Saturday, July 11, 2020, Lamar Williamson Jr.—missionary, teacher, scholar, pastor, activist, and former professor of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education—died in Black Mountain, North Carolina. I understand that three of his children were able to be with him when he died peacefully at 2:48 p.m. They sang songs to him in English, French, and Tshiluba as he transitioned from this life into eternity.

I met Lamar on my very first trip to the Montreat Conference Center, where I had been invited to preach at a text conference. I chose the Gospel of Mark as my primary text, and, because I deeply valued Lamar's commentary on the Gospel, I quoted from it several times during my first sermon. Afterward, I was introduced to him by a colleague, and so began an enduring friendship that blossomed throughout my ministry at Union Presbyterian Seminary.

Lamar earned his B.A. at Davidson College and then enrolled at Union Theological Seminary, where he earned a Bachelor of Divinity. Upon graduation, he enrolled in the *Faculté Libré de Théologie Protestante* in Montpellier, France, where he earned a Bachelor of Theology. He would later earn a Ph.D. in biblical theology at Yale University Graduate School.

Lamar said that he never intended to be a teacher or a missionary, but a peer he admired in Zaire (Congo) asked him to come to Africa to teach French at a school that had just been started. Lamar helped launch a United Theological School (*Ecole Unie de Théologie*, Ndesha, Zaire) that pooled the resources of three churches and allowed him to focus on teaching Bible, with a particular focus on the New Testament.



Lamar Williamson Jr., Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies

He and his family arrived in Richmond in 1966, where he taught for two years at Union Theological Seminary as a visiting professor. He returned to Zaire (Congo) for one year as a visiting professor at the *Faculté de Théologie Protestante du Zaire*, and then returned to Richmond to begin an illustrious career at PSCE.

Lamar's leadership in the history of Union Presbyterian Seminary was evident in words he shared in 1997: "The church needs pastors who are in fact teaching elders, and it continues to need unordained as well as ordained educators. UTS and PSCE need each other for the fulfillment of their missions, and to bring together the strengths and best qualities in both institutions..."

Words shared in 1997 that are just as appropriate in 2020.

Heath Rada, president of PSCE, remembered his commanding presence. "Lamar Williamson was bold, willing to stand for justice, and able to hold his own with any biblical scholar. A master teacher, writer, and author; a dedicated husband and father; a valued colleague and inclusive of all of God's children, he loved Jesus with his whole heart. He embodied love like few people I have ever known. He was the perfect mentor."

With prayers of thanksgiving, we celebrate the life and ministry of Lamar Williamson Jr.

## IN MEMORIAM

## S. Dean McBride Jr.

*The following statement was made by President Brian K. Blount on the death of S. Dean McBride Jr., Cyrus H. McCormick Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation, Emeritus, at Union Presbyterian Seminary. Dr. McBride died May 12 at his home in Kilmarnock, Virginia, surrounded by his loving family. He was 83.*

I first met Dean McBride when I was invited to serve on the Presbyterian Church's Cooperative Committee on Examinations. Though I was a biblical studies professor posted at a fairly reputable theological school myself, I remember feeling intimidated. The questions my group drafted on Bible Content were field-tested on those writing the Bible Exegesis exam, and I remember Dean finishing first. In those sessions, as in every aspect of his life of research and teaching, he was the consummate biblical scholar.

Colleagues agree. Professor of New Testament John Carroll Dean described him as a model mentor to students. "He knew as much about the Bible, particularly the Torah, as anyone. Many used to joke that Dean was really Moses—or at least that he knew more than Moses about Deuteronomy. He was among the most dedicated participants in discussion of current events from the perspective of Christian faith."



Dean McBride Jr., Cyrus H. McCormick Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation, Emeritus

Professor William Brown, who taught with Dean at UPSem, remembers him with great affection. "While Dean's expertise was stunningly wideranging, a central interest of his was Deuteronomical 'law.' Affectionately known as 'Dr. Deuteronomy,' he helped countless students appreciate the 'decrees, statutes, and ordinances' that constituted the community of ancient Israel."

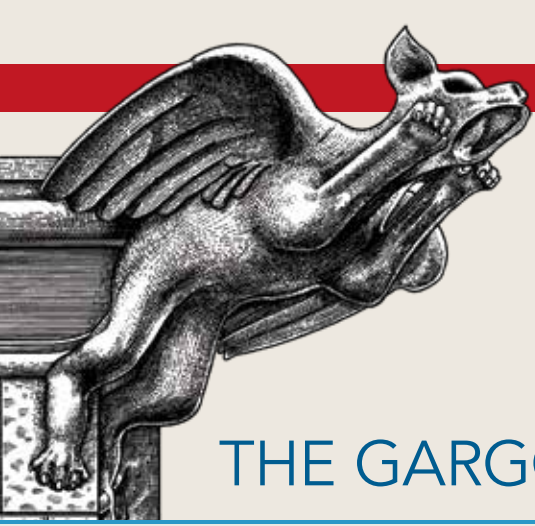
A native of Los Angeles, California, Dean attended Pomona College, where he earned a B.A. in religion. He received a Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Harvard Divinity School and his Ph.D. from Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

He served as an instructor at Pomona College, assistant professor of Old Testament at Yale, visiting professor at Cambridge University in England and Brown University in Rhode Island, associate professor of Old Testament at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and Northwestern University, and professor of Old Testament at UPSem from 1984 until his retirement in 2007.

He was a prolific editor, working with the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, the editorial board of the *Hermeneia Bible Commentaries*, and the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. He also served on the committee that produced the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Professor Bill Brown notes that one of Dean's favorite biblical passages comes from Exodus, where God pivots from liberating a people to constituting the people as a community. "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:4–6).

Professor Brown rightly concludes, "Now borne aloft on the wings of eagles to the top of the heavenly mountain, Dean enters the great cloud of witnesses...no doubt with syllabus in hand, ready to provide instruction."



## THE GARGOYLE SPEAKS

Professor Carson Brisson

“These Words...Upon Your Heart... And Diligently Teach Them...”

Union’s seal bears five Hebrew words from Deuteronomy 6:6–7. While translations vary, it usually takes about nine words to render them into English: “...these words...upon your heart... And diligently teach them...”

For years, I have believed that *these words* and the passage in which they live offer an appropriate place to conclude the last day of first-level Hebrew courses at Union. They speak to what the students in those classes have worked hard to learn, and to learning still to come for all of us.

As the eighth fall term in the third century of Union’s history convenes, ripe with promise and challenge, I hear *these words* calling yet again.

*These words* recognize that there are myriad words afoot—words beyond number—roaming the earth, staking their claims from beautiful to sinister. These are the words that are to matter most because they bear witness to the community we are called to become before God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength—and hence the community we are called to become toward others in the world God has “so loved.”

*These words* understand that there will always be words, claims, “upon” human hearts—convictions and values that form and reform their hosts individually and corporately. Words are the midwives of identity and actions in the world God has “so loved.”

*These words* counsel all who hear them to “diligently teach them.” When adequately heard, they orient the individuals and communities they are forming and reforming beyond themselves to the very ends of the entire, aching creation. *These words* intend not only to be upon the hearts of all who have “ears to hear” them, but also always passing through those hearts to seek diligently the flourishing of the world God has “so loved.”

Belov’ed gentle Gargoyle reader, *these words* are in the world a shepherd who, regardless of ravenous wolves and haunted wastes, will not cease searching for a lost sheep. They are in the world a woman who, regardless of vicious whispers and fashionable counsel to the contrary, will not stop looking for a missing coin. They are in the world all those who, regardless of the tempting spoils of retribution, neither weary from nor despair in running to embrace those who speak the truth that they have done what cannot be out-lived but can be out-loved.

*These words* are in the world the Name, Reign, and Will of the God of justice, kindness, and humility; the God of faith, hope, and love; the God whose Crucified-Risen Word is making nothing less than all things nothing less than new—the God whose Crucified-Risen Word is calling nothing less than every word to become nothing less than Hallelujah.



## RESEARCH HUB WILL SUPPORT FAITH FORMATION

## UPSem Awarded \$4.5M Grant to Research Religion in Families

Union Presbyterian Seminary has received a \$4.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to create a research and innovation hub that will broaden the definition of being religious for children and families and make church more meaningful in their lives. The \$4.5 million award is the school’s largest-ever research grant.

Josiah P. and Anne Wilson Rowe Professor of Christian Education Karen-Marie Yust will create a network of projects that will explore and support innovative and effective practices for children’s spiritual nurturing and faith formation. The Children’s Spirituality Research and Innovation Hub will provide a central public location for resources for and conversations about promoting children’s spiritual well-being. It will also support experimentation and reflective practice regarding new approaches to the formation of religious identity in children from birth to age 12.

“The project provides an opportunity to rethink what it means to nurture children’s spirituality at home, in congregations, and in the public realm,” Dr. Yust explains. “It also connects the Seminary with its roots in the Presbyterian School of Christian Education (now federated with Union Presbyterian Seminary), reclaiming its legacy as the place ministry leaders turn to for best practices around children’s spirituality and children’s faith formation.”

As religious participation continues to decline in North America, passing on the Christian faith to younger generations has become an increasingly pressing imperative. “We’re trying to find new ways to communicate how spirituality is a positive part of children’s lives in North America,” says Yust.

Seminary President Brian K. Blount says the work promises to be groundbreaking. “This Hub will continue the Seminary’s commitment—rooted in the legacy of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education and its Demonstration Kindergarten—to promote cutting-edge research on children’s spirituality and reflective practice. In a time when the church struggles to transmit its faith to younger generations, the project has the promise of being a transformational landmark in the ministry of children’s spiritual formation.”



Projects for the Children’s Spirituality Research and Innovation Hub will build on Yust’s initial work, *Mapping Children’s Faith Formation*, which has been helping churches find new ways to communicate the value of religious practices for children and families in a diverse and complicated world.

Groups of scholars and practitioners affiliated with the Hub will work to rethink the traditional Sunday school model of faith formation and examine how contemporary parents can become engaged with their children’s spiritual growth in meaningful ways. Yust says she hopes the faith formation methods they develop will meet parents where they are in 2020 and beyond.

The Hub will serve as a collaborative space for researchers, families, and congregations—and for a general public that is skeptical of religion—to talk with one another about children’s spirituality. It will also establish research working groups, fund independent researchers, and create an international research consultation group, in addition to supporting innovative trends in children’s faith education. The Hub will offer resources to the community through its website, publications, education consultancy, and course offerings.

## SLC MEMBER PROFILE

### Suzanne Davis

#### What prompted you to join the Seminary Leadership Conference (SLC)?

First, I must say that I am humbled to be considered! I believe that the future church that I hope will be needs to have trained leaders. The vision of better-resourced leadership both behind the pulpit and in front of it is a goal that I have been working on with NEXT Church. Union is addressing this through its Seminary, its outreach programs, and its Pathways online courses. I have benefited personally from a Pathways course and from the ministry of some of Union's graduates.

#### What are your hopes for the Seminary?

My hope for the Seminary is the same hope that I have for the church: to be relevant now and in the future. This hope requires leaders who are rooted in good theology with minds that can be creative and agile to face the challenges of the day. We can no longer assume that people know the teachings of Jesus Christ or, if they do know, that they want to follow those teachings. We need leaders who will better communicate how to be a follower of Jesus.

#### How will your work with the SLC press the Seminary toward fulfilling those hopes?

I am seeing the Seminary as a consumer—from the pews. I do believe that practical skills as well as the standard seminary curricula can enhance a ministry greatly. While it is very important to have a well-thought-out, challenging message, it does not mean anything if it cannot be delivered in a digestible form!

Building a community is more often done by what we do rather than what we say. I do wonder how a person preparing for ministry is taught to do and lead people for the kingdom of God. Are there courses on leadership styles? Are there opportunities to learn how to organize people? If the Seminary does not offer these, are seminarians pointed to resources that do?



Suzanne Davis, Ruling Elder, NEXT Church Strategy Team

#### What is one thing you want the wider Seminary community to know about the SLC?

The Leadership Council members are your advocates and cheerleaders. Tell us the story that you want told beyond your alumni and campus. We are anxious to share that story!

*Suzanne Davis is a Ruling Elder on the Strategy Team of NEXT Church (nextchurch.net), where she is challenged and stretched to move into roles she never thought were in her future! At NEXT Church, she is on a team that created and launched Elder Symposia for church leaders and where, through facilitated conversations, participants are invited to share their own knowledge of practical ministry to others.*

*Ms. Davis is a proud spouse of a retired military officer, with two adult children who are now out on their own. She enjoys creating itineraries, traveling, and afternoon tea. She is currently worshipping at Hopewell Presbyterian in Huntersville, North Carolina, sitting in the same pew (pre-COVID) with her mother and behind her aunt and uncle—something she longed for in her 25 years of living far away.*

*The Seminary Leadership Council is an auxiliary board of the Seminary, with members who represent the broad range of constituencies we serve. The Council offers advice to Seminary administration and interprets the work of the Seminary to the wider church and the world.*

## CHILD ADVOCACY MINISTRY

### Peaceable Kingdom

Each summer, in the third week of July, a glimpse of the Peaceable Kingdom can be seen at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry. A beautifully diverse group of people comes together at Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee—united in a common cause that transcends racial, cultural, orientation, socio-economic, and educational divides—joining the movement to end childhood poverty.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), knows about movement-building. Drawing on her experience as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, Edelman created an organization to ensure every child has a healthy start, head start, fair start, safe start, and moral start in life. CDF purchased the Haley Farm to provide a training ground and a spiritual home for the Children's Movement.

It is on these sacred grounds that the Proctor Institute gathers great preachers and teachers, elders from the Civil Rights movement, police chiefs, community organizers, teachers, social workers, ministers, and educators to equip and empower those committed to justice for children caught in the intersectionality of poverty. Attendees learn from, engage in dialogue with, and eat with these societal leaders.

Five years ago, a seminary track was created that brings faculty and students from across the nation together for this transformational week. Drs. Rodney Sadler and Rebecca Davis are among those faculty members, and our student delegation has become the largest in attendance. They read and prepare for their week at the Farm and return to create projects that address child poverty in their contexts of ministry for course credit. Perhaps even more importantly, they return with eyes and hearts wide open to the world around them and the urgent need for the Church to join in God's ongoing work of justice.



Union students at Haley Farm in 2019



## GREETINGS

W. Clay Macaulay

**Grace and peace to you!** We hope that you and your loved ones are well and have remained safe during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

As you can imagine, the pandemic—and the ongoing concern for public health and safety—has impacted our usual planned alumni summer gatherings at the UMC Virginia annual conference and at the Massanetta Bible Conference. The events we normally host in the fall and winter seasons at the SBL/AAR annual meetings, and for APCE's national gathering, are also postponed for a year. We hope to resume these fellowship times together once the pandemic has subsided.

In the meantime, many of us have taken the opportunity to gather virtually for worship and for the recent opening convocations for our Richmond and Charlotte campuses. The Seminary has offered webinars led by national church leaders, members of our faculty, and alumni on issues pertaining to social justice and reconciliation and a faithful response to racism, economic inequality, and affordable healthcare. These webinars will continue to be offered.

So while we may not be present together in person, the "koinonia" of our Christian and Reformed faith continues to draw us together, even virtually and prayerfully, for the Church in the World.

We hope you will come and join us for the **Sprunt Lectures** next **May 3–5, 2021**, here in Richmond. We are making plans for the lectures to be offered virtually. The Sprunt Lecturer is Rev. Dr. Ted Smith, Professor of Preaching and Ethics at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. The preachers will be Rev. Meg Peery McLaughlin (M.Div., M.A.C.E. '05) and Rev. Jarrett H. McLaughlin (M.Div.'05, M.A.C.E.'06). Both are serving as Co-Pastors of University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Please continue 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 [www.upsem.edu/alumni](http://www.upsem.edu/alumni)

We love hearing from you! Be well and stay safe!

**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)

## Alumni Notes

## TRANSITIONS

**Jayne Babczak (M.Div./M.A.C.E.'20)** is serving as Associate Pastor for First Parish Congregational Church in Yarmouth, ME.

**Daniel H. Burch (M.Div.'16, Th.M.'17)** is serving as Pastor with Carlisle UMC and Owingsville UMC in the Kentucky Conference.

**Jeremy Cannada (M.Div.'10)** is serving as Pastor-Head of Staff with First Presbyterian Church in Statesville, NC.

**James W. "Jim" Davis (M.Div.'07)** is serving as Pastor of Bethesda Presbyterian Church in Camden, SC.

**Colleen Earp (M.Div.'19)** is serving as Chaplain Resident at UVA Hospital in Charlottesville, VA.

**Isabella Fagiani (M.Div.'20)** has been called and is serving as Associate Pastor with Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church in Roanoke, VA.

**Katherine "Kate" Fiedler (M.Div., M.A.C.E.'07)** is serving as Associate Pastor with Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA.

**Alexander "Alex" Fischer (M.Div.'18)** is serving as Pastor for Hillsborough Presbyterian Church in Hillsborough, NC.

**Claire N. George (M.Div.'08, Th.M.'17)** is now a Chaplain Resident at Riverside Regional Medical Center in Newport News, VA.

**John B. Hartman II (D.Min.'82)** and **Elizabeth M. Hartman (M.A.'79)** live in Seneca, SC, where John serves as Pastor of Seneca Presbyterian Church.

**Rebecca Heilman (M.Div.'18)** is serving as Associate Pastor with Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC.

**Gail Henderson-Belsito (M.Div.'20)** has been called as Associate Pastor with Caldwell Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC, and will be ordained in July 2021.

**Anne Solovey Marshall (M.Div., M.A.C.E.'08)** and **James Gray Marshal (M.Div.'07)** serve as Co-Pastors of the Presbyterian Church of Wyoming, OH.

**Matthew A. "Matt" Rich (M.Div.'00)** serves as Pastor/Head of Staff of Unity Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, SC.

**Amy Busse Stoker (M.Div.'95)** is serving as Pastor-Head of Staff of First Presbyterian Church in Pulaski, TN.

**Byron A. Wade (M.A.'94)** is serving as General Presbyter for the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.

**A. Lee Zehmer (M.Div.'91)** is serving as Transitional Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in High Point, NC.

## CELEBRATIONS

**Jayne Babczak (M.Div./M.A.C.E.'20)** was ordained as an authorized minister in the United Church of Christ on September 6, 2020, and is serving as Associate Pastor with First Parish Congregational Church in Yarmouth, ME.

**Amy Busse (M.Div.'95)** married Brent Stoker on August 3, 2019.

**Hampton Deck (M.Div.'88)** celebrated his 25th anniversary as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Vallejo, CA, on January 2, 2020.

**Patricia LaSala (Stout) (M.Div.'83)** is honorably retired from the Presbytery of Riverside, CA. She has been named Pastor Emerita of Little Church of the Desert in Twentynine Palms, CA.

**J. Richard "Dick" Winters (B.D.'49)**, Pastor Emeritus of Warrenton (VA) Presbyterian Church and long-serving chaplain of the Warrenton Fire Department, was honored with a drive-by parade of fire trucks and a total of 83 vehicles on his 98th birthday on August 20, 2020.

## IN MEMORIAM

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

**James H. "Jim" Allen (M.Div.'56)**  
May 30, 2020

**James E. "Jim" Atwood (M.Div.'59)**  
June 26, 2020

**Richard E. "Dick" Bethune (B.D.'58)**  
May 24, 2020

**Daniel Bonilla-Rios (M.A.T.S.'03, Ph.D.'09)**  
August 8, 2020

**Leonard G. Boswell (M.R.E.'52)**  
June 12, 2020

**Carole F. Chase (M.A.'64)**  
May 21, 2020

**W. Reid Dalton III (M.Div.'89)**  
July 19, 2020

**Barry D. Van Deventrer (B.D.'59)**  
April 23, 2020

**Pansy E. Duke (M.A.'65)**  
June 3, 2020

**David H. Dyer (D.Min.'74)**  
August 29, 2020

**Freda A. Gardner (M.R.E.'57)**  
May 9, 2020

**Roger W. Jackle (M.Div.'71)**  
September 20, 2019

**John Hubert "Bert" Johnston (M.Div.'53)**  
April 14, 2020

**Thomas E. Marshall III (M.Div.'99)**  
April 29, 2020

**S. Dean McBride Jr. (Cyrus H. McCormick Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation Emeritus)**  
May 12, 2020

**Coline T. "Toto" McGehee (M.A.'47)**  
July 21, 2020

**James H. "Trip" McKinnon III (M.Div.'10)**  
June 6, 2020

**Kay Ellis Menius (PSCE'60)**  
April 28, 2020

**Gerald M. Miller Sr. (B.D.'69, Th.M.'70, D.Min.'81)**  
May 2, 2020

**Patrick D. Miller Jr. (B.D.'59)**  
April 30, 2020

**H.R. "Reid" Montgomery Sr. (B.D.'54)**  
April 21, 2020

**A. Thomas "Tom" Murphy Jr. (B.D.'59, Th.M.'60)**  
August 16, 2020

**Douglas W. Oldenburg (B.D.'60)**  
July 21, 2020

**Willard W. "Buddy" Olney (B.D.'66)**  
June 29, 2020

**Jean Feild Russell (B.R.E.'53)**  
August 8, 2020

**Ernest G. Sangster (Th.M.'58)**  
August 16, 2018

**William F. "Chip" Summers Jr. (M.Div.'72, D.Min.'84)**  
May 10, 2020

**Frederic D. Thompson Jr. (UTS'58)**  
December 16, 2019

## ON THE SHELF

**David R. Bauer (Ph.D.'85)** is the author of *The Gospel of the Son of God: An Introduction to Matthew*, published by InterVarsity Academic Press.

**Charles N. Davidson Jr. (M.Div.'70, Th.M.'74)** has edited and written a brief introductory biography for George Buttrick's *Guide to Preaching the Gospel*, Abingdon Press, August 2020.

**Dena Hobbs (M.Div.'98)** is the author of *When Anxiety Strikes: Help and Hope for Managing Your Storm*, Kregel Publications, September 2020.

**Joseph A. Slane (D.Min.'81)** is the author of the recently revised and illustrated *Pastor's Golf Association Rules: A Gracious Guide for Anyone Who Loves God and Golf, Laughter and Links, Faith and Fairways, Prayers and Pars*, Amazon, May 2020.

This list reflects notes received by the Alumni Office as of September 16, 2020.

**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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### Reformed Theology/Church History

Tuesdays  
7:00 pm–9:00 pm  
October 13–November 17, 2020  
(no class November 3, 2020)  
Led by Paul Galbreath

### Teaching the Bible

Thursdays  
7:00 pm–9:00 pm  
October 15–November 12, 2020  
Led by Cindy Kissel-Ito

### The New Testament & Current Social Concerns (Two-part series)

Tuesdays  
2:00 pm–3:30 pm  
Tuesday, October 20, 2020  
Tuesday, October 27, 2020  
Led by John Carroll

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