



Sharon&Brook

CONNECTING THE UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY COMMUNITY

ISSUE 14 / SUMMER 2023



What a busy season it has been for the Seminary! A new graduating class is ready to go forth and serve. A new president has been named. And that means we must say farewell to our dear friend and leader, Brian Blount.

Dr. Blount is well known among our Seminarians for his "Top 5" emails, so, in that spirit, we created a list of our own. These are the "Top 5 Reasons Why We Will Miss Brian Blount."

He has taught us well.

Throughout his 16-year tenure as president, Dr. Blount has made teaching an integral part of his work, sharing his knowledge with Union students and countless churches and external audiences who have benefited from his wisdom, his intellect, and his humor.

He has brought us together.

Although UTS and PSCE had combined before his time in office, it was Dr. Blount's initiative that brought them together as Union Presbyterian Seminary. He also led the charge to develop the Charlotte campus into full partnership with Richmond, fulfilling the vision of "One Seminary, Two Campuses."

He has lifted up our faculty.

Despite all of his accomplishments, when reflecting on the Seminary's successes, Dr. Blount praises Union's faculty as its greatest resource.

"Our faculty is one of our greatest gifts," he said a recent interview. "I am grateful to God for who they are and what they do."

He has made us more diverse.

Dr. Blount's efforts to increase the Seminary's diversity created a faculty that is well balanced by gender, race, and international presence and a campus that better reflects the society we are called to serve. As the Seminary's first African American president, he had a tremendous impact on seminarians and their congregations.

He has positioned us well for the future.

Dr. Blount has been a tireless champion of strengthening the Seminary's digital presence and social acuity. Our technological capabilities will help us meet new generations of students where they are—online and around the world—and our four amazing Centers are helping students engage new perspectives on serving the church in the world.

Under Dr. Blount's leadership, Union is better prepared than ever to train a new generation of leaders. As we welcome the energy and ideas of a new president, a fitting tribute to his time with us would be to continue his vision of growth and transformation.

JOIN US ONLINE

www.upsem.edu

Look for the links following a story or section to find extended articles, videos, images, and discussions. Or visit us on social media to keep up with the latest at the Seminary.



facebook.com/UPSem



youtube.com/user/UPSem



flickr.com/photos/upsem



instagram.com/upseminary



twitter.com/upseminary

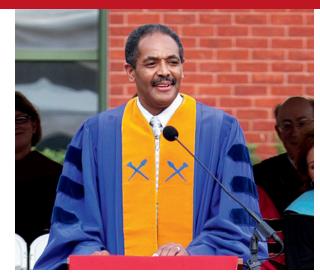
For Planned Giving, visit pg.upsem.edu

2 Campus

DR. BRIAN BLOUNT

Final Thoughts

"As we gather this day to inaugurate not just my time in a new office, but to imagine the renewal of this venerable institution, we gather together in love for this community—for what it has been and for what we believe God intends it can be." (from President Brian Blount's inauguration speech)

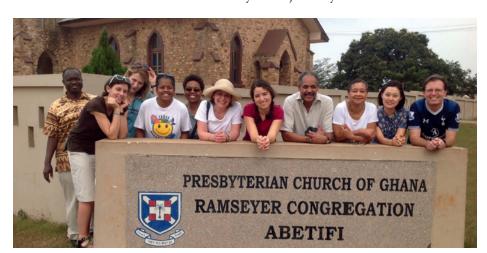


Brian delivering his inauguaration speech



Brian with his wife Sharon, daughter Kaylin, and son Joshua in 2008

"As for my own personal faith journey, the pinnacle and unparalleled experience has been serving as president of Union. I've been a pastor at a local church that I dearly love. I had a great and transformational time in the Ph.D. program at Emory University, helping shape me as a theological thinker. I enjoyed the 15 years I was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. But I would say all of those experiences allowed for a kind of 'mountaintop experience' here at Union. I was able to put to use all of the things that I learned in those places and see all of that come to a wonderful kind of fruition for me in terms of my faith journey."



Travel seminars help shape students for ministry across the globe. President Blount led a trip to Ghana in 2014 to renew connections with alums and broaden understanding of the global church.





The Black Alumni Association is an initiative begun by President Blount in 2009, when he engaged eight alumni and a student to lead its establishment, and it is thriving.



"The Seminary has become in some ways a magnet for people in the Charlotte community to think theologically together and have an interfaith conversation through the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation for public witness and concern, connecting theological thinking with issues of the public square."

Brian preaching at the Charlotte campus

"It was a privilege to have been the president during the bicentennial of the Seminary in 2012 and to do all the things we were able to do to celebrate that. I hope I helped generate an attitude of hopefulness about the possibilities for the Seminary that reaches from potential, current, and future students to faculty, alumni, and trustees."



Brian and Sharon Blount, along with the late U.S. Representative Donald McEachin, receiving a proclamation at the Virginia General Assembly for the Seminary's 200th anniversary

"I want this community to know that they nurtured me in a way that enabled me to both thrive and sometimes survive, and, for that, I'm deeply grateful."

As part of the Seminary's bicentennial, President Brian Blount led an 85-mile bike ride from Hampden-Sydney College to the Richmond quad—a symbolic reenactment of the Seminary's 1898 journey from Farmville, the Seminary's birthplace, to Richmond. The ride marked a new era for both institutions, led for the first time by Black presidents.

Sharon&Brook 2023 SUMMER ISSUE



Brian teaching the New Testament

"We use a lot of the yield from our endowment to give scholarships that enable students to cover their theological education. Paying back education loans can be very difficult. Graduates are going into various forms of ministry, which, as we know, are not the kind of high-paying jobs that allow you to pay back student loans quickly, so I'm very happy about that."





Throughout the spring, Brian and Sharon Blount were celebrated with dinners, accolades, gifts, and surprises. The Board of Trustees dinner allowed for a sneak preview of Dr. Blount's presidential portrait. At the 112th Sprunt Lecture series, the portrait artist, Stanley Rayfield, provided background regarding the painting.



Travel Seminar group in the Middle East

TRAVEL SEMINAR

The Church in the World

From April 22 to May 12, close to two dozen students, alumni, and friends of the Seminary visited the Middle East. Led by Dr. Safwat Marzouk, Associate Professor of Old Testament, and Dr. Christine Luckritz Marquis, Associate Professor of Church History, the group was the first to experience a travel seminar since 2019.

Highlights of the trip included visiting the pyramids in Egypt, experiencing Sabbath on the Red Sea, watching the sun rise on Mount Sinai, exploring the history of the Jewish people, watching the full moon over the Sea of Galilee, and taking a journey to Jerusalem.

A spiritually and emotionally intense experience, the 21-day journey allowed students to experience firsthand what it means to be the church in the world. As President Brian Blount noted, "our travel seminars to Ghana, Korea, China, India, the Middle East, and Central America have been long-established ways in which our students see the church of Jesus Christ in ministry around the globe in new cultural and interfaith settings."

Students and faculty wrote daily blog posts with reflections to share on the Seminary's website and social media channels. Images posted to Facebook and Instagram were popular with viewers as they followed the pilgrims on their journey.

"Learning about different religious traditions reminds us how God's table brings together people from different parts of the world," said Dr. Marzouk. "In the midst of complex political and social realities, Christian communities in the Middle East continue to show resilience as they work toward peace, reconciliation, and justice in their contexts," added Dr. Luckritz Marquis.

Through the historical intricacies of Egypt, Israel, and Palestine, travelers gained a valuable perspective of Biblical stories while building connections with people across the globe during their memorable trip.

MORE ONLINE You can read blog posts from the trip at



www.upsem.edu/about/news-blog/

Sharon&Brook

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

Editors

Samuel L. Adams, Faculty Advisor Rodney S. Sadler Jr., Faculty Advisor Marvin Daniel, Vice President of Advancement Barb Dodd, Director of Communications Clay Macaulay, Director of Alumni Development Tim Moore, Director of Donor Relations

Copywriter Joe Slay

Designer Edith Ridderhof

Richmond Campus:

3401 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23227 (804) 278-4240

Charlotte Campus:

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

www.upsem.edu

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 alumni@upsem.edu or call (804) 278-4228. **2023 GRADUATION**

A Time to Celebrate



Richmond Campus

The Seminary's Richmond campus held its commencement ceremony on May 27, 2023, at First Presbyterian Church in Richmond. Congratulations to all of our Richmond graduates!



CERTIFICATE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Eric Allen Potter

CERTIFICATE IN PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Carmen Francine Foster Sheryl Johnson

MASTER OF ARTS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Ashtyn Mae Bratt Connor Kennedy Ferreri Megan Sarah McWilliams Wael Melek Don Ray Moses

MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Robert William Lowry Valerie Hill Rawls William L. Thurston

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Ashtyn Mae Bratt
Mary Vincent Brown
Amber Colleen Casler
Robbie D'Orazio
Connor Kennedy Ferreri
Emma Parilee Hunter
Andrew Hinton McFayden
Megan Sarah McWilliams
Wael Melek
Shelby Catherine Powers
Jeremy Alexander Ray

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

Sam Thomas Arisapogu Veron Tamarah Hussey Joseph Louis Shafik Ibrahim Paul Karunakar Nalla Spandana Deepthi Valbhapuram

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Matthew Alexander Bowman Benjamin Daniel Brown Christopher Devon Burton Linda Rose Suiter Fox Rachel Christine Hebert James Edwin Lunde II Justice Agyemang Ofosuhene Franklyn Charles Pottorff













Charlotte Campus

On June 24, 2023, the Seminary's Charlotte campus celebrated its commencement. Brian Blount was named an honorary alumnus (at right). Congratulations to all of our Charlotte graduates!

















MASTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Patricia Cloninger Maxwell Grayson Michaels Dana Moulds Lindsey Kristen Odom Crystal Leonhardt Sellers

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Patricia Cloninger
Remi May Flaherty
Sara Margaret Martin
Maxwell Grayson Michaels
Dana Moulds
Nancy Elizabeth Myer
Lindsey Kristen Odom
Delilah Jane Phillips
Cassandra Rawls
Roger Wade Rizk
Paul E. Smith Jr.
William Van Spencer
Allison Romelle Tibe
Jeremy S. Whitner

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Kathryn Anne Beach Nelle Bordeaux Phanta I. Lansden Jeffrey Steven Smith



GREETINGS

W. Clay Macaulay



Grace and peace to you in this summer season of Pentecost!

More than 200 alumni, friends, students, faculty, and staff registered to attend, in person and through livestream, our annual Sprunt Lectures, held May 1-3 on the Richmond campus. We welcomed Dr. Keri Day as our lecturer and Dr. Kenyatta Gilbert as our worship leader. These two amazing speakers helped us fill Watts Chapel. The lectures and worship remain available for you to see, hear, and experience on the Seminary's YouTube channel.

Dr. Ted Wardlaw (D.Min.'78), retired president of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, delivered the keynote address during the annual alumni luncheon. Dr. Hoffman Brown III (D.Min.'81) was honored as Black Alumni Association Trailblazer of the Year, and Dr. Rosalyn Murphy (M.Div.'99) was named 2023 Distinguished Alum. President-elect Jacqueline "Jacq" Lapsley greeted alums and friends at the alumni luncheon.

We hope you'll enjoy some photos taken during the event, which included the unveiling of the official portrait of Brian Blount as seventh president of UPSem at a reception honoring Brian and Sharon. You can view the Sprunt photo album by visiting bit.ly/Sprunt2023Flickr.

Make plans to join us for next year's Sprunt Lectures, May 6-8, 2024, in Richmond. Dr. John J. Thatamanil, Professor of Theology and World Religions Director, Insight Project: Theology & Natural World, at Union Theological Seminary in New York will be the 2024 lecturer.

Yours faithfully,

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

alumni@upsem.edu



upsem.edu/alumni

GET IN TOUCH AND GO ONLINE We love hearing from you!

We encourage you to send news of your life and ministry to our alumni office. Also, check out our alumni web page.

Alumni Notes

TRANSITIONS

Barry W. Chance (M.Div.'05) now serves as General Presbyter and Stated Clerk at Eastminster Presbytery in northeastern OH.

Lacette R. Cross (Th.M.'16) is the Executive Director of Diversity Richmond in Richmond, VA.

British Hyrams (M.Div./M.A.C.E.'16) now serves as Jack and Jane Presseau Associate Chaplain at the Office of Spiritual Life in Clinton, SC.

James K. Sledge (M.Div.'95) became Transitional Pastor of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Alexandria, VA, in February 2023.

Thomas "Tom" Watkins (D.Min.'10) now serves as Pastor of Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, NC.

Michael "Mike" Watson (M.Div.'11) became Associate Pastor of Fairfield Presbyterian Church in Mechanicsville, VA, on January 15, 2023.

IN MEMORIAM

Richard S. Andrews (B.D.'56)

December 13, 2022

Mark D. Behrendt (D.Min.'86) February 8, 2023

Marietta Elsner Breidenthal (M.R.E.'53) January 8, 2023

Isabelle Ford Brooks (M.R.E.'51) January 24, 2023

Craig A. Buxton (M.Div.'84)

February 20, 2023

William "Bill" Carmines (D.Min.'86)

February 11, 2023 E. Allen Coffey (D.Min.'86)

June 9, 2022 JoAnn Gordon Fowler (B.R.E.'53)

January 15, 2023

Betty Ann "Betsy" McFadden Harvey (M.R.E.'54)

January 12, 2023

Cornelia "Connie" Kneedler Hudson (M.R.E.'57) January 6, 2023

Howatt "Mal" Mallinson (M.Div.'50, D.Min.'74) March 4, 2023

Larry C. Miles (B.D.'63) December 21, 2022

Kellie Weekly Mills (M.Div.'91, M.A.'97)

February 14, 2023 William H. Morrison (B.C.E.'69)

May 8, 2023

Gay D. Mothershed (M.C.E.'63) May 13, 2023

H. Wilkes O'Brien (M.Div.'66, D.Min.'77)

March 4, 2023

Florence Hussung Pasquale (M.A.'55) December 20, 2022

James H. "Jim" Saxon (B.D.'64)

December 17, 2022

Steven G. Sewell (M.Div.'71)

February 7, 2023 Gloria Carter Taylor (M.A.'78, Ed.D.'95)

January 25, 2023

Janet R. Tyson (M.Div.'06)

December 13, 2022

Patrick H. Winkler (D.Min.'87) March 2, 2023

William "Bill" Wolfe Jr. (M.C.E.'61) February 19, 2023

Jeanne R. Woodberry (M.A.'60)

ON THE SHELF

Jimmie Hawkins (M.A.'86) has a new book titled Unbroken and Unbowed: A History of Black Protest in America. The book chronicles the history of Black protest in America from the 17th century to the present day.

David Howell (M.Div.'81) has a new book titled Buried Dreamer, a historical novel about an exiled Scottish Presbyterian minister who assists with the Underground Railroad in Virginia in the 1800s. Then a Presbyterian minister related to the same family seeks to prevent a threat to democracy in Charlottesville, VA, in 2021. The foreword is by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church, and the book has been endorsed by

Peter Marty, editor/publisher of The Christian Century. Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023. Available on Amazon. Howell's previous book, Tethered to an Appalachian Curse: A Surprise Calling, was released in 2021. As founder of the Festival of Homiletics, he continues to work as a consultant to Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

Philip W. Jacobs (M.Div.'79) has a new book titled The Other Person in the Picture: The Portrayal and Interpretation of Joseph the Carpenter. Cascade Books.

Stan Skreslet (D.Min.'79) has a new book titled Constructing Mission History: Missionary Initiative and Indigenous Agency in the Making of World Christianity. Three master narratives currently dominate the analysis of modern mission history. One puts foreign missionaries at the heart of the story. A second emphasizes the colonial aspect of modern missions: Here, missionaries are not heroes, but villains, who are implicated in hegemonic schemes of imperial domination. Thirdly, mission history is subordinated to one of its outcomes, the advent of World Christianity. In this master narrative, the concept of contextualization looms large, bolstered by Sanneh's notion of translatability and emphasis on the agency of non-Westerners, who participate in and subtly shape the complex social processes of evangelization.

Bruce Taylor (Ph.D.'88) has a new book titled What Happens Next? More Sermons for the Lectionary, Year B, Advent through Eastertide. Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2023.

CELEBRATIONS

Robert R. "Rocky" Laha (D.Min.'80, Th.M.'81) was honorably retired by National Capital Presbytery as Pastor-Head of Staff of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Alexandria, VA, on January 30, 2023.

This list reflects notes received by the Alumni Office as of May 25, 2023.

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

Sharon&Brook 2023 SUMMER ISSUE

2023 SPRUNT LECTURES

Undomesticated Faith

When Dr. Keri Day opened her series of four Sprunt lectures the week of May 1, she promised to share "experimental" thoughts that were emerging from the manuscript of an upcoming book.

Her Sprunt lectures, titled "Undomesticated Faith: An Afro-Pentecostal Theology of Spirit," were driven by her own questioning and existential doubts, concerns, and hopes about what Christian faith is, the work it should do in the world, and how we image and imagine God.

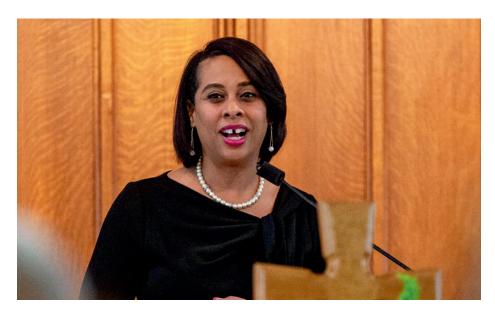
Dr. Day, associate professor of constructive theology and African American religion at Princeton Theological Seminary, spoke about the Azusa Street Revival, which began in 1906 in Los Angeles—how it was a critique of segregated, capitalist society then and is still relevant today. With roots in the religious beliefs of enslaved persons from the southern United States, Azusa became a movement in which, pastored by William Seymour, "...Black domestic women moved into positions of leadership... and those who worshiped under them were transracial, transgenerational, and ultimately global."

"When the Spirit moves, it participates in an economy of disruption, revealing a God who requires radical communion," said Dr. Day. It frees theology "to be a discursive space and practice of wonder and freedom." She also described how a decolonial theology of the Spirit attempts to avoid domestication of ideas about God and Christian faith. "I desperately want us to be released of needing to have the final say on divine reality."

The 112th Sprunt Lectures also featured preaching by Dr. Kenyatta Gilbert, professor of homiletics at Howard University School of Divinity. With Luke 4:22 as his text, Dr. Gilbert catalogued the ills that plague society today: "social collapse, grotesque violence, political tribalism, environmental neglect, and ecological catastrophe, and what was laid bare by the COVID crisis—society's despicable legacy of self-deceit, self-deception, self-obsession, and the abiding presence of unhealed racial wounds."

"Something has shifted," said Dr. Gilbert, "and how the church navigates its future course will determine if we can contribute anything of consequence that would support our agenda of advancing the reign of God here on earth."

Sprunt Week included a luncheon presentation by Dr. Ted Wardlaw, retired president of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Dr. Rosalyn Murphy, who has served in the Church of England for 23 years. And Dr. Hoffman Brown III, a member of Union's class of 1981, was honored with the Black Alumni Association Trailblazer award.







WELCOME

President Lapsley!

Dr. Jacqueline Lapsley arrived in Richmond in mid-June. As she and her husband, Greg Bezilla, settle into their Virginia home, Dr. Lapsley (known as "Jacq") is diving into the UPSem community on both the Charlotte and Richmond campuses.

Dr. Lapsley's credentials are impressive: She earned her Ph.D. from Emory University in 1999, her M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1994, her M.A. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1991, and her A.B. from Smith College in 1987. Before accepting the role of president at Union, she was dean and vice president for Academic Affairs at Princeton Theological Seminary and a professor of Old Testament.

As the first woman to lead Union Presbyterian Seminary, Dr. Lapsley is a proven trailblazer. She is a learned scholar and well-respected author. As co-editor of *The Women's Bible Commentary* and *After Exegesis: Feminist Biblical Theology*, her fresh perspective will propel UPSem to new areas of community engagement.

"The role of the seminary is to form leaders for gospel-filled ministries," said Dr. Lapsley. "The gospel calls us to speak into difficult issues of the day, such as social justice. Christians are being called to leadership—in communities and congregations—and are a powerful voice in society. Theological education helps people thrive wherever they are called."

Dr. Lapsley is a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. She is also the proud mother of two adult children. Welcome to Union, Dr. Lapsley!

MORE ONLINE The 2023 Sprunt lectures and worship are available for viewing at:



bit.ly/Sprunt-23



Top left: Sprunt
featured speaker
Dr. Keri Day
Far left: Worship leader
Dr. Kenyatta Gilbert
Left: 2023 BAA
Trailblazer award winner
Dr. Hoffman Brown III
and Distinguished
Alumni award winner
Dr. Rosalyn Murphy

UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

Sharon&Brook

UPCOMING EVENTS

Womanist Leadership Institute:

Reproductive Justice

Tuesdays / July 11–August 15 / 2023 6:00 pm–8:00 pm Dr. Toni Bond, Adjunct Faculty at

Claremont School of Theology and Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Online course providing an overview of the reproductive and sexual justice theory (RSJ) and framework. The course will cover the theory's grounding in Black feminist theory and the human rights framework, provide a contextual understanding of RSJ's four pillars, and explore a broad range of reproductive and sexual justice issues while applying an intersectional analysis that examines these issues through a critical lens that focuses on gender, race, class, and religion.



bit.ly/ReproductiveJust

Christian Educator Certification:

Religious Education Theory and Practice August – October / 2023

Polity and Administration Fall / 2023

Biblical Interpretation

Fall / 2023

These online courses are designed to meet the requirements for Christian Educator Certification in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Courses offer both synchronous (scheduled live class meetings) and asynchronous (at-home assignments posted on Blackboard) work. Registration opens in July.



bit.ly/certificateprog



3401 Brook Road Richmond, VA 23227

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U.S. POSTAGE PAID RICHMOND, VIRGINIA PERMIT NO. 1027



Blount Hall at Westminster

For generations, Westminster Hall was a home away from home — a place where lifelong friendships were formed during late-night discussions. Now the new home of the Leadership Institute will become Blount Hall at Westminster to honor Brian Blount for his 16 years of leadership and service to the Seminary. "It's hard to articulate how meaningful it is for me that when people visit the school, they'll have a sense that I contributed something for the future," said Blount when asked about the honor.

We are in the process of raising \$7 million to restore Westminster to its former glory with modern technologies needed to provide continuing education to visiting pastors, Christian educators, and other church leaders.

Your gift will help us turn this vision into reality. Would you like to honor an individual who has served Union as a scholar, pastor, leader, or friend?

For more information, contact Marvin Daniel at mdaniel@upsem.edu or at (804) 278-4240.



www.upsem.edu/give