

Perspective

magazine

WORLD-CHANGING
PREACHERS
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On the cover: The Rev. Dr. Alyce McKenzie, director of the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence. Photo by Hillsman Jackson. Photo Illustration by Corrie Demmler.

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Letter

FROM THE DEAN

A wise professor once said that a primary goal of theological education is to equip pastors to “simplify without distortion.” That capacity is nowhere more essential than in preaching.

A first-rate theological education walks students through a variety of complex subjects, not so they are left unable to speak simply, directly and understandably, but precisely so they might do so without being simplistic, without skating over ambiguous or difficult issues of interpretation and faith. To be sure, an overly simplified message can be compelling: “God wants you to be wealthy, period.” Or, “All suffering is the result of sin, period.” Or, “All true Christians agree with my reading of this text, period.” At some point, however, shallowness will be found out, especially by those in need of a more informed and substantive faith. We long for thoughtful, knowledgeable, relevant and inspiring preaching, not platitudes and bromides. We long for head and heart each to be given its due.

At the other extreme are preachers who seem to glory in impenetrable complexity. They might sound learned and impressive, but you’re never quite sure what the point of it all was – other, perhaps, than to sound learned and impressive. This is preaching as clanging cymbal, not clarion call. It is more inclined to complicate the simple than to simplify the complicated. It suggests a sermon in search of a purpose.

Those entering seminary sometimes feel that they have landed in an “obscurer than thou” competition. The more byzantine, the more incomprehensible the argument, the more intelligent it must be. It took me years to realize that the opposite is actually true. The best theologians and preachers I have known have also been the easiest to understand, the best at conveying complex ideas comprehensibly. Turns out, being opaque is easy. Being clear is not.

Consider, for example, how one preaches on one of the Bible’s apocalyptic texts, such as Daniel or Revelation. If you are unaware of the complexities of history and interpretation, you’ll neither include them in your preparation nor convey them in your

preaching. Ignore context, and such texts will almost inevitably be interpreted inappropriately – even irresponsibly.

Overly complex preaching on an apocalyptic passage could include a lengthy aside on the extrabiblical texts 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra along with numerous Hebrew and Greek word studies. (Or Coptic, if you really want to shine.) Not that such preaching is necessarily a sign of great learning.

I noticed something interesting as a college chaplain. The brilliant Christian scholars who came to preach were without exception models of simplification without distortion. I credit that to the fact that they knew their subject thoroughly, that they had learned over time to teach effectively, that they were secure in their identity and that they were therefore remarkably unselfconscious. The exceptions were persons who approached the pulpit more as challenge or burden than as opportunity or gift. Indeed, I often had to remind myself, “Please don’t try to be impressive. What we all need is a word from God.”

So it is that a Perkins education aims to prepare students to simplify without distortion, especially in their preaching. Proclamation that is both inspired and informed, thoughtful and clear, is a vital tool for reaching and equipping those who will advance the church’s mission in the decades to come.

Grace and peace,

CRAIG C. HILL

Leighton K. Farrell Endowed Dean,
Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University

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PERKINS EMERGES AS A LEADER IN PREACHING EDUCATION

When churches consider hiring seminary graduates, Perkins faculty member Wes Allen says, there's one requirement that's always at the top of their lists: "We need someone who's good at preaching."

Graduates of Perkins School of Theology are prepared for that challenge. Perkins offers innovative teaching, a catalog of lifelong learning opportunities through the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence and top faculty involved in innovative interdisciplinary collaborations.

Allen sums it up this way: "If a student sees preaching as the key to their future ministry, Perkins is the place to be."

Here's an overview of preaching programs underway at Perkins. For more information, visit pcpe.smu.edu

PREPARING PREACHERS: PREACHING EDUCATION AT PERKINS

While a student at Perkins, the Rev. Jennifer Kilpatrick (M.Div. '21) excelled in preaching, winning the William K. McElvaney Preaching Award in her second year. But she didn't realize how well Perkins had prepared her until she faced a common real-life challenge as the sole preaching pastor in her congregation.

Kilpatrick was fresh out of seminary and just a few months into her appointment as senior pastor at Northgate United Methodist Church in Irving, Texas, when the congregation lost a beloved member to COVID-19. Being new to the congregation, Kilpatrick didn't know the woman well. She had to quickly meet with family and prepare a sermon for the woman's funeral on Saturday. She also needed to preach the next day on Sunday, as usual.

Kilpatrick called on skills she's learned in her introductory preaching class at Perkins with Wes Allen.

"When you don't have as much time as you would like, those sermon forms and exegetical principles that Dr. Allen taught us are very valuable," she said. "They guide me through that weekly process in a way that is faithful to the text and that is faithful to my congregation. Dr. Allen has been a pastor himself. He knows the very real daily demands that pastors face."

As Kilpatrick's experience shows, Perkins prepares students to preach, with rigorous education in biblical

interpretation and exegesis as well as practical tools to meet the demands on pastors who preach every week.

Preaching classes have traditionally been small, Allen notes. While introductory preaching classes at other seminaries might have as many as 60 students, "Perkins has a long history of limiting preaching classes to 12 people," Allen said. He and his colleague Alyce McKenzie teach multiple sections every semester, to ensure that each student gets individual attention. Students also preach in front of a congregation, at least four times, as part of their internships, with guidance from a mentor pastor and a lay committee.

Students also benefit from the strong biblical emphases of Allen and McKenzie. McKenzie has written extensively on the biblical wisdom literature, especially Proverbs. Allen's focus is New Testament, in particular the synoptic gospels. "Most important, we share a biblical approach, and we have a common purpose in teaching people how to be better preachers," Allen said.

Rounding out Perkins students' preaching education is a strong program in worship, led by Mark W. Stamm, professor of Christian worship; a robust Chapel Worship program, with twice-a-week services on campus; and outstanding musical resources from the Master of Sacred Music (MSM) program led by Marcell Silva Steuernagel and Christopher Anderson. Before taking the required introductory preaching course, M.Div. students must complete the Church in Social Context course. They are also required to take Introduction to Christian Worship.

Stamm, whose areas of expertise include Rites of Christian initiation, the practice of "open communion" in Methodism and theology and practice of congregational intercessions, also teaches introductory preaching classes and has team-taught electives in preaching from time to time.

"Dr. Allen has been a pastor himself. He knows the very real daily demands that pastors face."

– REV. JENNIFER KILPATRICK

The Rev. Jennifer Kilpatrick is pastor of Northgate United Methodist Church in Irving, Texas.

“Preaching isn’t done in isolation; it’s always done in a context,” said Stamm. In preparing a sermon, he said, pastors must consider the worship service, the needs of the congregation and factors like the season of the Christian calendar.

“The question of ‘Why?’ must always be there,” said Stamm. “That’s what separates a good public speaker from someone who can preach the gospel with compassion and insight.”

Renewed Emphasis

Preachers today face challenges that are stiffer than ever. Social media and entertainment have shortened the attention spans of people in the pews. Interest in organized religion is waning. More people than ever

call themselves “nones” – those who don’t identify with any particular religious tradition.

“I believe there is still a craving for compelling, creative preaching that challenges as well as offers hope,” McKenzie said. “But we can’t assume basic knowledge of religious traditions or biblical events. Preaching to distractable, biblically untutored people needs to be both creative and rooted in careful study of the connections between biblical texts and contemporary contexts.”

Perkins’ emphasis on preaching in the context of creative worship, she adds, “is testimony to our confidence in the ongoing relevance and impact of preaching in this place and this time.”



FACULTY PROFILE:

THE REV. DR. ALYCE M. MCKENZIE

*Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship
Director of the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence
Altshuler Distinguished Professor*

At her first pastoral appointment, Alyce McKenzie vividly remembers the moment when she stepped into the pulpit to preach and saw the look in the eyes of the people in the pews.

“They had this look of hunger,” she recalled. “No matter how many sermons people have heard, they always seem hopeful for a new word. That’s when I realized that preaching is a lifelong learning endeavor.”

That moment foreshadowed McKenzie’s life work. Today, she is a sought-after preacher, professor, author and an ordained United

Methodist elder in the North Texas Conference. She joined the faculty at Perkins in 2000. In 2011 she was named an Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor, SMU’s highest teaching honor. In 2015 she was the Lyman Beecher Lecturer at Yale Divinity School. These prestigious lectures are the longest running homiletical lectures in the United States, first begun in 1871.

McKenzie received her B.A. in the History of Religions from Bryn Mawr College and an M.Div. from the Divinity School of Duke University. With encouragement from her husband, Murry, she also earned a Ph.D. in Theology and Communication in Preaching from Princeton Theological Seminary. Before and during her work on her doctoral degree, she served several churches in Central Pennsylvania. From 2012 to 2019 McKenzie was Preacher-in-Residence at Christ United Methodist Church in Plano, where she preached regularly and coached members of the clergy staff.

McKenzie is the author of 10 books and numerous articles, both for scholarly and popular audiences. Her research has focused in the past on preaching the wisdom

literature of the Bible: *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit* (1996), *The Gospel of Matthew* (1998), *Preaching Biblical Wisdom in a Self-Help Society* (2002), *Hear and Be Wise: Becoming a Teacher and Preacher of Wisdom* (2004) and *The Parables for Today* (2010). Her more recent focus is on the role of the imagination in preaching and on what preachers can learn from novelists and screenwriters (*Novel Preaching: Tips from Top Writers on Crafting Creative Sermons*, 2010). In 2011 McKenzie co-authored a textbook on preaching with John C. Holbert titled *What Not to Say: Avoiding the Common Mistakes that Can Sink Your Sermon*. McKenzie’s *Wise Up! Four Biblical Virtues for Navigating Life* was published in May of 2018 and is being used in small groups and sermon series around the country. Her most recent book, *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners*, was published in October of 2018. She is currently at work on a project with humor scholar Owen Lynch, titled *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Pulpit: Preaching and Humor*.



“If a student sees preaching as the key to their future ministry, Perkins is the place to be.”

– REV. DR. O. WESLEY ALLEN, JR.



Top left: The Rev. Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie. Top right: Dr. Marcell Silva Steuernagel. Bottom: The Rev. Dr. O. Wesley Allen, Jr.



The Rev. Dr. Mark W. Stamm leading worship in Perkins Chapel

Courses in preaching have always been part of the Perkins curriculum, but recent decades have brought renewed attention to the content and craft of preaching. In the 1960s and 1970s, preaching was downplayed in favor of social action in seminaries, McKenzie noted. The rise of narrative approaches to preaching in the 1980s and 1990s brought renewed energy to many pulpits.

That narrative approach was a key part of the classroom of experience of Paul Bussert (M.Div. '21). He felt a little intimidated when he took his first introductory preaching course with Wes Allen. And a little puzzled. Allen's first assignment was to have students write a series of short 100-word fictional stories.

"It felt like being taught by Mr. Miyagi," Bussert joked (referring to the iconic "Wax on, wax off" scene in the film "The Karate Kid"). "Dr. Allen kept pushing us, saying, 'You've got to make me feel something from your story.'" It wasn't until about halfway through

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For more information
about preaching at
Perkins, scan the QR code
or visit pcpe.smu.edu

the class, when the students began writing and preparing sermons, that Bussert understood what Allen had been up to.

"Dr. Allen had 'secretly' taught us that way so that story would be a central part of our sermons, to make them more relatable to the hearer," he said.

Bussert also remembers Allen's critique of the first sermon he delivered in his introductory class: "You read that academic paper real nicely," Allen said.

That spurred Bussert to improve. After the intro class, he went on to take two preaching electives, and later received the W. B. DeJernett Award in Homiletics. Today, Bussert uses what he learned at Perkins in his position as associate pastor of Bixby First United Methodist Church in Oklahoma. He particularly appreciates Allen's tips for "meatball exegesis," an efficient prescription for busy pastors in preparing a sermon, and often rereads his books and notes from class as he prepares his sermons.

"People don't always read your newsletters or come out for every Bible study," he said. "But they hear your sermon. As a pastor, you reach the biggest number of people through preaching. You need to take your preaching education seriously."



FACULTY PROFILE:

THE REV. DR. O. WESLEY ALLEN, JR.

Lois Craddock Professor of Homiletics

STARTING AT A YOUNG AGE, Wes Allen felt torn between two loves. He had a strong interest in the academic study of Scripture, but also felt a call to ministry. Today, he's an outstanding professor with empathy for the realities of those who preach week in and week out.

His interest in ministry was sparked when he was a teen, as he listened to his pastor, Howard Collins, at First United Methodist Church in Sylacauga, Alabama. "Back then, we talked about being called to preach,

and that's still part of how I define myself," he said.

As an undergraduate, Allen took his first New Testament class and fell in love with the academic study of the Bible. While still a student, at the age of 20, he served his first church, in Mulga, Alabama.

"Years later, I looked back at those sermons, handwritten on notebook paper, and some are just so, so bad," he said. "Yet the people in that congregation somehow found nourishment in them, and they loved me into the ministry. I think that is why I really want to help ministers in that situation today."

Today, Allen is a gifted preacher and teacher, and the author and editor of some two dozen books on homiletics and interpretation of the New Testament, as well as many scholarly articles and published sermons. Allen's work focuses on interpreting Scripture for postmodern life to produce sermons that offer both hope and challenge.

His writings include *The Homiletic of All Believers: A Conversational Approach, Matthew* (Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries) and *Preaching and the Human Condition*. He is currently working on a preaching commentary on the Gospel of Mark.

Allen earned a Ph.D. from Emory University in 1996, an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School in 1990 and a B.A. from Birmingham-Southern College in 1987. Before coming to Perkins in 2015, he served as professor of homiletics and worship at Lexington Theological Seminary, and before that, he taught homiletics at Drew Theological School and Caspersen School of Graduate Studies, Drew University. An ordained elder in the Indiana Annual Conference, Allen also served previously as a campus minister at the Georgia Tech Wesley Foundation and as Dean of the Chapel at DePauw University.



STAFF PROFILE:

SABINA HULEM, M.ED.

*Sabina Hulem, M.Ed.
Assistant to the Director
Perkins Center for Preaching
Excellence*

Sabina Hulem handles administrative tasks for the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence (PCPE), including day-to-day communications, event planning, social media, graphic design and video editing. A native of Poland, she taught English and worked as an interpreter for a U.S.-based Christian mission before coming to the U.S. 13 years ago. She and her husband have twin teen daughters, Iliana and Christie. While working at the PCPE, Hulem also completed an M.Ed. at

SMU in student development and leadership for higher ed.

Hulem enjoys the work and believes in the PCPE's mission.

"I really enjoy working behind the scenes and helping with whatever needs to be done," Hulem said. "It's so rewarding to see our programs succeed and to receive testimonials from the people that we serve. It's great to see that they've grown from our programs and created bonds with us and each other."

PERKINS CENTER FOR PREACHING EXCELLENCE

When the Rev. Karen Horan (M.Div. '04) needed help providing continuing education to pastors in the Rio Texas conference, she turned to the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence (PCPE).

Launched in 2013 with a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., the PCPE's motto is "Share the Story, Shape the World." Its mission is "to enhance transformative preaching in local congregations ... through innovative seminary courses and pedagogical innovations, preaching peer groups, continuing education events and online resources for weekly preachers."

Over the past four years, the Center has led five daylong workshops and facilitated several peer groups for preachers in the Rio Texas conference, where Horan serves as Director of Creating/Vitalizing Congregations and Developing Leaders.

Horan was especially pleased with the willingness of PCPE leaders to tailor programs to the specific needs of the conference. For example, this year the

PCPE is facilitating a peer group for pastors serving in bilingual congregations, plus two groups of African American pastors, one for those serving in cross-cultural appointments, and another for pastors in predominantly African American congregations. The Rev. Dr. Zan Holmes and the Rev. Edlen Cowley are consultants for those peer groups.

Horan still remembers many of the insights she learned while a student of Alyce McKenzie at Perkins: Keep the main thing the main thing. Don't pack everything into one sermon; know what to leave on the cutting room floor. Don't feel the need to tie up every sermon with a bow. It's okay to occasionally leave the congregation with a bit of uneasiness. She thinks it's important for pastors in Rio Texas to learn those lessons and to refresh them periodically.

"The art of preaching is something that needs to be continually worked on," Horan said. "The Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence has so many great resources to offer; I think more churches and conferences could take advantage of them." To those that may be considering adding a program, she advises, "Just say yes!"

The Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence hosted a training for pastors preparing to serve as conveners or homiletical consultants for upcoming peer group cohorts.



Over the years, these PCPE-sponsored peer groups have impacted nearly 200 pastors.



Participants gathered for a preaching workshop on storytelling hosted by the Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence.



A sampling of programs offered by the PCPE in recent years

PEER GROUPS: Over the past 10 years, the PCPE has sponsored more than 60 peer groups for pastors in the Southwest and beyond, including the North Texas, Texas, Northwest Texas, Tennessee, Mountain, Sky, Great Plains, Louisiana, Rio Texas and North Georgia conferences of The United Methodist Church. Each group consists of eight to 12 pastors who meet regularly for six to nine months to discuss readings in the field of preaching and to review one another's sermons. Each group has a local convener and a homiletical consultant, a professor of preaching with a strong record of teaching and publication in the field of homiletics. Over the years, these PCPE-sponsored peer groups have impacted nearly 200 pastors. A recent addition is "Short Story Sandbox," a peer group in which participants read short stories and discuss theme, tone,

form, point of view, scene and characters in the short stories.

THE STORY: The PCPE distributes *The Story*, an online newsletter, periodically to some 1,500 pastors.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

EVENTS: The PCPE offers a wide array of workshops and programs, including "The Preacher's Toolbox," daylong workshops for licensed local pastors who are not seminary trained. Providing a set of exegetical and homiletical skills, along with theological reflection on the purpose of preaching. Topics include interpreting Scripture for preaching; choosing a theme for each sermon; using imagery, story and scene; developing effective sermon delivery techniques.

BLOGS: The PCPE hosts a number of blogs, including **Must Reads**, featuring reviews of books of interest to preachers; **Ask a Professor**, which tackles questions submitted by readers about

ministry, theology and especially preaching, with answers written by Alyce McKenzie, Wes Allen or a guest writer from the Perkins faculty or staff. **Lively Lectionary** offers weekly posts by homiletician and Hebrew Bible scholar John Holbert on the Old Testament and on the gospel text for the day by Alyce McKenzie. **Passion for Preaching** covers a range of topics related to preaching. Many of the writers are participants in the Peer Groups or the Coaching Program.

VIDEO SERIES: In 2020, the PCPE launched "What's a Preacher to Do?" in response to COVID-19. In each video, Allen or McKenzie interview artists, scholars and community leaders. In 2020, the series produced "Preaching During a Pandemic of Racism" amid the protests at violence against African Americans, featuring brief interviews with church and community leaders, scholars and artists seeking their wisdom for preaching during that difficult time.

"The art of preaching is something that needs to be continually worked on. The Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence has so many great resources to offer; I think more churches and conferences could take advantage of them."

– REV. KAREN HORAN



Unique COLLABORATIONS

Perkins faculty team up with experts in other fields

A comedian and a homiletician walk into a seminary.... It's not the opening line of a joke. It's an innovative collaboration between Alyce McKenzie and humor scholar Owen Hanley Lynch, an associate professor at SMU's Meadows School of the Arts. The collaboration draws on key principles of the comic frame for insights for better preaching, and culminated in a workshop at Perkins, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Pulpit," and a forthcoming book by the same name.

Lynch isn't really a comedian - he's a social scientist who studies the way people use humor in organizations to share common experiences and to make sense of perplexing situations. When someone tells a joke, and the other person laughs, he says, it's a signal that the two people share the same understanding of the situation. Lynch and McKenzie's joint workshop explored how preachers can use humor, not just to lighten up sermons, but also to engage congregations more deeply.

"The collaboration with Alyce is a really nice example of one area, with its own strong body of work, utilizing the resources at the university to expand its role," Lynch said. "It's something we don't do enough of in academia."

Lynch is one of several experts from other disciplines who have collaborated with the PCPE in projects designed to broaden preachers' understanding of how to get their messages across as effectively as possible. The project is part of a series called "Preaching and ..." that pairs an expert in the field of preaching with a scholar from another field to lead a collaborative workshop at Perkins and to write a preaching textbook,



published by Westminster John Knox Press. Other projects include collaborations with novelists and filmmakers.

For the first book in the series, Wes Allen collaborated with Carrie La Ferle, a Meadows professor at the Temerlin Advertising Institute at SMU. The result was a workshop and a book, both titled "*Preaching and the Thirty Second Commercial: Lessons from Advertising for the Pulpit.*" Some pastors were skeptical about the collaboration, La Ferle noted, because they associate advertising with materialism and consumer overspending.

"In fact, pastors and advertisers share some techniques that can be similar and useful to each other," she said. "In the past, advertisers could simply share information about their products; now, it's much more about having the audience invite you in. You have to show them what you've got is worthy. Today, more than ever, it's about grabbing attention and then engaging people. Preachers share similar challenges in their efforts to invite people into churches."

The "Preaching and..." books are extending Perkins' reach, garnering attention not only among United Methodists but also pastors in other mainline Protestant and evangelical churches. "I don't know of anyone else who is doing this in such an intentional and systematic way," said Robert A. Ratcliff, Editor-in-Chief at Westminster John Knox Press "This is one of the few places where experts in homiletics are talking to experts in completely different fields and exchanging knowledge."

"This is one of the few places where experts in homiletics are talking to experts in completely different fields and exchanging knowledge."

ROBERT A. RATCLIFF



Discerning a Calling

SHANDON KLEIN'S INTERNSHIP HELPED CONFIRM HER CALLING AS A PREACHER.

Shandon Klein's comfort level at First UMC Richardson has never been questioned. So when it came time for Klein to find an internship experience, she didn't hesitate when selecting FUMCR - the church where she had been, at the time, a member for seven years and a staff member for four years.

The familiarity with the surroundings and congregation, however, did little to tamp down the anxiety Klein felt when preaching for the first time.

"I never had a problem with public speaking, but there was something different about preaching," said Klein, who graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins in 2021. "There was a larger weight on my shoulders, and I really cared that the message that God gave me came across, especially to my home audience.

"I quite literally was trembling in my seat as I waited to go up on stage. I remember quite clearly praying fervently to God to help me because I truly felt like I could not do this alone."

What followed was something entirely unexpected, Klein said. Though she had written out her sermon and put it between pages in her Bible - just in case she needed assistance getting back on track - Klein never referenced her notes. Instead, the words she wrote out came directly from her heart, no notes needed.

"As I left the stage, I just remember praying that the congregation would receive the message, almost to the point of tears," Klein said. "After the service, I received overwhelming affirmation from the congregation that not only was the message received, but that they felt they just had witnessed my calling before their eyes. It was a scary experience but a life-changing one!"

These are the life-changing experiences for which

the Perkins Intern Program was designed. A student's internship is further preparation for faithful leadership in Christian ministry. Students integrate the knowledge and theological reflection disciplines learned in the classroom with the practical demands of providing faithful leadership within a congregation or agency.

The Rev. Dr. Chuck Aaron, Director of the Intern Program and Associate Professor of Supervised Ministry at Perkins, calls the nine-month internship both formational and foundational. It creates, he said, a dialogue between the personal interactions of ministry and the insights of scholarship.

No matter the setting, an emphasis on preaching during a student's internship provides exposure to what pastoral ministry is all about.

"For both interns and pastors, preaching is the most public form of ministry," Dr. Aaron said. "Every other aspect of ministry - visitation, pastoral care, reading, teaching, administration - can be filtered through preaching."

At the time, Klein didn't know what direction she wanted to take in vocational ministry. She credits her internship experience - and that first time preaching - as an impactful step toward full-time elder status in The United Methodist Church. All of that is to come, following the completion of her doctoral studies in religious ethics in SMU's Graduate Program in Religious Studies.

"An internship is really a great opportunity to test out whether those nudges you have been feeling toward a specific ministry area are valid or whether you may be called to something else," Klein said. "Such affirmation, and sometimes disconfirmation, is so helpful in the discernment process on how we are called to do ministry.

"Seminary cannot give you every single scenario that you may encounter in the ministry field, wherever it may be, but an internship can give you practical experience in those scenarios with loving support from your mentors and peers. That makes all the difference."

- SHANDON KLEIN

PREACHING IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD:

A Panel Discussion with Four Perkins Alumni/ae

Perkins graduates share their biggest challenges — and how their Perkins education guides them.



THE REV. DR. EDGAR BAZAN
(M.Div. '14)

Senior pastor of New World United Methodist Church in Garland, Texas



THE REV. EDLEN COWLEY
(M.Div. '99)

Metro District Superintendent in The North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church



THE REV. DR. JAN DAVIS
(M.Div. '00, D.Min. '15)

Associate pastor at First Methodist Church in Mansfield, Texas



THE REV. DR. BRAD MORGAN
(M.Div. '09, D.Min. '16)

Senior pastor at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church in Houston and a member of Perkins' Executive Board

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN YOUR CAREER AS A PREACHER?

BRAD MORGAN: Most recently, the biggest challenge is preaching in a time where things have become overly politicized. I've always pointed out our need to care for the widow, the orphan and the alien resident, as it says in the Old Testament. Now I might be accused of being political for saying that. I can't help but think that the reason those teachings are in the Bible in the first place is that, even back then, people struggled to live into those godly values. Preaching in a pandemic was an intense technical

challenge. We prerecorded our services on Thursdays. The team would mic me up, test the lights and put a white piece of paper in front of my face to adjust the cameras. Then they'd say, "Take one!" and suddenly I was supposed to preach as if I were in the middle of the service and just heard "Amazing Grace." The pandemic also created a lot of frustration in people over the issues of the day, which heightened the politicization. I think the pandemic was isolating, and that caused us to forget that we should be coming together for the cause of Jesus in the world. We're doing a sermon series now called "Why are we so angry?" Believe it or not, a church member yelled at one of my colleagues about that.

EDLEN COWLEY: The biggest challenge I always face is balance. How do you balance the core scriptural message of your sermon, and make that relatable to what's happening today? How do you talk about what's happening within the church and balance that with what's happening in the mission field, outside the church and in the greater community?

EDGAR BAZAN: My challenge is being an effective communicator. You don't just show up and preach something because you like it. Preaching should mobilize people into intentional discipleship and engagement with the community. You need to speak in terms that inspire and encourage people. Often, people go to church and the sermon goes over their heads. You want to be practical and inspiring. Over the years, you learn how to do that. It starts with listening to the people, listening to their stories and learning where they're coming from.

JAN DAVIS: My lack of self-confidence and the lack of women preachers as role models have been a struggle for most of my career. When I started my doctoral project, Alyce McKenzie guided me in a project to find women's voices as preachers in history. It was life changing.

My project explored how God uses the voices of women throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. Then I studied women preachers in Christian history, up to the present day. I spent two years just reading the stories of these amazing women, most of whom I had never heard of before. I have these little challenges, but they endured insurmountable challenges. I connected deeply with them. I read about women like Anne Hutchinson, the 17th-century religious reformer; Jarena Lee, the first female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church; Sarah Crosby and Mary Bosanquet Fletcher, who were lay preachers for John Wesley; Phoebe Palmer from the holiness movement; and Aimee Semple McPherson, the Pentecostal evangelist. I studied them and read their sermons and notes. They suffered ridicule, persecution and hardship, but their call to preach was so great that they just

kept preaching. That really inspired me. While working on this project, I also met weekly with a small group of women pastors in the Dallas area. We helped one another find our voices. From one another, we learned that our body language in the pulpit could present a lack of confidence, and that prevented us from communicating the word effectively. The more I learned, the more confident I became.

HOW DID YOUR PERKINS EXPERIENCE INFLUENCE YOUR PREACHING STYLE? ARE THERE WORDS OF WISDOM FROM YOUR PROFESSORS THAT STILL COME TO MIND?

MORGAN: I took two courses with Alyce McKenzie. After I delivered one of my first sermons in class, she asked me, "Brad, who is that who's preaching? Because that doesn't sound like you." She helped me find my own voice. That is one of my most cherished gifts from my education. She taught us to be attentive: to pay attention to the Scripture, pay attention to your people, pay attention to the world and what is going on in it. Pay attention to where there's crossover between them. Then bring those things together on Sunday morning in a way that helps those listening realize who God is and what God is up to, in a way they can understand. If there's anything good about how I preach today, it's because of Alyce. And if there's anything bad, it's because I didn't listen to her!

BAZAN: I remember John Holbert, my professor in my introductory preaching course, saying, "Tell the story." The Bible is a story that communicates a message. Make sure you tell the story and bring in stories from the church and the world to help bring that biblical narrative alive. You work on understanding the context of the text that you're preaching and making sure that you tell it in the broader context of a story. That's pretty basic, but sometimes preachers forget that. I forget sometimes!

"We're doing a sermon series now called 'Why are we so angry?' Believe it or not, a church member yelled at one of my colleagues about that."

THE REV. DR. BRAD MORGAN

“There’s a lot of pressure on preachers to be entertaining, or even sensational, to get people to come back next week.”

THE REV. DR. JAN DAVIS

DAVIS: Alyce McKenzie always talked about “strengths” and “strengtheners.” There was never a weakness. I still use that language when I work with colleagues to evaluate their sermons. The other thing I learned from Alyce: Add a little “granola.” Think of leaving for the day when all you had for breakfast was a sugary muffin. You really need to give your people a hearty bowl of granola – something substantial. From my other professor, David Mosser, I learned the importance of resources. I spent several years buying exegetical commentaries and resources at Half Price Books. Because of him, I probably doubled the amount of time I was spending on researching and studying to write a sermon. But it made a difference.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY’S UNIQUE IDENTITY AND HOW THAT INFORMS YOUR PREACHING.

BAZAN: I’m from Mexico. One of the things that I learned quite quickly when I came to the U.S. is that here we have people from many different places. They might be from Ireland, or Germany. Even in a Spanish-speaking church, you may have people from Colombia, Peru, Spain, all around the world. They all bring their culture, their context, their own values into the church.

COWLEY: I’ve served in cross-racial appointments for the past 20 years. I’m culturally aware with my experience that I bring as an African American male in communities where I’m in a statistical minority. The biggest challenge is balance. If you don’t do balance well, you lose people. The Christian witness speaks to social justice, but at the same time, the church is a big tent. You need to have a broad enough theological understanding so that everyone can be welcome. Jesus asked Zacchaeus to come down from the tree even though he was the tax collector, a rich and wealthy person. I think we’re called to have that balance.

For a minority pastor male serving in an Anglo-dominant congregation, communication is so important. Some people might tell me, “Edlen, you talk too much about politics in all your sermons.” Then another will say, “You don’t talk enough about politics in your sermons.” I have to be mindful of what I say.

I also try not to put people in file folders based on their political beliefs. They might change. I might change. The world might change. You always want to prayerfully lead people toward their full God-given potential. Who knows what that looks like?

TALK ABOUT YOUR PROCESS FOR CHOOSING A SERMON TOPIC AND PREPARING YOUR SERMONS.

BAZAN: First, you do an exegesis of the church. You try to understand what church members are going through. You listen during pastoral visits, or Bible studies, or when they stop by the office. You pay attention to their struggles. I may get a sermon idea from something someone says in a trustee meeting or from watching a movie. Sometimes I get inspired in the weirdest places, like watching cartoons with my kids!

I write my sermon on Wednesday, and on Thursday I share it with a handful of church members as a Bible study. I always get new perspectives and great contextual feedback on how my sermon will speak to our people. I do a final revision, and my sermon is completed by Thursday afternoon. Currently, I’m preaching a series from the book of Nehemiah. That has been fascinating. Church members know when the preacher is passionate about what he or she is saying. That is inspiring to people.

MORGAN: We’re a large congregation, with lots of people preaching in lots of places. We have a well-developed team approach. It starts with a Bible and a two-page lectionary sheet. We plan about a year out. It’s kind of a long process, but we make sure the whole team has had input.

DAVIS: In the last two churches I served, we followed the Lectionary. But this church is in a completely different place now, coming out of the pandemic. We are stopping the series model. I’ve preached four- to six-week series almost my entire career, and we just think that is not working anymore. It’s not bringing people back. Instead, we’re going to try preaching in long seasons. We’re using John Wesley’s 44 sermons as the framework. It’s an opportunity to revisit all the Christian doctrines.

“The Christian witness speaks to social justice, but at the same time, the church is a big tent. You need to have a broad enough theological understanding so that everyone can be welcome.”

THE REV. EDLEN COWLEY

COWLEY: I like to tell stories that pair up well with the point that I’m trying to make from Scripture. I think of it this way: You may not remember the words to a song, but you remember the way the song makes you feel when you hear the music. With a sermon, you may not remember everything I said, but if you can remember the story, that attaches you back to the Scripture. In Africa, the griot is the person who has the stories of the community. In the same way, the Bible started as an oral tradition that was handed down from generation to generation. Stories are part of this tradition that’s handed down to us. Preachers are telling these stories, again and again. I try to find a balance between wanting to present an academic sermon, and a sermon that’s more of a story, an allegory.

THERE’S THE SERMON YOUR CONGREGATION NEEDS TO HEAR, AND THE SERMON THEY’D LIKE TO HEAR. HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON THE FORMER?

MORGAN: I want to push back on the question a little. We should start with the assumption that people who are showing up on Sunday morning are people of faith who want to be moved by God in a way that is faithful and true. They aren’t showing up to be false Christians, or to just be told what they want to hear. I’m always going to resist putting people in that category. The people in the pew are not the enemy; they’re our allies to help change the world.

DAVIS: There’s a lot of pressure on preachers to be entertaining, or even sensational, to get people to

come back next week. And if one of your biggest givers doesn’t like your sermon ... it’s not easy. Preachers should not give in to those types of pressures, but be true to God’s message for your people.

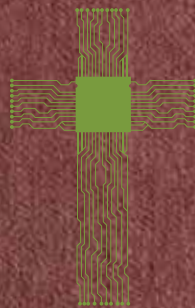
BAZAN: I try to keep a balance between the two. I’m not a prophet. I’m not an activist preacher. I want people to be encouraged and inspired. You listen to the people’s stories, and once you know their pains, their sufferings, even the shortcomings, you work with that and you preach to that. I don’t mean, “I’m going to tell you what you need to hear, because you’re bad.” It’s more like encouragement and discipline. We walk together. I always tell people, “I’m learning a lot for this sermon series, too.” I’m learning as I am preaching.

COWLEY: Zan Holmes, one of my great mentors, told me, “You never use the authority you have as a pastor before it’s granted to you.” If people know that you care about them and love them, they can hear what you have to say, even if they don’t understand or agree. The love you extend comes back, as you hear people’s unique voices and they hear your unique voice. It’s not just the skill and the way you deliver the message. You have to build that relational capital.

Also, you don’t preach for amens. You preach for substance. I’m not saying I don’t need the amens, but I’m not preaching for that. I’m preaching because I’m trying to do honor to the Scripture and to do honor to God and the message that I’m delivering. The goal of preaching is to make a connection with somebody’s heart and spirit so that they might decide to make a change.

“I always tell people, “I’m learning a lot for this sermon series, too.” I’m learning as I am preaching.”

THE REV. DR. EDGAR BAZAN



Technology
AND THE FUTURE OF
Preaching

New course prepares Perkins
students for ministry
in the digital age

For many churches, the future came early, in 2020. As the pandemic shut down in-person worship, churches scrambled to shift worship services and sermons to online platforms like Facebook Live, YouTube and Zoom.

Today, most churches are returning to in-person gatherings, but don't expect things to go back to normal, according to Perkins faculty members Robert A. Hunt and Marcell Silva Steuernagel.

"COVID-19 catalyzed changes that were already ongoing - it just made them happen more quickly," said Silva Steuernagel, Assistant Professor of Church Music and Director of the Master of Sacred Music program.

"Online is here to stay," said Hunt, who is Director of Global Theological Education.

NEW COURSE, NEW LAB

To equip students to work with digital platforms, Hunt and Silva Steuernagel launched a course in the fall of 2020 that focused on Digitally Mediated Ministry. The new course ramped up quickly, after a faculty meeting via Zoom in the spring of 2020. Many Perkins students were already being asked to launch online platforms at churches where they served or were interning. Hunt and Silva Steuernagel alerted Dean Craig C. Hill to the need to offer students guidance in digital ministry.

"Dean Hill looked at us and said, 'Well, then, design a course,'" said Silva Steuernagel.



A green screen and podcasting studio are part of Perkins' new Digitally Mediated Ministries Lab.

The course was offered again in the fall of 2021, and now it has become a popular elective class, likely to be offered every academic year. Students learn more than the craft and technique of providing worship via online platforms. Hunt and Silva Steuernagel engage students in questions about how digital technology will shape churches and human interactions and connections in general.

"Technology always draws certain practices into itself and resists others," said Silva Steuernagel. "I think the line between digital practices that become established in person, and in-person practices that are adopted digitally, will continually be negotiated. I think we can expect a lot more video sermons, and a different mixture

of digital music and live music. Much of what's done musically these days is recorded anyway, so why shouldn't we play it in our live services as well?"

In early 2022, Perkins added a new Digitally Mediated Ministries Lab, with a podcasting studio and a video recording studio, along with virtual reality (VR) tools and a green screen. Equipment will be added as new projects unfold. The lab will be primarily available to faculty but will also eventually become a center where students and local church staff can try new forms of digital ministry.

Hunt and Silva Steuernagel think online worship and virtual offerings will continue because, as many churches discovered, they reach people who might

"Preaching in online settings is almost like having to relearn how to preach, but in doing so, you really are becoming a better preacher."

DR. ROBERT A. HUNT

not be able to attend worship in person, or who might prefer online alternatives. Many clergy make in-person visits to church members in places like nursing homes and hospitals; with online platforms, those members may participate in corporate worship. Online options also opened churches up for a wide range of people with disabilities for whom it is very difficult to attend in person.

Plus, the technology needed for online platforms is quickly becoming more and more affordable. Once prohibitively expensive, systems with multiple cameras and the ability to switch from one camera to another during worship are within reach.

“This would have cost \$30,000 to \$40,000 only 10 years ago,” Hunt said. “Now, video cameras are relatively inexpensive, and churches can hire services that remotely manage the livestream for weekly worship for a relatively small monthly fee.”

Hunt believes it will become critical for churches to upgrade their online presence. For example, most live

television shows have one camera turned to the studio audience, showing the audience’s reactions. That helps viewers connect and feel more present for the experience. Churches need to do that, too.

“We’ve got too many churches that have just pointed one camera at the pulpit or the altar area,” he said.

Churches will also need to grapple with who in the congregation has access to technology – avoiding a situation where there are “haves” and “have nots” – and examine whether the church’s online presence is hospitable. If getting access to online sermons involves a cumbersome process for logging onto a website, registering and creating a password, that can be just as inhospitable as a church without accessible entryways or with hard-to-find bathrooms.

“I think the technology itself will become the secondary problem,” Hunt said. “The first problem will be learning to operate in the new environment and be effective in it.”



PREACHING TO A CAMERA

As many preachers discovered over the past two years, preaching effectively via online platforms involves more than just pointing a camera toward the pastor. Relating to a camera is different than relating to an audience; it's more intimate and doesn't require projecting to reach the people in the back pews.

Hunt believes these emerging platforms will ultimately shape preachers' delivery. In person, effective preachers make eye contact with people in the audience; when preaching online, the preacher must look to the camera as one of those people in the pews.

"Before COVID-19, unless you were a televangelist, all of your best cards were in-person cards," said Silva Steuernagel. "Preaching in online settings is almost like having to relearn how to preach, but in doing so, you really are becoming a better preacher."

Silva Steuernagel views the challenge through the perspective of performance theory. "Not in the sense that performance is insincere or posturing, but that everything we do in a sense is performative," he said. "You don't relate to your boss in the same way you relate to your spouse, for example."

He noted that a comedian might relate to a live audience one way, writing jokes and timing them with the audience in mind. If the same performance is taped for Netflix, the timing is different, adjusted for an audience watching through a streaming service.

Hunt even thinks the shift to digital platforms will open up preaching opportunities to more people - including those who might be less adept, or even unable to preach, in in-person settings. That leads Hunt to ponder, "Who does the new digital technology open the door for to come in and lead worship and participate? When worship is online, who was it that would have found it difficult to lead in a conventional setting and now finds it easier? I think that's going to be a fascinating question."



"COVID-19 catalyzed changes that were already ongoing - it just made them happen more quickly."

DR. MARCELL SILVA STEUERNAGEL



Opposite: Dr. Marcell Silva Steuernagel

Top Right: Dr. Robert A. Hunt

A Life of Service

ZAN HOLMES LOOKS BACK ON HIS PREACHING CAREER

If Zan Holmes Jr. followed his first choice of college major – music performance – his professional path would have been wildly different.

He and some friends at Huston-Tillotson University had formed a group, “The Vinos,” and cut a few records. They were successful, but an invitation to visit Perkins from Cecil Williams – one of the school’s first Black graduates – was enough of a nudge for Holmes to take the first steps toward a life of service to The United Methodist Church and his community.

A life in professional ministry wouldn’t have been completely unexpected, since his father was a Methodist pastor. But upon his arrival at Perkins, Holmes flourished. He became known as much for his community activism and engagement as he was for his demonstrative preaching style.

In addition to his years of service as a pastor – from his first appointment at Hamilton Park UMC to his years as a preaching professor at Perkins and 28 years as Senior Pastor at St. Luke “Community” UMC – Holmes also was a member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1968 to 1972.

He was pivotal in the desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District and later became the first Black member of the University of Texas System Board of Regents.

In Holmes’ own words, “Wherever there’s trouble, I show up.”

And, Holmes said, he owes it all to his role as a preacher.

He recently sat down for an interview with Perspective to remark on his illustrious career in ministry, his years as a professor teaching that craft, his views on the future of the church universal and the role that Perkins plays in preparing those who embark on careers in ministry.

You’re known so much for preaching. That’s what you taught for so many years at Perkins. And your legacy is not only being able to teach others to be great preachers, but to be a great preacher yourself. Where did your love for preaching come from?

HOLMES: Well, I have to go back to my dad. My dad was a wonderful preacher, and he thrived in that arena. The one thing that moved me was that gift to tell stories. I would sit and I would hear and I was greatly informed by that storytelling. I was shaped in that environment, and when you add the music and the spirituals, it’s just magical. People respond to stories, and I see preaching as a way of storytelling.

What do you think it was about the way that you taught preaching that had people lining up to get into your class?

HOLMES: One thing, I was doing it. I was preaching myself, and I loved doing it. I would get my students to discover their own gifts, their own talents. I would encourage them. I was patient. I had students who could hardly read in some instances. I mean, I’m not going to call out their names, but I saw those students grow magnificently. I was very patient.



Holmes with (l to r) Perkins Dean Joseph D. Quillian, Dr. Albert C. Outler, and Bishop W. McFerrin Stowe during Ministers Week 1974.

I loved my students. They saw the passion I had for teaching preaching and felt they could take what I was teaching them and put it into practice.

Can you speak to the importance of a theological education in the role of preaching today?

HOLMES: I think hunger for theological education is alive and well, and I say that because that has to be the case when you look at what's going on in society today. Where is the church? Where is the church in the midst of the critical issues that we are facing in our nation today? Where is the cry? Where is the passion? Pastors – and what they're preaching about to their congregations – need to be front and center to be a change agent in our world.

You have always said that the Black church is very special to you. What can the church universal learn from the Black church?

HOLMES: The Black church, that's who I am. I worked very hard, my whole style and ministry, to preach unity. And I'm all for those who call for community. I think community doesn't mean that we are all alike. I mean, we can move in the right direction and have some differences. We grow, we learn from one another, and I see hope for us all.

What is your hope for Perkins, as it continues to prepare women and men for ministry and leadership, both in the church and in the community?

HOLMES: My hope is that Perkins will just stay out on the cutting edge of when we look at what's happening in our society. You know, in some ways, it looks like we're going backward, with the tensions of what's happening, there is still a lot of racism alive and well in our nation. I mean, these are challenging times, and the struggle for justice and peace continues on the campus, in the community, in the church. I used to say, "If you see a good fight, get in it." I got in every good fight I saw, and I think fighting for what's right is what we still need today.



Holmes (center) leads a Dallas Civil Rights march.



Holmes (center) with the Rev. Jesse Jackson (left) at a gathering at Warren United Methodist Church in Dallas.

The Objects of Preaching

BRIDWELL LIBRARY AND THE SPOKEN WORD

By Anthony J. Elia

Director and J.S. Bridwell Foundation Endowed Librarian

From a library perspective, the idea of preaching is just as complex as the art of its performance by practitioners of this ancient craft. For most of my life, I have experienced the nuanced facility and mastery of the spoken word from the congregational side of the pulpit, yet this has not discouraged my own interest in the mysteries and profundities of preaching, especially among those attributes, approaches, or tools that go into the choreography of the Word. Since a library like Bridwell plays distinct roles in fostering the research and spiritual direction of our whole community, the integral qualities of “what goes into preaching” may span the spectrum of scriptural study, language learning, and training on how to interrogate reliable and balanced sources. How we speak, communicate, hold our voices, project our confidence, and connect with all kinds of people in those spaces of preaching is what my fine and beloved colleagues work on with their students. The connections between the objects of preaching in Bridwell and the actions of performance in the classroom and the church itself are distinct and important.

Bridwell recently received John Wesley’s personal traveling pulpit. I look at it often and it has become one of our most visited and treasured possessions. When tour groups, church congregations, or student seminars visit Bridwell they almost immediately ask, “Can we see the Wesley pulpit?” They come to it with great energy and enthusiasm and touch it, look behind it, pose with it for photos. A smaller pulpit from an island in Great Britain, a mere thirty feet away, often stands ignored. While the curiosity and admiration of the Wesley pulpit has its role, the benefits of Bridwell’s collections goes well beyond the tangibility of communing with the same objects that were once owned and presided over by the founder of Methodism. These are important distinctions and have particular meaning and significance, because the notion of a pulpit emotes its own constellation of attachments, respect, sobriety, humility, and distinction. That place where one preaches from may be a physical place, but it is imbued with the powers of credentials, practice, and



Visitors often ask to see John Wesley’s personal traveling pulpit, a recent acquisition at Bridwell.



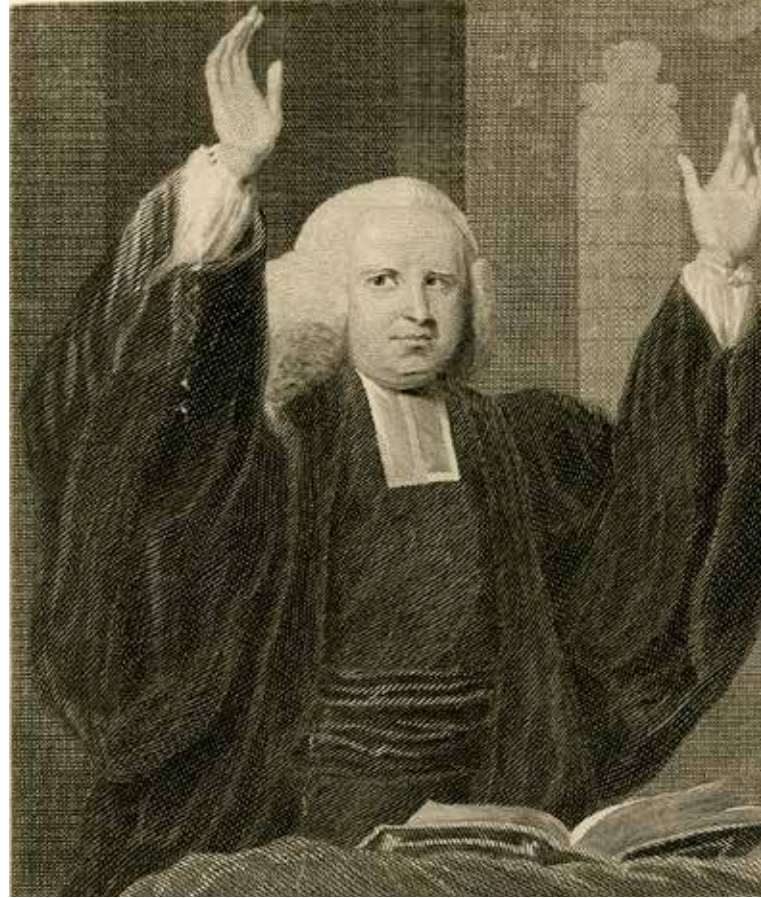
This Catholic Missal (ca. 1400) was used to guide liturgy, prayer and preaching. Credit: Bridwell Library Special Collections, SMU

performance, but most of all, an inner conveyance of the spirit (or Spirit) that transcends all else.

Among the many images, objects, and books related to preaching in Bridwell are items that portray the diverse nature of preaching itself—not just in our present world, but in the historical arc of time that displays the preacherly habits, refinements, and styles in vibrantly unique ways. In medieval times before the advent of the printing press, there were obviously not as many books in circulation as there would be after its invention. The flood of books throughout Europe guaranteed a new way of not just engaging with texts, but with how the common person viewed the Bible, reflected on ideas of authority and freedom, or considered modes of communicating through print culture. And some of this played out during the European reformations. At the end of the 14th century, we find Catholic missals, which were used as guides for reflection, prayer, and preaching—like some of those found now in Bridwell Library. During the time of Martin Luther in the early 16th century, there were debates about the number of times that priests (and later pastors) would deliver sermons, where in some cases the populace and church leaders thought too many sermons were being preached. In the 18th century we see greater diversity of biblical exegesis, debates, and fragmentation, which led to new denominations and an increase in travel and itinerant preaching. The fact that Wesley's pulpit was a traveling pulpit is also important to the nature of his time and the organic, evolving, and growing nature of the church.

A well-known image of early Methodist evangelist George Whitefield (1714-1770) preaching with his arms raised gives us an interesting portrait of a mid-18th century churchman conveying the Word of God with particular effusion; while an earlier portrait of him by Joseph Badger, ca. 1745, seems more studied and modest. Each portrayal has a man with a wig and a book opened at a pulpit.

In a more contemporary context, another image from Bridwell's collections shows the vibrant young preacher, William Talbot Handy Jr. (1924-1998) at an African American congregation dating from the 1950s. He too is at a pulpit with a book open, though in these modern times, he has a light and microphone in front of him. He is also standing above a group of distinguished and honorable congregants—something you do not see in the portraits of earlier times. Each of these images, objects, and spaces tells us both explicit and implicit details and facts. This helps us as historians, homiletics, liturgists, and students to interrogate and discern the varieties of experiences and practices. These may be documented episodes of the past, images or portraits of a preacher, or simply a written manuscript or printed text exegeting the Word for congregations at a local church. Whatever these objects are, we seek to provide the context, evidence, resources, and distinct materials to our constituents that brings us closer together as a community. Ultimately, we hope this affords our preachers and preachers-in-training the optimal tools for refining their craft and rendering that practice into a meaningful and life affirming art.



A well-known image of early Methodist evangelist George Whitefield (1714-1770). Credit: Bridwell Library Special Collections, SMU



William Talbot Handy Jr. (1924-1998) preaches at an African American congregation in the 1950s. Credit: Bridwell Library Special Collections Exhibitions, SMU

Friends We Will Miss

“The best of all is, God is with us.”

- JOHN WESLEY

**We remember all those who have gone before us this past year
and pray and pray that their souls are at rest with God.**

The Rev. Eddie J. Adams (M.Div.'92)
The Rev. Charles E. Addington (M.Div. '93)
The Rev. Preston S. Adkison (M.Th. '56)
Barbara R. Aniol (M.R.E. '52)
The Rev. Lou Ann Hollis Asbury (M.Div. '89)
The Rev. John P. Aymond, Jr. (M.Div. '90)
The Rev. Taylor Scott Boone (M.Div. '08)
Boyd V. Baker (M.Th. '61)
The Rev. David R. Blackmon (M.Th. '79)
The Rev. Dr. Norman Bouffard (M.Th. '64; M.S.T. '71)
The Rev. Mary Elizabeth "Patsy" Brundige (M.Div. '86)
The Rev. Manasseh C. Cady (M.Th. '55)
The Rev. Dan H. Carmichael (M.Th. '52)
Byron P. Cavnar (M.Th. '51)
The Rev. John S. Davis (M.Th. '45)
The Rev. Charles W. Danheim (M.Th. '51)
James E. Dorff (M.Th. '72)
Father Joseph Doyle (D.Min. '85)
The Rev. James H. Ellison (M.Th. '50)
The Rev. Donald S. Elrod (M.Div. '86)
The Rev. Loy S. Estes (M.Th. '56)
The Rev. Verlon E. Feller (M.Div. '52)
Nolan M. Fisher (M. Th. '52)
The Rev. Norman W. Grigsby (M.Th. '57)
Francis W. Hursh (M.Th. '63)
The Rev. Ben F. Jordan (M.Th. '52)
The Rev. Fred H. Kight (M.Th. '58)
Dr. James E. Laughlin (M.Th. '08)
The Rev. Bob L. Lawton (M.Th. '55)
The Rev. Dr. Osmond A. Lindo, Sr. (M.Th. '75)
The Rev. James T. Logan (M.Th. '80)
The Rev. John L. "Jack" Matkin (M.Div. '99)
The Rev. Harvey H. Matney (M.Th. '52)
Shirley Wittman Matthews
(Master of Christian Education, '57)
Dr. Edward G. Matthews (M.Th. '59)
The Rev. John Patton McClatchy (M.Th. '53)
Chaplain Stanley L. H. McGuire (M.Th.'55)
The Rev. Gene C. McNutt (M.Th. '80)
Francine F. Meyer (M.Div. '03)
The Rev. Marvin R. Moore (M.Div. '93)
The Rev. Larry Nicholson (M.Th. '69)
The Rev. Dr. Bobby W. Parrott (M.Th. '58; D.Min. '77)
The Rev. Janice K. Petty (M.Div. '91)
Dr. James J. Pullen (M.Th. '70)
The Rev. Troy Pults, Jr. (M.Th. '69)
The Rev. Billy L. Reed (M.Th. '78)
Gene Rives, Jr. (M.Div. '01)
Dr. John C. Robertson, Jr. (M.Div. '61)
The Rev. Gordon Roe (M.Th. '80)
The Rev. Glenna Spencer (M.Div. '91)
The Rev. Allen Snider (M.Div. '96)
The Rev. William "Bill" Steele (M.Th. '77)
The Rev. Lee W. Stephenson (M.Th. '62)
The Rev. Norman D. Stephenson (M.Th. '60)
The Rev. Kenneth Truelove (M.Th. '64)
The Rev. Karl D. Wood (M.Th. '57)
John F. Yeaman (M.Th. '53)

*For a comprehensive list of all Perkins alumni/ae who have died during the past 12 months, please visit smu.edu/perkins/memoriams.
Note: All information regarding deceased Perkins alumni/ae is provided by Southern Methodist University's official database.*



OBITUARY

William J. Abraham

December 19, 1947 - October 7, 2021

Tributes poured in after the Perkins community received word that Dr. William “Billy” J. Abraham, 73, died suddenly on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021.

A Professor Emeritus of Wesley Studies at Perkins, Abraham was the Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies from 1995 until his retirement in May 2021. He joined the Perkins faculty in 1985 as the McCreless Associate Professor of Evangelism and the Philosophy of Religion under the leadership of then-Dean James Kirby and Provost Hans Hillerbrand.

“For almost four decades, Billy Abraham’s scholarship and commitment to excellence impacted the lives of countless Perkins students, colleagues and others across the globe,” said Perkins Dean Craig C. Hill. “He was a Christ-bearer, both in the academy and in the local church - to which he was profoundly committed - and his death is a tremendous loss to Perkins and to the wider community. Our heartfelt prayers are with his family at this time.”

Abraham was active early in the Confessing Movement, which challenged The United Methodist Church and other mainline denominations to maintain traditional positions on theology, including the understanding of marriage as between one man and one woman. An early critic of what he viewed as the doctrinal drift of The United Methodist Church, he articulated his concerns in an influential book, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in The United Methodist Church*.

“He made us think hard, he inspired us and filled our hearts with joy and holy laughter,” said Keith Boyette, president of the Wesley Covenant Association (WCA), recalling a presentation by Abraham at the WCA’s

2019 Global Gathering. “His impact on thousands of students, pastors and lay people will live on for years to come.”

Abraham was a prolific author and sought-after lecturer. He earned an undergraduate degree from The Queen’s University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford. He taught at Seattle Pacific University and Harvard Divinity School, as well as at SMU. An ordained elder in the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, he served on the General Commission on Unity and Interreligious Concerns of the United Methodist Church (1992-2021). In 2018, he received the SMU Faculty Career Achievement Award for his dedication to Perkins and Southern Methodist University. Shortly before his death, Abraham was named the inaugural director of the new Wesley House of Studies at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Abraham is survived by his wife, Muriel; a daughter, Siobhan; and a son, Shaun. Another son, Timothy, died in 2012. A memorial service took place on Oct. 30 at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, where Abraham was a Sunday School teacher for many years.

A Perkins annual lectureship has been planned in honor of Professor Billy Abraham (details will be released soon). Those interested in helping to fund the lecture may contribute either online or by check to the SMU Fund for Perkins, “noting Abraham Lecture.” To donate online, go to link.smu.edu/giving/GiveNow

If by check the donation should be sent to: Perkins Development, PO Box 750133, Dallas, TX 75275-0133

“He was a Christ-bearer, both in the academy and in the local church - to which he was profoundly committed ...”

DEAN CRAIG C. HILL



PERKINS NAMES EVELYN PARKER AS 2021 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA

The Perkins School of Theology Alumni/ae Council selected Evelyn L. Parker as the 2021 recipient of the Perkins Distinguished Alumnus/a Award.

Parker is both an alumna of Perkins and a member emerita of the Perkins faculty. Until her retirement in May 2021, she was the Susanna Wesley Centennial Professor of Practical Theology at Perkins.

“Evelyn Parker was loved by her students and esteemed by her colleagues at Perkins,” said Craig C. Hill, dean of Perkins School of Theology. “But her influence stretched well beyond our campus. She is globally recognized as an ecumenical leader and as one of the preeminent theological scholars of her generation in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.”

Parker also served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Perkins. As a J. William Fulbright Scholar, Parker spent 2019-2020 in Cape Town, South Africa, focusing on the role of religious leaders in preventing and intervening in teen dating violence.

In a letter affirming Parker’s nomination for the award, Bishop Lawrence Reddick of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church praised Parker’s dedication to scholarship, to Perkins, to ecumenical causes and to her local congregation. “Having joined the Perkins faculty in 1998, she has inspired countless

others into scholarship,” he said. He added that his daughter Iris visited the campus at Parker’s urging and later completed an M.Div. and Th.M. at Perkins.

The Rev. Brian Lightner (M.Div. ’18), senior pastor of St. James CME Church in Tyler, Texas, remembered his first impressions upon meeting Parker the first time (“Wow! She is really smart.”) during a campus visit. “Her love for Christian education resonates in the countless students she taught, mentored and challenged to develop a critical theological consciousness,” he said.

Parker’s career began in 1983 as a research scientist in the department of Human Biological Chemistry and Genetics at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. After completing a certificate course in Christian Education at Perkins, she came to Perkins as a full-time student in the fall of 1989. She earned a master’s degree in Religious Education at Perkins and a Ph.D. in the Religious and Theological Studies Joint Program at Garrett-Evangelical School of Theology and Northwestern University in 1996. She returned to Perkins in 1998 to join the faculty.

A faithful lifelong member of Kirkwood Temple CME Church in Dallas, Parker has served as the church’s Christian Education Coordinator. The church’s pastor, Dr. Jerry L. Christian, Sr., who has known Parker for more than a half-century, wrote in his letter of nomination, “As her pastor for the past 15-plus

years, I have observed her to be an outstanding woman of impeccable character who possesses phenomenal leadership skills and who exhibits genuine knowledge of the Word of God.”

Parker has represented the CME denomination at the World Council of Churches (WCC) and helped guide the planning for the Tenth Assembly of the WCC in Busan, South Korea, in 2013 as a member of its Central Committee.

She was also distinguished visiting professor for the 2021-22 academic year at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Parker is the author of *Between Sisters: Emancipatory Hope Out of Tragic Relationships*, (Cascade Books, 2017) and *Trouble Don't Last Always: Emancipatory Hope Among African American Adolescents* (Pilgrim Press, 2003) and editor of *The Sacred Selves of Adolescent Girls: Hard Stories of Race, Class, and Gender* (Pilgrim Press, 2006). She has also published several chapters and journal articles on adolescent spirituality, including “Divine Fortitude: A reflection on God’s goodness in black female child soldiers,” in *Female Child Soldiering: Gender Violence and Feminist Theologies* (Susan Willhauck, ed., Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019).

“Her scholarship is exceptionally distinguished because she has devoted herself deeply to listening to young people – primarily young women and girls – about their spirituality, sexuality, cultural identity and personal individuality,” said William Lawrence, Professor Emeritus and former Perkins dean, in a letter affirming Parker’s nomination. “She has heard the silenced voices of Black, gay and trans youth.”

Parker will be honored at the Distinguished Alumni Awards Banquet on Monday, Nov. 14 on the campus of SMU. The event will also honor the 2022 Award recipient(s), as well as the 2020 Award recipients, the Rev. Donald W. Underwood and the Rev. Dr. Sidney G. Hall, III.



To register for the Distinguished Alumni Awards Banquet visit:
smu.edu/perkins

“As her pastor for the past 15-plus years, I have observed her to be an outstanding woman of impeccable character who possesses phenomenal leadership skills and who exhibits genuine knowledge of the Word of God.”

DR. JERRY L. CHRISTIAN, SR.

NOMINATIONS FOR 2022 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS/A AWARD

Perkins School of Theology is now accepting nominations for the 2022 Distinguished Alumnus/a Award. The deadline to submit is Friday, Sept. 30.

The Distinguished Alumnus/a Award, presented annually, recognizes Perkins graduates who have demonstrated effectiveness and integrity in service to the church, continuing support for the goals of Perkins and SMU, distinguished service to the community and exemplary character.

To nominate a Perkins graduate for the award, please submit:

- + a letter describing the nominee’s career highlights and other accomplishments.
- + letters or statements from at least two additional people who support the nomination.

The person submitting the nomination should compile all materials and mail them together to:

Office of Public Affairs and Alumni/ae Relations
Perkins School of Theology
PO Box 750133
Dallas, TX 75275-0133

Alternatively, nominations may be submitted via email. Attach the nominating letter and all supporting materials in a single email to:

The Rev. Connie L. Nelson
Executive Director of Public Affairs
and Alumni/ae Relations
clnelson@smu.edu

THE BAUGH FOUNDATION GRANTS \$2.7 MILLION TO

Perkins Baptist House of Studies

The Baptist House of Studies at the SMU Perkins School of Theology has been awarded a \$2.7 million, three-year grant from the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, a Texas-based philanthropy committed to supporting the work of faith-based, nonprofit organizations.

The contribution will fund approximately 10 full-time Baugh Scholars enrolled in Perkins master's, Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Pastoral Music degree programs within the Baptist House of Studies. In addition to covering full tuition and fees, the grant will provide emergency aid for students enrolled in the program. The Baugh Foundation's commitment supports the University's \$1.5 billion campaign, SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow, particularly the campaign goal to empower outstanding students.

"Programs like the Baugh Scholars grow fellowship and scholarship within the Perkins School, helping its students cultivate wisdom and personal development," said SMU President R. Gerald Turner. "We are gratified by the Baugh Foundation's support for the academic and spiritual pursuits of our students."

Founded in 2019, the Perkins Baptist House of Studies fosters a community for ministerial students, faculty and staff who identify with the Baptist and Free Church traditions. A program rather than a physical house, the Perkins Baptist House is a spiritual haven that supports and encourages students as they pursue their academic and ecclesial training in an ecumenical and university-based seminary.

"The Baugh Foundation is enthusiastic about the opportunity to support the development of the Baptist House of Studies at Perkins School



SMU Perkins School of Theology
Baptist House of Studies

of Theology," said Baugh Foundation Vice President Jackie Baugh Moore. "Training the next generation of pastors, scholars and faith leaders in an ecumenical and inclusive setting matches the challenges of the culture in which Baptist and Free Church leaders will be serving."

Perkins Dean Craig C. Hill believes the Baugh Foundation grant is important both for the Baptist House of Studies and for all Baptist students enrolled at Perkins.

"Our Baptist House of Studies is off to an excellent start, and this funding will empower it to flourish, providing essential financial support for students while also creating an intellectual and spiritual home for a community of Baptist seminarians," Hill said.

Through the Baptist House of Studies, Baptist students in Perkins and those from Free Church traditions (such as the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ Mennonite and nondenominational churches) can participate in mentoring, internships and fellowships. In addition, students are offered a concentration in Baptist studies, including teaching Baptist and Free Church history, theology and polity.

The founding director of the Baptist House of Studies is renowned New Testament scholar and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor Jaime Clark-Soles.

"This new grant will be transformational for the Baptist House," said Clark-Soles. "It will provide scholarship and programming funds, enabling us to compete for high-quality students from a wider geographic area. It will also allow us to dramatically intensify our outreach and the awareness of what we have to offer, elevating Perkins as a premier destination for a robust Baptist theological education."

2021-2022 News Roundup

FALL CONVOCATION



With the theme, “Speak Up! Stories for a New Day,” the 2021 Perkins Fall Convocation brought together theology professors, authors, activists, performers, pastors and laypeople for two days of programming at Highland Park United Methodist Church. Keynote speakers included Amy-Jill Levine, who is Rabbi Stanley M. Kessler Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford Seminary and University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies Emerita as well as Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies Emerita at Vanderbilt University; Lillian Daniel, pastor and author of *When ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’ is Not Enough*; and Patrick B. Reyes, Chicano educator, administrator and institutional strategist. Rounding out the two-day program were performances by Bandan Koro, an African dance ensemble; closing worship led by Dallas Indian United Methodist Church; and a Slam Poetry Open Mic event led by Mike Guinn. Participants also had an opportunity to test some of the ideas in a practicum session following each plenary.

SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON



Not only did Perkins’ annual fundraising luncheon return to its usual in-person format in 2022 – the event was a rousing success. The Bolin Family Perkins Scholarship Luncheon took place on March 17 in the Martha Proctor Mack Ballroom. (Last year’s event, with speaker David Brooks of *The New York Times*, took place virtually.) With every table sponsored, and net proceeds of approximately \$125,000, it was the most financially successful Bolin Family Scholarship Luncheon in the history of the series, according to John Martin, Director of Development for Perkins. Highlights included a video tribute to the Rev. Dr. Zan Holmes (M. Th., 1959; M.S.T., 1968), a presentation on the Black/Africana Church Studies Program (BACS) and a keynote delivered by the Rev. Dr. Richie Butler, senior pastor of St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church in Dallas. Funds raised will support the Black Africana Church Studies Program scholarship fund.

PERKINS SUMMIT



The 2022 Perkins Summit for Faith and Learning took place on Friday and Saturday, March 25-26 at the Dallas campus of Perkins. Some 55 people from nine states attended the annual event, with virtual attendees joining from as far away as Alaska, California and North Carolina. Angela Gorrell, author of *The Gravity of Joy: A Story of Being Lost and Found* and assistant professor of Practical Theology at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary, presented the keynote lecture. Attendees also chose from a selection of courses on the Bible, theology and spirituality taught by Perkins faculty and Gorrell. The event was sponsored by the Howard-Holbert Endowment for Laity Education. Ten attendees were there thanks to a special arrangement with the Arkansas Methodist Foundation, which paid for tuition, travel and accommodations for clergy and staff in the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Looking Back with Gratitude, Looking Ahead with Hope



In preparing this message for the Perkins community, I looked back at our Development Office letters published in past issues of *Perspective*. Over the years, in this column, we've shared some of our needs to support visions for Perkins' future. Those visions depended on the generosity of the Perkins community. I reflect with gratitude when I consider those that have come to fruition.

In 2018, for example, we highlighted two key development priorities: student financial aid and the rejuvenation of the Perkins Houston-Galveston Extension Program. With the support of Perkins donors and friends, both visions are becoming reality today.

We are attracting excellent M.Div. students thanks to the generosity of the Perkins Executive Board and other supporters. That allows us to provide substantial scholarships to assist with the cost of theological education. We are helping ensure that our students do not graduate with a burdensome level of debt.

Our "rebooted" Houston-Galveston program is thriving. Students in this hybrid program now represent about a third of the Perkins student body. More important, Houston-Galveston offers a path of preparation for ministry to promising students who might not otherwise be able to attend, due to family or job commitments. This past May, the first students enrolled in the "rebooted" Houston-Galveston program graduated and began their careers in Christian ministry. We are just beginning to see how God is working through the Houston-Galveston program.

While it's wonderful to see this kind of progress, we cannot sit on our laurels. As always, we must look to the future.

Perkins continues to face the changes affecting all theological seminaries, including the rising cost

of higher education on both the seminary and undergraduate levels, a culture that places less value on theological education than in previous generations, and the urgent need to train women and men from a variety of cultures and traditions in multiple languages.

But we have many reasons to look ahead with hope. In this issue of *Perspective*, you'll read about our outstanding and innovative programs in preaching at Perkins. Our faculty are national leaders in the field of homiletics. Our students are prepared with strong academic skills in exegesis and sermon structure as well as practical tools to help them meet the real demands of preaching week in and week out. Our Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence offers innovative continuing education programs to working pastors.

Important and life-changing work is taking place here at Perkins. As always, we need friends and donors to partner with us in the important task of educating women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry. Consider making a recurring gift. Or contact me personally at johnma@smu.edu to discuss ways that you can honor a parent, pastor, mentor or spiritual influence with a gift to Perkins. **To give to Perkins, visit giving.smu.edu/schools-areas/perkins/**

The need is the same from generation to generation. I invite you to join us in this endeavor.

With a thankful heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Martin".

John A. Martin

*Director of Development
Perkins School of Theology*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Save the dates for these exciting Perkins opportunities in 2022-23

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL

June 27–July 15 and July 18–August 5, 2022

The Perkins Regional Course of Study School (COSS) provides basic theological education to licensed local pastors. COSS is a program of The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church in partnership with and administered by Perkins School of Theology. Visit smu.edu/coss.

CERTIFICATE IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

August 26-28 and December 2-4, 2022, April 21-23, 2023

Continuing education workshop focusing on “Internal Family Systems” as a tool for understanding relationships in the spiritual journey. Seasoned directors and newcomers alike are welcome. Visit smu.edu/perkins/csd for more information.

PERKINS FALL CONVOCATION

November 14-15, 2022

Don't miss our impactful annual continuing education event that brings clergy, church staff and laity together to explore various intersections of faith and culture. Enjoy two days of engagement, lectures, learning and worship with esteemed theologians, scholars, community leaders and influencers.

2022 ANNUAL ADVENT WORSHIP SERVICE

December 1, 2022

Advent Service at 6 p.m. in Perkins Chapel. Free and open to the public.

CERTIFICATE IN PRACTICAL MINISTRY

January 4-13, 2023

Course for non-credit students looking for specialized training in relevant, practical knowledge that informs their lifelong spiritual journey and ministry. January 2023 courses include United Methodist Studies and Engaging Theology. Visit smu.edu/perkins/cpm for more information.

PERKINS SCHOOL OF YOUTH MINISTRY

January 9-12, 2023

Practical and theological training programs to resource those in the church whose ministries focus on youth and young adults. Visit smu.edu/perkinsyouth

PERKINS SUMMIT FOR FAITH AND LEARNING

March 24-25, 2023

Join us for three days of study focusing on the Bible, theology and spirituality with Perkins faculty and guest speakers. Request email updates at smu.edu/perkins/oepupdates

COMMENCEMENT AND CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

May 13, 2023

Perkins School of Theology will honor graduating seniors during the University-wide commencement ceremony in Moody Coliseum, followed by the annual Celebration of Degrees and Academic Achievements at Highland Park United Methodist Church.

NEW FACES AT PERKINS



Matt Jacob re-joined the Perkins staff as Associate Director of Public Affairs and Alumni/ae Relations in January 2022, a position he held previously from 2015-2017. Jacob also teaches an advanced writing class for public relations students in the corporate communications and public affairs program at Meadows as an adjunct.



Brandy Walthall is the Circulation and Front-Desk Specialist at Bridwell Library. She joined the staff in January 2022.



Rose Burns joined the Development and External Affairs office as an Advancement Associate in April 2022.

Perspective

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