



# SMU PERKINS

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2009

For more information contact:

Roberta Cox, 214-768-2335, [rcox@smu.edu](mailto:rcox@smu.edu)

Paul Escamilla, 214-768-1393, [escamilla@smu.edu](mailto:escamilla@smu.edu)

## **PERKINS NAMES PREACHING LAB FOR DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE REV. DR. A. CECIL WILLIAMS**

*Dallas, Texas* – Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University has announced the naming of the Williams Preaching Lab in Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall in honor of Rev. Dr. A. Cecil Williams '55, Minister of Liberation at Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco. The announcement was made by Dean William B. Lawrence at a reception held in honor of Williams and his wife, Janice Mirikitani, on Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> in the Great Hall of Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall at Perkins. The preaching lab is a state-of-the-art facility within the newly constructed Prothro Hall. The room is designed to support instruction and training in homiletics for present and future clergy.

Williams was in Dallas to receive one of the SMU 2009 Distinguished Alumnus Awards, presented Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas. He is a previous recipient of the Perkins Distinguished Alumnus Award (1996), and was conferred an honorary doctorate by the University in 1997.

As minister, author, social activist, lecturer, community leader, and spokesperson for the poor and marginalized, Rev. Williams has long been recognized as a national leader in the struggle for civil and human rights. He was one of five African American students admitted to Perkins in the fall of 1952 in what was the first voluntary desegregation of a major educational institution in the South. The story of the historic series of events surrounding their matriculation is chronicled by former Perkins dean

Merrimon Cuninggim in *Perkins Led the Way: The Story of Desegregation at Southern Methodist University*. Williams went on to graduate from Perkins and begin his pastoral ministry. In 1963 he was appointed to Glide Memorial Methodist, a church of fewer than 50 members in a declining section of San Francisco. His extraordinary vision, prophetic imagination, and gifted leadership across more than 45 years have raised Glide to national prominence.

Today the church has a membership of more than 11,000, representing a multitude of races, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, social classes, and ages. Glide has garnered innumerable accolades for its radical embrace of its surrounding community, having developed myriad programs to enable San Francisco's poor to break the cycle of poverty and dependence. The church's extensive network of services includes the only food program in San Francisco offering three meals a day, 365 days a year, as well as an outpatient substance abuse treatment and recovery program that has received national recognition as a model of innovation. This particular program has moved hundreds from dependence and powerlessness to self-sufficiency and empowerment.

As a minister, author, and lecturer, Williams has become a national leader for urban ministry, social change, and responsible discipleship, not only in The United Methodist Church, but in church and society throughout the country and beyond. His many honors include an appointment to the Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets and the bestowal of the National Caring Award by the Caring Institute in Washington, D.C. In May 2005, SMU recognized the contributions of Williams and his four pioneering African American colleagues at their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commencement.

Williams' life and ministry continue to be transformative to the church and the unchurched, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the powerful and the powerless. His untiring ministry has been both model and inspiration to countless others who share his vision of a just and humane society.

***We invite you to visit our new website at [www.smu.edu/perkins](http://www.smu.edu/perkins) to learn more about Perkins School of Theology.***

*Perkins School of Theology, founded in 1911, is one of five official University-related schools of theology of The United Methodist Church. Degree programs include*

*the Master of Divinity, Master of Sacred Music, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Church Ministries, and Doctor of Ministry, as well as the Ph.D., in cooperation with SMU's Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences.*

- # -

- # -

- # -