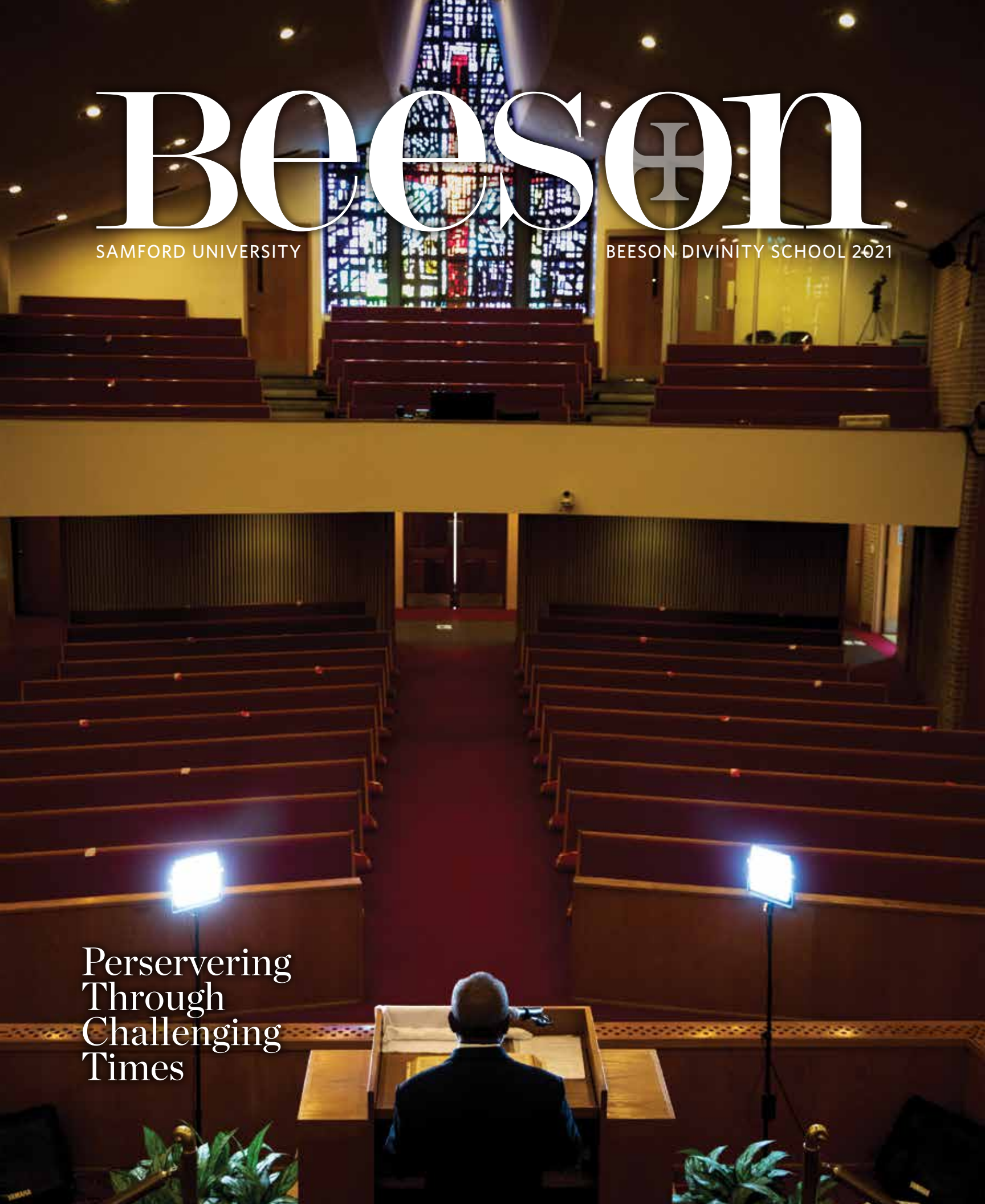


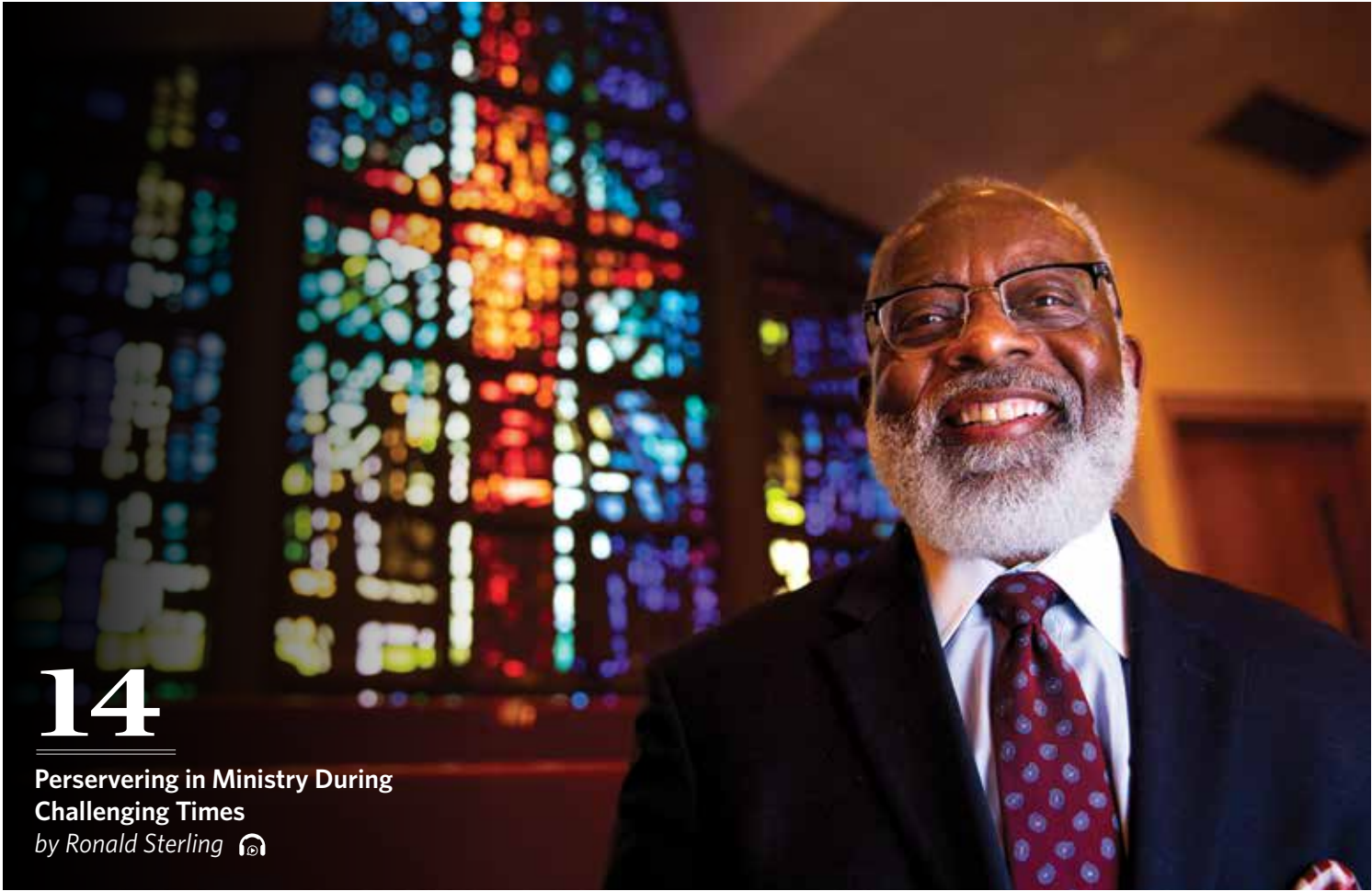
# BEESON

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

BEESON DIVINITY SCHOOL 2021


Perservering  
Through  
Challenging  
Times





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# BEESON

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# A Letter of Consolation and Exhortation to

In July 1524, 150 men arrived in Strasbourg as refugees after being forced to flee from their small German town of Kentzingen (now known as Kenzingen) in Breisgau because of their Protestant faith. Under the threat of military force, the male parishioners of the town's Lutheran church had accompanied their pastor, Jacob Otter, out of town.

However, when the men tried returning, the prince's soldiers had already taken control, and they were unable to reenter. So, the men, with their pastor, rowed boats up the river Rhine until they arrived in the Protestant-sympathetic city of Strasbourg, leaving their wives and children behind.

On their first night in Strasbourg, 80 of the men were taken in by a local Protestant pastor and wife, by the names of Matthias and Katharina Schütz Zell, who opened up their parsonage as shelter. Over the following four weeks, the Zells fed 50-60 of them per day with the help of neighbors. News arrived of the situation back in Kentzingen: The overlords had killed the city secretary for owning Luther's German New Testament, confiscated and burned Lutheran Bibles and books and persecuted the wives of the men who fled.

Katharina felt a particular pastoral concern for the wives of the men she was feeding. So on July 22, 1524, she published an open letter to "the suffering women of the community of Kentzingen, who believe in Christ," which was eventually reprinted and even sent to Martin Luther.


Their situation was "distressing." Not only did they lose their husbands and providers (in all practicality they lived as

widows), but now they and their children faced the real possibility of persecution and death. Katharina's main pastoral concern was that the women would remain steadfast in their "God-given faith" and in faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

While it is unlikely that any of us reading this magazine today have had this type of experience of suffering, we all have lived through a distressing year and have suffered in other ways. As we prayed and brainstormed about the theme of this year's Beeson magazine, we remembered the difficult year this has been for our alumni. Pastoring and ministering to congregations during a pandemic and a year of political and racial turmoil has taken its toll. Many of you are discouraged, tired, and perhaps ready to give up and leave ministry altogether. Additionally, many of you have personally experienced pain and suffering due to the pandemic: your own health struggles with

COVID-19, the death of a loved one, financial difficulties, depression, and the list goes on.

These days, the popular phrase is "thriving in ministry." At Beeson, we even have a Thriving Pastors Initiative. Unfortunately, though, in the United States, thriving (its basic definition meaning to flourish and prosper) can be misunderstood and misapplied when associated with ministry. As Americans, to thrive or prosper is too often measured in material accumulation, power and numbers. When this concept of flourishing is projected onto ministry (and it often is), we might be apt to think of thriving as promotions, baptisms and memberships, tithes and offering dollars, platforms, book deals and name recognition. Yet, this year there has been very little of this type of "flourishing." So, should we drop the term altogether when speaking of ministry? Or can flourishing also encapsulate suffering and want?



*“If you want to be Christians and to enter into his glory with him, you must also suffer with him.”*

—Katharina Schütz Zell



# the Suffering



In this issue we want to propose that thriving in ministry means to remain faithful to God while enduring suffering. How can we remain faithful under suffering? I believe Katharina can help us with this question in her letter to the suffering women. The following are six points of pastoral wisdom that Katharina offered the suffering women, and which can be helpful for us today.

First, meditate on God's Word. Katharina wrote, do "not let the invincible Word of God go out of your heart, but always meditate on that Word that you have had with you for so long and heard with all your earnestness and faithfulness." It is in God's Word that the women will be reminded of the suffering of God's faithful people in Scripture, the suffering of God's own Son, the goodness of God in the midst of suffering, and the purpose of suffering.



Second, share in the faith of Abraham. Katharina pointed to the example of Abraham when God commanded him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, the promised son of God's covenant. "In the opinion of the world," Katharina wrote, "that was truly an unfatherly thing to do!"

"But Abraham believed and knew that his heir was invisibly kept safe for him and that God could also bring him back to life. So, I beg you, loyal believing women, also to do this: Take on you the manly, Abraham-like courage while you too are in distress and while you are abused with all kinds of insult and suffering. When you may meet with imprisonment in towers, chains, drowning, banishment, and such like things; when your husbands and you yourselves may be killed, meditate then on strong Abraham, father of us all; struggle after him as a good child should follow his father in a faith like the father's."

Third, look to Jesus Christ, who suffered on your behalf, and share in his sufferings. "If you want to be Christians and to enter into his glory with him, you must also suffer with him, and for this you encounter abuse. Yes, even if you are put in chains for Christ's sake, how happy you are!"

Fourth, remember faith is a "holy struggle." Katharina pointed again to Christ as an example, who struggled with his own impending death, praying, "If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26:39). "Dear

sisters, even though sometimes your faith may be discouraged, and the flesh may fight against the spirit, do not therefore be frightened away. It is a holy struggle; it must be thus: faith that is not tempted is not faith."

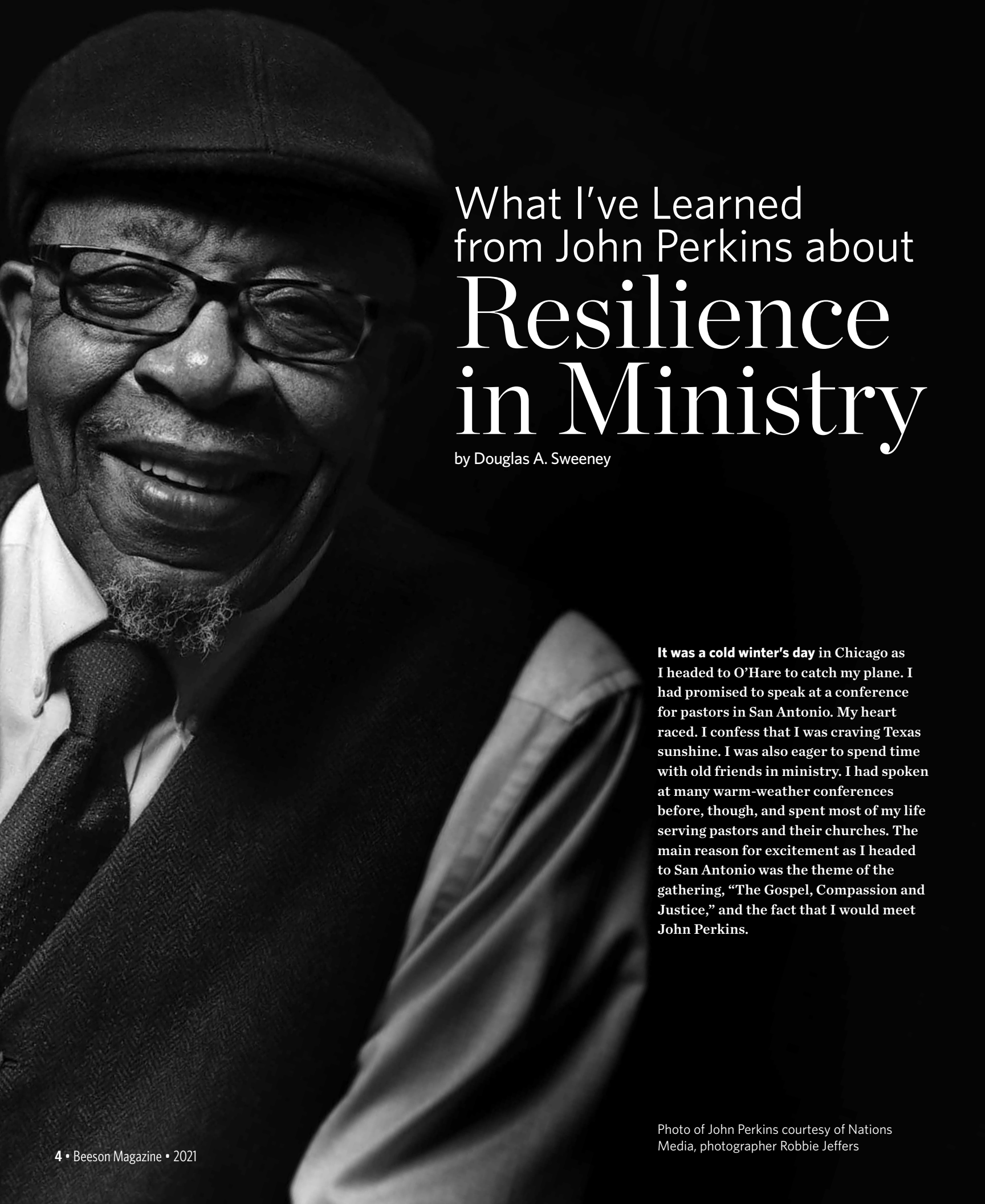
Fifth, speak God's Word to one another for mutual encouragement. "Trample your flesh under foot, lift up your spirit, and speak comfortingly to your husbands and also to yourselves the words that Christ himself has said: 'Do not fear those who can kill the body.'"

Finally, place your hope in the God of resurrection and the God who is for you in Christ Jesus. Katharina told the women if their husbands are killed, then remember that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Whether their husbands are gone for a short time or permanently, God will be a husband to them, for they are "beloved by God," she said. "His mercy and covenant of eternal peace will not be divorced from you in such a storm, for he will not divorce himself from you. ... He himself wants to be your Comforter, trusted Guardian, and Protector." ♦



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Material for this article came from *Katharina Schütz Zell: The Life and Thought of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer and Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, both by Elsie McKee.



# What I've Learned from John Perkins about Resilience in Ministry

by Douglas A. Sweeney

**It was a cold winter's day** in Chicago as I headed to O'Hare to catch my plane. I had promised to speak at a conference for pastors in San Antonio. My heart raced. I confess that I was craving Texas sunshine. I was also eager to spend time with old friends in ministry. I had spoken at many warm-weather conferences before, though, and spent most of my life serving pastors and their churches. The main reason for excitement as I headed to San Antonio was the theme of the gathering, "The Gospel, Compassion and Justice," and the fact that I would meet John Perkins.

Photo of John Perkins courtesy of Nations Media, photographer Robbie Jeffers

I had read Perkins' work and heard him speak many times. He turns 91 this year and has served as a well-known Christian leader most of my life. But I had not yet met him, and, at this conference in particular, we were both on the docket. I even had an appointment to meet with him alone.

As a church history teacher, I have long stood amazed at the miracle of African American Christianity. Given the way that millions of Africans were captured, transported and enslaved in the Americas, the fact that some converted to the faith of their abusers is remarkable enough. The flourishing of African American churches, denominations and parachurch ministries is nothing short of astounding.

As I think about resilience in pastoral ministry, my mind turns as often as not to ministries of Black brothers and sisters in the Lord. And no single Black brother springs to mind quite as often as the Rev. John Perkins. Born in 1930 in New Hebron, Mississippi, he was orphaned as a baby. His mother died of pellagra, a form of malnutrition. His father ran away. He was raised by his grandmother. He dropped out of school and picked cotton as a boy. His older brother, Clyde, who fought in World War II and even earned a Purple Heart, was murdered by police in a local altercation. In short, his childhood was not very conducive to resilience in Christian faith and practice.

Perkins moved to California at the bidding of his friends. He fought in Okinawa as a soldier in Korea. He climbed the corporate ladder. And then, in 1957, he met the Lord. He moved his family back to central Mississippi in 1960, convinced that God was asking him to serve the Black community, mainly as an evangelist and Bible school teacher. He founded an organization known as the Voice of Calvary Institute, which cared for local residents spiritually and physically. During the mid-1960s, he worked for civil rights as a way of helping those he came to serve as a pastor.

In 1970, while caring for a group of young people who had marched for civil rights in Mississippi, he was jailed and then beaten within an inch of his life by a group of white police. But, surprisingly, rather than respond with hate and vengeance, Perkins decided to forgive those who beat him and commit his life to inter-racial reconciliation.

He believed that racial hatred damaged those of both races. He spread his new message of Christian love far and wide, writing books and preaching sermons wherever he was asked. He expanded his



labors into other parts of the country—Pasadena and Chicago—and all around the world. By the 1980s, these ministries, and Perkins' own reconciling spirit, grew so famous and attractive to so many other people that this grade school dropout became one the most influential Christian speakers anywhere. His message usually echoes that of Paul in Ephesians: Christ has reconciled the faithful to the Lord and one another and we should act like this is true as we serve him day by day.

If any minister in America has a right to be frustrated, or even just tired, it is surely John Perkins. But when I met him in Texas, he was full of the Holy Spirit and appeared to have more energy and optimism than I did.

It is healthy to admit it when we're flagging in ministry. Many pastors need rest, good friends with whom to relax, share fellowship and pray. But when I'm tempted to despair or grow weary in well doing, I remember John Perkins. He has shown me how to spend myself for others even when I don't think I have it in me. He has shown me how to participate in the sufferings of Jesus for the sake of the gospel. He has shown me how to represent the reconciling love of the Savior in the world—in both word and in deed—with a love stronger than death. ♦

John Perkins (second from right) pictured with his wife, Vera Mae, and their four children in 1960.

Photo courtesy of the John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation.



*Douglas A. Sweeney is dean of Beeson Divinity School and author of 'The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement and The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward A More Compassionate Christology.'*



# A Prophetically Shaped Ministry

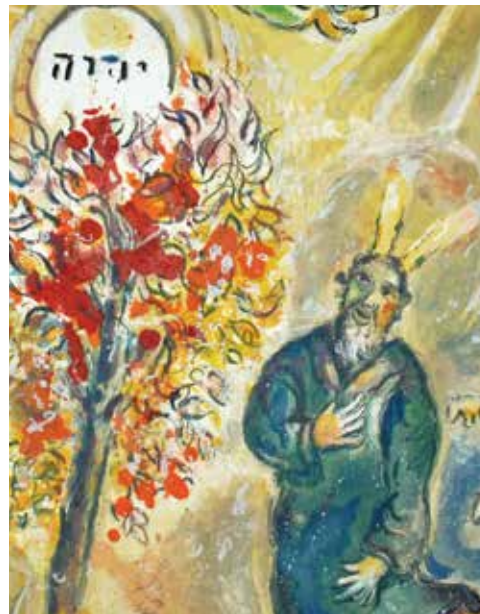
"Destruction of Jerusalem  
Under the Babylonian Rule."  
Illustration from the *Nuremberg  
Chronicle* in 1493 // Wikimedia  
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by Mark Gignilliat

## Prophetic Reluctance

A general trend exists among the prophets of the Old Testament. Few appear eager or excited about their calling. It's stunning how predictable this prophetic response is, even if it remains difficult to pin down or unpack. I think, if left to my own instincts, I'd highlight the following prophetic character traits: courageous, empowered, inspired, poetic even suffering. But what about reluctant? It may not appear obvious at first glance, but it's true. The prophets embrace their calling reluctantly, and they do so, in part, because the prophets understood something about the nature of their calling. Bearing God's Word is a burden; it's painful. And the source of the pain is, more often than not, the word of God that they themselves deliver.

Moses, that paradigmatic prophet of prophets (Deut 18:15-20), receives his call from an enflamed bush. I think we can all agree that's some call, a pretty clear answer to the "what does God want me to do with my life" question. We have fond family memories of our son Jackson requesting "the burning tree" story almost every night when he was younger. And why not? The story ignites the imagination. Think of the artwork inspired by the scene. Marc Chagall's painting, "Moses Before the Burning Bush," springs to mind. Chagall depicts Moses aglow before the luminous



"Moses and the Burning Bush" by Marc Chagall, 1966 // [wikiart.org](http://wikiart.org)

tree while the Tetragrammaton makes his appearance known. It's in the midst of this wonder where a type or prophetic pattern emerges. Moses hesitates before God's call. He's reluctant. "You know, I've never been good at public speaking."

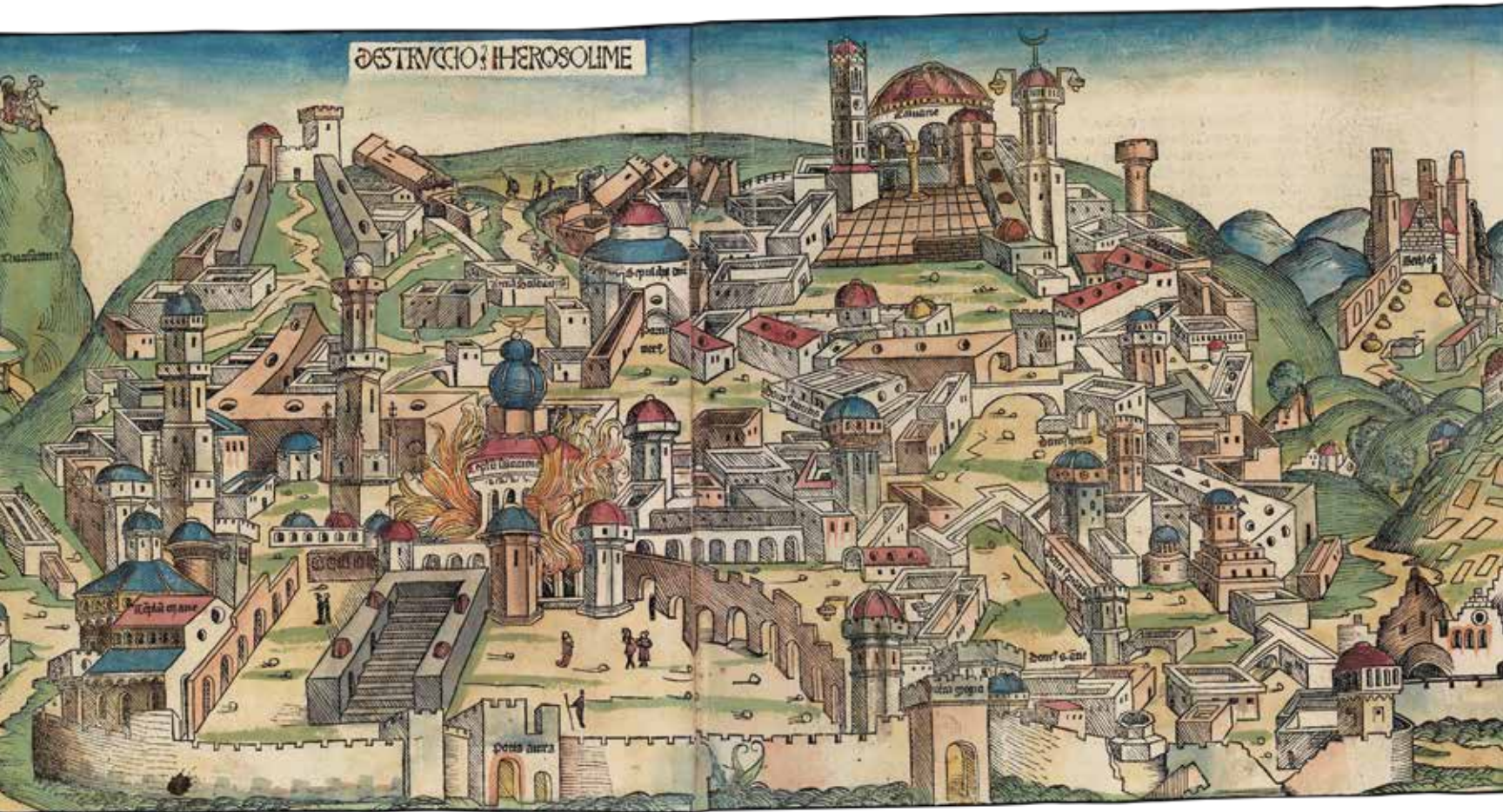
Isaiah withers in God's exalted presence: "Woe is me." After his cleansing, Isaiah offers himself as the Lord's spokesman and representative. In what appears a bait and switch move, Isaiah signs the prophetic contract, so to speak, before he learns the terms of the call or recommission. "Your

word, Isaiah, will be the means of my deafening the ears and blinding the eyes of my people." In short, Isaiah, your prophetic call entails a ministry of judgment. Now, Isaiah hesitates. After hearing the terms of the call, he asks the martyr's question. "How long, O, Lord?" Yes, indeed, how long? Amos reveals his own self-awareness: "I'm not a prophet, neither the son of a prophet." Micah announces ruin to the cities of Judah's lowlands in Micah 1, only to conclude the chapter with a dirge about his own suffering and loss in the midst of this judgment. Alert and empathetic readers struggle to read the prophets without some deep sighing. Little wonder the prophets were reluctant. Hosea, how's your wife doing?

## Jeremiah's Prophetic Burden

Among the prophetic choir, one sufferer sings an especially woeful tune. When called, he too recoiled at his vocational prospects. "I'm just a young man, Lord." Nevertheless, the Lord lays a heavy burden on this young prophet-priest from Anathoth. "Jeremiah, you'll do what I tell you to do." God appears to have forgotten his velvet gloves in Jeremiah 1. And if you're wondering where Anathoth is, think single traffic light, RC Cola and Moon Pie kind of towns, not bustling metropolitans. In other words, Jeremiah was out of his league in





Jerusalem, just the way God often likes his spokespersons.

Jeremiah, like the prophets before him, had a penchant for igniting the wrong people. When he preaches what appears to be one of his “favorite” sermons in chapter 26, let’s just say the response from the hearers wasn’t a handshake and a “nice sermon, pastor.” What Jeremiah says in this sermon shocks and stuns. He pulls no punches, leaning into what must have been the most controversial thing a prophet could possibly say in pre-exilic Judah. I’ll paraphrase. “If you don’t amend your ways, pay heed to my instruction, and listen to my word, then this temple of yours will become a faint memory. Don’t trust in this temple as if it’s indestructible. Because it isn’t. If you don’t think this is possible, then recall what the Lord did at Shiloh.” Jeremiah said something almost verbatim in his first temple sermon (7:1-34), drawing out more fully the Shiloh analogy. The Lord first gave his name, his presence, his very being to dwell at Shiloh, yet, in time, this sacred place became the location of

idolatry and covenant infidelity of the worst kind. In effect, Jeremiah says, “Go visit the tabernacle in Shiloh. When you arrive, it won’t be there because God reigned his judgment down on the place. It happened there; it can happen here.” Jeremiah’s homily is terse and direct. No one left the sermon perplexed at its meaning or sorting out hidden innuendos. Repent or Zion as you know it is over. What was the response from the prophets and priests, Zion’s principal stakeholders? Canon fire.

The scene unravels and grows chaotic. The stakes for Jeremiah were very high at this point. The priests and prophets seize him and sentence him to death. To describe the reaction of the religious elites as “vitriolic” appears understated. They were incensed to murder because Jeremiah spoke against their religious symbol and raised questions about the inviolability of Mount Zion. Haven’t you read Psalm 46, Jeremiah? Zion cannot be shaken! And Jeremiah’s entire prophetic ministry challenges this theological one-sidedness with a courageous and burdensome prophetic response.

Haven’t you read the book of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah retorts? When covenant loyalty to the Lord elides into religious platitudes and tired slogans—The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord this is (7:4)—then Zion would do well to recall the story of Shiloh. Do you understand what I’m saying, prophets and priests? Apparently, they did, because Jeremiah now finds himself sentenced to death.

The burden of Jeremiah’s ministry reverberates off the prophetic page. Threatened with impending death, Jeremiah stands in need of a lifeline, an advocate who can mitigate the charges leveled against him. Who will step into this perilous scene to rescue Jeremiah? Enter stage right: the prophet Micah. The officials overseeing Jeremiah’s hearing appeal to Micah in defense of the hard word Jeremiah delivers. Didn’t Micah say something similar in the days of Hezekiah? Micah, like Jeremiah, did not hail from the urban center but came from the lowland regions of the Shephelah. And, like Jeremiah, he



“Prophet Jeremiah” by ►  
Marc Chagall, 1968 //  
wikiart.org

speaks a word of judgment against Zion in the face of her covenant faithlessness and injustice. “Zion shall be plowed as a field” (Mic 3:12). The officials, therefore, at Jeremiah’s trial defend him, with Micah coming to Jeremiah’s rescue. Crisis averted.

### Prophetic Hope

Jeremiah and Micah share some canonical affinity for one another. They level claims against the abuses and faithlessness of the religious and political classes, sharing much of their prophetic substance in common. As stated above, Micah 3:12 appears as a quoted text in Jeremiah. While prophetic allusions and echoes abound in the prophets—e.g., Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 are almost carbon copies—actual quotations attributed to a particular prophet do not. Believe it or not, a direct quotation of another prophet is a rarity. Actually, “rarity” is the wrong term. It only happens here in Jeremiah. All the more curious is the text quoted: Micah 3:12. Here’s where things get interesting and encouraging.

Micah 3:12 sits at the exact middle point of the Minor Prophets or the Book of the Twelve. Leaving the textual details to the side, Micah 3:12 and Micah 4:1 form something like the center crease of the Minor Prophets, Hosea through Malachi. If your copy of the Minor Prophets fell open naturally to its center point, you’d find yourself at this textual juncture. In a nice turn of phrase, Christopher Seitz identifies Micah 3:12 as the Good Friday of the Minor Prophets. The imagery leaves little to the imagination: Zion plowed like a field; Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a pile of rubble for future archaeologists to rummage through. Micah 3:12 speaks of death. Yet, Micah 4:1 bursts forth into life and light, Easter Sunday if you will. “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as



the highest of the mountains” (Mic 4:1). The character of God emerges at this juncture as the one who can both put to death and bring to life. The Triune God of the Bible takes dead things and raises them up again: Israel from Egypt; Zion from the rubble; Jesus from the grave. Both Jeremiah and Micah share in the same prophetic hope: the character of God to judge and to make alive.

### Conclusion

The prophets offer little in the way of solace for ministers who suffer under the burden of their ministries, at least in terms of a get-out-of-jail-free card. Jeremiah’s prophetic legacy gives no comforting hug for those weighed down by God’s Word or laboring in difficult circumstances. What would Jeremiah’s counsel be? Just hang in there, friends; the prophets and priests probably won’t kill you...maybe. What we learn from the prophets is their own solidarity of living into the challenges of their moment, challenges brought on by sin and the judgment of God’s Word. Jeremiah teaches us the promises of God “to be with you to deliver you” in those Red Sea moments. The prophets remind us of our heavenly citizenship and our loyalty to a

King who reigns above all earthly powers and kingdoms. Why in the world would ministers find any of this comforting? Because God’s character is trustworthy and in these matters of life and death, somewhat predictable. Our Father takes dead things and makes them alive again. He takes plowed Zion and raises it as the highest of all mountains. We find comfort and solidarity with the prophets because, like them, we put all of our hope and trust in a simple prophetic phrase: “In the latter days.” Or in terms of our Christian confession of faith, “I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” ♦



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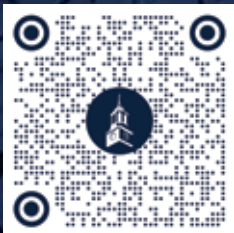


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We have all done our fair share of waiting since the coronavirus came on the scene. We wait for our test results. Then, depending on the outcome, we may have to wait for our time under quarantine to end (assuming, of course, that we are spared the worst effects of COVID-19). We waited eagerly for the development and approval and availability of a vaccine. Then, we waited (or are still waiting) for our turn to get the shots. But most of all, we are waiting for things to improve to the point that we can get back to business as usual.



# *As We Wait:* A Reflection on Hebrews 10:32-39

by Thomas L. Fuller

**We have endured** a long and contentious election season, and though the election itself is behind us, still we wait for the healing of divisions and the restoration of unity.

We have lived for generation after generation with the scourge of racial discrimination and injustice, and while progress has surely been made, the waiting and the working continues to secure equal justice and opportunity for all.

Rarely is waiting something we enjoy. Some of us have a harder time with it than others, especially when we are waiting in the thin places of life—places of pain and suffering, of persecution and deprivation, places of bondage and hopelessness, in the miry clay of life's pits, the whelming floods of life's waters, the scorching flames of life's fiery furnaces. It can evoke from us that familiar cry, "How long, O Lord?"

The believers to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed were in one of those thin places...and waiting. At least some of them were; others had grown tired

of waiting and suffering and thrown in the towel. We cannot be entirely certain of their circumstances, but it is possible they were suffering through the persecutions that Nero initiated while emperor.

Whatever the case, they were in desperate need of encouragement. They needed a word from the Lord to sustain them and fortify them in the faith, a word to embolden them to "not throw away their confidence" or "shrink back" but to endure and persevere (Heb 10:35, 39). And so do we.

Hebrews is a fine example of (and source of) real pastoral encouragement for believers in every age who stand in such need. So much that passes for pastoral encouragement today often amounts to nothing more than sanctified cheerleading. Don't get me wrong: We all appreciate and need to hear the admonishments to hang in there and keep on keeping on. Posters of kittens hanging by a single claw to a tree limb and poems about never quitting have their place. In the end, however, all such

things amount to little more than tossing someone a lifeline that is not secured to anything on the home end. That is far from being what the author of Hebrews did.

For more than nine chapters of the letter, he goes to great lengths to tie off his message of pastoral encouragement to something weighty: the supremacy of Jesus to deliver and to save above all other contenders. He uses the scriptures to methodically tie tight knots, one after the other. Jesus is better than the angels. Jesus is better than the lawgiver. He is the better Sabbath rest and the great high priest. He is the maker of a better covenant and the all-sufficient sacrifice. And it is only in and through and by and because of Jesus that we can "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22a).

Then, as we come to the closing verses of chapter 10 (vv. 32-39), the pastor calls them to remember their former days of endurance and perseverance in the face of struggles and suffering. He is saying to them, "You've been here before." Maybe it



“Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

Hebrews 10:35-36



"Daniel in the Lion's Den" by Sir Peter Paul Rubens // Wikimedia Commons

wasn't Nero then, but Claudius who was persecuting you. Or to us today: Maybe it wasn't a global pandemic before, but a great economic recession. Maybe it wasn't the frustration and fatigue of teaching and mentoring students under COVID conditions and great social upheaval, but the challenge of doing your work while facing acute family struggles, financial difficulties, health problems and myriad other commitments.

“Recall the former days...when you endured a hard struggle...sometimes exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated” (vv. 32-33). Remember the grace God gave that enabled you to stand firm in those times, and remember the truths in which you stood. “You knew you had a better possession and an abiding one” (v. 34b). So don't throw away your confidence, “which has a great reward,” not just in the days to come but right now.

Remember how your confidence sustained you and secured you before. Not

a confidence in yourself. Not a confidence, ultimately, in those around you. Not a confidence in fate or a change and improvement in your circumstances. But a confidence in Christ alone. A confidence in his sufficiency, in his faithfulness, in his love.

This is the confidence of which Habakkuk spoke in 2:3-4, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him” (vv. 37-38). It is the confidence of faith. And this is our heritage as members of the household of faith—a heritage that the author of Hebrews proceeds (in 11:1-40) to review as testimony to how this confidence, this faith, sustained God's servants in their seasons of waiting.

And so we wait...but not as those who have no hope. We tire, we cry out, but we persevere. This is what we do because this is who we are. Because this is who Jesus is, “who for the joy that was set before

him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2b). May our confident waiting bring glory to his holy name. ♦



Thomas L. Fuller is associate dean of Beeson Divinity School and director of the Thriving Pastors Initiative.

*This devotional reflection was originally shared with Beeson Divinity School faculty and staff at their mid-year workshop on January 25, 2021.*

# Imperturbable Endurance: Fritz Onnasch, Bonhoeffer's Forgotten Friend

by Paul R. House

*One of the benefits of studying Dietrich Bonhoeffer is learning about his friends. Many are well known. Others have been neglected or forgotten. Fritz Onnasch is the least deserving member of that group. Onnasch provides a model of faithful endurance that equals Bonhoeffer's. His endurance occurred in local, obscure places, which makes him an excellent model for all of us.*



Zingsthoof was Bonhoeffer's seminary's intentionally temporary home in 1935. The Bonhoeffer Chapel (pictured here) was built near the dining hall. Photo courtesy of Paul House.

## Pastor's Kid and polio victim Friedrich

**(Fritz) Onnasch** was born in 1911. His father, Friedrich, was a pastor who became one of the lions of the Confessing Church. When he was 8 years old, Onnasch contracted polio, the stealthy crippling disease of that era. His right leg was permanently damaged. The family moved to Koslin (pop. 30,000) in Pomerania in 1922, in part to get Onnasch the medical treatment he needed. His father served as pastor of St. Mary's Church and as district superintendent of over 20 Lutheran churches in the area. Koslin was Onnasch's home base the rest of his life.

## With Bonhoeffer in Zingst and Finkenwalde

By April 1935, Onnasch had chosen to seek ministry in the Confessing Church, a small minority within the Protestant church. Thus, he was sent to the new seminary Dietrich Bonhoeffer started at Zingst that eventually settled at Finkenwalde, near Stettin.



Onnasch and four other students from Pomerania took a westward train to Zingst, arriving at the seaside town late on a cold, blustery night. If the five men walked the two kilometers from the train station to the seminary site, then Onnasch limped the whole distance. They found a warm welcome.

Over the next four terms, Onnasch became an indispensable part of the seminary's ministry while serving as an assistant pastor at a local church. He was one of the members of the "Household of

the Brethren," a ministry team that lived at the seminary and pooled their salaries. Fritz became the household manager, charged with keeping the household accounts and managing the building and grounds. He fulfilled these duties while preaching and conducting confirmation classes at his church. In the fifth and last semester at Finkenwalde, he also became academic director and teacher of Old Testament. Onnasch was at the seminary when the Gestapo came to close it in September 1937.

As the Confessing Church considered

Fritz Onnasch (front row) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (third row) stand with students of Finkenwalde Seminary. Photo courtesy of Friedrich Bartels.





next steps for seminary work, Onnasch kept serving his church. On Nov. 18, 1937, he was jailed for leading intercessory prayer for imprisoned pastors and taking up an offering without the government church agency's approval. Bonhoeffer and Bethge visited him in prison. The experience shook Bonhoeffer, though Onnasch tried to put them at ease.

### With Bonhoeffer in Koslin

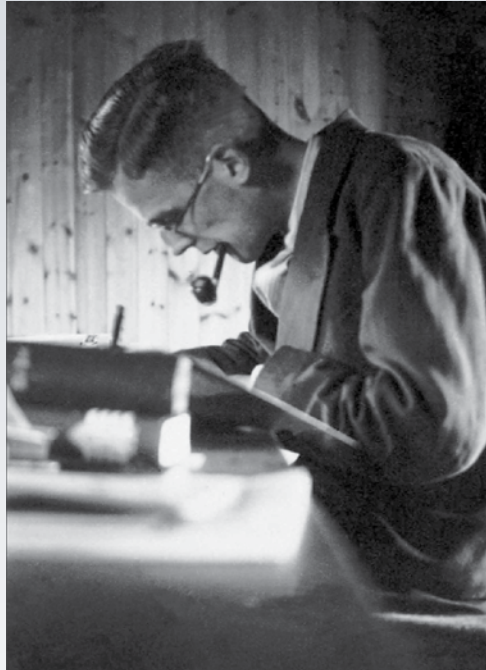
By December 1937, the Confessing Church had decided to place seven to eight students in two locations: Koslin and Gross Schlönwitz. Onnasch was released from jail on December 20, 1937. He went immediately to Koslin to continue the seminary work with Bonhoeffer. On January 11, 1938, the two attended a meeting of Confessing Church leaders in Berlin to discuss seminary training. They were arrested and held for questioning and banned from meeting in Berlin. They returned to the work, which lasted over a year.

In spring 1939, Bethge and Onnasch accompanied Bonhoeffer to the Berlin airport. Bonhoeffer was headed to the United States for a sabbatical. By September 1939, Bonhoeffer had come home, World War II had begun, and Onnasch had married Margret, Bethge's sister. Onnasch's father had been in jail for preaching an anti-war sermon and conducting a funeral for a communist. He was given a special pass to do the ceremony.

### Faithful unto Death

Onnasch became the leader of young Confessing Church pastors in Pomerania. Of the 300 or so pastors that first signed up with the Confessing Church in Pomerania, as few as 11 refused to accept approval of the government approved church office. Onnasch was one of them.

Onnasch and Margret had hoped to work together in seminary ministry in Koslin. The war ended those hopes, but they were undeterred. When Onnasch was tasked with Confessing Church administrative duties, they rented an apartment in Stettin, the home of the Pomeranian church offices. They eventually had three sons. A daughter



Fritz Onnasch pictured left and below with his wife, Margret.

Photos courtesy of Fritz's son, Martin Onnasch



died at birth in the midst of a bombing raid. They opened their home to Confessing Church pastors on leave from the army. They fed and housed them at their own expense, thus living out Acts 4:32-37. As time passed, the home became a shelter to refugees, including some Jews. Onnasch visited and preached in churches, many of whose pastors were in the military.

In May 1943, Onnasch's right leg was amputated, but he kept serving the churches. He also served his community as air raid warden in heavily bombed Stettin. As refugees increased and death tolls mounted, he encouraged Christians to open their homes and hearts to the outsider and the hurting. In October 1944, he preached on loving and forgiving one another as a prerequisite for taking communion.

With Stettin becoming so dangerous, the family settled back in Koslin. Onnasch preached in his home church on Christmas Day 1944. His three points were simple: God directs our time; God knows our fate; God wants to make us his children through his Son. Onnasch and Margret decided not to leave their people when evacuation orders came.

By March 4, 1945, the Soviet army was raping and slaughtering its way west to Berlin, avenging the suffering their people

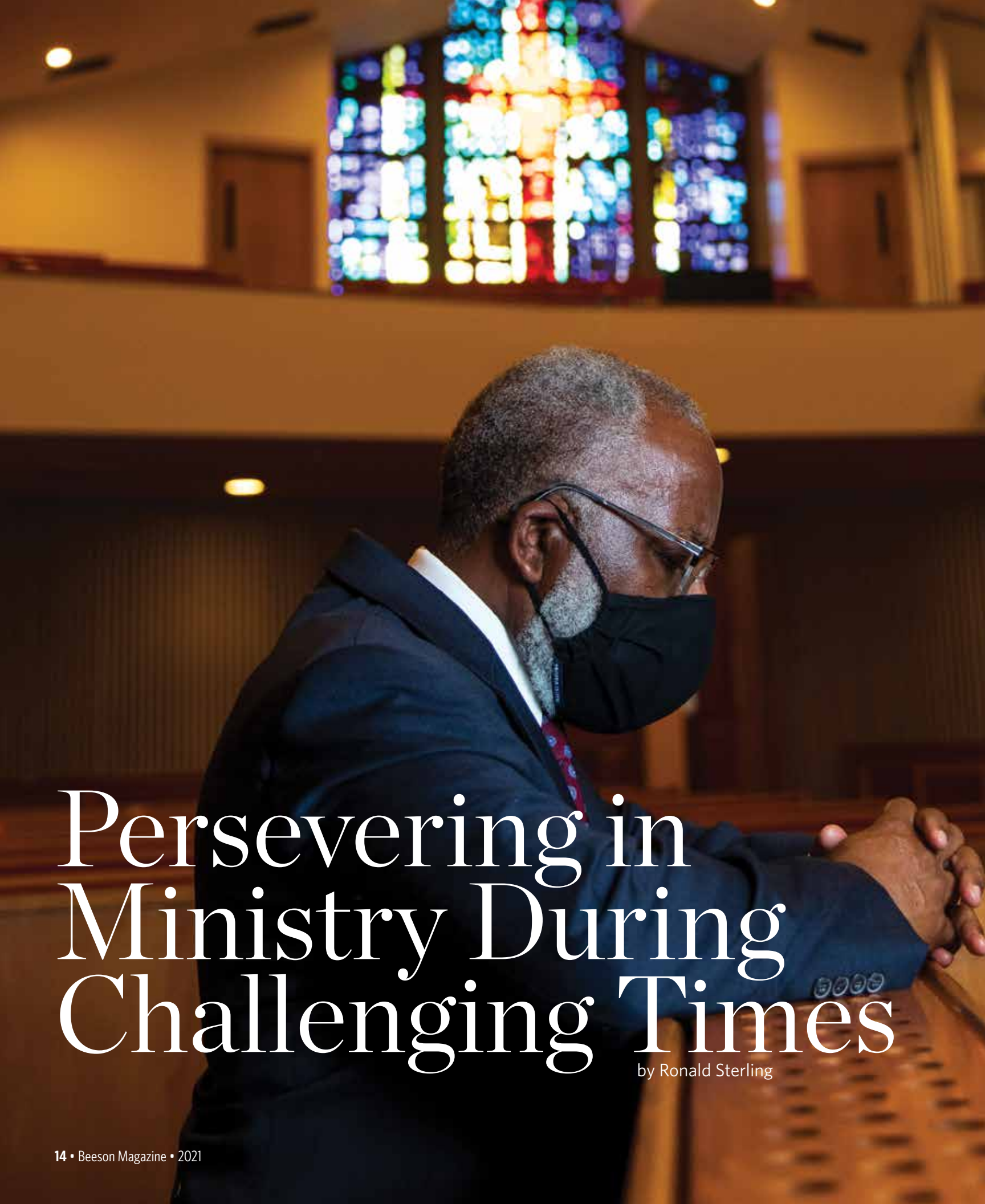
had endured from Germany. Onnasch, Margret, their children, and some neighbors were huddled in a cellar. Details vary, but the result is the same. Soviet soldiers seized Onnasch, took him away, and murdered him. The family found him two days later.

### Imperturbable Endurance

Bethge described his brother-in-law in one word: imperturbable. Once on the path of the cross of Christ, he did not waver, nor did his wife. They stayed on the path of sacrificial service. While our paths are different today, we do well to consider Onnasch's path of imperturbable faith and how we might emulate it. Our path may be forgotten on earth, but it will not be forgotten by God. Some days when I am weary, I think of Onnasch limping in the rubble, and I look ahead of him and see Jesus. That gives me perspective and strength. ♦



*Paul R. House is professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School, where he teaches Old Testament and Hebrew. He is the author of Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision: Recovering Costly Discipleship and Life Together.*



# Persevering in Ministry During Challenging Times

by Ronald Sterling



**As the apostle Paul often greeted the churches,** “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord,” I greet you as well. I write to encourage you in the ministry that you have been called to serve. I know there are times when you feel frustrated, tired and weary on the journey, but remember, God is faithful to those he has called. Moreover, “For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do” (Heb 6:10).

I have been in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) since 1992 and have pastored three churches since 1997. I am clear that I did not choose the calling into ministry or the ministry gifts, but God chose me. I have been sent on a mission of proclaiming God’s love to those who would be entrusted to my care and those who may not know him. The assurance of my calling has been a strength throughout this journey. As I have been assured of God’s faithfulness toward me and my commitment to the calling (wherever I have served), I have experienced his grace and presence. The desire to be faithful versus the desire to be successful has been a source of constant encouragement.

Has the journey been without its challenges? No, it has not. Initially, I suffered from being misunderstood on several fronts, even distancing by some family members and friends. Mostly because they did not understand the fullness of the calling that had been placed on my life, and in some respect, neither did I. I later would learn that God used times of testing, persecution and being misunderstood to deepen my relationship with him and to conform me more into the image of Christ. I remain confident that the Lord is at work within me to carry out his purpose. Subsequently, I have found over the years, the more I cry out to the Lord for grace and mercy, the more I have experienced his lovingkindness, grace, compassion and faithfulness.

*As we continue to run this race that has been set before us, may the words of Charles Wesley be an encouragement to us as well.*

**“A Charge to Keep I Have”**

A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save,  
And fit it for the sky.  
To serve the present age,  
My calling to fulfill:  
Oh, may it all my pow’rs engage  
To do my Master’s will!  
Arm me with jealous care,  
As in Thy sight to live;  
And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare  
A strict account to give!  
Help me to watch and pray,  
And on Thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

Several years ago, I experienced fatigue that I could not explain, so I shared it with several ministry brothers. Still, I did not find any release in my confession or appeal to them for understanding. As I continued to cry out to the Lord, I could hear him saying to me, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). There are times in ministry that only God can give you what is needed. He must be the source we draw from to aid us in persevering in ministry. I have learned that God’s calling into ministry requires constant reliance on his grace as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

To remain strengthened during these challenging times, we must also continue

in our spiritual disciplines. Many of us know firsthand the importance of prayer. We should always pray, just as Jesus spent time in prayer with the Father. We must never neglect our time in fellowship and communion with him. Do not be deceived in thinking that the “to-do” list is more important than your fellowship in the presence of the Lord. He is always there waiting for us to come to him about everything. Furthermore, if you do not have a prayer or accountability partner, ask the Lord to place someone in your life to walk alongside you. He has not called us on this journey to be alone.

The spiritual discipline of journaling also has been a great source of comfort over the years. Journaling allows me to express my deepest thoughts and feelings and experience other disciplines, such as meditation, guidance, humility and confession of sins. During this quiet time with the Lord, I can also express my love, adoration and praise for a loving Father.

The challenge of my ministerial journey is an expression of the need for the sufficiency of God’s grace. Our vertical relationship with the Lord provides us with an overflow of God’s grace and presence for our ministry’s horizontal relationship with others. The abiding presence of the Lord that comes through abiding in him and his Word abiding in us is sufficient to sustain us as we persevere in the ministry we have been called to serve. ♦



*Ronald Sterling is lecturer in pastoral studies and director of student services at Beeson Divinity School. He is also the pastor of St. John AME Church in Birmingham.*

# Beeson's New M.Div. Certificate Program will Prepare Wesleyan Students for Ordained Ministry

by Kristen Padilla

**Beeson announced** a new Certificate of Wesleyan Studies for Master of Divinity (M.Div.) students who intend to pursue ordination in a Wesleyan denomination this spring.

The Certificate of Wesleyan Studies program will satisfy educational requirements stipulated by several Wesleyan denominations and will prepare Wesleyan students for life and ministry in their churches. The certificate gives attention to Wesleyan history and doctrine, worship, polity, spirituality, ministry and mission. The new certificate program will be directed by Beeson's Methodist Chair of Divinity, Michael Pasquarello III.

"The Beeson Divinity School community and curriculum will provide Wesleyan students with a robust opportunity to integrate the study of Scripture, Christian tradition and practical disciplines so that, in good Wesleyan fashion, they will be equipped for faithful leadership of the church in making disciples of Jesus Christ," said Pasquarello. "I believe this is just the kind of education and formation Wesleyan pastors and church leaders will need if they are to flourish in the Christian life and the vocation of ministry for the 21st century."

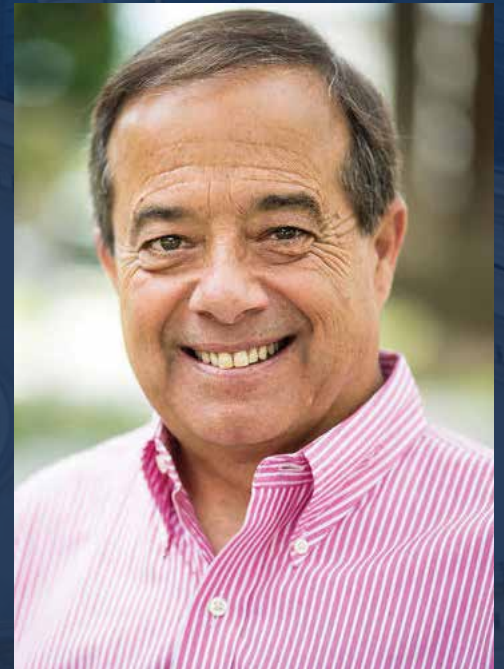
Students in this certificate program also are required to take part in Beeson's newly formed Wesley Fellowship, which provides students opportunities to grow in Wesleyan practice and spiritual formation. Monthly gatherings include participation in the practices of prayer,

meditation on Scripture, mutual encouragement and accountability, learning and service. The Wesley Fellowship also will host occasional events that feature conversations with Wesleyan pastors, denominational leaders, scholars, missionaries and lay persons.

"We are excited about partnering with our Wesleyan brothers and sisters to educate the next generation of their ministers," said Beeson's Dean Douglas A. Sweeney. "Beeson's commitment to the authority of Scripture and a learned pastoral ministry enflamed with love for the Lord and his people worldwide will be used by God, we pray, to expand and strengthen Wesleyan congregations for years to come."

Beeson is home to many alumni and students in the larger Wesleyan family, which includes denominations such as African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Church of the Nazarene and United Methodist Church. Students in the M.Div. certificate program will have the opportunity to connect with Wesleyan alumni and local churches in the area as well as be mentored by Wesleyan pastors.

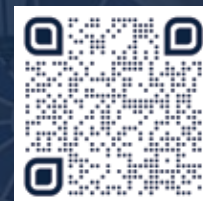
"I highly recommend the Wesleyan certificate program at Beeson Divinity School," said Paul Lawler, lead pastor of Christ Church UMC Birmingham. "Rooted in the heart of the evangelical tradition, Beeson Divinity students have the opportunity to develop spiritually and intellectually in a vibrant



Michael Pasquarello III

interdenominational learning context. The Wesleyan certificate program opens doors of opportunity for persons preparing to serve through established and emerging evangelical Wesleyan expressions around the world today." ♦

Learn more about the certificate program at [beesondivinity.com/QR/wesleyans](https://beesondivinity.com/QR/wesleyans).





# Samford and Beeson Partner to Create Accelerated Undergraduate Pathway to Master of Divinity

by Sean Flynt

**Samford University and Beeson Divinity School** have created an accelerated professional pathway for select undergraduate students called to ministry, giving them the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Divinity (M.Div.) in six years rather than the typical seven. Applicants majoring in biblical studies, religion (including the concentration in ministry leadership) or Christian ministry will be evaluated on their academic performance, spiritual maturity and vocational clarity.

“Originally an impetus of Beeson Divinity School reaching out to the undergraduate departments, the new accelerated degree track was designed in coordination with both the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies in Howard College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Christian Ministry in the School of the Arts,” said Scott Guffin, executive director of Samford’s Christian Ministry program. “Our hope is to see a limited number of highly focused students from both departments take part each year in the new program.”

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*Students must complete all course work required for their undergraduate major (96-98 hours; no general electives) before beginning their M.Div. studies.*

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Application for admission to Beeson Divinity School must be made one year prior to beginning graduate studies. Students who are granted admission will participate in a co-curricular program of spiritual and vocational mentoring during their final year of undergraduate studies.

“We at Beeson look forward to welcoming such students into the life we share together in our



community of disciples called to serve the Lord by building up his church around the world,” said Douglas Sweeney, dean of Beeson Divinity School. “It offers a great way for gifted college students to focus early on their ministerial training.”

Roy Ciampa, chair of the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, noted that many of the department’s graduates have crossed Samford’s quad to continue their theological education. “Beeson Divinity School, Samford’s top-tier interdenominational, evangelical divinity school, has always been a great place for our students to gain further preparation for a life of ministry,” he said. “Now it is an even better option!” ♦

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**Learn more about Samford’s accelerated B.A.-to-M.Div. program at [samford.edu/go/BA2MDIV](http://samford.edu/go/BA2MDIV).**

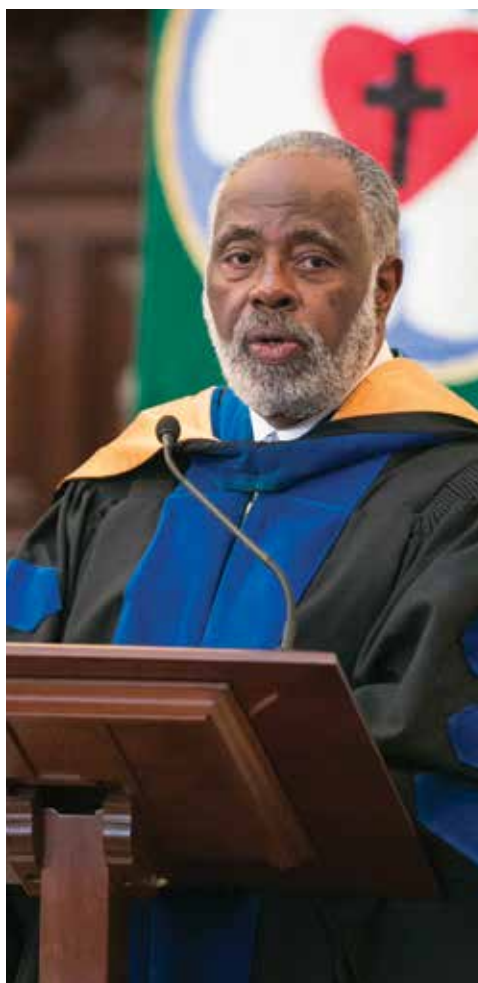
# New Student Scholarship to Honor Beeson Divinity School Longtime Faculty Member Robert Smith Jr.

**Beeson Divinity School** launched a new scholarship in honor of longtime faculty member Robert Smith Jr. for his more than 20 years at Beeson and more than 50 years of preaching God's Word in fall 2020.

The Dr. Robert Smith Jr. Endowed Scholarship will provide significant tuition assistance to outstanding applicants who are called to the preaching ministry. The school has raised almost half of the \$500,000 endowment goal.

"Dr. Smith is one of the most respected preachers in the world, and one of the most beloved professors and mentors at Beeson," said Beeson Divinity's Dean Douglas A. Sweeney. "He has become a spiritual father to literally hundreds of our grads, so it is fitting that his legacy continues in part through this provision for Beeson students of the future. Gifts to the Robert Smith scholarship fund will help us train godly 'pastors who can preach' for years to come."

Smith, who has been a professor at Beeson since 1997, is a world-renowned preacher and teacher of preaching, having received the prestigious E.K. and V.M. Bailey Living Legend Award in 2017. Not one to just stay in the classroom, he has filled numerous pulpits on Sunday mornings around the nation and world. He has lectured and taught on the subject of preaching at conferences such as The Gospel Coalition, the E.K. Bailey Expository Preaching Conference and Morling College Preaching Conference in Sydney, Australia, to name a few. Smith is also the author of two books, *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching* and *Teaching to Life and The Oasis of God: From*



## *Mourning to Morning.*

"The Reverend Dr. Robert Smith shows us that there need not be a divide between scholarship and the preaching of the gospel. God, through him, has enriched his church and numerous preachers to do the same," said Ralph D. West, senior pastor of the Church Without Walls in Houston, Texas, and co-chair of the scholarship steering committee. "This scholarship is properly given in Dr. Smith's name.

Through it, many more students will be able to take on Dr. Smith's model."

Sixth Avenue Baptist Church and Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, both of Birmingham, made the lead gifts to fund the scholarship.

Fellow co-chair of the scholarship steering committee and Beeson alumna, Victoria Gaston, gave thanks for the provision of these two churches to establish a scholarship in Smith's name for those who are called to preach God's Word.

"The esteemed ministry of the Reverend Dr. Robert Smith Jr. is a reflection of what he writes, 'The preacher who handles the Word must be touched by the Word,'" said Gaston. "He is a witness of one who runs the race given to him in the passion of Christ with doxological, eschatological joy. May students who receive this scholarship seek to be a faithful witness of the living God."

Smith said he feels overwhelmed that anything would be put in his name.

"I want the scholarship to reflect God's glory," he said. "If the scholarship can promote the cause of Christ through the gospel, I'd just be so grateful. I want the scholarship to be an instrument to equip people who can edify the church."

Congregations or individuals who have benefitted from Smith's preaching ministry and want to give to this scholarship can contact senior advancement officer Gary Fenton at [gdfenton@samford.edu](mailto:gdfenton@samford.edu) or send a check to Fenton's attention at 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35229. Gifts also can be made online at [beesondivinity.com/giving](https://beesondivinity.com/giving). ♦



# D.Min. Student's Life Cut Short By COVID, New Scholarship Honors His Memory

by Grace Thornton

**Gregory Tippins** was all set to graduate from Beeson Divinity School in December 2020 with his Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.).

But COVID-19 took his life two months shy of that milestone.

"Gregory was a man who was in love with our Savior," Wanda Tippins, his widow, said. "He was passionate about the Word of God, especially the Old Testament. He loved to preach and share the Word with those who did not know the Lord because he wanted to see the lost saved."

Tippins' legacy will live on with the church he served as pastor—Rising Star Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa—as well as with his children, grandchildren and the community of Jerusalem Heights, where the church is located. Part of that continued investment will be through his son, Daron, who now serves as Rising Star's pastor.

And Tippins' legacy will also live on in the ministry of future Beeson students through the new Rev. Gregory Tippins Scholarship, which will be awarded in his honor to Master of Divinity students who need financial assistance.

Tippins' widow—who received his diploma on his behalf in December—said her husband cherished his time at Beeson.

"Gregory loved the relationships that he established at Beeson, not only his professors and mentors but his cohorts as well," she said. "He appreciated the kind treatment that he received from everyone he came in contact with there at Beeson. He loved spending time at the library and sitting on the beautiful grounds of the campus."



**"Gregory loved the relationships that he established at Beeson, not only his professors and mentors but his cohorts as well."**

*Wanda Tippins*

Mark DeVine, associate professor of divinity who supervised Tippins' dissertation work, said Tippins was "such a joy to work with." Tippins' doctoral work was a plan to deepen the theological understanding and practice of the Christian life in the congregation he led in Tuscaloosa. He was finished with his writing and about to defend his dissertation when he caught COVID-19 and never recovered.

"He typified the seriousness and maturity that students often exhibit who pursue doctoral work later in life," DeVine said. "His experience and commitment to God's flock under his care was inspiring. Gregory identified the strengths and the areas in need of growth among those the Lord called him to serve and then dedicated his research to the goal of bringing leadership tailored to their special needs and potential."

Tippins modeled "the sort of conscientious pastoral shepherding" needed in congregations across the state, DeVine said.

That deep character is why David Sloan, a professor emeritus from the University of Alabama, started the scholarship in his honor.

Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, met Tippins about 30 years ago when Tippins was starting a mission church from First Baptist.

"We became very good friends with his family," Sloan said. "He had a real concern for the church and also for the community, the neighborhoods, around the church. He had quite an impact on the people there.

He was a very good-hearted, pleasant person who was a strong pastor and always devoted himself to other people. I felt like that needed to be remembered."

Tippins' name was read during the spring 2021 Commencement and Service of Consecration on April 30, since the December commencement service was cancelled due to COVID-19. ♦

# Jennifer Rash Scholarship Will Offer Aid

by Grace Thornton

**A new scholarship** named in honor of Beeson alumna Jennifer Davis Rash, president and editor-in-chief of The Alabama Baptist, will provide financial aid for women and other minorities at Beeson Divinity School.

The first scholarships from the \$25,000 endowment will be awarded in fall 2022.

“We are thrilled with this opportunity to honor one of our most esteemed alumnae in this way,” said Douglas A. Sweeney, Beeson’s dean. “Jennifer Rash represents Beeson in all the best ways. More importantly, she represents the Lord Jesus Christ in her ministries at The Alabama Baptist and beyond. We are praying that the Jennifer Davis Rash Scholarship will help us attract and train

Baptist women like her for years to come.” The scholarship was announced Feb. 25 at the TAB board of directors meeting in honor of Rash’s 25th anniversary at the publication—a milestone she says wouldn’t have been possible without Beeson.

Her undergraduate work at the University of Alabama pointed her toward journalism, and her two years serving on the mission field through the International Mission Board and Caribbean Christian Publications focused that call specifically on faith-based communications. To her, seminary seemed like the right next step.

“God was calling me to serve him through news reporting and storytelling, and I wanted to learn more about how to work out my calling in this way as well

as grow closer to him in the process,” Rash said. “As I explored my options, Beeson Divinity School kept rising to the top for its well-known quality of instruction, professor-student mentoring opportunities, focus on community, interdenominational approach and, at that time in the mid-1990s, more advanced recruitment of female students.”

The opportunity to move to Birmingham and attend Beeson also put her in the right place to accept an opportunity to work at the main office of The Alabama Baptist. A quarter-century later, she serves at the publication’s helm.

“The ministry of The Alabama Baptist and TAB Media took a chance on me 25 years ago,” Rash said. “Numerous





# to SBC Women, Other Minorities

leaders and peers with TAB Media and across the whole of Alabama Baptist life invested—and continue to invest—in my development in the ministry of faith-based communications.”

Most seminaries today are more aggressive in recruiting the typically underrepresented minorities, such as women, than they were when she started studying at Beeson, Rash said.

“But the percentages are still small, and I’m excited to be part of helping the underrepresented among Baptists study at Beeson in the coming days and well beyond my lifetime,” said Rash, who also serves on the advisory board of Beeson’s new Center for Women in Ministry.

Gary Fenton, advancement officer at

Beeson and a member of TAB’s board of directors, said Baptists have been blessed by Rash’s contributions at TAB.

“We’re very grateful for her 25 years of service to The Alabama Baptist. She has served in so many roles and now doing an outstanding job as editor,” Fenton said. “We have benefited from her so much, and we are so grateful for the innovative approach she’s bringing at a time when Baptist news publications are in the process of changing and often declining.”

Rash said she is grateful for the opportunity to be involved in ministry in this way and excited about how God will continue to work through Beeson students and graduates.

“What a tremendous privilege and

touching realization to know that ministers of the gospel will be preparing for their callings through this scholarship, which was endowed by the 178-year-old ministry founded to connect and inform Alabama Baptists so that they might be able to stay properly focused on missions, evangelism and disciple making,” Rash said.

Give to the Jennifer Rash Scholarship or other scholarships at [beesondivinity.com/giving](http://beesondivinity.com/giving), or by contacting senior advancement officer Gary Fenton at [gdfenton@samford.edu](mailto:gdfenton@samford.edu). You also can send a check to Fenton’s attention at 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35229. ♦

“God was calling me to serve him  
*through news reporting and storytelling,*  
and I wanted to learn more  
*about how to work out my calling in this way*  
as well as grow closer to him  
in the process.”

# Center for Women in Ministry



*Samford University's Beeson Divinity School launched a new center for women pursuing Christian ministry this spring. The Center for Women in Ministry at Beeson exists to encourage and equip women called to Christian ministry and to serve as a resource for the church of Jesus Christ for the edification of the church and for the thriving of women in ministry.*

**"Beeson has welcomed female students** ever since its founding," said Beeson's dean Douglas A. Sweeney. "They come from many different evangelical, Protestant denominations with different ways of making use of the gifts God has given to its female members with interests in public ministry. We are eager to work with all those the Lord brings our way, preparing them to serve the church with biblical fidelity, theological wisdom, strong ministry skills and deep love for God's people."

The center hosted an International Women's Day worship service in March and its first Women in Ministry Conference, July 9-10, 2021, on the theme, "Minister

Like the Magdalene," with Jennifer Powell McNutt, Franklin S. Dyrness associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Wheaton College.

As the center grows, it plans to expand its services to Samford undergraduate women called to ministry, women in ministry not connected to Beeson, and churches and church leaders. This new center aims to fulfill its mission by providing strategic support in the key areas of Christian discipleship, placement, resources, mentoring, networking, events, research and consultation.

The center will be led and directed by Beeson alumna and manager of marketing

and communication Kristen Padilla, who published a book with Zondervan Academic in 2018 for women discerning a vocation of Christian ministry titled, *Now That I'm Called: A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry*.

"I am thrilled by the opportunity to lead the work of this new center," said Padilla. "I look forward to working with partners at Beeson and on Samford's campus and with friends who share our vision so that women called to Christian ministry can live out their callings in faithful service to Jesus Christ." ♦

**Learn more at**  
[beesondivinity.com/women-in-ministry](https://beesondivinity.com/women-in-ministry).



# Thriving Pastors Initiative



**Stephen Johnson joined the Beeson Divinity School** staff in fall 2020 as associate director of the grant-funded Thriving Pastors Initiative. Founder of Good Steward Ministries, Johnson has spent more than a decade in ministry, having served as a pastor and church planter. In addition to his role with Thriving Pastors, Johnson also will assist with ministry placement services for divinity students and alumni. Johnson serves with associate dean Tom Fuller, who is the program director of Thriving Pastors.

“I am excited that Stephen Johnson has joined us to help implement the vision and plans for this important initiative,” Fuller said. “He is already engaged in a ministry to pastors with similar goals (to Thriving Pastors). Stephen brings a combination of experience, passion and gifts for this work that will be invaluable to our efforts to equip and encourage pastors on the front lines of gospel ministry.”

This spring Thriving Pastors hosted its first Threads events, which are designed to

*“Together with Dr. Fuller, Stephen will lead us in a crucial new ministry to pastors, including our alumni, whose tireless kingdom service deserves all the support and encouragement we can provide.” - Dean Douglas A. Sweeney*

strengthen and shape enduring ministry by addressing specific issues and practices relevant to ministry today. Topics included, “Addressing Social, Cultural and Political Matters from the Pulpit” and “Building Biblical Models for Ministry.”

In addition to hosting regular events for those serving in pastoral ministry, Thriving Pastors seeks to improve the quality of relationships pastors have with one another. One of the primary ways we are working to achieve that goal is through the development and support of pastoral peer groups, called Thrive Groups. These groups of pastors and Beeson Divinity School alumni meet regularly throughout the year to encourage and help one another to thrive in

congregational leadership.

Thriving Pastors is funded by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving in Ministry initiative. The overarching goal of Thriving Pastors is to connect congregational leaders with one another and with other sources of support and encouragement to enhance their capacity to thrive in ministry. ♦

**For more information about the Thriving Pastors Initiative, visit [beesondivinity.com/thriving-pastors](https://beesondivinity.com/thriving-pastors).**

# Beeson's Global Center, Preaching Institute Announce Events for the 2021-22 School Year

**Beeson Divinity School's** Global Center and Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute will continue their ministries to students, alumni, and local ministers and ministry partners through events planned for the fall and spring terms. With loosening COVID restrictions, the center and institute will offer in-person events to outside guests for the first time in more than a year.

The Global Center will host its annual fall Go Global Missions Emphasis Week, Oct. 5-7, with featured speaker Karen Ellis, director of the Center for the Study of the Bible and Ethnicity and the Robert Canada Fellow for World Christianity at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta. In the spring, Enoch Wan, professor of Intercultural Studies and director of Education and Doctor of Intercultural Studies at Western Seminary in Portland, will speak at the annual spring World Christianity Focus Week, April 5-7.

The center's weekly Global Voices events, which take place on most Thursdays, will include spotlights on ministry in Bolivia, Jordan, Thailand and Turkey, a networking opportunity with the Birmingham Internationals Ministry Network, and Christmas Around the World.

The Preaching Institute will host two Day with a Beeson Author events. On Oct. 11, Douglas Sweeney, dean of Beeson, will share on the topic of "Jonathan Edwards, the Bible, and Preaching." On March 14, Timothy George, distinguished professor of divinity and founding dean of Beeson, will share on the topic of "Reading Scripture and Preaching with the Reformers."

The institute's Text to Sermon workshops will continue in the fall and spring, featuring history and doctrine faculty speaking on significant preachers in the Christian tradition in the fall and

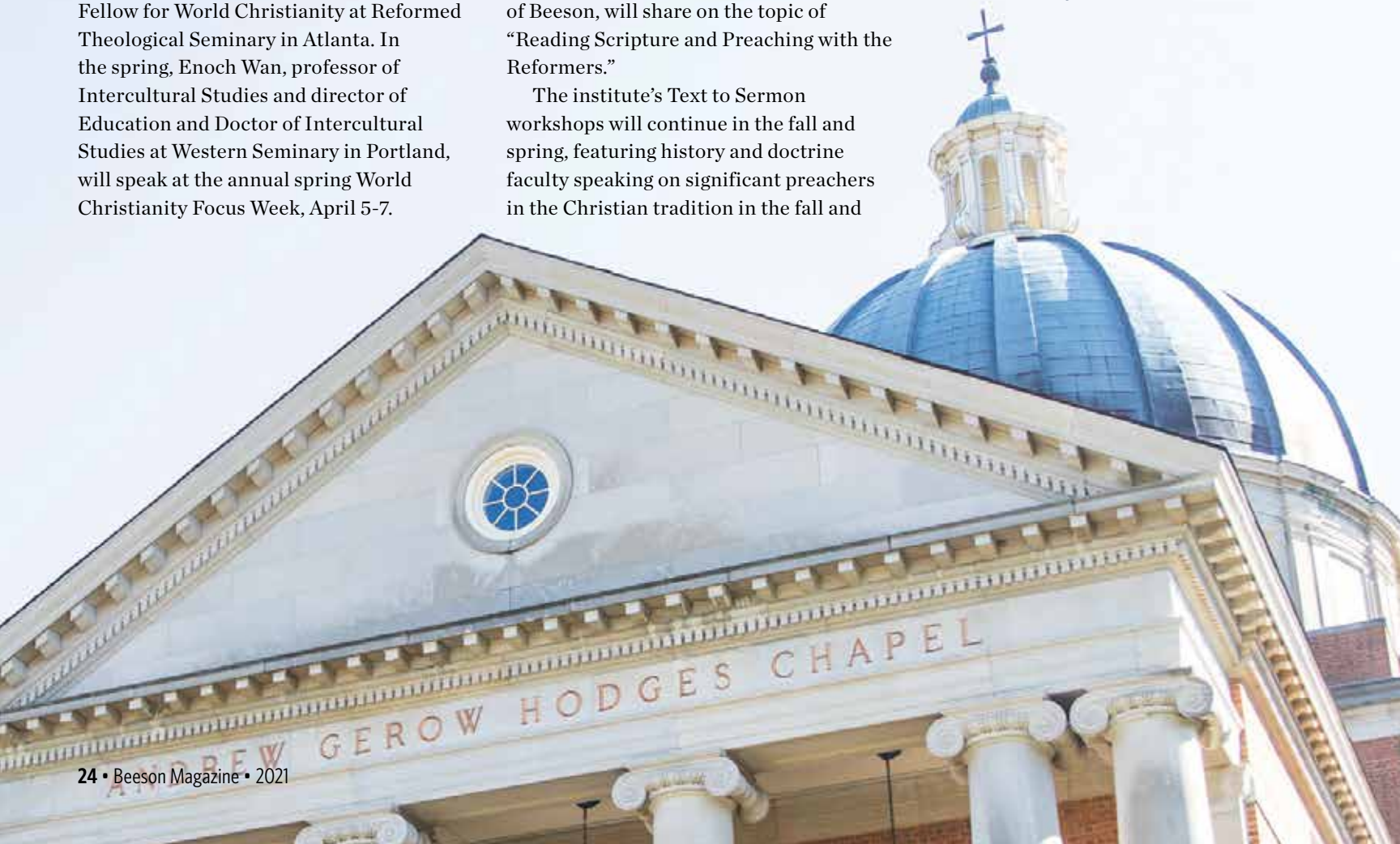
local pastors going from text to sermon in the spring.

On April 18-19, the institute will co-host a conference with Samford's Center for Worship and the Arts on the theme of "The Beauty of God in Worship, Preaching, and the Arts."

All of these events are free with the exception of Day with a Beeson Author and the conference, which will require a modest registration fee. ♦

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***Find more information about these events and how to register at [beesondivinity.com/events](https://beesondivinity.com/events).***





# Beeson Divinity School Becomes Approved Seminary for Two Lutheran Denominations

by Kristen Padilla

**The Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)** and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) have approved Beeson Divinity School as one of their officially-recognized seminaries for training in pastoral ministry in 2020-21.

The LCMC board, led by Steve Turnbull, pastor of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Ohio, said that this new relationship with Beeson, an interdenominational divinity school, means that LCMC recognizes the school's curriculum is well-designed in preparing candidates for ministry that is consistent with the denomination's expectations. Additionally, the availability of Lutheran faculty members to mentor and guide LCMC students in the strengths of the Lutheran tradition makes Beeson a good fit.

"We appreciate Beeson's spiritual vitality and academic rigor," Turnbull said. "We also appreciate Beeson's identity as a classical, residential seminary community. Beeson also helps fill out the regional diversity among the seminaries with whom we have a working relationship. I hope that Beeson will help form students and equip them for the proclamation of the gospel."

Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary, oversees the pastoral education of NALC ordinand candidates. He said that the NALC wants to partner with Beeson in the training of its pastors in large part because of the school's interdenominational ethos.

"What drew me to Beeson Divinity School was its ecumenical setting," Riesen said. "The church of the future will have to think more ecumenically. Beeson also has a good reputation academically, and its residential education resonated with me in a big way."

"We think Beeson Divinity School can help us position ourselves, educate and form our pastors for this movement of the Holy Spirit working in the confessionally Lutheran churches for the good of the whole church."



◀ Carl Beckwith, professor of history and doctrine at Beeson and ordained Lutheran pastor, preaches in Hodges Chapel.

Chris DeGreen, Beeson alumnus and pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Hoover, a LCMC congregation, is excited about the new possibilities to work with future Beeson students in their ministry preparation.

"I encourage LCMC students to consider Beeson because it was through my own Doctor of Ministry studies at Beeson from 1995 to 1998 that I was equipped to not just preach to pews and administer programs, but to see lives transformed into the image of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit," DeGreen said.

Beeson's dean, Douglas A. Sweeney, who is a committed Lutheran, said he is grateful for these new partnerships.

"The NALC and LCMC are young, spiritually vital, and theologically orthodox networks of God-and-neighbor-loving Lutherans," he said. "They fit well with the evangelical-catholic mission of Beeson. We are praying that the Lord will bless these partnerships for Jesus' sake for many years to come." ♦

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***LCMC and NALC prospective students can begin their application or learn more at [beesondivinity.com/ad/lutherans](https://beesondivinity.com/ad/lutherans).***

# Beeson Wives Fellowship

by Kristen Padilla

*The Beeson Wives Fellowship exists to provide a place for students' wives to grow and mature together in Christ as they prepare for ministry individually and alongside their husbands. The fellowship seeks to build relationships in a supporting community and develop deep friendships, in which wives can learn and grow together while sharing the common bond of being a seminarian's wife. Special events such as panel discussions, guest speakers and Saturday brunches are planned to facilitate growth and community. Since 2019, Wilma Sweeney, the wife of Beeson's dean Douglas Sweeney, has provided oversight to this fellowship. The Q&A has been edited for length.*

**KP** What led you to get involved with a ministry to Beeson student wives?

**WS** Doug and I have always had mentoring relationships with “our” students. Someone recently teased me for referring to Beeson students as “our” students. For 22 years, while Doug was a faculty member at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and since being at Beeson, we have loved getting to know the students God brings our way. We feel strongly about building community—not only for those taking seminary classes—but also for their spouses, who will partner with them in ministry. When Doug was a seminary student, there was a special faculty couple who warmly welcomed us into their home. I knew back then that if God ever allowed us to work with students, I wanted to be that kind of faculty wife.

**KP** Why is it important for wives to feel supported while their husbands are in seminary?

**WS** Graduate work is difficult; there are many long nights filled with studying. I really want spouses to feel a part of this journey and not become resentful of all the time and energy their husbands devote to their studies or to the community their husbands are experiencing on campus. This fellowship allows the opportunity for wives to meet like-minded women in the same season of life, enabling them to build lasting friendships.



**KP** What types of support are student wives looking for?

**WS** Support and involvement can vary from person to person. Women who are native to Alabama may have family nearby. Career women may have overwhelming schedules. Their needs are different from those of a student wife newly planted in Birmingham or a stay-at-home mother. I want all our women to be active in local churches and would hate to see our fellowship get in the way of that. So, by providing various social and learning events throughout the year, both for the wives and couples, we can find ways to meet all our women and their needs.

**KP** What are the events you have hosted for wives since taking this new role?

**WS** I love making crafts. I've hosted a few “Card Crafts, Coffee Cake and Conversation” mornings. A few faculty wives also attend these meetings, as it is fun for student wives to meet the wives of their husband's professors. This past December, we had a couple of cookie decorating gatherings (with masks and social distancing). I hosted a Zoom Bible study and a Zoom book study, which two recent female Beeson graduates taught. Playdates with moms and children, feeding turtles at Aldridge Gardens, were simply a delight. Doug and I also host intimate Beeson couples' dinners and larger student-and-spouse socials in our home throughout the year. This past January, we held a couples' marriage retreat called, “Common Ground: Discovering God's Gift of Marital Togetherness,” featuring Dr. Gordon Bals, founding counselor of Daymark Pastoral Counseling and beloved adjunct professor at Beeson. This fall, I'm excited to be hosting a Ministry Wives Discussion Panel on campus. It will feature two alumni wives and two Beeson faculty wives, whose husbands have served or are still serving as pastors.

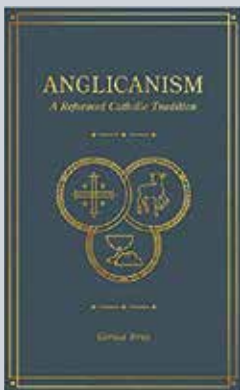
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**To support the ministry of Beeson Wives Fellowship or to learn more, contact Sharon Head at [shead@samford.edu](mailto:shead@samford.edu).**

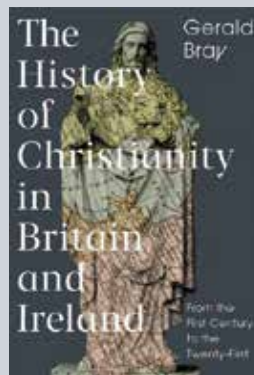


# FACULTY BOOKSHELF

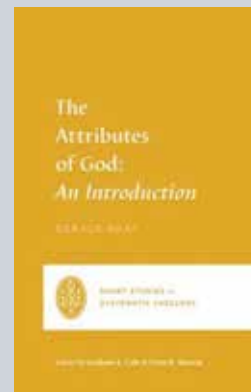
*These texts can be found at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and Books-a-Million.*



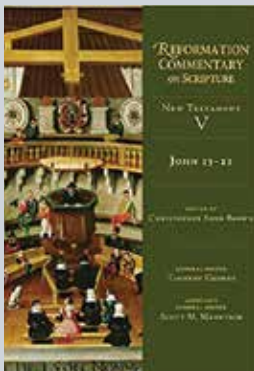
*Anglicanism: A Reformed Catholic Tradition*  
**Gerald Bray**  
(Lexham Press, March 2021)



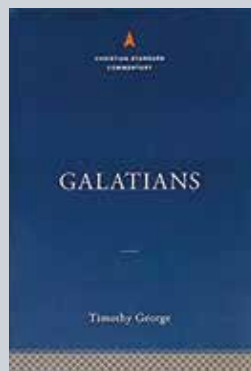
*The History of Christianity in Britain and Ireland*  
**Gerald Bray**  
(IVP-UK, June 2021)



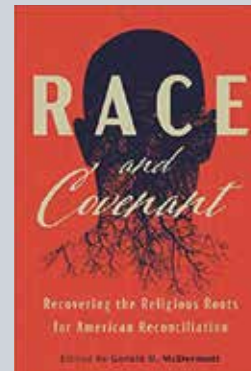
*The Attributes of God: An Introduction (Short Studies in Systematic Theology)*  
**Gerald Bray**  
(Crossway, April 2021)



*John 13-21 (Reformation Commentary on Scripture)*  
**Timothy George, General Editor**  
(InterVarsity Press, June 2021)



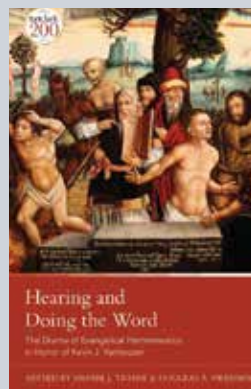
*Galatians (The Christian Standard Commentary)*  
**Timothy George**  
(Holman Bible Publishers, November 2020)



*Race and Covenant: Recovering the Religious Roots for American Reconciliation*  
**Timothy George, Osvaldo Padilla, Robert Smith Jr., Contributors**  
(Acton Institute, October 2020)



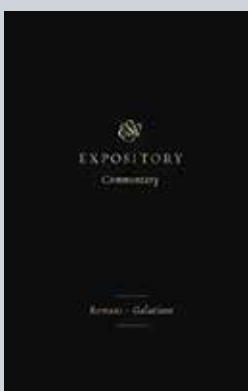
*The Identity of Israel's God in Christian Scripture (Resources for Biblical Study)*  
**Mark Gignilliat, co-editor**  
(SBL Press, January 2021)



*Hearing and Doing the Word: The Drama of Evangelical Hermeneutics in Honor of Kevin J. Vanhoozer*  
**Douglas A. Sweeney, co-editor**  
(T&T Clark, August 2021)



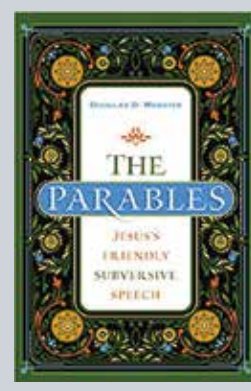
*The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards*  
**Douglas A. Sweeney, General Editor**  
(Oxford, April 2021)



*Galatians (ESV Commentary Romans-Galatians)*  
**Frank Thielman**  
(Crossway, September 2020)



*The New Creation and the Storyline of Scripture (Short Studies in Biblical Theology)*  
**Frank Thielman**  
(Crossway, January 2021)



*The Parables: Jesus's Friendly Subversive Speech*  
**Douglas D. Webster**  
(Kregel Academic, March 2021)

# *Distinguished Alum Dedicates His Life to Giving Students in Liberia What Someone Else Gave Him* by Grace Thornton

*Eddie Gibson's whole life is different because of a school—several schools, actually.*

**In 1975, Southern Baptist missionaries** started teaching Bible in the school he attended in Lamco Yekepa, an American Swedish Ironore mining site in Nimba county, Liberia, west Africa. It was the first time he had been introduced to Jesus.

That started his faith journey.

Then several years down the road, his wife, Charlesetta, started working at a publishing company with another Southern Baptist missionary—Edie Wells, who became the Gibsons' good friend and hosted them in her home often as they did the same. Around the time Wells returned to the U.S., the Gibsons came too, fleeing the brutal civil war in Liberia. Among the few things Gibson carried with him was his school paperwork, tucked safely in his backpack.

And Wells again overwhelmed them with hospitality—she gave Gibson the scholarship she was supposed to use at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

"She had planned to come to Beeson herself, but when we got out of Liberia, she went to the school and asked if she could trade her 'missionary kid'



Eddie Gibson gives a press conference about the destruction of the Dellana West O'Brien School. Photo courtesy Eddie Gibson.

scholarship with someone who needed it more," Gibson said.

That someone was a Liberian pastor who wanted to grow in his faith and leadership skills so he could go back to his home country and give other children what someone had once given him.

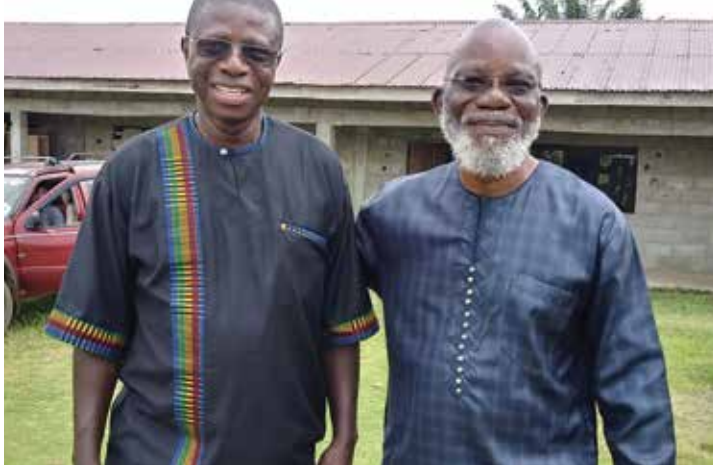
He wanted to start more Christ-centered schools.

"Our mission is in the classroom," said Gibson, who earned a Master of Divinity from Beeson in 1993. "Education is a major need, and I felt God telling me we could use it as a platform. If 25 students out of 100 became disciples of Jesus, that would be a success. We wanted to touch their minds and hearts."

So he formed Eddie Gibson International Ministries in Birmingham—the city that had become his home base—to raise money to do just that. In 2001, he started Marla H. Corts Mission School, a pre-K to ninth grade school in Gibson's home-village named after the widow of former Samford University President Thomas E. Corts.

In 2003, he bought the land for the Dellanna West O'Brien School, named after the late national Woman's Missionary Union executive director. That





Eddie Gibson is pictured with Dr. Roosevelt Zarwulugbo Liberty (left), wife Charlesetta (center), and two students (right). Photos courtesy Eddie Gibson.

school is located outside Monrovia, Liberia, and serves preschool through high school age students.

A third school is in the works—an agricultural college named after the late John T. Carter—as well as the Fran Carter Woman-2-Woman Microloan Program, named after his wife, who was an original Riveter in World War II.

“We wanted to prepare people for life,” Gibson said.

But the mission hasn’t come without struggles. In February, a man in the community who was angry over a land purchase contract dispute drove a bulldozer through the buildings on the campus of the Dellanna West O’Brien Learning.

“Everything is down—pillars, foundations, everything,” said Gibson after traveling to Liberia in March to see the damage for himself. “To do anything else with the school, we would have to take everything down and rebuild.”

The controversy over the land began in 2015, and for the past six years, Gibson said he has been trying to resolve it in court. As the situation has escalated, he has focused on helping the school decide what to do next and how to keep going.

“The students, the community, our ministry supporters—everyone wants us to rebuild to the glory of God,” said Gibson, who also currently serves as pastor of Brewster Road Community Church in Birmingham. “We’re praying for wisdom, praying to make the right decisions.”

He said the school’s impact has been broad, providing jobs for some in the community and teaching needed job skills to others. Gibson himself has baptized both students and teachers who have decided to follow Jesus.

Despite the massive damage to the campus (at the cost of \$549,120), classes haven’t stopped meeting at the school. Students have done lessons outside under trees and sat under tarps when it has rained. Gibson said his “heart is aching,” but he is trusting God. Friends of his ministry have rallied around to do what they can to help the school get back on its feet.

And support came in another way that surprised him in the midst of that valley—he learned he had been named Beeson’s Distinguished Alumnus of the Year for 2021.

“It blew my mind,” Gibson said. “It was good timing—God encouraged me because my heart is still broken right now.”

Renee Pitts, a Beeson alumna who nominated Gibson for the award, said over the years she has observed him to be “extraordinarily generous with his time and resources.”

“He lives his life open to those around him, ready and available to give and to serve in any way,” said Pitts, who serves as STEP Coordinator at Entrust, a cross-cultural training organization that comes alongside local church leaders around the world to help them develop strategies to multiply leaders and churches.

She called Gibson a faithful husband, father and pastor who tirelessly serves his community in Birmingham and “the people of Liberia he loves so deeply.”

“Eddie preaches the gospel with his words and with his life daily,” Pitts said. “He is a man of prayer and obedience, and the life he lives with Christ is the source out of which he gives to so many.”

For more information about the schools or to connect with Gibson, visit [brcbham.org](http://brcbham.org). ♦

Eddie Gibson speaks at a PTA meeting for one of the schools.

Photo courtesy Eddie Gibson.



## ALUMNI

**Ross Lankford** (M.Div., '96, D.Min., '04) became the senior pastor at First Baptist Church Troy, Alabama, in February 2020. He is married to Jeanna, and they have two children, Will and Bailey.

**Tommy Sanders** (M.Div., '96) became minister to senior adults at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Homewood, Alabama, in August 2020. He is married to Kathy, and they have two children, Austin and Mary-Margaret.

**Brent McDougall** (M.Div., '96) became the senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, in December 2020. He is married to Jennifer, and they have two children, Christopher and Emily.

**Brian** (M.Div., '99) and **Renee** (M.Div., '98) **Pitts** transitioned into new positions this year. Brian oversees Fatherhood Coaching with the Center for Executive Leadership. Renee became shepherd to STEP for Entrust Ministries in January 2021. They have two sons, Cooper and Owen.



**Randall Pressnell** (D.Min., '99) became a Harvest Field team leader/bi-vocational specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board in Franklin, Tennessee, in May 2020. He is married to Debbi, and they have two children, Kristen and Andrew.

**Danny Wood** (D.Min., '99) announced his retirement as senior pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, Alabama, effective August 2021.

**Allen Bishop** (M.Div., '01) became the Ringgold campus pastor of Rock City Community Church in Ringgold, Georgia, in December 2020.

**Josh Dear** (M.Div., '01) became pastor of Grace Bible Church in Muskegon, Michigan, in September 2020. He contributed a chapter to *Amazing Love! How Can It Be: Studies on Hymns* by Charles Wesley (Resource Publications, May 2020). Josh is married to Karen, and they have three children, Luther Martin, Nora Grace and Wesley James.

**Jonathan Munson** (M.Div., '02) became the executive director at Right from the Heart Ministries in June 2020, based in Marietta, Georgia. He is married to Lisa, and they have three children, Grant, Mitchell and Anna.

**Anna Moseley Gissing** (M.T.S., '03) is an editor at InterVarsity Press. She led the publishing team for *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* by Esau McCaulley, which won Christianity Today Book of the Year. She is married to **Jeff** (M.Div., '02) and they have two children.

**Kyle Wiltshire** (M.Div., '03) transitioned to content editor at LifeWay Christian Resources in May 2020. He is married to Joni, and they have three children, Noah, Micah and Lilly.

**David Nelson** (M.Div., '04) published *A Companion to the Theology of John Webster*, with Eerdmans Publishing in June 2021. David is an acquisitions editor at Baker Academic and Brazos Press.

**Chad Raith** (M.Div., '04) became chief mission integration officer at Ascension Health in January 2021. He is married to Ansley, and they are part of the Anglican Church in North America along with their children, Charles David III, Paul, Elizabeth, Edie, Zeb and Thomas.

In February 2021, **Jimbo Tucker** (M.Div., '05) became director of partnerships at Neverthirst Water. He is married to Hayley, and they have four children.

**Mark Goodman** (D.Min., '06) is the senior pastor of Rabbit Creek Church in Anchorage, Alaska. He is the author of the recently published book *The Ordinary Way: A Unique Way to Live* (Five Stones, April 2020). He is married to Vonda Kay, and they have three children, Kate, Max and Sam.

In January 2021, **Patricia Frazier** (M.Div., '07) became an associate minister at Sardis Missionary Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. She is married to Johnny.

**Waymon Oliver** (M.Div., '07) began working as a 6th grade English and history teacher at King's Ridge Christian School in the summer of 2020. He is married to Sara, and they have two children, Elizabeth and Caleb.

In June 2020, **Cokiesha Bailey Robinson** (M.Div., '08), founder of Cross Springs Ministries, became associate dean of student diversity and inclusion at Grace College. She is married to **Tim Robinson** (M.Div., '08).



**Jacob Simmons** (M.Div., '09) became pastor of Hope Community Church in November 2020 in east Birmingham. He is married to **Suzanne** (M.Div., '09) and they have two children, John and Bea.





**Trey Medley** (M.Div., '09) started a new job as a lecturer at Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University in January 2020. He is married to Sarah, and they have two children, Ellie and Tate.

**Cary Hughes** (M.Div., '11) became senior pastor at Bear Cove Baptist Church in February 2019 in Sparta, Tennessee. He is married to Laura, and they have two children, Mirra Grace and Brock.

In August 2020, **Carol Griggs** (M.Div., '12) became director of operations for Student Health and Wellness at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and she recently completed her Ph.D. She is married to Kuna Griggs.

**Ruby Heard-Bustamonte** (M.Div., '12) became pastor at Wayman Chapel AME at Valley Grande, Alabama. She is married to John, and they have one child.

In July 2020, **Michael Abrams** (M.Div., '14) became pastor at Double Oak Community Church in Chelsea, Alabama. He is married to Mia, and they have two children, Milly and Clover.

**Tyshawn Gardner** (M.Div., '14), pastor of Plum Grove Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was named Black History Maker of Alabama by Praise 93.3 in Tuscaloosa. He is married to Shonetay, and they have four children, Coretta, Tristan, Titus and Tyson.



In December 2019, **Sherrad Hayes** (M.Div., '14) became the Joint Minister for Youth at West Point Presbyterian Church and First Baptist Church of West Point in Georgia. Serving two churches, one Baptist and the other Presbyterian, they are working to build a joint youth program. He is married to Amy, and they have two children, Will and Cooper.

In June 2020, **Betsy Howard** (M.A.T.S., '15) published a book, *Arlo and the Great Big Cover Up* (Crossway, June 2020).

In the fall 2020, **Eric Parker** (M.Div., '15) became assistant professor of biblical studies at Highlands College. He is married to Katie, and they have three children: Hudson, Elizabeth and Noelle (deceased).

In September 2020, **Lisa Taylor** (M.Div., '15) became the manager of pastoral services at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Edwin Ojodo** (M.Div., '16) recently became the regional coordinator at BTCP Kenya.

**Lydia Suitt** (M.A.T.S., '16) is the receptionist and administrative assistant in the dean of students office at William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. After graduating from Beeson, she earned a degree at Yale in Philosophical Theology in 2018. She is married to Canaan.



**Christopher Campbell** (M.Div., '17) became pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama. He is married to Marianne, and they have two children, Addison and Caden.

In January 2020, **Trey Powell** (M.Div., '17) became pastor of groups and connection at The Gospel Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He is married to Carly.

**Kadie Smith** (M.Div., '18) became minister of congregational care and women's discipleship at Grace Fellowship in Birmingham, Alabama. She is married to **Ethan** (M.Div., '18).

In August 2020, **Cameron Thomas** (M.Div., '18) became the director of diversity enrichment and relations at Samford University. He also began a Ph.D. in preaching at Baylor University. Cameron is married to Terrah, and they live in Calera, Alabama.

In November 2020, **Hunter Upton** (M.Div., '18) became the associate pastor at Getwell Church in Southaven, Mississippi. He is married to Keaton, and they have one son, Henry.

**Clay Wyatt** (M.Div., '18) was hired as a student pastor at Dayspring Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama.

**James Henderson** (M.Div., '19) began work as a chaplain at Brookwood Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama. James is married to **Rebecca** (M.A.T.S., '19).



## ALUMNI

In October 2020, **Kim King-Martin** (M.A.T.S., '19) became senior pastor at Bethel AME Church Rosedale. She is married to Paul.



In August 2020, **Callie McManus** (M.Div., '19) began serving as a TESOL teacher with an international organization.

In the winter of 2021, **Mark Rector** (M.Div., '19) became a guys minister at BigTime Ministries. He is married to Anne, and they have two children, Joshua and Evelyn.

**Will Sorrell** (M.Div./M.B.A., '19) was hired as an investment solutions manager at OneAscent Financial. He is married to Sarah Catherine, and they worship at Grace Fellowship in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Kara Fincher** (M.A.T.S., '20) became associate minister to college students at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in August 2020. She married Caleb Fincher on Aug. 1, 2020.



**Jarrod Hill** (M.Div., '20) became associate rector at Anglican Church of the Redeemer, an ACNA parish in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is married to Rachel.

In February 2020, **Cameron Patterson** (M.Div., '20) was ordained as an associate pastor at Faith Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and married Ann Mathews in March 2020.

In November 2020, **Luke Miller** (M.Div., '20) married Mary Kate. Luke is a teacher at Briarwood Christian School, and he and Mary Kate worship at Christ the King Anglican Church in Hoover, Alabama.



## In Memoriam

**Howard Calvin** (M.Div., '94) passed away on October 17, 2020.

**Marilane Carter** (M.T.S., '08) passed away in August of 2020.

**Wilton H. Bunch**, professor of ethics at Beeson from 2004-2008, died on May 16, 2021.

## Baby Updates

In June 2020, **Kaelan** (M.Div., '08) and Ashley **Clay** welcomed the birth of their daughter, Margaret. Kaelan is a chaplain for the U.S. Navy and recently became an associate pastor at Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church in Norfolk, Virginia. They are also the parents of Oliver and Charlotte.

**Matt** (M.Div., '09) and Niki **Paetz** welcomed the birth of their new daughter, Sadie Jane, in February 2020. Matt also recently became a manufacturer's representative for Haracro Sales. They are also the parents of Allyson and Lily.



**Patrick** (M.Div., '11) and **Kennerly** (M.Div., '11) **King** welcomed the birth of their son, Ezra, in May 2020. Patrick serves as the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, San Diego, California.



**Timmy** (M.A.T.S., '12) and Maggie **Ray** are the parents of Maddux, Sophie (born and adopted in 2019), and Theo (born in 2019). Timmy is the worship pastor at Woodward Ave Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and is currently pursuing a D.Ed.Min. in worship ministries from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

**Chase** (M.Div., '13) and Natalie **Porter** welcomed the birth of Charles in 2020. They also are the parents of Chase Jr. and Mary Beth. Chase is assistant professor of political science at California Baptist University.





**Michael** (M.Div., '13) and Jennifer **Novotny** welcomed the birth of their son Joseph David in December 2020. Michael is the Rector of Christ the King Anglican Church, in Hoover, Alabama, has also been named dean of the Central Alabama Deanery/Anglican Diocese of the South for 2021.

In April 2020, **Hayden Walker** (M.Div., '13) and her husband, Cody, welcomed the birth of their son, Harrison. They are also the parents of Zoe Karis (born June 24, 2016, and went home to Jesus the same day) and Rhett Benjamin, born in 2017.



In May 2020, **Nic** (M.Div., '14) and Rachel **Seaborn** welcomed the birth of their son, Elliot. He is pastor of Shades Crest Baptist Church. They are also the parents of Darcy Ann.

In May 2020, **Taylor** (M.Div., '16) and Katie **Geurin** welcomed the birth of their son, James Lewis. Taylor is the junior high and high school pastor at First Baptist Church Benton in Benton, Arkansas.



**Irby** (M.Div., '16) and Jessica **Wallace** welcomed the birth of their son, Dexter, in 2019. Irby is assistant county engineer at DeKalb County Commission.

**Matthew Neely** (M.Div., '16) welcomed the birth of his daughter, Marigold, in February of 2021. He is a reference librarian at North Carolina Central School of Law.

In December 2020, **Dustin** (M.Div., '17) and Tara **Ratcliff** welcomed the birth of Judah Lynn. They are the parents of Daisy. Dustin serves as a pastor at Iron City Church.



In April 2020, **Hunter** (M.Div., '17) and Morgan **Sandlin** welcomed the birth of their daughter, Francesca. Hunter is an adjunct instructor at Marion Military Institute.



**Mark Jessup** (M.Div., '17) recently became the pastor of Knollwood Presbyterian Church in Sylacauga, Alabama. He and his wife, Abby, welcomed the birth of their son, William Granger, in June 2020.



In September 2020, **Shaphan** (M.Div., '17) and **Elizabeth Helms** (M.Div., '18) welcomed the birth of their son, Nathan. Shaphan is the pastor of North Brewton Baptist Church in Brewton, Alabama.

In September 2020, **Richy** (M.Div., '18) and Kassidy **Hall** welcomed the birth of their daughter, Lydia.

In September 2020, **Yannick Christos-Wahab** (M.Div., '18) and his wife, Kiitan, welcomed the birth of Kharis. Yannick is the pastor of Stockwell Baptist Church.

In November 2020, **David** (M.Div., '18) and Ruth Ann **Moss** welcomed the birth of their daughter, Elizabeth Flannery. David is the director of volunteer engagement at the Cathedral Church of the Advent.



In February 2021, **Michael** (M.Div., '18) and Rachel **Weeks** welcomed the birth of their son, Jonathan. He is the leader of the young adults and college ministries at the Cathedral Church of the Advent.

**Byron** (M.Div., '19) and Bria **Jackson** welcomed the birth of their daughter, Mila, in 2019. He is the pastor of Greater Thankful Missionary Baptist Church.

**Dylan Evans** (M.Div., '19) and his wife, Ariana, welcomed the birth of their first child, Jack Iverson, in November 2020.



In August 2020, **Russell** (M.Div., '20) and Christina **Mann**, welcome the birth of their son, Mateo. He is the associate minister of students at Central Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama.

In June 2020, **Cort** (M.Div., '20) and **Abby** (M.Div., '21) **Gatliff** welcomed the birth of their first child, Eleanor Elizabeth. He is an assistant minister for discipleship at South Highlands Presbyterian Church.



**Kyle** (M.Div., '20) and Caroline **Sullivan** welcomed the birth of their first child, Asher, in 2020. He is the senior pastor at Riverbend Baptist Church in Gadsden, Alabama.

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Welcome, Beck and Julie Taylor, Samford's 19th president and first lady, to Samford.