

BEESON

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

BEESON DIVINITY SCHOOL 2020

BEING HUMAN

From The Editor

The theme for this year's issue is theological anthropology. What is a biblical and theological understanding of what it means to be human? This question has always been important; yet now, perhaps more than ever, this question has far-reaching implications. In our social distancing and isolation, it is questions of humanity's essential and tangible relatedness that come to the fore. Does the humanity of the elderly and immuno-compromised matter enough for the healthy to stay at home? Do we care enough for others that we are willing to share our possessions with those in dire need?

Leading up to the pandemic, I was disturbed by how quick and easy it was for some people to dismiss another's humanity (or seek to destroy it) on social media. Hidden behind a screen, without having to look each other in the eyes, we (the collective we) became indifferent to one another's personhood and inherent dignity. The person behind that Twitter handle or Facebook profile was reduced to a dangerous idea or opponent that had to be dismantled and knocked down.

After March 15, 2020, the day when Samford University announced that the campus would close for classes, I began to see a shift. Now that we had a greater opponent than each other looming, and given the sudden and abrupt loss of in-person relationships and community, we began to realize how much

we needed each other. The irony is that now that almost all of our relationships and community have gone virtual, we are perhaps beginning to see the humanity of the person behind the online profile. Fear has seized us all, and the coronavirus has not shown any partiality as to who it affects. In our isolation, many are now beginning to realize how important the other is to our daily living. We are interconnected. We need one another.

Under normal circumstances, we might tend to forget our interconnectedness. We might be tempted to believe the following: that my work is my own, my home is my castle and my freedoms only affect me. This self-centered focus most often leads to a devaluation of the other. But as this pandemic has forced us into a prison of sorts, placing us behind doors and face masks and six-feet-apart, the reality of a life without the other is a shallow, thin one.

The Church, however, has always made visible our interconnectedness and what it means to be human. This is first of all interconnectedness to God, and then to one another. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "God himself did what no human being could do. He brought the sinner through death to life." To truly be human, then, is to be a person whom Jesus brings from death to life. We are those baptized (Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13), valued more by God than the best of our achievements. Our lives are now hidden

with Christ, who is our life and whose death is our death and whose resurrection is our resurrection (Col. 3:3-4). We are a new humanity (Col. 3:11) because we share one body, namely the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27).

This means, further, that we are not merely coffee-shop style participants, being alone while at the same time surrounded by people. As individual members of the one body, we are in Christ, living and being rooted and built up in him (Col. 2:7), open to the surprises of another. Clearly, this is not a Platonic reality or solely future aspiration. As the Church, we experience a true interconnectedness in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior—now, today! We find ourselves and we find each other when we lose ourselves to Jesus. By being made anew in him, we find strength and power to keep the commandments: to love God with all of who we are and to love others (even our non-Christian neighbors) as ourselves.

In this body of Christ, we understand what it means to be human and what it means to look at our brothers and sisters and actually see their humanity. To see their humanity is to see them first as people for whom Christ came, died and overcame the grave. God has arranged it all in such a way that if one member of the body suffers the entire body suffers (1 Cor. 12:26). Can we be more interconnected than this?!

In the Church we also find the already/not yet. The Church anticipates the future reality even as she experiences it now in this time of preparation. Thus, as the pandemic has even taken away from the Church the possibility of meeting with one another in person, the Church does not fail or die for her body is that of Jesus Christ, who lives eternally.

How, then, should we think about the theme of this issue of *Beeson* magazine? The question of our humanity is always relevant and will be applicable in numerous ways. But perhaps as we reflect on this question in light of our current situation, my prayer is that this will be a time in which our Christ-formed and Christ-shaped humanity witnesses to the world the perfect and true human, Jesus Christ. And when this pandemic ceases, and we find ourselves back in our routines, feeling safe and secure once more, I pray we will remember the other even as we remember who we are in Jesus Christ. I also hope we will remember that we are interconnected in ways that go beyond the virtual to the physical. We need one another, for that is how God has designed it.



Kristen Padilla is Beeson's marketing and communication coordinator and author of Now That I'm Called: A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry.

22

Beeson Divinity Welcomes New Dean

After a nationwide search in 2019 for founding Dean Timothy George's successor, Douglas A. Sweeney was chosen as the second dean of Beeson Divinity School.



4

The Knowledge of Ourselves

by Douglas A. Sweeney

As John Calvin wrote famously in the opening lines of his Institutes, “nearly all the wisdom we possess . . . consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”



14

Human Desire

by Lydia Suitt

All humans desire, yet our desires are often spontaneous and enigmatic. We desire things at one moment, then later look back and find ourselves asking, “Why on earth did I want that?”



6

Being Human

by Piotr J. Małysz

The church father, Gregory of Nazianzus (died A.D. 390), challenged some thinkers in his own day who boasted they could make the knowledge of God into an exact science.



15

Indispensable

by James Henderson

The briefest glance at what our culture deems worthy of praise suggests that those with disabilities are a burden at best. But do we truly believe that they are indispensable to the life of the church?



10

Preaching and Christian Humanism

by Michael Pasquarello III

I must confess that, as a preacher and teacher of preaching, I am often tempted to lament the state of preaching in our time.



16

Interviews

by Kristen Padilla

How do our views of God and humanity affect the way we minister to others? Five Beeson alumni reflect on the issue's theme in light of their work among the weak, vulnerable and marginalized.



- 21** Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute Extends Reach
- 22** Beeson Divinity Welcomes New Dean
- 24** Robert Smith Jr. Student Scholarship
- 25** Beeson Launches First Annual African American Ministry Emphasis Month
- 26** Timothy George Scholarship Endowed
- 27** General James M. Hutchens' Legacy Continues
- 30** Faculty Bookshelf
- 33** Alumni Updates

BEESON

Dean
Douglas A. Sweeney

Editor
Kristen Padilla

Designer
Scott Camp

Creative Services
Sarah Howard
Laine Williams

Photography
Kyle Thompson, Mark Jessup,
Gage Goddard

Contributors
Piotr Malysz, Michael Pasquarello III, Lydia Suitt, James Henderson, Rebecca Graber Henderson, Brian Keen, Cecelia Walker, Awon Shanglai, Oleg Turlac



Beeson Divinity School

Samford University
800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35229
205-726-2991 • beesondivinity.com

©2020 Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

Beeson Divinity School is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

Samford University is an Equal Opportunity Institution that complies with applicable laws prohibiting discrimination in its educational and employment policies and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information, or national or ethnic origin.

The Knowledge of Ourselves

by Douglas A. Sweeney

As John Calvin wrote famously in the opening lines of his Institutes, “nearly all the wisdom we possess . . . consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”

It is difficult, moreover, to discern which comes first—for each kind of knowledge seems to lead us to the other. As we think about God, we can hardly help but think of our relationship to him. On the other hand, however,

“no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he “lives and moves” (Acts 17:28). For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God. Then, by

these benefits shed like dew from heaven upon us, we are led as by rivulets to the spring itself.”

For Calvin, the “knowledge of ourselves” has mainly to do with awareness of our sinfulness, finitude and weakness. It reinforces our feeling of dependence on the Lord. “For, as a veritable world of miseries is to be found in mankind,” he said, “our shameful nakedness exposes a teeming horde of infamies.” Still, this knowledge is essential to our welfare and happiness. It prepares us for the gospel. It moves us toward the Lord. Indeed, it “not only arouses

us to seek God,” he argued. It “leads us by the hand to find him.”

In this issue of Beeson magazine, we focus our attention on the “knowledge of ourselves” in an effort to lead readers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Theologians used to call this issue’s theme “the doctrine of man.” Today, most call it “theological anthropology.” But no matter what the label, it pertains to the knowledge of

God’s intentions for humanity, the distortion of those intentions that results from our sin and the ways in which the Father can redeem us



from our plight by his Son and Holy Spirit—reordering our lives in accordance with his will, restoring the joy of our relationship with him and enabling us to flourish by participating in him and his work of redemption in the world.

Professor Piotr Małysz leads off with reflections on our situation as moderns—after centuries of work on what it means to be human—with respect to the knowledge of ourselves. Have our scientific advances led us closer to the truth about who we really are, Małysz asks, or have they “only served to obscure, and distract us from, the question?” They have made life easier and improved our understanding of its natural dimensions, he admits right away. But only in Christ does human life make the kind of sense and find the kind of purpose for which God has designed it. In the words of the gospel we proclaim day by day, God himself became human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, reconciled the faithful to himself and one another, showed us who we really are, and gave us our identity.

Professor Mike Pasquarello then presents us with profound advice from Dietrich Bonhoeffer about preaching Christ, the God-man, and thereby demonstrating God’s intentions for humanity. Bonhoeffer’s incarnational way of training pastors (which is much like Beeson’s) involved “a robust theological

vision of God and humanity united in” the Savior, Pasquarello explains, one that “comprised the basis of all homiletical instruction.” And his preaching on “the ‘Word made flesh’,” in its turn, “provides the basis for a Christian humanism by which we might be what we were created to be in Christ.”

Beeson alumna Lydia Suitt offers wisdom on the theme of human desire from the writings of Jonathan Edwards and the late 20th-century French thinker René Girard. From Edwards, she teaches us that affections, or desires, “are present in all our activities.” They animate our lives and fuel everything we do. From Girard, she suggests that “we learn what to desire by association with our family, friends, coworkers and neighbors.” We tend to “mimic” role models as we express our deepest longings. “Jesus invites us to take him as our model.” And as we do, Suitt reminds us, “we can expect to find desires slowly turning from serving ourselves to serving a world desperately in need of God’s mercy and love.”

Beeson alumnus James Henderson bats cleanup with an inspirational challenge to appreciate the humanity of the members of the body of Christ often deemed the weakest. The disabled and their families feel invisible, neglected, even useless in many churches. But as Paul warned the

Corinthians, “the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” As we “ponder what it means to be human,” pleads Henderson, “we must recognize the indispensability of every member of the body, not by politely allowing those with disabilities to exist within the boundaries of the church, but by fully embracing and celebrating their unique gifting as essential aspects both of what it means to be human and to be in Christ.”

We hope the cumulative effect of these four lead essays will encourage you to find your identity in Christ, who best represents God’s intentions for humanity. And we pray that all God’s children will grow up into him, “from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16). That’s what the “knowledge of ourselves” is really all about! ♦



*Douglas A. Sweeney is dean of Beeson Divinity School and author of *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment*.*

Photo credit: Mark Jessup





Being Human

by Piotr J. Małysz

*“What is man
that You should note him,
and the human creature,
that You should pay him heed,
and You make him
little less than the gods,
with glory and grandeur
You crown him.”*

Psa



man

The church father, Gregory of Nazianzus (died A.D. 390), challenged some thinkers in his own day who boasted they could make the knowledge of God into an exact science. They claimed they had God in their pocket when, in fact, they barely knew anything about the staggeringly complex and varied world around them. Even less so could they boast any kind of reliable knowledge of the human being. “There are many facts,” Gregory observes, “about rest in sleep, about our imagination at work in dreams, about memory and recollection, about calculation, anger and desire—to be brief, about all that runs the affairs of this little world called Man.”¹ In other words, get to know your own selves first before you foolishly barge into God’s mysteries!

Today, it seems, the situation is quite different. Our knowledge of ourselves—“this little world called Man”—is incomparably more incisive and sophisticated. Scientific disciplines, from chemistry, through a range of biomedical sciences, linguistics, psychology, cultural anthropology, all the way to philosophy of mind and the study of artificial intelligence (to name only a few), collectively offer us a host of insights into human being. Small surprise, we have taken our cue and have now begun to reach for the stars!

Yet, for all its advances, this explosion of anthropological knowledge has failed, as some have noted, to shed light on the most fundamental of questions: *What does it actually mean to be human?*² We do face, to be sure, an information overload long beyond the mastery of even the most gifted Renaissance man. But it has scarcely provided us with insight into what we ourselves are precisely as human beings: as fragile as a reed, in the words of Pascal, and yet possessing an incomparable

advantage over the whole mute cosmos, for when crushed, we at least know that we are dying.³ Has the kaleidoscopic variety of human phenomena under our fingertips brought us any closer to knowing what a human being actually is? Or has it only served to obscure, and distract us from, the question?

As early as the 16th century, Martin Luther worried that we no longer knew what we were. For to answer the question of our identity and significance, we would have to know where we come from (that is, our true origin, or efficient cause) and what we are for (that is our destiny or final cause).⁴ This disorientation has since become a signature characteristic of modernity. Modernity goes so far as making a virtue of it, seeing it as an opportunity to remake our own selves, humanity as such, and even our whole world. And it promises to bless those endeavors. Lack of confidence in our very selves, paradoxically accompanied by in-depth knowledge of various aspects of human existence, thus becomes transformed into delusional self-confidence. The story of modernity is, at many of its junctures, a tragic tale of this delusion.⁵

But things have not always been so uncertain and so up for grabs. We may not always have known about the intricacies of our cardiovascular system, the chemistry of the DNA or the subconscious; yet the big picture was available. Take Psalm 8, for example. The psalmist, too, is clearly struck by the insignificance of the human. Still, this insignificance is no pretext for a call to make something of ourselves. It is, instead, an opportunity to confess that our meaning, as human beings, comes from beyond ourselves. It comes from God, and it is related to God’s attentiveness:

¹Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, ed. L. Wickham (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s, 2002), 54.

²Eberhard Jüngel, “On Becoming Truly Human,” *Theological Essays II*, ed. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 224.

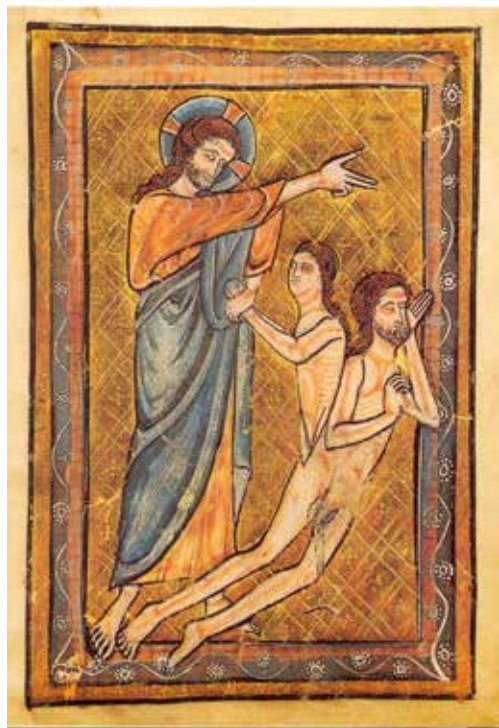
³Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, XVI/231, various editions available.

⁴Martin Luther, *Disputation Concerning Man*; in *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955), 34:138.

⁵See, among others, Robert W. Jenson, “How the World Lost Its Story,” *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 50-61; as well as the works of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.

The meaning of being human, at least for the Bible and subsequent Christian tradition, is to be found in God's creation, his sustaining mindfulness, his caring provision for us and his love that seeks us out and destines us for itself. In other words, to be human, as Martin Luther also noted, is to be justified: to allow another—God!—to establish our significance, to make sense of us and to ground our identity.⁶

In the Bible, God's act of creation constitutes such foundational act of justification. Everything that God creates has its proper, intended place. But humans are justified in a unique way. First, the man and the woman are not only summoned into being like the rest of creation. Their existence is, rather, the fruit of divine consideration ("Let us make mankind..." Genesis 1:26) and intimate formation (Genesis 2:7). The dust of the ground is formed and given breath by God to become a living being. The man and the woman exist in a special relationship with God. Second, they receive a blessing to be fruitful. But unlike the other creatures, for them, as those enlivened by God, the blessing comes with a task: to cultivate the garden and to make their own the world around them. They are to be creators of sorts. Finally, and most importantly, they are to do so together,



as male and female, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

The image of God has received various interpretations throughout the history of Christian theology, being associated most often with rationality as that which differentiates humans from animals. While there is some merit to this perspective, it owes more to the Greek philosopher Aristotle than it does to the Bible.⁷ For Aristotle, the human is a life-form with *logos*, often interpreted simply as a rational animal.

By contrast, in the biblical witness from Genesis all the way to the New Testament, the image of God, as a human distinctive, has more to do with *how* humans exist. They are to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28)—in a way that reflects God's own being and work. Now, God brings everything into being solely on account of who he is, the triune God who is love (1 John 4:8). In creating, God graciously elects to be the God he is, not just for himself but for also for others, especially his human creatures. He brings creation into being, then creates the man and the woman, gives them a place of honor, bestows on them the gift of creation as a token of his abiding favor, and summons them to a purposeful living that reflects what he has done for them. In all this, he offers them, above all else, fellowship with himself.

Correspondingly, the man and the woman, followed by all the children of Adam, are to rest their being and find their identity in God's many-splendored goodness. They are defined by their unique fellowship with God. Since humans are unable to create out of nothing, they are to use God's gift of creation and, through it, to express their own self-giving on each other's behalf. They thus also, as it were, justify the other by summoning this other out of social nonexistence into rich relational living. Humans do in a human way what God does in a divine way! Just so, they exist in the right relationship to God, exhibiting in their being his goodness and design, and in the right relationship to each other. They are

◀ Creation of Eve, English School, XIII century, Musée Marmotten, Paris, France; photo credit: Jim Forest

as God meant them to be. In this complex way, they are justified as creatures in God's very image—trusting God for who they are and living out that very identity in mutual affection and creation stewardship. Humans exist as believing, social and vocational beings.

However, as the entire arc of the biblical narrative underscores, humans can also exist differently, in contradiction to God's intention. They can deny what God has made of them and lose themselves. While there are no unpine-y pine trees or unlion-y lions, there most certainly are inhuman human beings, those who dehumanize themselves and do so to others, though this should not be taken simply in a moralistic sense. The bottom line is that only humans can sin. And humans sin, fundamentally, when they do not take God's goodness for what he discloses it to be, but give credence to a lie that God is not to be trusted. "Did God really say . . . ? And even if he did, did he mean it?" (Genesis 3:1-4). The serpent's questions to Eve are at the root of all sin.

To exist in sin is not to be able to trust God with one's very being or to live out of God's justification. Both Luther and Calvin saw unbelief, in the specific form of refusal to take God for who he is—to take him at his word, to be the root sin.⁸ What flows from it is the pressing and debilitating need to justify one's own existence in all its glaring insignificance, to create and make something of oneself. This involves sinners in two paradoxes. First, they must act as simultaneously creator and material in relation to themselves, which is impossible.⁹ Second, for all their self-justification, sinners remain stubbornly oriented to justification by another. We all want what we make of ourselves to be recognized, admired and even envied by others. This entangles us in patterns of mistrust, competition, judgment, blame, etc., in relation to others, all of which pervert our original togetherness and become contexts for a host of greater and lesser sins against the neighbor and, as such, against God himself, making mockery of his abiding love and favor.

In sin, the rich togetherness for which we were created becomes absorbed into an



◀ Le Bon Samaritain by Aime Nicolas Morot

Christ. The children of Adam are no longer where Adam was once justified, where human existence made sense and human life had a purpose. God himself, therefore, has become a human being, our brother and friend, to take up our cause.

Jesus Christ, to be sure, paid the price for our unfaithfulness. He was ultimately held guilty for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). On the cross, he bore in his body our own isolation and death. But our focus on the cross must not become so excessive that we should forget about Christ's life and his resurrection, as if they were merely incidental. In Christ's entire person and work—his life, death, resurrection and ascension—we discern again the image of God and the possibility of its renewal in ourselves.

First of all, Jesus is the human image of *God*, in that in him, God addresses us about himself in the language of our own flesh (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15). Over against satanic doubt, God shows himself to be a good God, a God who does not give up on us, undeterred by death itself, even though we have recklessly given up on him. More importantly for our consideration here, Jesus not only displays God's faithfulness. He is also the human image of God. He is the second Adam (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15:45).

Jesus Christ lived a truly human life, the life that Adam and all Adam's children ought to have lived. His earthly, human ministry was one of unshaken trust in the Father's provision in face of temptation to doubt God, to justify himself and to take matters into his own hands. Jesus repeatedly entrusted himself to the Father's care, beginning with the wilderness encounter with Satan, all the way through Gethsemane and Golgotha. By trusting the Father with his very self, Jesus was able to live a life free from self-preoccupation. He lived, therefore, as a man for others—even to the point of death. "Father, forgive them..." he

pleaded (Luke 23:34). In raising his Son from the dead, the Father vindicated the life of his Son as a truly human and godly life. In Jesus, humanity is again justified—it is how and where it should have been all along. With his life, he restores it to its God-accorded place.

But Jesus was raised not only because of his sinless life. The resurrection was no private event or reward. He was raised also for our justification (Romans 4:25). With his self-giving life, Jesus has opened up a life-space for us to come into, inviting us to find ourselves in him and to claim his faithful existence for ourselves, as if we had lived it all ourselves. What a gift!

As the risen and ascended Lord, Jesus Christ is now on the other side of death; but he is there as none other than the human he was. In him, the life of Adam, human life is brought to completion and finds its Sabbath: it is truly finished as a life reposing in God through and through (John 19:30; Luke 23:46). The triune God has brought forth a faithful covenant partner and a human person who, with his entire life, perfectly images him and gives expression to his divine goodness. But there is more. The same risen and ascended Jesus is also God's very own living grace, now living for us. He is the human face of God turned toward us in abiding favor. In him, our own lives, too, can be made into a new creation. For if Christ is for us with the being of the triune God, do we need to justify ourselves any more? As St. Paul noted, "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). They shall live as justified by God, who in Jesus Christ has already made more of us than we could ever make of ourselves. A place in Christ is our own completion and destiny; to claim it as our very own—to believe that the human in Christ is me—is what defines us as human beings. We are the body of Christ. ♦

excessive and inescapable preoccupation with the self. As Karl Barth observed, by wanting to be on our own what we can only be with God, we have actually become less.¹⁰ Our very lives have become stamped with death. When death finally does come, God, in effect, only ratifies what we have been doing to ourselves all along. In death, the last relationship, that of me to myself, is undercut. The judgment of death is: "As you want it so be it!"¹¹

But—and this is the good news—even as he pronounces us guilty, God does not wish for his creation to destroy itself and for humanity to perish. God's question to Adam in the garden, "Where are you?" comes to define the arc of the biblical story. It is God who first asks the question. And, importantly, it is God himself who answers it on our behalf. He answers it in Jesus



*Piotr J. Malysz is associate professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School, where he teaches history and doctrine. He is the author of *Trinity, Freedom and Love: An Engagement with the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel and co-editor of *Luther Refracted: The Reformer's Ecumenical Legacy.***

⁶Luther, Disputation Concerning Man, 139.

⁷Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a; and *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1093a, various editions available.

⁸Luther, Lectures on Genesis; in *Luther's Works*, 1:149. Calvin, Institutes, II.i.4.

⁹So Luther, Lectures on Galatians; in *Luther's Works*, 26:259.

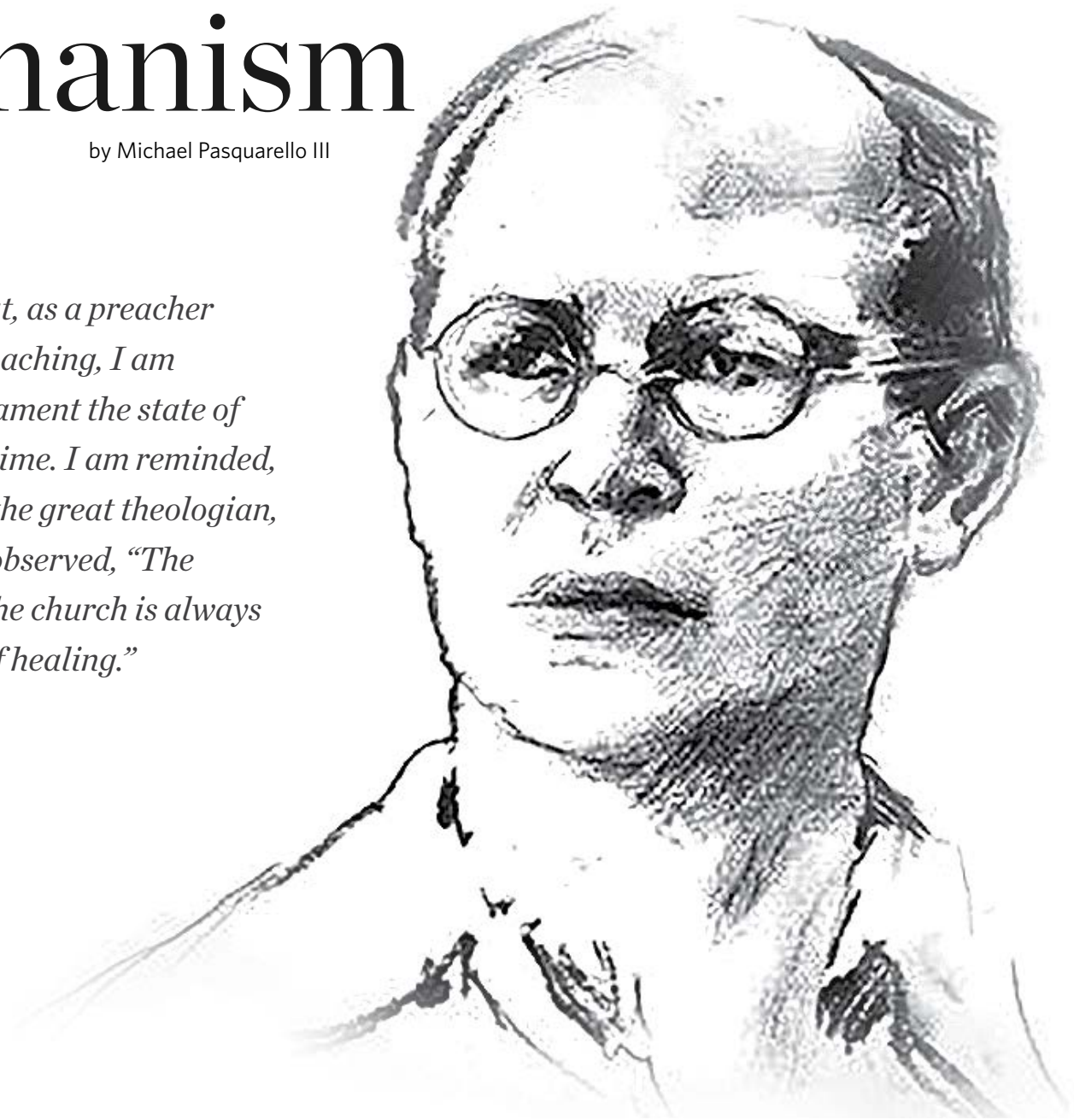
¹⁰Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 247.

¹¹See my essay, "On Death, Dying, and Dying Well," *Lutheran Forum* 53:3 (Fall 2019), 7-17.

Preaching *and Christian* Humanism

by Michael Pasquarello III

I must confess that, as a preacher and teacher of preaching, I am often tempted to lament the state of preaching in our time. I am reminded, however, of what the great theologian, Karl Barth, once observed, “The proclamation of the church is always sick and in need of healing.”



Cover design and illustration of Michael Pasquarello's *Dietrich: Bonhoeffer and the Theology of a Preaching Life* by Hannah Feldmeier for Baylor University Press

And so even as I seek some amount of comfort in pointing out all that is shallow, superficial, misleading, abusive, unfaithful and even heretical in the world of contemporary preaching, I find myself longing to be taught, challenged and inspired by a compelling vision of what Christian preaching is and does. This is precisely what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Barth's younger contemporary, sought to do during the dark time we remember as Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany.

In the summer, 1933, just a few months after Adolf Hitler's stunning ascent to power, Bonhoeffer gave a series of seminar lectures at the University of Berlin on the subject of Christology. The lectures articulated a robust theological vision that would later guide Bonhoeffer's work at Finkenwalde, the underground seminary of the Confessing Church which he directed from 1935–37. Given the overwhelming "noise" of Nazi propaganda, Bonhoeffer's lectures were heard by many as offering a strong challenge to the idolatrous definitions of Christ, the church and humanity advocated by those who identified themselves as "German Christians." Bonhoeffer, therefore, began by announcing the doxological nature of Christian doctrine—"orthodoxy" as not only right confession, but as right prayer and praise evoked by wonder in beholding the glory of God incarnate in Christ and a new humanity united to him.

"The silence of the church is silence before the Word. In proclaiming Christ, the church falls on its knees in silence before the inexpressible. . . To speak of Christ is to be silent, and to be silent about Christ is to speak. That is obedient affirmation of God's revelation, which takes place through the Word. The church's speech through silence is the right way to proclaim Christ."¹

Bonhoeffer clarified the meaning of silence. "To pray is to keep silent and, at the same time, is to cry out, before God in both cases, in the light of God's Word." Because proclaiming Christ is an act of

worship; Christology, speaking of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, is from and to a person who is himself the "transcendent" in our midst. Christian preaching begins by asking "Who?" rather than "How?" The question of being, "Who are you, Jesus Christ?" calls human beings into question and reveals who they truly are in the encounter with Christ. Neither an ideal nor super-human, Christ is the God-human person, humiliated by his suffering and death on the cross, exalted by his resurrection from the dead.²

Bonhoeffer's work with seminarians at Finkenwalde would focus on the mystery of Christ as articulated in the Christology lectures. He introduced students to the paradoxical nature of preaching as an act and event which is dependent upon God, who is pleased to speak the Word in the person of Christ through the human word of preaching. He states this eloquently in the Christology lectures.

"His presence is present in the word of the church. His presence is, by nature, his existence as preaching . . . If this were not so, the sermon would not have the exclusive status that the Reformation gives it. The sermon is the poverty and riches of our church. The sermon is the form of the present Christ to whom we are committed, whom we are to follow. If Christ is not wholly present in the sermon, the church breaks down . . . Luther says, 'This is the human being to whom you should point and say; this is God!' We say, this is the human word to which you should point and say, this is God."³

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932 - 1933*, DBWE vol. 12 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 300.

²DBWE 12:301-302.

³DBWE 12:317-318.

The human speaking of the Word requires silence. Such silence, which is a gift, is not merely the absence of words, but rather is a silence appropriate for the glory revealed in the wonder of God incarnate in human form. Silence, then, is humble recognition of the Word, prayerful attentiveness that waits and listens before speaking. Right speech is therefore dependent upon right silence, and right silence is dependent upon right speech. Preaching is an act of faith in the Word, which, from beginning to end, is dependent upon the freedom and initiative of God who freely became human.⁴

Bonhoeffer's incarnational Christology guided his work of training preachers within a daily rhythm of silence and speech. A robust theological vision of God and humanity united in Christ comprised the basis of all homiletical instruction. Preaching was not reduced to theory and application, as was the habit of many preachers in Germany, but rather homiletical content and form were united in Christ. Preaching was therefore seen as a theological practice in all its human aspects, dimensions and considerations.⁵

⁴DBWE 12:366. See the discussion of Bonhoeffer's Christological orientation to reality in Philip G. Ziegler, "God, Christ, and Church in the DDR," in *Engaging Bonhoeffer: The Impact and Influence of Bonhoeffer's Life and Thought*, ed. Matthew D. Kirkpatrick (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 201-220.

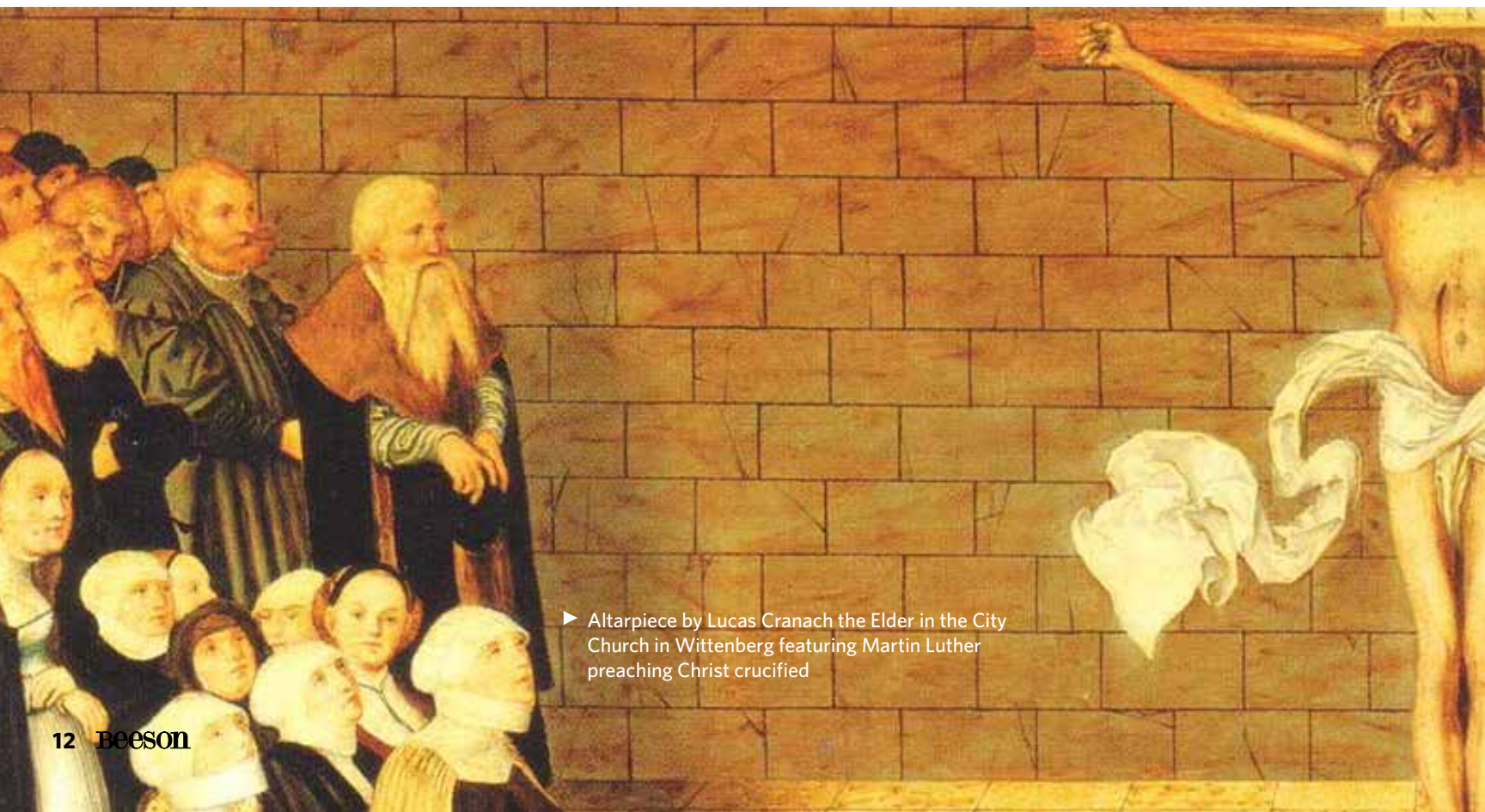
⁵See the illuminating summary of Bonhoeffer's integrative way of teaching as practical theology in "Editor's Afterword to the German Edition," in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935 - 1937*, DBWE vol. 14 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 971-1015. Richard Lischer describes this way of forming preachers as a theological grounded habitus, a quality of life uniting both theological understanding and spiritual wisdom. See Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching: Dynamics of the Gospel*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), ix-x.

Proclaiming the New Humanity in Christ

According to student notes, Bonhoeffer's homiletical lectures in Finkenwalde included establishing the criteria for a Christian sermon, beginning always with careful exegesis. Following Martin Luther, Bonhoeffer situated preaching within the union of Christology and ecclesiology, Christ and his body the church, thus offering a remarkable theological vision of preaching that serves God's work of raising up a new humanity in conformity to Christ, a "Christian humanism."

1. The sermon derives from the incarnation of Jesus Christ and is determined by the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
2. In the incarnation, God the Son takes on human nature.
3. The word of the sermon is, in fact, this Christ who bears human nature.
4. Because the word by nature bears the new humanity, it is by nature always oriented to the church community
5. The shape of the preached word is different from that of every other word.
6. The spoken word receives the promise that it will be able to take on people and to bear or sustain them.
7. Because the world was created and is maintained by the Word, God can be recognized only through the Word.⁶

⁶DBWE 14:509-514. One of the first studies of Bonhoeffer's as homiletical work is still available in Clyde E. Fant, *Bonhoeffer: Worldly Preaching* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975).



▶ Altarpiece by Lucas Cranach the Elder in the City Church in Wittenberg featuring Martin Luther preaching Christ crucified

Bonhoeffer's stunning vision of preaching affirmed Christ present as the content, form and efficacy of the sermon: "[Christ] who walks through the church community." As the incarnate Son of God, Christ is present in the word of proclamation, taking on human nature which has been adopted by God, "being fully flesh of the flesh Christ bore." This is the body of Christ, united in the incarnation and established as the *communio sanctorum* (communion of saints). The word of the sermon is nothing less than "the incarnate Lord who seeks to take up people to bear sinful human nature." God does not lecture, coerce or seek to improve people through the word of Christ. Rather, as demonstrated by the cross, God speaks a word that takes on a body to create a community borne by Christ himself. Amazingly, the word has become incarnate and desires to have a body, inherently moving toward humanity by its own free initiative.⁷

The preacher's calling is to follow after the gracious movement of the word in the whole scriptural witness to Christ. Moreover, the preached word needs no support or enhancement, but simply expresses itself, being what it is, uniting content and form; Christ himself bearing humanity; Christ addressing and challenging humanity; Christ taking up humanity; and humanity bearing Christ in the world. As

the first and original Word of God, "it supports and sustains the whole world and lays a foundation for a new world in the sermon." Bonhoeffer adds this astonishing claim: "In the proclaimed word, Christ steps into the congregation, which is waiting for and calling upon Christ, worshipping and celebrating Christ. In the proclaimed word, Christ takes up the congregation."⁸

Bonhoeffer's compelling vision of what Christian preaching is and does is grounded in an incarnational Christology, a vision of reality possessing a distinctive humanist quality in which Christians participate by virtue of their union with Christ. Bonhoeffer's strong Christological focus on the "Word made flesh," God becoming human, provides the basis for a Christian humanism by which we might be what we were created to be in Christ. As the Lord of all creation, Christ is both the source and goal of the renewal of humanity that embraces all people without distinctions through his life, death and resurrection—a new creation made visible in the midst of the old one.⁹ ♦



Michael Pasquarello III is Methodist chair of Divinity, director of the Doctor of Ministry program and director of the Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute at Beeson Divinity School. He is the author of Dietrich: Bonhoeffer and the Theology of a Preaching Life.

⁷DBWE 14:510-511.

⁸DBWE 14:512-513.

⁹See the excellent study in Jens Zimmerman, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).



Human Desire

by Lydia Suitt

All humans desire, yet our desires are often spontaneous and enigmatic. We desire things at one moment, then later look back and find ourselves asking, “Why on earth did I want that?” One for me: “Why on earth did I want a furby?” While our desires can seem mysterious and beyond our control, the Christian tradition has insightful resources to help us understand the nature and cause of our desires. Two thinkers worth bringing together on the topic are Jonathan Edwards, an 18th-century American theologian, and René Girard, a late 20th-century French literary critic and philosopher.

For Edwards, affections, or desires, are necessarily kinetic. They are “the springs of motion” that “set men agoing in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits.”¹ They propel us into action toward the objects of our desires, whether those objects are securing a comfortable lifestyle, wooing an individual or pleasing God. As such, our desires are present in all our activities. They keep us getting up for work, making dinner for our families, shopping for new clothes and gadgets, posting on social media, and worshiping with our church communities. Without them, we would be inert. Lifeless.

Among our many affections, many of us have *religious* affections—affections which set us into motion toward a religious end. For Christians, this end is seeing the kingdom of God come near. Therefore, these affections propel us into love. We love God and our neighbors, performing works of charity, seeking justice for the oppressed, caring for creation and sharing the good news of God’s forgiveness with those we encounter. And we do this not because we think that we should, but because we have this kinetic desire to see God’s vision enacted on earth.

Unfortunately, even if we agree with Edwards’s description of religious affections, we may not find ourselves filled with them. We may want to be filled and guided by these affections, but all of us experience a mix of desires—some religious, some not. We want to seek the kingdom, but we also find ourselves pursuing acceptance, success and power. How should we respond to this situation? Can our

desires change?

In addressing these questions, René Girard offers a helpful exposition of desire in *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*. He claims that human desire is uniquely “mimetic.”²



Ni Ketut Ayu Sri Wardani
There is Always Forgiveness 2008
oil on canvas: 39" x 27 ½"
Charis: Boundary Crossings Exhibition,
Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity
(used with permission)

While animal desire is confined to instinct, human desire persists after our basic needs are met. This above-and-beyond desire lacks a predetermined object; we don’t instinctively know what to desire. Instead, we learn what to desire by association with our family, friends, coworkers and neighbors. As those closest to us value and pursue beauty, power, community and success, we learn to value and desire those same things and mimic those desires. This molding process is largely unconscious.

Girard calls those whose desires we mimic our “models,” and they are of paramount importance.³ While our desire is and will always be mimetic, we can choose who we take to be our model(s). And this is where our influence over our desires lies.⁴ If we want to change our desire, we must change our model.

¹Jonathan Edwards, “A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections (1746),” in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 145.

²René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 10.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 15.

⁵Ibid., 14.

If we want to develop religious affections, we may be prone to select a religious “superstar” as our model—someone like John Piper or Pope Francis. However, all humans experience competing desires, an ongoing war between “the flesh and the spirit” (Galatians 5:17). If we take any human as our model, we will find ourselves adopting their mixed desires. While we may learn to value worship, service and love, we may also be learning to desire a large congregation, popularity or recognition. We may inadvertently begin to compete with our models. We may want to become the better version of them instead of developing a pure desire for God and God’s kingdom.

Girard explains that if we want to develop the religious affections Edwards describes, the only model we can turn to is Jesus himself. Jesus invites us to take him as our model—to follow him in his imitation of God. Jesus knows that only imitating the nonegotistical, “detached generosity of God” will free us from envy, self-obsession and shame so that we can love our neighbors with self-abandon.⁵

We cannot turn to Jesus as our model on our own; however, with his invitation, Jesus gives us the means to accept it. He grants us his Spirit. The Spirit turns us toward Jesus and binds us with him and the Father. The Spirit roots us in Christ and shapes us from the inside out. As we remain in Christ by his Spirit, we bear Christ’s fruit (John 15:4-8).

As we journey through life, each of us will always be *simul iustus et peccator*, both righteous and sinner. We will never outgrow our need for grace. This does not, however, mean that we are victims to desires that wield their power over us. By Christ’s Spirit and guided by the wisdom of Edwards and Girard, we can direct our attention toward Jesus and choose him as our model. And as we do, we can expect to find desires slowly turning from serving ourselves to serving a world desperately in need of God’s mercy and love. ♦



Lydia Nace Suitt holds an M.A.T.S. from Beeson Divinity School (16) and an M.A.R. concentrating in philosophical theology from Yale Divinity School (18). She and her husband Canaan currently live in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Indispensable

by James Henderson

My brother David faithfully serves as an usher each week at my family's church in Orlando, Florida. Sunday by Sunday, he shows up early and receives his stack of bulletins to hand out to faithful congregants as they arrive for worship. It's a relatively simple task, but an important one. David is one of the most authentic and joyful people I know, and he has the opportunity to remind people of Christ's love for them as they enter into worship. While many people are capable of handing out bulletins, not all share in David's natural gift of warmth and love for virtually everyone he encounters. His disposition makes him uniquely gifted for his role as an usher.

Oh—he also has Down syndrome.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul rebukes a church fallen prey to the false promises of self-promotion. He explains to them that diversity is essential to the functioning of the body of Christ, and then he goes a step further. He reminds them of one of the paradoxes of the gospel: “The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require” (vv. 22-24).

The key word in this passage is “indispensable.” Paul is not arguing that the church should tolerate or simply be kind to those members of the body that *seem* to be weaker. All too often the church mistakes pity for compassion and inadvertently assumes that the “weaker” brethren function only as objects of charity. In contrast, Paul makes the case that the church is incomplete and incapable of being fully herself without those whom the world would overlook.

The briefest glance at what our culture deems worthy of praise suggests that those with disabilities are a burden at best. They are often marginalized, ignored and perceived as weak. Even in the church, it is not uncommon for families, including members with

disabilities, to be overlooked. Perhaps these people are welcomed into the sanctuary on Sunday morning. But do we truly believe that they are *indispensable* to the life of the church? I imagine our communities would be much richer if we truly integrated this theology into our daily practice.¹

Practically, what should be our response to Paul's challenge? It's easy to talk about being inclusive, but it is much harder to put into practice. Simply put, we must become both curious and flexible.

As previously mentioned, many individuals with disabilities or families who have members with disabilities can feel invisible in their congregations. It is not that people do not know who they are, but that people do not know how to relate to them. As a result, these people are “politely” ignored, and few people actually know what is occurring in their lives. When we allow our feelings of awkwardness or unease to dictate our relationships, we will discard relationships that require more work.

However, if it is true that “we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another,” as Paul writes in Romans 12:5, then a polite dismissal of those whom we perceive as different can only be harmful to both parties. Therefore, as we take the time to get to know people in our congregations who have disabilities, even (and especially!) when we feel uncomfortable, we will discover that those of us considered “normal” have much to learn and receive from them.

The Christian community needs her members with disabilities—not despite the fact that they are different, but precisely because they are. This is the very theme of Mary's song following the Annunciation: “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate” (Luke 1:52).

David's perceived limitations relieve him of so much of the baggage that prevents the rest of us from faithfully resting in the arms of Christ. While he has his own sin struggles, I know that he is not encumbered with the same weight of self-absorption that so often inhibits my walk with the Lord. Rather, while I am paralyzed in 1 Corinthians 12 seeking after the most attractive spiritual gifts, David is resting in 1 Corinthians 13 because he already knows that “the greatest of these is love” (v. 13).

Therefore, as we ponder what it means to be human, we must recognize the indispensability of every member of the body, not by politely allowing those with disabilities to exist within the boundaries of the church, but by fully embracing and celebrating their unique giftings as essential aspects both of what it means to be human and to be in Christ. ♦



David Henderson (left) and James Henderson (right). James Henderson is a recent Beeson graduate (M.Div. '19) currently serving as a chaplain at UAB Hospital in Birmingham. He is married to Rebecca (M.A.T.S./M.S.W. '19).

¹See Jean Vanier in *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2008), 74.

Interviews

by Kristen Padilla

How do our views of God and humanity affect the way we minister to others? What does it look like to respect someone else's humanity? These are questions we wanted to ask Beeson alumni who are working with people on the margins, those whom society and culture may deem unworthy, unlovable or a lost cause. I spoke to five alumni both locally and internationally. Their answers have been edited for length and clarity.

Rebecca Graber Henderson

(M.A.T.S./M.S.W. '19)

Mobile Unit Counselor,
Birmingham Crisis Center

K What kind of persons do you work with? What are their basic needs?

RH I work with sexual assault survivors and secondary survivors (those who are close with someone who's been sexually assaulted), especially in rural areas of Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair and Walker counties. Survivors have varying needs, but one of the core things they need is to be believed and supported. Many times, when someone has been assaulted, they struggle with self-blame and difficulty trusting others. Their own family, friends and faith communities may perpetrate rape myths and put some level of blame on them (i.e. "Well, if you hadn't been doing X, then this wouldn't have happened").

They also need legal and financial support, especially if they decide to move forward in the legal process. In these times, having someone to help with things like food, moral support and childcare can be immensely helpful. And some of their basic needs are the same basic needs of all people—to be heard, to have someone try to understand and to have a support system that encourages them.



Rebecca Graber Henderson

K In what ways have your assumptions about the plight of humanity and what it means to be human been challenged through this work?

RH I believe many times we think we have the answers and we know what is best; we crave a sense of control. This work has shown me that many times we have much less control than we believe. While as Christians, even though we recognize that ultimately God is in control and sovereign over all things, we still find ways to try and make ourselves feel safe and in control.

A false sense of control is one of the things

that fuels rape myths. If I can keep myself safe by going home at night and not talking to strangers, then life would be a lot easier. However, many times the rapist is not a stranger in a dark alley at night, but someone the survivor trusts in a place they thought was safe (like their home or the home of the rapist). Life is so much more unpredictable and complicated than we want to believe sometimes.

My work has also shown me that the way out of trauma and pain is not avoidance of vulnerability but an embrace of it. I recognize that coping with pain through avoidance can be helpful for a time and may be what a person needs to just get through, but eventually people have to move through the pain. Sometimes, I think even in Christian circles, we are taught a kind of stoicism, where our intellect is our "true self" and emotions, are something to be avoided or even held suspect. But in my work, I see the value of emotions. God has given them to us (and experienced them through the incarnation of Jesus Christ). Even uncomfortable emotions, like sadness or anger, can tell us something and to be fully human means to be willing to engage with them. We see this with Jesus, who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, who was enraged at the money changers in the temple and who experienced pain and rejection at the cross—if he is truly, fully human and seemed to engage with what he felt, shouldn't we as well?

K In what way has your work informed your thinking about what it means to respect another person's humanity?

RH My work is all about walking with someone whose humanity was dismissed in order for another person to exploit and objectify it. I think there is still an assumption that those who sexually assault are unable to control their sexual desires. But it is really about their need for power and control and to take what they want or think they "deserve." And while we may not all go to this extreme to exert our power, we do it in countless ways by not loving our neighbors as ourselves. Maybe we are quick to speak and slow to listen, or we dismiss another person's experience or pain rather than stepping into the messy business of

compassion and empathy.

In my work, I see how someone's choice is taken from them and how important it is to respect a person's autonomy and self-determination. This can look like giving the person choice of what clothes they wear when they come in to get a Sexual Assault Nurse Examination (their clothes are often taken as evidence and so we provide clothes for them to wear home) or giving them the choice to talk or to sit in silence as they wait for their exam, despite what my preferences may be.

We are also called to meet the person where they are rather than try to make them into who we want them to be. As Fred Rogers said, "I don't think anyone can grow unless he's loved exactly as he is now, appreciated for what he is rather than what he will be." In a sense, I'm called, as we all are, to be the presence of Christ to a person in pain. And Christ has shown us what that looks like as Immanuel, the God with us, who took on flesh to meet us where we were—in darkness and sin—so that we could be freed into new life with him.

K Are there broader applications that go beyond the demographic or the group you work with that help you think more generally about being human in our day and age?

RH The work I do makes me more committed to recognize the importance of our physical selves (I am definitely not a gnostic!). Trauma impacts the whole person—physically, emotionally, relationally, mentally and spiritually and therefore the whole person has to be incorporated in the healing process as well. Sometimes, because of how trauma impacts our brains, we have to start with the body in order to get to a place where a person can process mentally and emotionally.

Similarly, how we approach our spiritual lives has to be thought of in a holistic manner. Our bodies matter! How we sit, how we breathe, our environment can all impact our worship. It also shows that the way a person reacts may, in a sense, be out of their control, especially when they've experienced trauma.

My main ministry as an Anglican

deacon is the job I do at the Crisis Center but my job at the Crisis Center influences my ministry on Sundays as well. When I preach, I cannot help but think of those I'm counseling and also recognize that the people in the pews are likely to have suffered trauma in some way as well. I know that Christ meets them in that pain, and that in this weary and broken world, we need Christ proclaimed and not just a list of things to do. We need the good news of the gospel when we are in our darkest times. We need to know that there is Someone in the depths with us who actually has the power to make things right and to heal us.

Brian Keen

(M.Div. '08)

Program Director, Brother Bryan Mission of Birmingham

K What kind of persons do you work with? What are their basic needs?

BK Brother Bryan Mission serves the economically, emotionally and spiritually impoverished men of the Birmingham area. Men come to us from all walks of life and professional backgrounds. The presenting problem that brings many to our doorstep are the ravages of addictive behavior. However, addiction is not a prerequisite, and others come looking for hope while dealing with legal problems, mental health issues or a lifestyle that has been destructive in nature. We provide long-term Christian discipleship and drug and alcohol recovery programs to address the root causes of homelessness. As such, the programs target educational deficiencies, physical needs, referrals for psychological care, spiritual counsel and formation, and vocational readiness.

K In what ways have your assumptions about the plight of humanity and what it means to be human been challenged through this work?

BK One of my assumptions before beginning this work was that those who were homeless and/or addicted were lazy and unwilling to change. I have come to understand that there

is an incredibly high instance of co-occurring disorders of those who are mired in addiction, chronic homelessness and mental illness. In addition, we have done in-house surveys and find that the overwhelming majority of our men have suffered emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. Considering all of the challenges that plague many in our community, it is no surprise that some have turned to unhealthy methods to medicate their pain. Serving here has provided a battering ram to many of the areas of my personal pride. It has given me a much deeper compassion for those who suffer and think differently than I do. It has also awakened me to the reality of Christ's heart for the poor and the outcast.

K In what way has your work informed your thinking about what it means to respect another person's humanity?

BK Loving others is considerably more difficult than I would have anticipated. I once heard a minister at a rescue mission say, "If you don't like the smell of sheep, you should have never aspired to be a shepherd." The words had a particular bite to them because I was struggling with how difficult it was to act in ways that were compassionate day after day with characters who could be challenging. What I found is that my vision for love and service did not match up with reality. It was Dostoevsky that noted in *Brothers Karamazov*, "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing



Brian Keen



Brother Bryan Mission in Birmingham

compared to love in dreams.” The love in dream form that I would have carried into ministry would not have included cleaning human waste from bathroom stall floors. Love in dreams certainly did not include drug screens, resuscitation efforts from overdose, more tears from disappointments than could be numbered or countless other “surprises” that the Lord would unpack. Love in action means that we don’t reserve the right to put parameters around what love should look like. We have the opportunity to learn the humility of our Savior and serve even those who will act out in ways that may make life difficult for us.

K Are there broader applications that go beyond the demographic or the group you work with that help you think more generally about being human in our day and age?

BK Our executive director, Jim Etheredge, once stated, “men don’t become homeless because they run out of money; men become homeless because they run out of relationships.” There certainly is a dearth of healthy relationships in the lives of the broken men we serve. Yet these men are not alone in their struggle to find intimacy and acceptance. I find it ironic that in our current context in which humanity has never been so connected through the medium of social media that yet many have never felt so isolated from their respective communities. There is a dissonance of our online avatars and personas from the person underneath the plastic images. This isolation can lead many

who have crossed the threshold of Brother Bryan Mission to act out in substance use and criminality. Yet, isolation is a bane on the soul that can lead us all to make different, albeit, destructive decisions.

The Scriptures teach us that we were created to be rightly related to God and rightly related to one another. This universal human need of the soul transcends those who find themselves homeless and/or addicted and touches us all. Serving at Brother Bryan provides a unique setting for ministry and yet the needs of our men are not fundamentally different from everyone else. The ways in which we cope with these needs may vary, and yet the remedy for each method is constant. It is into that context of the darkness of isolation that we have the privilege of pointing people to the Light of the world.

Cecelia Walker

(M.Div. '98)

Executive Director of Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education, Brookwood Baptist Health

K What kind of persons do you work with? What are their basic needs?

CW As the director of Pastoral Care, I serve as the pastor of Princeton BMC, which includes patients, families and staff. Princeton is a Level III Trauma Center; we have intensive care units, a Comprehensive Cancer Center, general medical floors and surgeries. I serve as a resource for those in the community that we

serve in the west end of Birmingham, offering care to city officials, responders, educators, students of public schools, etc.

K In what way has your work informed your thinking about what it means to respect another person’s humanity? Give some specific examples.

CW John 1:14 and Philippians 2:5 have shaped my thinking about what it means to be human and to respect another’s humanity. If, as ministers, we want to learn to speak the language of those we serve, we have to be willing to be in the places where they find meaning—places of crisis and celebration. Here are a few examples.

I was on call one morning and the infection disease specialist had me paged. When I called him back he asked, “Are you one of those chaplains who does not want to deal with people with HIV/AIDS?” I said, “No, sir, I would gladly come,” but on the way there I began to think I had never knowingly been around anyone with AIDS. I started rehearsing what I knew—that you can’t get AIDs by being in the room with or by touching them. When I got to the room, I stood at the door, introduced myself and asked if there was anything I could do. The patient stretched out her hand and said, “You can hold my hand.”

I was on call at Princeton, and a beautiful



Cecelia Walker

young lady had overdosed on Tylenol. She was actively dying. The nurse informed me that her father, who was from Cullman, Alabama, was in the prayer room and wanted a chaplain. Immediately I started thinking of all of the negative things I had heard about Cullman. I felt my guard go up. I was sure that this man would not want me, an African American woman, as his chaplain. But I was the only one in the hospital, so I went. I walked into the room and introduced myself, and he fell into my arms crying, thanking me for coming and begging me to pray. He taught me that those of us who have been mistreated because of our race are also biased. He helped me get a good look at my own racism.

All of these teachers were patients who deepened my understanding of what it means to respect and honor the imago Dei in those to whom I minister.

K What theological insights have been helpful in your ministry?

CW I believe that all people are created in the image of God and that all human beings are special and have worth. My theological history, which was always absorbed in love for humankind, has given me a good foundation to develop a broader worldview and to hear and evaluate conversations from a variety of sources. As I have interacted with people from multiple walks of life, ministered in the hospital and been in dialogue with CPE students, my former “blacks and whites,” “rights and wrongs” have been challenged enormously. I have discovered that I don’t have to have all of the answers to minister. Not having to know it all has brought refreshing freedom and elasticity to my faith.

Awon Shanglai

(M.Div. '04)

Regional Director, Project Light,
India

K What kind of persons do you work with? What are their basic needs?

AS The people at the verge of being marginalized and those already marginalized in the community. They are mostly girl students and women from poor rural



Awon Shanglai (right)

background, having HIV/AIDS related problems. Their basic needs are education support, food, clothing, health care and training on sustainable micro-enterprises for self-support/sustenance.

K In what way has your work informed your thinking about what it means to respect another person’s humanity? Give some specific examples.

AS To be present and available when people need you the most in their difficult time is

sharing Christ’s life in the most ordinary but holy way of doing ministry. Ignoring people or their problem is disrespect both to God and man who is created in his image. “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

Here are two examples.

Miss Pemngam grew up in the home of a maternal aunt in a Hindu family after her mother died. Her father remarried and never came to visit her. Pemngam came to Shillong from Manipur to work as a domestic helper, but she was later diagnosed with a disease called SLE and was unable to work. She was 23 when she joined the Project Light course to learn basic reading and writing. She came to know the Lord after going through a series of counseling for more than a year. Her decision to take believer’s baptism after attending the baptism class was refused by the pastor, which added pain to her life. As a result, she left that church. I arranged for her baptism with another Baptist pastor in Shillong. By God’s grace, Pemngam, who was insecure and unhappy in life, is a new person after knowing Christ. A few of us also helped her to get beautician training, and now she is working in a parlor and able to take care of herself for her ongoing SLE treatment. She gained self-image and self-respect by being able to stand on her own feet.

With the help of friends, I am helping Miss Woyangla in pursuing her dream to do



a bachelor's degree in Shillong. When she was two, both her parents died with HIV/AIDS, and she was raised by relatives. She is growing up confident now by overcoming the social stigma of being HIV/AIDS positive and is focused on achieving her dream to be an educator in the village for the disabled children and HIV/AIDS affected children, in particular. She also takes active part in the church activities.

K What kind of character traits, virtues or approaches has your ministry helped you form? How has your ministry shaped you as a person?

AS Doing ministry among a marginalized group has taught me to be less judgmental and more compassionate in my approach. This led me to practice an open home, providing hospitality and creating safe places to help them encounter Jesus Christ personally.

Oleg Turlac

(M.Div. '99; D.Min. '06)

Founding President, Turlac Mission

K What kind of persons do you work with? What are their basic needs?

OT I minister to young female victims of human trafficking in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and teens at risk of trafficking. Poverty is one of the major causes of trafficking in third world countries. While some are taken into trafficking with false promises and hopes to get their basic needs met, others want an easy access to the best things in life (clothes, cars, etc.).

K In what ways have your assumptions about the plight of humanity and what it means to be human been challenged through this work?

OT Before Natasha and I started this ministry, we did not realize that human nature was so fallen—that even in the 21st century some people would be selling others into slavery. Trafficking today is regarded as a modern form of slavery. Having been raised in a Christian family, I did not realize how

corrupt human hearts can be so evil as even to take teenage girls into prostitution. Romans 3:23 spoke to me in an entirely new way. I realized that the human race is truly hopeless without God.

K In what way has your work informed your thinking about what it means to respect another person's humanity?

OT To respect another person's humanity means treating people as persons and not as machines or means for one's profit. Young women that are taken into prostitution are treated precisely as machines that bring immediate profit and are thrown out once they reach a certain age, get sick with venereal diseases, or become pregnant.

K What theological insights have been helpful in ministering to the people in your care?

OT Young women that we minister to value it when we see them as persons and that God sees them as his daughters created by him. They are encouraged when we tell them that God created people so that they could have fellowship with him. God is not using people as means and does not treat them as things. For Jesus, even the woman that was caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), a grave sin, was valuable. He did not give up on her at the time when others turned their backs to her.

K Are there broader applications that go beyond the demographic or the group you work with that help you think more generally about being human in our day and age?

OT I would say that one of my big frustrations is seeing how much human life is undervalued in both the East and West. Humans are being dehumanized. I grew up in the Communist Soviet Union, where an individual life did not matter very much. The masses, being part of a larger group, was of essence. Unfortunately, in the West, the value of persons is being diminished because people are judged on the basis of whether they can or cannot perform. People are valued for what they do and not for who they are—persons created in the image of God. Also, it seems



Oleg Turlac

like, especially in urban settings, the further the society moves away from Christian values to post-Christian understanding of life (postmodernism, humanism, self-centeredness), the less people are being treated as persons.

K What kind of character traits, virtues or approaches has your ministry helped you form? How has your ministry shaped you as a person?

OT As a result of my ministry to trafficked persons and those in poverty, I learned to be more compassionate. I understood why Jesus, while keeping up with his purpose of saving the world from sin through the cross, devoted considerable amount of time to healing the sick and helping those in need. I also learned to be grateful for what I have and for the privilege to know that I am valuable not for what I have achieved (or have not achieved), but because I am a child of God created in his image. ♦

Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute Extends Reach, Plans First Conference

Beeson Divinity's Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute, supported by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc., extended its reach in 2019-20 by establishing four new preaching peer groups in the Southeast and adding extracurricular preaching opportunities for Beeson students.

Beeson students were invited to preach and receive feedback, advice and encouragement from Michael Pasquarello III, director of the Preaching Institute, and local pastors in fall 2019 and spring 2020. Students also continue to receive four opportunities a semester to learn from Beeson faculty and seasoned pastors on how to prepare a sermon in the Text to Sermon events. These events are well-attended by students as well as alumni and area pastors.

M.Div. student Thomas George took part in the extra opportunity to preach and receive feedback this year.

"It was a gift to have our Beeson professors and local pastors go the extra mile to invest in our calling," he said. "Providing this opportunity to grow as preachers outside of the required preaching class was a tremendous blessing."

Peer groups, made up of pastors, meet monthly, typically sharing a meal together and seeking to grow in the vocation of preaching by focusing on learning, devotion and practice. These peer groups are a central part of the institute's mission to

strengthen preachers and preaching.

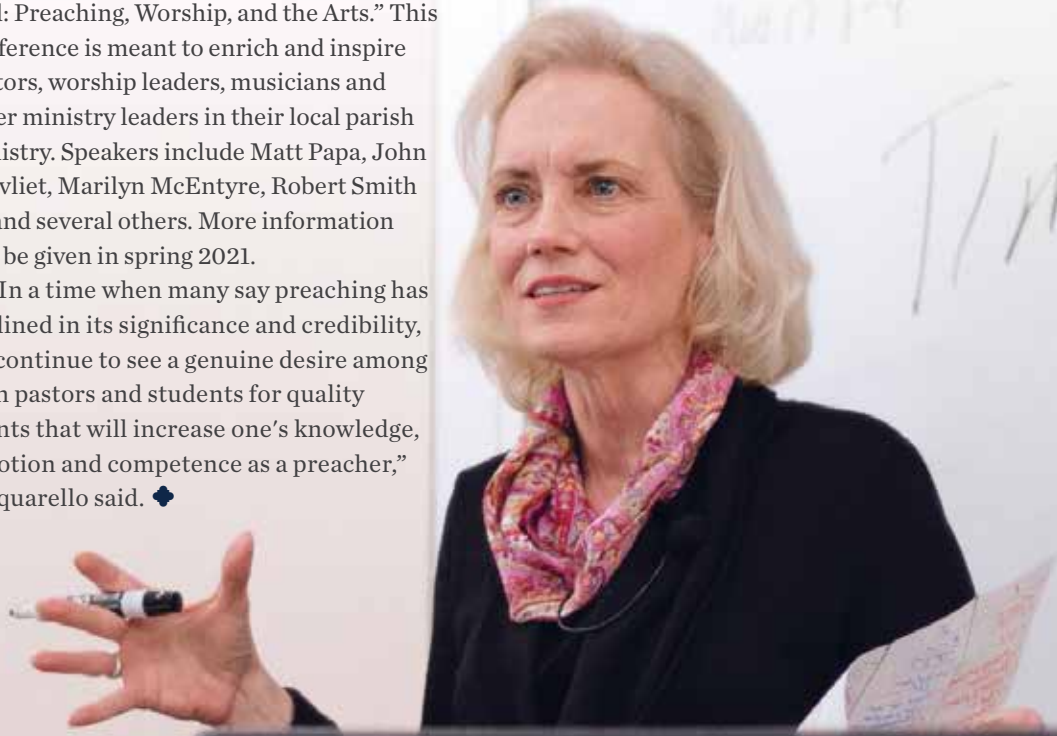
In addition to peer groups, the institute continued to offer events for area pastors for preaching development. This year the institute hosted a Day With a Beeson Author event featuring Old Testament professor Mark Gignilliat (fall 2019).

In Oct. 2021, the institute will co-host a conference with Samford's Center for Worship and the Arts called, "The Beauty of God: Preaching, Worship, and the Arts." This conference is meant to enrich and inspire pastors, worship leaders, musicians and other ministry leaders in their local parish ministry. Speakers include Matt Papa, John Witvliet, Marilyn McEntyre, Robert Smith Jr. and several others. More information will be given in spring 2021.

"In a time when many say preaching has declined in its significance and credibility, we continue to see a genuine desire among both pastors and students for quality events that will increase one's knowledge, devotion and competence as a preacher," Pasquarello said. ♦



Piotr Małysz



Connie Happell

Find preaching resources and learn about events at our website:

beesondivinity.com/preaching-institute | #PreachingInstitute

Beeson Divinity Welcomes New Dean, *Douglas A. Sweeney Casts Vision for School*

by Kristen Padilla

After a nationwide search in 2019 for founding Dean Timothy George's successor, Douglas A. Sweeney was chosen as the second dean of Beeson Divinity School. He began his tenure July 1, 2019, and was formally installed during the school's spring Opening Convocation, Jan. 28, 2020.

A world-renowned scholar of American theologian Jonathan Edwards, Sweeney came to Beeson Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he was the distinguished professor and chair of church history and the history of Christian thought and founding director of the Jonathan Edwards Center.

Having served on Trinity's faculty since 1997, Sweeney was also the founding director of the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity, 2000-2012. As director, he raised nearly \$4 million for the center, supervised staff, collaborated with boards and hosted conferences and lectures.



Prior to his tenure at Trinity, Sweeney served at Yale University, where he edited *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* and was a lecturer in church history and historical theology.

"Dr. Sweeney brings together internationally renowned scholarship, academic administrative experience and a deep love and commitment to the church of Jesus Christ," Samford Provost J. Michael Hardin said. "In addition to exceptional academic credentials, Dr. Sweeney also possesses a humble spirit and a servant's heart, which make him uniquely qualified to lead Beeson Divinity School in its next chapter."

During Sweeney's installation service on Jan. 28, Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said that Samford and Beeson have come to know Sweeney as one ideally prepared to provide wise visionary leadership for Beeson.

"Your commitment to the relevance and authority of Scripture, your strong record of scholarship, your devotion to equipping those called to ministry, your administrative expertise, and your engaging, charitable spirit will serve you and Samford well in the many years to come," Westmoreland said to Sweeney.

Sweeney, who has been a longtime admirer of George, said it was a great honor and privilege to serve as the next dean of Beeson.

"I think that Beeson is the best-conceived and cultivated divinity school in all of North America," he said. "My approach to



theological education meshes well with Beeson's guiding confessional documents, academic culture and personal approach to teaching and mentoring students. In fact, for me, moving to Beeson is like moving to a school that was designed to facilitate the kind of academic work, ecumenism and ministry I have done all my life. These are exciting times in which to serve the Lord together at Samford."

President and editor-in-chief of *The Alabama Baptist*, Beeson alumna and dean search committee member Jennifer Davis Rash believes Sweeney will represent Beeson well to churchgoers across Alabama and the nation and will win the hearts of many.

"Dr. Sweeney is a solid evangelical and theologically sound leader who is ready to tell the world why students interested in seminary should consider Beeson first," she said.





◀ Kevin Vanhoozer (left) and Andrew Westmoreland (right) pray over Sweeney during spring Opening Convocation.

Vision for the Future

In his first address as dean during fall 2019 Opening Convocation, Aug. 27, Sweeney outlined his vision for Beeson.

“We are meant to help others align themselves with God’s will and use their gifts in the service of his kingdom work in the world. And at schools like Beeson, we are meant to teach people to serve as laborers in God’s vineyard, primarily by equipping them to serve the church of Christ,” he said.

“I have a theocentric (God-centered) view of the nature of reality that fuels a missional, collaborative and God-and-neighbor-oriented view of kingdom leadership,” Sweeney continued. “Christian leaders are called to help others come to know this God, be reconciled to him through the blood of Jesus Christ, walk in step with his Spirit and advance in Christian discipleship.”

This theocentric view leads to a view of leadership that is characterized by serving

others, he said. This kingdom leadership philosophy extends to deans, too. Kingdom leaders are to serve others, and theological education done at its best will serve the church.

“Theological education serves the church, first and foremost,” Sweeney said. “Divinity schools like Beeson train pastors, first and foremost. But insofar as our churches send their young people to Samford, Samford teachers play a role in their formation and discipleship—and Beeson plays a crucial role in supporting that work.”

If Sweeney were to put his vision of theological education into a slogan it would be “the more discipleship, the better.”

“There are many ways to encourage maturation in discipleship, but the best ways are centered on and shaped by the gospel and involve careful study of the Bible,” he said. “Theological education should be characterized above all by prayerful, humble, joyful, diligent, collaborative discipleship for the sake and in the love of God and neighbor.”

Sweeney hopes to take the school to the next level in three ways—expand Beeson’s global connections, start new programs for faculty to foster partnerships between disciplines and fundraise for student scholarships and stipends.

“We are especially well-placed—in terms of our culture, our faculty, our staff and other

resources—to inspire fellow Christians to more faithful Christian witness, discipleship and service by connecting them to the progress of the gospel in our time. As we do so, I’m convinced we will excite more Christians about participating in gospel work on campus.”

Sweeney holds degrees from Vanderbilt University (Ph.D., M.A.), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.A.) and Wheaton College (B.A.). He and his wife, Wilma, have one adult son. ♦



Beeson Divinity School Announces New Robert Smith Jr. Student Scholarship

Samford University's Beeson Divinity School is pleased to announce a new scholarship in honor of longtime faculty member Robert Smith Jr. for his more than 20 years at Beeson and his more than 50 years of preaching God's Word.

The Robert Smith Jr. Student Scholarship will provide significant scholarship assistance to outstanding applicants who are called to a preaching ministry.

"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'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 teaching at Beeson

since 1997, is a world-renowned preacher and teacher of preaching, having received the E.K. and V.M. Bailey Living Legend Award in 2017. He has filled numerous pulpits on Sunday mornings around the nation and world, and has lectured and taught on the subject of preaching at conferences such as The Gospel Coalition, the E.K. Bailey 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*.

"I feel overwhelmed that anything would be put in my name," said Smith. "I want the scholarship to reflect God's glory. 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."

To give to this scholarship, contact contact Gary Fenton, Samford's senior advancement officer, at gdfenton@samford.edu or send a check to Fenton's attention at 800 Lakeshore Drive Birmingham, Alabama 35229. ♦

Beeson Launches First Annual African American Ministry Emphasis Month, Minority Student Fellowship

This spring 2020, Beeson Divinity School hosted its first annual African American Ministry Emphasis Month in conjunction with Black History Month, and formed its first minority student fellowship called All Saints Fellowship.

The African American Ministry Emphasis Month sought to highlight God's continued work among African American alumni and friends and to celebrate in a special way what God is doing in and through black churches in America, especially those connected to Beeson and Samford.

The special emphasis included sermons in Hodges Chapel during the month of February, with the exception of the annual Biblical Studies Lectures week. Preachers included Ronald Sterling, pastor of Saint John AME Church and Beeson's director of student services; Cokiesha Bailey Robinson, Beeson alumna and founder of Cross Spring Ministries, Dallas, Texas; and Charlie Dates, senior pastor of the historic Progressive Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois.



Charlie Dates



Cokiesha Bailey Robinson

During the month-long emphasis, Beeson's Student Government Association also sponsored a tour of the 16th Street Baptist Church, led by Beeson alumna and bombing survivor Carolyn McKinstry, and of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute on Feb. 22.

"African American Ministry Emphasis Month was a blessing to me," said Master of Divinity student Corey Savage. "To experience the faithful proclamation of Scripture and fervent expressions of worship rooted in the African American tradition has made an indelible impact on my soul. Seeing and gleaning from sojourners in the faith, who look like me and come from where I've come from, are a testament to the God that has brought us this far."

In January, Beeson launched a new minority student fellowship called All Saints Fellowship, which seeks to prepare students to serve in minority church contexts, discuss challenges unique to minority students at Beeson, and provide fellowship with visiting speakers and each other.

"We are so excited about the things the Lord has been doing through the ministries of so many of our minority alumni. Current and future students need to know about these things," Douglas A. Sweeney, Beeson's dean, said. "And all of us can grow in our usefulness to the church and our aptitude for partnering with Christians from other racial, ethnic and national backgrounds. Our hope is that the All Saints Fellowship will serve as a forum for just this kind of education."

All Saints Fellowship hosted its first event open to the entire Beeson community with Robinson and a closed lunch with Dates, where they engaged in conversation around various topics, including contextualizing methods learned in the classroom in an African American church setting and challenges minorities face in predominantly Anglo American spaces.

The All Saints Fellowship elected officers for 2020-21: Samuel Hagos, president; Corey Savage, vice president; and Isaiah Cruz, secretary. Faculty members Osvaldo Padilla, Sydney Park, Robert Smith Jr., Sterling and Sweeney serve as the faculty advisers.

In addition to the African American Ministry Emphasis preachers, Beeson Doctor of Ministry student Thomas Wilder, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Colledgeville, was a guest on the *Beeson* podcast, discussing how God is at work in his ministry. Listen to Wilder, Robinson, Dates and Sterling on the podcast at beesondivinity.com/podcast or on iTunes. ♦

The Timothy George Scholarship for Excellence Reaches Endowment Goal

by Kristen Padilla

Thanks to the generous gifts of alumni, colleagues and friends, the Timothy George Scholarship for Excellence is now fully endowed at just over half a million dollars. According to the scholarship agreement, the divinity school “will have an enhanced ability to attract top-tier students who will guide, challenge and shape future generations of ministers and scholars for Christ’s church throughout the world.”

Jamie and Mary French of Birmingham gave to the scholarship because, “Dr. George has been a blessing to so many Christians through his scholarship, preaching and leadership that we want to enable outstanding divinity students to further carry the Christian message to the world.”

Beeson’s Dean Douglas A. Sweeney gives thanks to God for brothers and sisters in Christ who partner with Beeson in the service of the church.

“Timothy George’s legacy in the theological education of pastors and laity is nothing short of immense. But so is the legacy of the board members and other friends of Beeson whose tireless service as laborers in the kingdom of God yielded the funds we needed to reach our funding goal for this scholarship,” he said.

George, who felt a call to preach as a teenager, would not have been able to pursue graduate studies at Harvard Divinity School had it not been for a generous scholarship he received from the then-called Dora Maclellan Brown Charitable Trust (now The Generosity Trust). As the scholarship’s first recipient, George credits the trajectory of his life to the faithfulness and generosity of Dora Maclellan Brown, a longtime Sunday School teacher at Second Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

“It seems fitting that we would seek to establish a fund in honor of Dr. George that would help other students, now and in the future, who have great minds and great



Founding Dean Timothy George stands with his wife, Denise, following his last commencement service as dean on May 3, 2019.

spirits to accomplish great things for the kingdom of God,” Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said.

Now that the scholarship has reached its endowment goal, it is in the process of gestating according to university policy, with the hope that it will be awarded to its first recipient(s) within the next two years. Alumni and friends can continue contributing to the scholarship, ensuring its sustainability in the years to come by giving online at beesondivinity.com/giving. ♦

General James M. Hutchens' Legacy to Continue at Beeson Divinity School with New Scholarship for Military Chaplains in His Name

by Kristen Padilla

Gen. James M. Hutchens was brought to faith in Jesus Christ by his Army unit chaplain while he was an enlisted paratrooper. And because of that chaplain, Gen. Hutchens not only became a Christian, but also felt a call to follow him into military chaplaincy.

After leaving the Army and while both were students at Wheaton College, Hutchens was asked a simple but profound question by his fiancé: "If you could do anything you wanted to do without a fear of failure, what would you do?"

He replied, "I think I'd like to serve in the chaplaincy; that's where I found the Lord and that's where I got direction and a sense of purpose."

After college and seminary, Hutchens entered the Army as a chaplain, serving as a Green Beret in the 10th Special Forces Group. During the Vietnam war, he served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and became the first chaplain wounded in Vietnam. He later was awarded the Purple Heart and two Bronze Star Medals for valor. By the time he retired in 1994, Hutchens had earned the rank of Brigadier General.

Just like the chaplain that changed Hutchens' life, he changed the lives of many men in his units, including Birmingham doctor Alton Baker.

Baker, a nuclear medicine physician at Princeton Baptist Medical Center and part-time Beeson student, met Hutchens while serving in the 10th Special Forces Group as Group Surgeon.

"Jim Hutchens was a real stabilizing influence in our lives in the Special Forces," Baker said.

For that reason, Baker wanted to honor Hutchens and ensure his legacy by making it financially possible for men and women to prepare for military chaplaincy at Beeson Divinity School.



Gen. James M. Hutchens honored with new scholarship for military chaplains in his name at Beeson Divinity School.

Thanks to the generous gift of Baker and his wife, Mary, the General James M. Hutchens Military Chaplain Scholarship will be awarded to men and women enrolled in Beeson's Master of Divinity program and who are committed to pursuing a career in the military as an active duty chaplain.

"We want to make Beeson the premier divinity school that supplies military chaplains," Baker said.

One of Beeson's strengths is that students interface with faculty members in person and not over the computer, he added. This incarnational approach is important to the military.

"We are tremendously grateful to the Bakers for establishing this scholarship and being fully committed to providing an excellent pathway to military chaplaincy for appropriately called and gifted Beeson students," Beeson's Dean Douglas A. Sweeney said. "Those serving in the Armed Forces stand in need of the best possible spiritual

guidance and care. Now some of them can get that care from future Beeson alumni."

The scholarship was recognized during Beeson's community worship on Tuesday, Oct. 15, by Sweeney. Present during chapel were the Bakers, special guests of the Bakers' and Hutchens', and members of the Armed Forces, who were on campus for the school's annual military chaplaincy fair.

Prospective students called to serve in military chaplaincy can begin their application to Beeson Divinity School on its website (beesondivinity.com) or by reaching out to Beeson's admission director Sherri Brown (sbrown5@samford.edu). ♦

Beeson Welcomed World-Renowned

Beeson Divinity School once again welcomed world-renowned and respected scholars to deliver edifying and challenging lectures in order to enrich the spiritual life of our community and enhance the educational experience of our students. Special guests included N. T. Wright, Miriam Adeney, Kelly Kapic and Ray Van Neste. Lectures for William E. Conger Biblical Preaching and World Christianity Focus Week were postponed due to COVID-19.



Provost Distinguished Lecture Series featuring N. T. Wright

Samford's Provost J. Michael Hardin hosted the inaugural Provost Distinguished Lecture Series featuring New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, Sept. 9-11. Wright, who is now the senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, gave a public lecture called, "Space, Time and History: Jesus and the Challenge of God," preached in Hodges Chapel from Isaiah 12:1-6, participated in a conversation with Frank Thielman for divinity students, and debated Mark Kinzer, president emeritus of Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, on the meaning of Israel.



Go Global with Miriam Adeney

Beeson's Global Center hosted its annual Go Global Missions Emphasis Week with missiologist and anthropologist Miriam Adeney, Oct. 8-10. While at Beeson, Adeney spoke on her book, *Refugee Diaspora: Missions Amid the Greatest Humanitarian Crisis of the World*, preached in Hodges Chapel from Jeremiah 31:10-14, and presented a lecture at Beeson's Global Voices, called "Stories Behind the Stories: Refugees and Worldwide Christians." Adeney is associate professor of World Christian Studies at Seattle Pacific University.

All of these lectures and sermons are found on Beeson's YouTube channel: [YouTube.com/BeesonDivinity](https://www.youtube.com/BeesonDivinity). To know about all of Beeson's events throughout the year, visit [beesondivinity.com/events](https://www.beesondivinity.com/events).

Scholars to Give Lectures in 2019-20



Reformation Heritage Lectures *with* Kelly Kopic

Theologian Kelly Kopic was the lecturer for the annual Reformation Heritage Lectures, Oct. 29-30. Kopic, who is professor of theological studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, preached a sermon called, “Does God Like...Me?” from Galatians 2:16-21 in Hodges Chapel. He delivered two lectures: “Have I Done Enough? Facing our Finitude” and “Humility: Joyful Realism.” The Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute also hosted an event with Kopic around his book, *The God Who Gives*, called, “Preaching the Movement of Divine Generosity.”



Biblical Studies Lectures *with* Ray Van Neste

Ray Van Neste, dean of Union University’s School of Theology and Missions and professor of biblical studies, was the lecturer for the 29th annual Biblical Studies Lectures, Feb. 11-13. A New Testament scholar, Van Neste preached a sermon called, “Portrait of a Faithful and Approved Workman,” from 2 Tim. 2:14-26 in Hodges Chapel for community worship. He delivered two lectures: “‘Our People’: Ethics and the Identity of the People of God in the Letter to Titus” and “The Word, Prayer, and Practice: Worship in the Pastoral Epistles.”

2020-21 Upcoming Lectures

Go Global Missions Emphasis Week

Oct. 6-8

Karen Ellis

Director of the Center for the Study of the Bible and Ethnicity,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta

Reformation Heritage Lectures

Oct. 27-29

Michael McClymond

Professor of Modern Christianity
Saint Louis University

Conger Preaching Lectures

Feb. 23-25

Jared Alcántara

Paul W. Powell Endowed Chair in Preaching,
Associate Professor of Preaching
George W. Truett Theological Seminary,
Baylor University

Biblical Studies Lectures

March 23-25

Christopher Seitz

Senior Research Professor
Wycliffe College, Toronto, Canada

World Christianity Focus Week

April 5-8

Lionel Young

Executive Vice President
Global Action

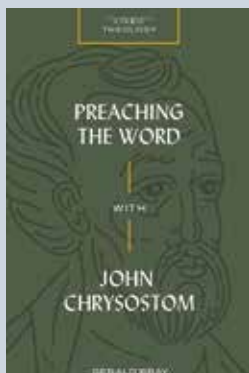
FACULTY STAFF

Paul R. House Wins Book Award

Paul R. House, professor of divinity, was recognized for his book, *Isaiah: A Mentor Commentary*, Volumes I-II, by The Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary during its first annual Biblical Foundations Book Awards, Feb. 24. House's book was the winner in the category of Old Testament Commentary. Awards juror T. D. Alexander of Union Theological College praised House's work as "an important alternative perspective to that adopted in much scholarly discussion of the book of Isaiah."



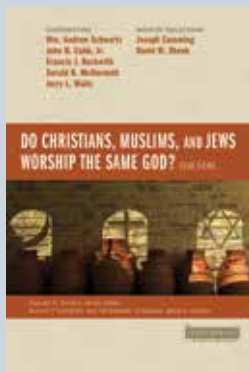
FACULTY BOOKSHELF



Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom
Gerald Bray
(Faithlife Publications, May 2020)



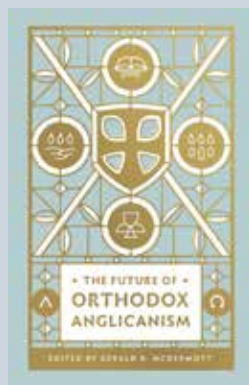
The Beauty of Preaching: God's Glory in Christian Proclamation
Michael Pasquarello III
(Eerdmans, Aug. 2020)



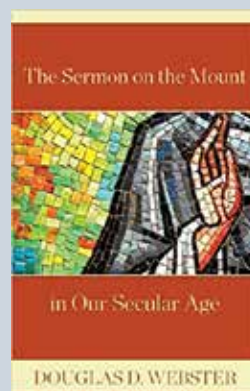
Do Christians, Muslims, and Jews Worship the Same God?
Eds. Ronnie Campbell and Christopher Gnanakan
Gerald R. McDermott
(Zondervan, 2019)



Jonathan Edwards and Scripture: Biblical Exegesis in North America
Douglas A. Sweeney, co-editor
(Oxford Press, 2018)



The Future of Orthodox Anglicanism
Gerald R. McDermott, editor and contributor
(Crossway, 2020)



The Sermon on the Mount in Our Secular Age
Douglas D. Webster
(Regent College Publishing, 2020)

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

NEW STAFF

Three new colleagues joined the Beeson Divinity School staff in 2019-20. Anna Russell is the new program assistant for the Global Center. Joy Wint is the new program assistant to the Robert Smith Jr. Preaching Institute and Student Services. Kyle Young is the new recruitment coordinator and alumni relations officer.



Anna Russell



Joy Wint



Kyle Young

FACULTY/ STAFF UPDATES

Thomas “Tom” Fuller moved into a new role in fall 2019, becoming the associate dean. Melissa Matthews transitioned with Fuller into the associate dean’s office as the administrative assistant. David Parks, in addition to his role as the Global Center

director, now oversees the supervised ministry practicum. Finally, Gabriele “Gabby” Watts, who was Russell’s predecessor, now serves as the events coordinator.



Thomas "Tom" Fuller



Melissa Matthews



David Parks



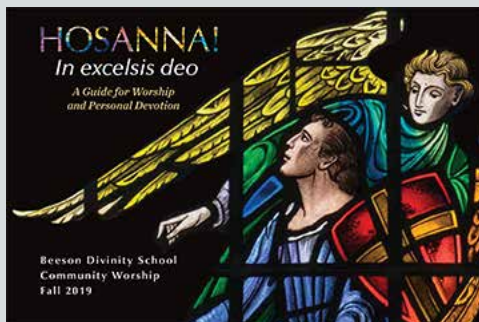
Gabriele "Gabby" Watts

Beeson's Marketing and Communications Office Wins National Awards

Beeson Divinity School's Marketing and Communications Office won the following awards in spring 2020 for work produced in 2019. The following awards are:

Religion Communicators Council's DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards

- Best in Class for Class F—Audio and Video, Non-Broadcast and Cable: "It's More Than What You Earn. It's Who You Become."
- Award of Excellence in Class F—Video, Promotional/Informational: "It's More Than What You Earn. It's Who You Become."
- Award of Excellence in Class G—Publication Relations Materials, Booklet: Andrew Gerow Hodges Chapel brochure



- Award of Excellence in Class G—Publication Relations Materials, Special Issue Publication, Religious Observance: *Beeson Magazine*, "For All the Saints"



Award-winning video, "It's More Than What You Earn. It's Who You Become."

Baptist Communicators Association's Wilmer C. Fields Awards

- 1st place for the picture of Timothy George in "Timothy George: A Tribute to Beeson Divinity School's Founding Dean" in the 2019 *Beeson Magazine* taken by Kyle Thompson in Photography: Feature: Single category.
- 2nd place for *Beeson Magazine*—For All the Saints in Design: Publications: Magazine category.
- 2nd place for *Beeson Magazine*—For All the Saints in Design: Publications: Magazine Cover category.
- 3rd place for *Hosanna! In excelsis deo* (fall chapel devotional guide) in Design—Print Collateral: Booklet category.
- 3rd place for "Timothy George: A Tribute to Beeson Divinity School's Founding Dean" in the 2019 *Beeson Magazine* by Kristen Padilla in Feature Writing: Single Article: More than 1500 words category



Beeson Podcast Receives New Co-hosts, Fresh Look

In Sept. 2019, Dean Douglas A. Sweeney and Kristen Padilla, Beeson's marketing and communications coordinator, took over as co-hosts of the *Beeson* podcast following Timothy George's retirement as dean.

Sweeney and Padilla refocused the podcast to shine a light on what God is doing in and among people connected to Beeson. The podcast also received a new graphic, theme music written and performed by Advent Birmingham, a music ministry of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, and new announcer, Michael Pasquarello III. This fall included new

mini-series on the podcast such as, "Cross-Cultural Ministry" and "Grieving with Hope."

The podcast, which began in 2010 under George and Beeson alumna and former employee Betsy Childs Howard, is in its 10th year and will publish its 500th episode June 9.

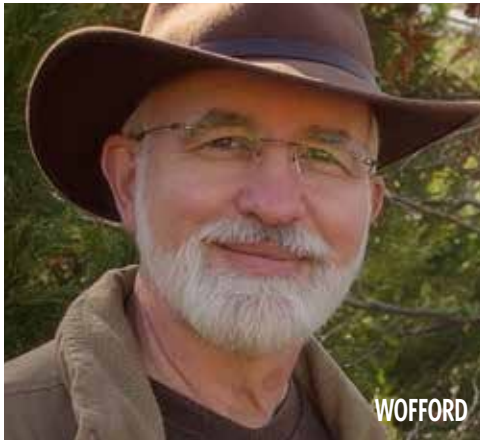
Listen to the podcast online at beesondivinity.com/podcast, iTunes or Spotify.



#BeesonPodcast

Alumni Updates

Terry Wofford (M.Div. '91) is pastor of evangelism at HighView Church and director of HighView Institute, which offers bachelor's and master's level courses. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in Theology through Midwestern. Terry is married to Gayle; they have three children and four grandchildren.



WOFFORD

Elizabeth Thompson (M.Div. '93) is the owner and lead consultant of Eremos Consulting Group in Littleton, Colorado, where she works with clergy, individuals and congregations. She is married to Phillip, and they have two children, James and Rebecca.

Richard Anderson (M.Div. '96) is command chaplain for the Air Force Special Operations Command. He and his wife, Faith, attend Spring Valley Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, and are the parents of Richard and Jonathan.

Mark Whittington (M.Div. '96) pastors Evergreen Baptist Church in Evergreen, Alabama. He is married to Michele, and they are parents of Noah, Grace and Melody.

Brian (M.Div. '99) and **Renee** (M.Div. '98) **Pitts** have both recently stepped into new ministry roles. Brian spearheads The Man Year, a ministry primarily to fathers through the Center for Executive Leadership. Renee serves as director of STEP (Serving to Equip People) and shepherd to new staff with Entrust, a cross-cultural training organization. The Pitts

have two children, Cooper and Owen, and worship at Brookwood Baptist Church, where Brian is on the worship staff.



PITTS

Andrew Smith (M.Div. '00) is the dean of academics at Veritas School in Richmond, Virginia. He is married to Keri, and they are the parents of Lizzie, Anna Keath, Sara Kate and Hugh. The Smiths worship at Redeemer Anglican Church in Richmond, Virginia.

John Alexander (M.Div. '05) became the pastor of Greensboro First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, Alabama. He is married to Angie, and they are the parents of Morgan.



Garland Vance (M.Div. '05) published *Gettin' (un)Busy: 5 Steps to Kill Busyness and Live with Purpose, Productivity, and Peace* in 2019. He is the founder and leadership consultant of AdVance Leadership. Garland lives with his wife, Dorothy, and their three children, Calvin, Sophie and Toby in Knoxville, Tennessee, where they attend Shoreline Church.



BURFORD

Matt Burford (M. Div. '07; D. Min. '16) is a state missionary with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He and his wife, Holly, worship at Hunter Street Baptist Church and are the parents of Benjamin and Emily (pictured above).

Nathan Parker (M.Div. '07) is senior pastor at Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He and his wife, Morgan, are parents of Jude, Mae and Isaiah.

Wayne (M.Div. '07) and **Mary** (M.Div. '06) **Splawn** welcomed their third child, Mary Hamilton (Mae), into the world on March 14, 2019. Their other two children are Web and Eleanor. The Splawns attend Mountain Brook Baptist Church, where Wayne is associate minister and Mary is minister of connections.



SPLAWN

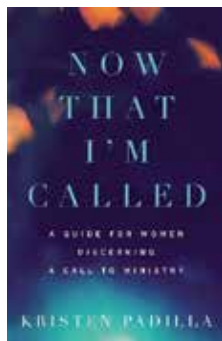
alumni

Kelley Brown (M.A.T.S. '08) writes for First 5 Bible App, part of Proverbs 31 Ministries, and is director of women's ministry at Mountain Brook Community Church. She and her husband, Scott, are parents of Caroline, Carter, Grace and Mayrn.



Kristen Padilla (M.Div. '08) published *Now That I'm Called: A Guide for Women Discerning a Call to Ministry* (Zondervan Academic, 2018).

She is marketing and communications coordinator at Beeson Divinity School, where her husband, Osvaldo, is a faculty member. They have one son, Philip.



Marcus Busenitz (M.Div. '09) is the senior pastor at Trinity Church in Covington, Louisiana. He is married to Sarah, and they are the parents of Ruby, Maggie, Bonnie Kate, Mac and Gus.



James Drake (M.Div. '10) is executive director of Cru in South Florida. He is married to Heidi, and they have four children, Isaiah, Lily, Luke and Judah. They belong to Granada Church.

Brett Davis (M.Div. '11) is the associate and teaching pastor at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is married to Joy, and they are parents of Daphne and Daisy.

Jonathan Haefs (M.Div. '11) and his wife, Holly, had their fifth child, Solomon, in 2018. Jonathan is lead pastor of Shades Valley Community Church in Homewood, Alabama. They are also parents of Charis, Levi, Talitha and Asher.

Josh Pilgrim (M.Div. '11) became pastor of Riverview Baptist Church in Calhoun, Georgia. He is married to Jenny, and they have three children, John, Lydia and Luke.

Aaron Baldrige (M.Div. '12) is the senior pastor at First Free Will Baptist Church in Pearl, Mississippi. He is married to Leslie.

Zach McCain (M.Div. '12) is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Rutherford in Rutherford, Tennessee. He is married to Adriane, and they have three children, Eleanor, Clara and James.

Ralph McCracken (M.Div. '12) is the general manager of the Distribution Center at The Foundry Ministry. He and his wife, Michelle, belong to High Point Community Church and are parents of Isaiah and Kayla.

Drew Phillips (M.Div. '12) is a chaplain at St. Vincent's in Birmingham. He is married to Rebecca, and they are the parents of Micah and Noah.

Kyle Bailey (M.Div. '13) is director of student experience at INTO, the International Student Center at UAB. He is an active member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church along with his wife, Ali, and their two children, Thomas and Claire.

Matt Harber (M.Div. '13) is a 2019-2020 doctoral research fellow at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem. He and his wife, Katie, are parents of Richie, Kari Beth and Emmett.

Chris Yancey (M.Div. '13) moved to Patate, Ecuador, with his wife, Madeline, and their daughter, Gloria, in November 2019. They serve there as missionaries with Global Outreach. They are involved with church planting, theological training and camp ministries.

Kyle (M.Div. '14) and **Rebekah** (M.A.T.S. '16) **DeBoer** welcomed their third child, Daniel, into the world in 2018. They are also the parents of Luke and Caleb.



Tyshawn Gardner (M.Div. '14) recently finished his Ph.D. in Christian Preaching at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is senior pastor at Plum Grove Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He is married to Shonetay, and they have four children, Coretta, Tristan, Titus and Tyson.

Hunter Twitty (M.Div. '14) and his wife, Elizabeth, welcomed their second child, Mae, on Nov. 16, 2018. They, along with their firstborn, Sam, attend Third Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, where Hunter serves as assistant pastor.

Bob Ayres (D. Min. '15) is the author of *Deaf Diaspora: The Third Wave of Deaf Ministry* (iUniverse, 2004) and co-author of *DEAFCHURCH 21: Vision for a New Generation* (Ayres & McClain Publishing, 2019). He lives with his wife, Kathryn, in Gainesville, Florida, where he is the pastor of formation at Servants of Christ Anglican Church.

Colton (M.Div. '16) and **Meredith** (M.Div. '16) **Conrad** welcomed their first child, Zander Rice, into the world on Oct. 24, 2019. They worship at Summit Drive Church in Kamloops, British Columbia, where Colton is pastor of student ministries.

Tucker Messamore (M.Div. '16) became pastor of Centerburg Christian Church (Ohio) in 2019. He and his wife, Amelia, welcomed their first child, Maggie, to the world the year before. Tucker also serves as a part-time hospital chaplain at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio.

John Bacon (M.Div. '17) became the church planting curate at the Community of Saint Columba, Missoula, Montana. He is married to Lauren, and they are the parents of Ezekiel, John Harvey, Patrick and Joseph.

Christopher Campbell (M.Div. '17) serves as pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama. He and his wife, Marianne, are parents of Addison and Caden.

Ryan Gaines (M.Div. '17) and his wife, Holly, welcomed their first child, Haddon, to the world on May 8, 2019. Ryan is minister of young adults at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Alabama.

Shaphan Helms (M.Div. '17) is pastor of North Brewton Baptist Church in Brewton, Alabama. He is married to **Elizabeth** (M.Div. '18), who, in addition to her freelance graphic design work, helps with several vital ministries in the church.

Kevin Naylor (M.Div. '17) is the church planter and pastor of vision and teaching at



Antioch Community Church in Birmingham, Alabama. He is married to Allison, and they recently welcomed their second child, Quinn Bloom, on Feb. 2, 2020. Their firstborn, Rowan, was born in June 2018.



Brad Baxter (M.Div. '18) married Krista on Feb. 1, 2020. Brad and Krista worship at Park Place Baptist Church in Pearl, Mississippi, where Brad is minister of community outreach, college and single adults. Brad is also pursuing a Ph.D. in Biblical exposition at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Blake Harris (M.Div. '18) is assistant pastor at Altadena Valley Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama. He is married to Danielle.

Connor Coskery (M.Div. '19) and his wife Shelley welcomed their first child, Jacob, into the world on Jan. 22, 2019. Connor is the youth ministry director at Redeemer Community Church in Birmingham, Alabama.



Tyler Kerley (M.Div. '19) married Jane on August 3, 2019. He serves as assisting priest at Resurrection Anglican Church in Woodstock, Georgia.



In Memoriam

Sam Fitts (M.Div. '94) died Nov. 27, 2019 at the age of 77. Sam was a youth minister and pastor in Alabama for years before having a heart transplant in 1988. The Lord opened the door for him to attend Beeson after a successful transplant, and he continued to pastor for years after receiving his degree. He is survived by his wife, Iris, his son, Michael, a brother, a sister-in-law and three grandchildren.

William "Bill" O'Brien, Beeson's founding director of the Global Center (1992-99), died Feb. 2, 2020. Prior to his tenure at Beeson, he was a career missionary to Indonesia before serving as the vice president of the then-Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is survived by his wife, Charmaine, three children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



We want to hear from you!
beesondivinity.com/alumni

Follow us on social media.



@BeesonDivinity



Samford University
Beeson Divinity School

800 Lakeshore Drive
Birmingham, AL 35229

