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Focus
Boston University
School of Theology
Winter 2009/10

Dean
MARY ELIZABETH MOORE
Development and Alumni/ae Officer
MAGGIE KEELAN ('07)
Senior Staff Coordinator, Alumni/ae Office
JACLYN JONES ('06)
Editor
ANDREW THURSTON
Contributing Writers
PATRICK KENNEDY (COM'04)
CORINNE STEINBRENNER (COM'06)
Designer
SHOLA FRIEDENSOHN
Photography
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The future is up to you.
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## FRONT COVER

Jet in the Carina Nebula taken with Hubble’s WFC3 detector. Photo courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble SM4 ERO Team.
Mary Elizabeth Moore’s route to the dean’s office at the School of Theology is very different from those of her 14—male—predecessors: she’s been a wannabe psychologist, stay-at-home mom, civil rights activist, mental health volunteer, and ecological and feminist theologian.

Growing up in the segregated south, Moore realized “from a very early age, that there was something badly, badly wrong with the way our churches, schools, and everything else was organized.” Moore says she “just couldn’t let it roll off.” It wasn’t just attitudes to race that rankled; her high school teachers told her she should do something special with her life, “like marry a minister.” She didn’t let that roll off either.

Moore has established a stellar reputation as a scholar of ecofeminist theology, spirituality, and sacramental teaching, holding positions at Emory University and the Claremont School of Theology. Until her appointment at STH, Moore was director of the Women in Theology and Ministry program at Emory. In addition to her duties as STH dean, Moore is co-teaching two classes this academic year, while her upcoming books on youth and culture, and feminist practical ecclesiology are “very much on the burner.”

IN JANUARY 2009, MARY ELIZABETH MOORE WAS APPOINTED DEAN OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY. AS SHE APPROACHED ONE YEAR IN THE ROLE, MOORE TALKED WITH FOCUS ABOUT HER CAREER, HOPES FOR STH, AND HOW ALUMS CAN HELP SHAPE THE SCHOOL’S FUTURE.

BY ANDREW THURSTON
Focus: What led you into ministry and teaching?

Moore: There were five accents that kept growing in me all of my life: loving and caring for other people; loving and following God; loving the natural world; loving the church and being aware of how much good could take place through the church, tempered with a realistic appraisal of its failings; and lastly, loving school. I fell in love with school very early and I loved it all the way through. All of those things formed in me early and continue to influence my journey of ministry and teaching.

At what point did you start studying to be a minister?

When I finished my master’s degree, I moved to El Paso, Texas, gave birth to two children, and was a stay-at-home mom. I did a huge amount of volunteer work in the mental health community and in the church, but my intention was to go back to school and earn a PhD in clinical psychology. I found the volunteer work so captivating that I became inspired to go to an ordained ministry. I had experienced this calling as a youth, but I received zero encouragement for it in my church—my church didn’t think girls should do that kind of thing. In fact, I had two teachers in high school who thought that, “I should do something special with my life, like marry a minister.” Later, when I was living in El Paso with two young children and doing all this work with the church, I realized this was truly my calling. I was also divorced in that period of time and thought to myself: “If you really have this call, this is the time to do it.”

When did teaching become part of that calling?

I realized my calling might be to serve the church in a more specialized way. One of my discoveries was this bigger picture of what ministry is. The important question is not what form of ministry you choose; the question is: “What is your vocation?” I found my vocation in teaching.

Why did you decide to join Boston University School of Theology?

In recent years, I’ve had a sense that I want to contribute to the shaping of theological and higher education before I die. That includes continued research and writing; further contributions to practical theology, religious education, and feminist theologies, which are my primary fields; and the shaping of institutions.

Where is STH now and what needs to change?

STH is a diamond in the rough—it is a gem that just needs some polishing. We are working on faculty, student, and program development; deepening and widening our international relationships; broadening our engaged learning; developing an ethical witness; and contributing to a deeper interreligious, international, and interdisciplinary discourse that adds to global well-being.

“I see our program as the way in which we rethink, critique, and reshape institutions, which includes institutions of church and of other religious communities, as well as schools and public agencies.”
What plans do you have for the faculty?
We have an outstanding faculty, and I think it is far more outstanding than even the faculty realizes. One of my roles is to support the faculty in undertaking the kind of visioning, teaching, research, and service that they feel compelled to do. This is what the world needs. We also want to bring in new people to enlarge the faculty and to diversify it. [That process began this fall with the appointment of Anjulet Tucker as assistant professor of sociology of religion, while three searches are presently under way.]

We have some great strengths here at the School that we need to build upon. In global Christianity and mission, for example, we have a center and a distinguished faculty member in Dana Robert, but we need to add to that work, not to rely on Dana to do it all. The same is true of our biblical and practical theological and other faculty. Another piece is improving research and intellectual interchange among the faculty at STH and between the faculty at STH and others in the University.

And what of students?
We also have very strong students here, but we are not able to support them as well as we need to. We would like to build our scholarships considerably, and we are working on that. A third of our student body is international; very few schools of theology have the opportunity to do the kind of international learning that we enjoy in our daily lives. We need to provide more support for these international students and encourage students and faculty to learn from and with one another. We’d also like to enhance our contextual education program, which includes offering more opportunities to spend time working with communities and people across the U.S. and the world.

“A third of our student body is international; very few schools of theology have the opportunity to do the kind of international learning that we enjoy in our daily lives.”

STH has a long history of social leadership. What do you mean by ethical witness?
I am not talking about developing a particular ideology that everyone agrees with. An ethical witness has to include people who disagree about major questions as well as small ones. Before I retire, I would like to see the School contribute to justice and peacemaking, and take several major steps towards sustainability and ecological witness.

The new curriculum development program at STH has another year to go before it unfolds. What would you like it to achieve?
My hope is that we will contribute to rethinking and renewing the church, as well as renewing other religious
communities. I see our program as preparation for religious leaders who will touch human lives and help faith communities and institutions to rethink, critique, and reshape themselves in response to their God-given callings.

**How important are alums in the school’s future development?**

We still have a huge potential for learning from, not dwelling on, our past. Our alums have tremendous vision—they have vision for the future of the church, community service, global politics, and this School. I want to tap those visions. They are a resource from which we can learn. We have already developed some ideas from what they’ve told us so far, and that is from only one year of conversations.

**What can alums do to renew their involvement in STH?**

Participation is one way, whether it’s attending a Wednesday worship service or a special event, like the annual Lowell lecture. Another way is consultation, being available for conversation when we go to their parts of the country. A third way is money—small gifts add up. We have the highest percentage of alums who donate of any school in the University. That is a very powerful witness, which inspires our students and faculty, and it makes a difference in what we can do as a school. A fourth contribution is to help us build relationships in their own regions, whether they help us recruit students, meet with other alums, form a donation group, or partner with us to create a continuing education event. We also have the scholar-pastor program, which allows people to take a free course at STH.

**Has it taken some adjustment to being dean?**

The learning curve is steep, but I’m also discovering that a lot of what I’ve learned in my lifetime of theological education is encouraging and informing me. I feel a huge responsibility. The opportunity to help people do what they are called to do, to help them develop their gifts, and to contribute what they have to offer the world is incredible. ♦
BY CORINNE STEINBRENNER

After 15 years in high-tech sales, Daniel Vélez-Rivera was moved by his entrepreneurial spirit to launch his own startup. The venture isn’t a social networking website or an alternative energy company—it is, in Vélez-Rivera’s words, “God’s enterprise.”

When the call to spiritual life became too loud to ignore, Vélez-Rivera (SSW’05, STH’06) left the software industry for dual studies in divinity and social work. After graduation, he established a Spanish-language ministry at Grace Episcopal Church in Salem, Massachusetts—one of just five Hispanic ministries in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. “It was an adventure, a holy adventure,” says Vélez-Rivera, who grew up in Puerto Rico, “and I knew it was going to work. In my heart, I just knew this was the right thing, that we needed to start it in this community.”

Three years later, the ministry has moved a mile down the road to St. Peter’s Episcopal Church (or Iglesia Episcopal San Pedro), where a small but growing congregation—made up primarily of recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic—meets each Sunday for a worship service offered in Spanish and accompanied by the distinctly Latin beats of the merengue, salsa, and bachata.

Starting a congregation from scratch, says Vélez-Rivera, required an intensive effort to make Salem’s Hispanic community aware of the ministry. “It’s bringing the church to the street,” he says. “If you want to use business words, it’s marketing.” Vélez-Rivera’s awareness-building campaign includes volunteering at a local immigrant services center, being an active member of Salem’s Point Neighborhood Association (the Point is home to much of Salem’s immigrant population), setting up a table at every community fair or festival, and holding the occasional service in a neighborhood barbershop. Vélez-Rivera even considers himself a walking advertisement for the ministry.

“I wear my clerical collar—I call it my uniform—everyday,” he explains, “so that when I’m out walking in the street, people know there’s a priest in this community; they see the presence of a church person in the grocery store, in the bank, in the post office. It’s one way of showing people that, yes, there is a priest in your community, and it’s not just on Sunday behind the wooden door—it’s someone who is actually part of the fabric of the community.”

Vélez-Rivera knows he can’t build an enterprise—especially God’s enterprise—by himself, so he’s asking the members of his congregation to join his holy sales force. “We’re training our lay people to be evangelists and mis-
sionaries,” he says, “to go out into their communities and let people know that they love their church.” He’s also asking his congregation to take on leadership positions within the ministry, an unusual experience, he says, for most of his members who grew up in the more hierarchical Roman Catholic Church and aren’t accustomed to being empowered as lay leaders.

As a former salesman, Vélez-Rivera knows that marketing alone won’t sell a product. The product must be tailored to meet the specific needs of the customer. From the very beginning, therefore, Vélez-Rivera’s ministry has been respectful of and responsive to the dynamics of Salem’s Hispanic community. He scheduled his first Spanish-language service, for example, for January 21, the feast day of the patron saint of the Dominican Republic, Altagracia (the Virgin of Highest Grace). “It’s not in the Episcopal calendar — it’s a Roman Catholic celebration,” he says. “But we venerate the Virgin, the mother of God. And if it’s important to the people in my congregation, then it’s important to me.”

The ministry also offers classes and workshops to address specific needs of the Hispanic community, like a family communication class that helps Spanish-speaking parents relate to English-speaking children. Vélez-Rivera works hard to cater to the youths and young adults who make up about 60 percent of his congregation. (His congregation is younger than most, he says, because the U.S. immigrant population is younger than the population as a whole.) He’s enthusiastic about developing a youth service that will be conducted in Spanish, English, and Spanglish and will incorporate elements of the Episcopal Church’s official hip-hop mass. He also plans to develop a new mass that uses reggaetón, a fusion of Latin music and reggae. “People will tell their stories in whatever language — music being a language — that’s accessible,” he says. “And my goal and vision and prayer is that our kids will feel comfortable inviting their friends to something cool.”

After three years of marketing and refining his product, how successful has Vélez-Rivera been in his venture? “I can measure this very easily,” he says. “We have an average attendance on Sunday of about 60 people, and we have 100 to 110 families and individuals on our books, so we’ve gone from zero to 100 in three years.” While he’s proud of these numbers, Vélez-Rivera’s goal is to grow even more, and he knows that — just as in business — he’ll need to expand his infrastructure to support that growth. His most pressing need is manpower, and he has a perfect sales pitch for recruiting help from nearby Boston: “This is a mission site. People think of mission sites as being far away. This is a train ride away. You can walk from the commuter rail station. It’s a four-minute walk, if you walk briskly, like I do.”

Daniel Vélez-Rivera attends a consecration ceremony in Havana, Cuba, in 2007.
OPENING THE EYES of the OPPRESSOR

DAI SIL KIM-GIBSON ('69, GRS'69) MAKES DOCUMENTARY FILMS THAT HIGHLIGHT UNDERREPORTED WRONGS AND BRING COMFORT TO THE AFFLICTED.

BY PATRICK L. KENNEDY

“I am a child of the Korean War,” says Dai Sil Kim-Gibson. “From the time I was very little, I saw innocent people, who had nothing to do with anything, being killed.”

Born in northern Korea in 1938, the young Dai Sil moved with her family to the south in 1945, as the country was freed from Japanese imperialism only to be torn apart by the former Allied powers, with the Soviet Union holding sway north of the 38th parallel and the United States overseeing the south.

Tensions boiled over in 1950, as North Korean and then Chinese Communist troops battled American and UN forces up and down the peninsula. By the time an armistice was signed in 1953, South Korean casualties numbered well over a million.

“As a Christian girl brought up in the church with a Bible in my hand,” says Kim-Gibson (’69, GRS’69), “I couldn’t understand why a good, omnipotent, omniscient God allowed children to die under bombs, which I witnessed with my own eyes.”

She began seeking answers. That search led her to Boston University in 1962—and eventually to a career as a filmmaker.

Kim-Gibson’s documentaries shed light on underreported wrongs, especially those against Korean women and other minorities: “I choose as topics the forgotten and neglected people—those with compelling and pressing issues not dealt with by mainstream media,” she says.

Kim-Gibson’s best-known film, Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women, tells the stories of some of the 200,000 women forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese troops across Asia and the Pacific throughout World War II. Another, Sai-I-Gu [April 29], focuses on immigrant shopkeepers who saw everything they’d worked for go up in flames during the Los Angeles riots of 1992.

Almost all of her films have been broadcast nationally on PBS, while she has garnered a host of honors, including a Kodak Filmmaker’s Award and an Asian American Media Award.

Kim-Gibson received BU School of Theology’s Distinguished Alumni Award this fall. (Though she officially earned her PhD from the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Kim-Gibson is also considered an STH alumna because she took most of her classes at STH, in scriptural-historical studies.)
How did she evolve from religious scholar to filmmaker? “I used to tell people ‘It was an accident,’” she says. “But I no longer think it was.”

Upon receiving her BU doctorate, “My plan was to go back home and teach in Korea.” But first, she decided to teach religion for a year at Mount Holyoke College. At the end of the year, the department chairman suggested she keep her options open by returning home for a visit without resigning her post. The advice proved wise. After eight years away, “the South Korea I found in 1970 was under the military regime of President Park Chung-hee. The discrepancy between rich and poor was so terrible, I could not stand it.”

Kim-Gibson returned to the States and taught at Mount Holyoke until 1978. Then, she recalls, “I decided, ‘OK, I did my pilgrimage through religious studies. Now, I will live to alleviate suffering in practical ways. And I will define God in my own way—the definition that gives me peace and strength, that will make me a better human being.’”

From there, she says, it was a short leap to the realization that she wanted to better the world through the arts. She worked for the National Endowment for the Humanities until 1985, then directed the media program of the New York State Council on the Arts, and finally turned to independent filmmaking in 1988.

“Artists are a rare breed of people who live in agony and ecstasy, who try to expand and transform human reality through their creative work. And I think film is a collaborative form of art.”

Documentary films have become her means of effecting change. Kim-Gibson tries to align herself with “the oppressed and make them narrators of their story so some of the oppressors who are blind can have their eyes opened.

“So documentary filmmaking, in one sense, became my way of practicing my religion. Because you cannot be a really good filmmaker if you do not think about what it means to be a human being, what it means to suffer together, to have compassion.”

Her time in academia has been instrumental in guiding her professional work, she adds. “True documentary filmmaking cannot be done if you are not equipped with conceptual tools, if you don’t know how to ask questions or do research, or if you don’t understand human nature. So the PhD in religion did not ultimately make me a true scholar, but it helped me to make documentaries dealing with concrete issues of history and people.”
IMAM. HOSPITAL AND PRISON CHAPLAIN. DOCTOR OF MINISTRY. ACTIVIST FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY. SALIH YUCEL ('08) HAS BEEN MUCH AND SEEN MUCH, ACCUMULATING STORIES THAT SWEEP FROM A TURKISH VILLAGE, THROUGH 9/11 AND A BURNED IRAQI BOY, TO THE BOSTON RED SOX.

BY ANDREW THURSTON

When Salih Yucel ('08) sits with the sick, he knows from hadith that 70,000 angels watch over him. But after he'd sat at Children’s Hospital Boston with a five-year-old Iraqi, Omar, the boy’s young body scalded from flames sparked by stray American bullets, he went alone to the beach near his home “and just cried for that child.” It was, he says, “a hard time for me.”

It’s a potent statement from someone who has seen so much of this world. Yucel currently teaches Islam and Interfaith Activities at Melbourne’s Monash University, but has been an Imam in Turkey and Australia, a prison chaplain in Sydney, and a hospital chaplain in Boston. He was also the first Muslim to earn a doctor of ministry from BU School of Theology.

“[Across] half of his face, the skin was burned; there was no right ear,” remembers Yucel of the boy who’d been brought to the United States for treatment. “I started talking to him in Arabic and said, ‘I am your uncle.’ He was so happy; he kissed me and hugged me, and said in Arabic: ‘Am mu, am mu,’ which means ‘Uncle, uncle.’ I will never forget that moment.”

AN ISOLATED COMMUNITY

Yucel was just 16 when he decided he would be an Imam. After his mother passed away, his family struggled to find an Imam from their village in Turkey to perform funeral rites. It was then that he chose to follow his faith and “provide the services for my community.”

After graduating from divinity school, completing national service, and spending a decade in religious positions, Yucel heard the call from another community short of Imams: Turkish-Australians. Traveling down under, he found a people cut off from society.

“I saw the community was usually isolated from the rest of mainstream Australia—the Imams were the same,” says Yucel. “I was very lucky to have a young generation who grew up in Australia as part of my congregation, so they guided me to have some kind of dialogue with the non-Muslim community.”

Yucel began to give talks on Islam to local students and soon became a voluntary university chaplain: “I started having dialogue with clergy from other denominations and saw the fruit of that,” he says. When he came to the U.S., first as a chaplain to Turkish university students in New York, later to
patients at some of Boston’s biggest hospitals, he noticed the same problem he’d faced in Australia. Meeting with students, small business people, and academics in Boston, he was told: “The Muslim community here is isolated; they have almost no contact with the surrounding community.”

This disparate group of Muslims decided to do something about it. “Instead of building a mosque or establishing an Islamic society,” says Yucel, “we said, ‘let’s start an organization that could have dialogue with the non-Muslim community.’”

The Boston Dialogue Foundation brings Muslims together with people from other faiths for concerts, food drives, and seminars. While Yucel has a legion of stories of people admitting they misunderstood Islam, he admits that not everyone was happy: “Some Muslims had rude questions: ‘Why dialogue? Are you going to compromise the religion?’ We ignored them.”

TALES OF POST-9/11 HOPE
The 9/11 terror attacks changed everything. On the day of the attacks, Yucel pleaded with his hijab-wearing wife to “stay at home, don’t go anywhere.” As weeks and months passed, other events tested the resolve of many Muslim-Americans. As the police looked on, Yucel’s daughter was assaulted and taunted on the way home from school. “They asked her: ‘Where is Osama? Are you hiding Osama?’” says Yucel. He also remembers speaking Turkish with a hospital patient who nervously asked him to switch languages when an English speaker approached because “they will think we might be terrorists.”

But the conversations he’d started before the War on Terror would give reason for hope. “When 9/11 happened, there was a big demand for dialogue with the non-Muslim community,” says Yucel. “The non-Muslim community also wanted to know about Islam.”

After speaking at a Unitarian memorial service for 9/11 victims, Yucel was flooded with phone calls and e-mails offering the Muslim community help and support. He hopes other faith communities hear about the power of these small gestures: “In that situation, as a community, we need neighbors, at least emotional help, even a phone call or just a smiling face. I think it’s very helpful.”

It explains in part why an Imam chose a Methodist seminary for his doctorate: “It was a good opportunity for me to improve my understanding of other faiths and traditions,” says Yucel.

ONE MORE TRADITION
Speaking of important traditions, Yucel ends with a more upbeat Boston story. Asked to offer a prayer and benediction at a Boston Medical Center graduation ceremony in 2004, Yucel stood and said: “Dear graduates, wherever you go, please pray for the Red Sox.”

Some of them must have followed his request. Several months later, the Boston Red Sox would break the curse, win their first championship in 86 years, and give New England fresh reason for hope.◆
ANTI-AIDS CAMPAIGNER DONALD MESSER (’66, GRS’69) SHARES A SOMETIMES HARRATING, OFTEN JOYFUL MISSION, BUT HAS SOME TOUGH, CANDID WORDS FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH.

BY ANDREW THURSTON

Donald Messer (’66, GRS’69) is fighting an AIDS epidemic and he’s not about to mince words. Messer provides a powerful commentary on the suffering caused by the disease and a frank assessment—“Frisky not Risky” and “Lubricate” are both chapters in his latest book—of what might alleviate it.

When he speaks with Focus, the executive director of the Center for the Church and Global AIDS is preparing to take 10 pastors from the U.S. on “an immersion experience” in Kenya. Messer says they’ll “visit with children who’ve been orphaned by AIDS” and spend time in churches with “outstanding AIDS ministries that are trying to overcome stigma and discrimination in their local congregation and community.”

A JOURNEY TO CANDOR

The Christian church has, as Messer points out, “always struggled talking about human sexuality.” He’s not surprised that when skimming the advanced listing of his 15th book, 52 Ways to Create an AIDS-Free World, we spot chapter 33: “Masturbate.”

“The editor challenged me to write a book that wasn’t to a churchy audience and to be open and forthright, so I did,” says Messer. “We’d have a lot less HIV if men might be encouraged to masturbate, rather than going to commercial sex workers or other places.”

The book’s 51 other no-nonsense chapters—from “Teach Children about Sex and AIDS” to “Thank God for Condoms”—are based on Messer’s decades of campaigning at home and overseas. It was a mission he first took on in the 1980s after an inspirational meeting with six gay, HIV-positive men. All were dying, but all preached a message of hope.

“I asked: ‘What would you say if you were in the pulpit; what should I tell people?’” says Messer. “I never forgot their generosity of spirit, their courage at a time when there was great hostility towards them and great fear of the disease.

“They kept emphasizing, don’t ever give up hope.”

Back then, Messer was president of Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado. Now retired, he dedicates all of his time to the Center for the Church and Global AIDS, which he helped incorporate as a nonprofit in 2006. The center’s first aim, says Messer, is “theological education broadly conceived as reaching out to the public;” the second, raising money for specific projects around the world “that others might not do.” Mixed in among upcoming trips to Bali, Costa Rica, and Haiti, is one such project.
“We have a conference in Bangalore, India, which focuses on the church and ministry with transgendered persons and men who have sex with men,” says Messer. “This’ll be a cutting-edge issue, because generally the church anywhere fails to deal openly with men who have sex with men or with transgendered persons, and certainly [that’s true] in India.”

JOY AND PITY
That touches on a theme that runs through our conversation—Messer’s joy in a ministry that gives him the opportunity to meet “a wonderfully great humanity out there,” mixed with “righteous anger” and pity for some other members of his faith.

“Most people in the world who are HIV-positive tell me that worse than having the disease is the negative way people treat them,” he says. “That’s really a telling commentary on society and culture, and especially the church.

“The church has contributed to this stigma and discrimination by labeling people as sinners, casting them out, by marginalizing [them]… We have to work on overcoming that stigma and creating a more accepting, inclusive, compassionate community.”

Messer dips into the Bible to affirm that this isn’t just some personal crusade: “[Jesus] didn’t seem to care what the disease was,” he says. “Repeatedly in the scripture, he tells his disciples and followers to heal every illness and every disease. To me, that means we have a mandate for being in a healing ministry.”

Looking back at the origins of his ministry, Messer remembers the lessons he learned at BU School of Theology.

“I would reaffirm our legacy of addressing critical issues of justice,” he says. “We really need to carry on our tradition of seeking out injustice, and bringing justice and hope to the world. The openness and inclusiveness of BU School of Theology is something that needs to be underscored and the world needs more of that, not less.” ✝
These are, says Shelly Rambo, “glimpses of trauma through the lens of theology.” Sifting through dire headlines of financial meltdowns, Rambo sees an opportunity for theologians to guide a nation in its soul-searching. In the second part of her article, she also offers a theological reflection on the difficult path of trauma healing.

**PART ONE: GUIDING PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS**

It has been a year of crises, meltdowns, slowdowns, and breakdowns. Trauma has become part of our national vocabulary. As the events on Wall Street were unfolding, I noticed that the public conversation began to change. In news headlines, op-eds, and political rhetoric, a different kind of inquiry into the economic situation was emerging. There seemed to be an increased desire to move beyond the facts to probe larger questions of identity: Who are we? Who have we become? There was a sense that we had been putting Band-Aids on deep wounds in our public life; there was talk about the moral and spiritual problem at the core of a trying year.

In my research (more of which in Part Two), I examine what theology, and people of faith, can do to bring healing in traumatic times. As journalists and commentators began to shift from economic woes to questions of identity, I was reminded of the mid-twentieth century, when theologians became public figures as they tackled the deep wounds of their time. Recently, the name of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) started again to be voiced in the public sphere. The New York Times columnist David Brooks was the first to publicly ask President Barack Obama if he had ever read any of the theologian’s work. And much to David Brooks’s surprise, Obama fired back a concise summary of Niebuhr’s *The Irony of American History.*

Suddenly, as the nation again dealt with trauma on multiple fronts, this theologian and his theological vocabulary—words like ambiguity and tragedy—were being retrieved. In the 1940s, Niebuhr provided a national diagnosis to explain a kind of malaise pervading not just Christian churches and academic institutions, but American society. He began to talk about American foreign policy and America’s role in the world in theological terms. In a *Time* magazine title article on Niebuhr’s life and legacy, .

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**About the Author**

Shelly Rambo is an assistant professor of theology. She teaches classes on theology and trauma, feminist and womanist theologies, and the development of Christian thought. From 2010, STH will offer a master’s degree specializing in military chaplaincy, including a concentration in trauma and healing.
Whittaker Chambers proclaimed: “To Protestantism’s easy conscience and easy optimism that figure [Niebuhr] was saying, with every muscle of its being: No.” Niebuhr revived the concept of sin to counter two things: a perceived complacency in contemporary Protestantism and an overextension of American military power overseas. His was the era of the public theologian. Where there was a crisis, an unsolved question of national identity, or trauma, there were theologians, standing up to provide helpful ways of diagnosing the human condition and society. These public theologians were also calling for national accountability and responsibility, drawing from religious traditions and their visions of love and justice. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59) used religious language to call America to task for its racial economics.

SPEAKING PROPHETICALLY
For multiple reasons, the days of the public theologian have passed. When I asked my students who they would identify as a public theologian, the room fell silent. “What about an influential religious leader?” They followed with names like Oprah, Rick Warren, and Bono. It is a different time, and the public theologians are not taking distinctively theological forms.

As an academic theologian, I do not bemoan this, and I by no means want to call us back to some good ole’ days. Yet I do think that we have lost a critical vocabulary for thinking about who we are and who we are to be. The recent shift in public rhetoric suggests that we are hungering to ask the big questions—the existential questions—anew: Who are we? Where is God? Who are we to be? The world’s religions have always provided frameworks for understanding and engaging the world and, in turn, the trauma—the meltdowns and breakdowns—it throws in our path. These frameworks are a weaving together of sacred stories, beliefs, and sets of practices. It is the work of theologians to continually examine these frameworks in order to bring them to life in the present moment. In the Boston University School of Theology tradition, theologians deeply engage the questions of the time. Theologians appeal to and employ a well of resources in order to make meaning of the present moment and to speak powerfully—and prophetically—in the messy times and places in which we live.

PART TWO: HEALING TRAUMA
It is January 2008. I am standing with a group of students in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. We are on Deacon Julius Lee’s family property—there’s no house left, just remnants of the foundation. In the distance, we can see the new levee wall. His family is in different stages of returning to New Orleans after dispersing to southern cities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He tells me that he doesn’t know what will happen, but he is fairly certain that his family will never be together on this street again. That morning, Lee gathered with other area ministers and religious leaders strategizing about rebuilding efforts. He was visibly angry: “People keep telling us to get over it already. But I tell you: The storm is gone, but the after-the-storm is always here.”

This statement summarizes the primary challenges of trauma; it is not confined to a violent or devastating event, but is what lives on long after the event is over. Trauma is what remains. Lee also attests to public impatience and to a central misunderstanding about trauma—the idea that someone can simply “get over it.” If theologians intend to speak to the perennial question of human suffering, Lee’s words must ring in our ears: “The after-the-storm is always here.” These words and the view from Lee’s backyard have come to represent for me the new lens through which theologians, religious leaders, and religious communities must look if we want to engage in the work of trauma healing. If we are to speak to God’s presence and movement in the world, we must do so through deep engagement with the realities of trauma.

The more I interact with people and communities who struggle to reconstitute their lives in the aftermath of trauma, the more I identify trauma as a crisis of the aftermath. Using Lee’s words, the trauma lies in the “always here.” Trauma is not isolated to an event, but is what remains of that event. Due to the force of violence, a person cannot integrate that experience fully. This lack of integration results in a series of problems. The past does not stay in the past but, instead, invades the present in such a way that a person cannot fully engage the world around them. This invasion of past into the present also makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to envision a future. The struggle to be present, to be in the now, reveals the assault of the past and the diminished capacity to imagine life beyond the suffering.

We also know, through research in neurobiology, that trauma lives in the body to a degree that we had not previously grasped. Brain scans are telling us that traumatic experiences dismantle the limbic system, the emotional part of the brain, in such a way that the experience does not get transferred to the frontal lobe, the intellectual part of the brain, where experiences are registered in cognition and language. The result is that trauma gets stored as body memory. It does not get assigned a proper context, rendering a person susceptible to potential triggers that are not contextually specific to the trauma. Also,
words are not assigned to the experience. This confirms what we already know about trauma—that it is often difficult to access the narrative of trauma and to speak it—and pushes us to think about how much trauma is not only carried in the body, but also communicated between bodies, without any verbal communication. Trauma is not a onetime event. Trauma lives in the body. Given these two insights, the big questions of theology begin to take particular form.

**WHO ARE WE THAT WE CAN BE SO WOUNDED?**

Trauma suggests that we are more fragile in, and vulnerable to, our world than we ever imagined. The violence of our world cannot be understood fully within traditional fault lines of victims and perpetrators; retributive models of justice do not reflect the truth that many who inflict harm are products of cultures and experiences layered with trauma. Christian understandings of sin often strengthen retributive models of justice, depicting humans as willful and defiant creatures who disobey God. Theologians working closely with trauma are rethinking the theological anthropology dominated by particular understandings of sin: Is sin, classically understood, a fitting diagnosis of the human condition? In contrast to sin understood in vertical and individual terms, they are introducing the concept of tragedy and a tragic framework to interpret the human condition.¹

The problem of the human condition may not be pride but vulnerability, not defiance but complicity in the tragic structures of existence. Tragedy acknowledges moral complexities and helps make sense of situations in which there are no clear lines between victims and perpetrators. Scholars addressing the trauma of war, such as Edward Tick and Jonathan Shay, are also appealing to a tragic framework to make sense of military trauma. We are witnessing a move to think about our existence in a much more interconnected and complex way, forging methods of thinking about the world that do not reinforce binary and oppositional modes of thought and action.

**WHERE IS GOD IN THE SUFFERING?**

The striking thing about trauma is that the suffering persists and is difficult to track. To think about God’s presence in suffering, we need to think about the challenge of location in trauma. In my work, this has taken the form of moving a theological discussion of trauma off the cross to the aftermath of the cross. Rethinking trauma between the central death and life (resurrection) events in Christianity, I meet the experience of trauma where it narrates both an encounter with death and the challenge of reimagining life in its aftermath. Many Christian theological engagements focus on a theology of the cross, and the figure of Jesus, to make sense of human suffering. I move, instead, to think about trauma in relationship to the Spirit, to the movements of God in places too deep for words, where the breath of life is most threatened.

When confronting the question, “Where is God in the suffering?” in respect to trauma, it is important to think about the figure of the Spirit witnessing to truths that cannot be contained. In the Gospel of John, for example, the Paraclete is the figure of witness, the advocate who accompanies the disciples in the aftermath of the cross. It is

3. Marjorie Suchocki’s *The Fall to Violence* was groundbreaking in shifting our understanding of sin from a vertical (between human beings and God) to a more horizontal understanding (as a violation of the well-being of creation). This reframing is not solely the work of contemporary theologians. Fourteenth-century British theologian and mystic, Julian of Norwich, provided an analysis of the human condition in more tragic terms. In *Showings*, she contested the “blameworthiness of sin” in light of what she understands to be a fragile and vulnerable conception of the human person.
critical to think about God’s presence in suffering as a witnessing presence amidst the temporal and spatial distortions in traumatic suffering. Images of breath and Spirit also speak across religious traditions and, if developed, can contribute to interreligious partnerships around trauma healing. Theologians such as Catherine Keller and Sallie McFague also urge us to rethink theological conceptions of divine power in light of violence. Not only can we understand ourselves as more vulnerable, we can also envision God’s interaction with the world against a kind of triumphalistic power brokering that often accompanies claims to God’s omnipotence. 4

WHO ARE WE TO BE IN THE AFTERMATH?

An experience of trauma is an attack on the imagination. With the past continually threatening the present, the most challenging thing for those who survive trauma is to imagine life ahead. In situations of urban trauma, one of the central challenges is to get young people to imagine a future beyond their present situation, to imagine forms of life beyond the violence. Professor of Psychiatry at the BU School of Medicine Dr. Bessel van der Kolk claims that success in trauma healing can only come if we can restore a person’s capacity to imagine a future. He claims: “As therapists, we are hope and imagination merchants.” 5

I think of the role that theology can play in this. At its most basic level, theological work is imaginative work insofar as it attempts to make sense of the human story in light of the divine story, to connect life experiences to sacred scriptures. The work of witnessing to the past, restoring connection in the present, and imagining the world differently is the central work of religious communities in the aftermath of trauma. The experience of trauma presents us with some central challenges about how we understand our lives temporally.

The topic of eschatology is a way of thinking about life—both human and nonhuman—in and beyond time. How might eschatology be rethought in respect to trauma and its temporal distortions? 6 A central concept in eschatology, hope, often runs the danger of following the same fate as Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “cheap grace.” 7 “Cheap hope,” a term coined by Kathryn House (’08), a former student at the School of Theology, became a key part of our discussions in my theology and trauma class. After studying trauma, students were wary to offer up theological hope without substance, without what we came to identify as the necessary work of witnessing to extinguished hope, to the continual assault on the future experienced in trauma.

These represent brief glimpses of trauma through the lens of theology. The view from Deacon Lee’s backyard tells us that despite the new levee wall, the “after-the-storm” remains. The work of discerning God’s Spirit in our times will depend upon our capacity to witness in and through the realities of trauma, and to witness what does not go away, to the suffering that persists beyond the event of suffering. ♥

Online Extra
Watch Shelly Rambo’s lecture, “Practicing Theology in the Aftermath of Trauma,” at www.bu.edu/sth/academics/interviews-lectures/theologytrauma.
SCIENCE, RELIGION, and the ORIGIN of the WORLD

BY KIRK WEGTER-MCNELLY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY
A theologian stepping into the physics lab to test scientific theories about the beginning of the universe might be a little unconventional, but it could herald a breakthrough that will force us all to think again about our origins.

Where do we come from? It’s an ancient question, with a host of possible meanings. Just think of all the experts who might want to weigh in. Historians, biologists, obstetricians, geographers, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, legal theorists, astronomers, even grandparents—all of these and more would have something valuable to add. Of course, Christian theology has probed the origins question deeply over the centuries, largely due to the importance given by the early tradition to accounts in Genesis of the link between human identity and the origin of all existence. But if the question is there in Genesis, that’s because it’s there in daily life. Ask someone who they are, and sooner or later you’ll find yourself wandering in the land of origins.

Questions like this never exist in isolation but are inevitably outward projections of the historical puzzle of one’s own particular existence. My own brand of theological curiosity and competence—as someone first trained in physics—has generated an abiding interest in origins, but with a cosmic twist. In particular, I have long been drawn to what astronomy and cosmology can tell us about where we come from. Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to sharpen this interest by becoming involved in an interdisciplinary research project that aims to put new empirical pressure on the question of where the universe comes from and how it got here.

With the encouragement of my chief collaborator, physicist Raymond Chiao of the University of California at Merced, I have gradually been embracing a kind of hybrid professional identity, returning to my past training as a physicist and reshaping my present identity as a theologian.

Together, Chiao and I have begun to contemplate a number of physical scenarios whose theoretical ramifications frequently brush up against matters philosophical and theological. The initial aim of our project has been, and...
continues to be, to provide scientists with a new tool for investigating the origin and structure of the observable universe. The larger goal—as if the initial aim weren’t ambitious enough—is to do what BU Professor of Philosophy and Physics Emeritus Abner Shimony has called “experimental metaphysics.” The particular subject of our investigation is something most people have never even heard of: we are looking for “gravitational waves.”

The scientific quest to detect gravitational waves has the potential to significantly extend the limits of our knowledge about our universe. Although the interdisciplinary project Chiao and I have been pursuing is still in its early stages—we began our first major round of experiments at Chiao’s laboratory in fall 2009—we have made an initial theoretical breakthrough that suggests we are headed in the right direction.

**GRAVITATIONAL WAVES**

Gravitational waves were first predicted by Albert Einstein in 1916 on the basis of his theory of gravity, the so-called “general theory of relativity.” Gravitational waves, not unlike the more familiar electromagnetic waves (which we know in the visible form of light, as well as the various invisible forms that allow for television, radio, microwave ovens, medical x-rays, and cell phones), are thought to be raining down on us at every moment from every direction.

Current efforts at directly detecting gravitational waves are being led in this country by the National Science Foundation-funded, Earth-based Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO), which went online in 2002 at a cost of more than $300 million. To date, LIGO has detected no gravitational waves. An international, space-based instrument, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA), backed by NASA and the European Space Agency, is expected to launch sometime in the next decade at a cost of nearly $2 billion.

Why has it proven so difficult, and so expensive, to detect gravitational waves directly? The central problem with all gravitational wave research is that the effect of even highly energetic gravitational waves is extremely small. (To get a sense of how the waves move through space, see the panel, *Jell-O, Grapes, and Physics.*) Even in the case of a highly energetic wave produced, say, by the collision of two black holes somewhere in our local galaxy cluster, the squeezing and stretching of space brought about by the wave by the time it reaches Earth will be on the order of one part in \(10^{21}\); that’s a very small effect, even by physicists’ standards.

**COSMIC ORIGINS**

The detection of gravitational waves has become something of a Holy Grail for contemporary physicists, not only because it would represent a remarkable confirmation of Einstein’s important theories about the nature of space and time, but because it would shed new light on the origin of the cosmos.

Einstein’s general theory of relativity is the basis for the big bang model and the standard against which all other models are judged. One of the most well-known implications of the big bang model, which began with Edwin Hubble’s discovery of the expanding universe in the 1920s, is that it appears to have a temporal beginning.
A ccording to the view one typically finds in popular literature, the universe has been continually expanding from an initial point in time, the so-called $t = 0$ moment, when its basic physical quantities, such as temperature and mass-density, were infinite. The backward extrapolation of Hubble’s discovery to an originating moment has led to much speculation about whether modern science has, in fact, corroborated the idea of a cosmic creation, spoken of in various ways by so many of the world’s religious traditions.

Such speculation, while not presently ruled out by the evidence, goes well beyond what can be justified solely on the basis of scientific consensus. Although the standard big bang model does entail a cosmic singularity, a $t = 0$ moment, the significance of this singularity remains the subject of much dispute. Moreover, most cosmologists now regard the idea of $t = 0$ as a theoretical
defect to be overcome in future work. In recent decades, this attitude has even motivated some to put forward alternatives, such as a pre-big bang, to the standard model. These alternatives deliberately avoid an initial singularity. In one, for example, the big bang becomes a big bounce from a pre-existent universe. What has so far frustrated any attempt to adjudicate among the alternatives is that all line up reasonably well with data coming from conventional (i.e., electromagnetic) astronomy.

Enter gravitational-wave physics. Unlike in the electromagnetic case, each of the alternative cosmological models leads to a different prediction for what the gravitational sky should look like. Our work could, therefore, lend new empirical weight to one of the models (or none at all!), thereby strengthening or weakening the claim that the observable universe had a primal cosmic beginning.

LOOKING AT THE WAVES
In many ways, most gravitational waves are quite like electromagnetic waves. They can even be described by similar sets of equations. But in one important way gravitational waves are very different from electromagnetic waves: gravitational waves do not bounce off normal matter. There is no such thing as a simple, laboratory-scale mirror for gravitational waves. The consensus against the possibility of gravitational-wave mirrors is what has led to experiments like LIGO, which depend upon the effect of gravitational waves on space rather than the strength of their interaction with matter.

For the past decade, however, Chiao has been arguing that the conventional view regarding gravitational wave mirrors is wrong. Chiao, a winner of the Willis E. Lamb Award for Laser Science and Quantum Optics and the Einstein Prize for Laser Science, has suggested that a special type of material called a superconductor, which behaves in various unique ways, might be able to function as an efficient mirror for gravitational waves. In 2006, I contacted Chiao about forming an interdisciplinary team around the subject of his research, and in 2007 we received two major grants from the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences to leverage Chiao’s research for the sake of establishing an interdisciplinary project on cosmic origins. Our first major step toward this goal and the possibility of laboratory-scale mirrors for gravitational waves came in early 2009, when we succeeded in identifying a clear physical mechanism and a supporting mathematical argument for the enhanced interaction between a gravitational wave and a superconductor.

Our team has recently begun to perform a number of experiments designed to leverage this idea for the sake of generating and detecting high-frequency gravitational waves. Should any of these experiments prove successful, this would constitute a scientific breakthrough of the first order, both theoretically (by providing further confirmation of Einstein’s general theory of relativity)

“Would new evidence for a cosmic beginning lend further weight to the claim that the observable universe must have its origin in some larger physical reality? Or would such evidence support the claim that the universe has a transcendent cause?”
and experimentally (by leapfrogging large-scale efforts such as LIGO and LISA, and by opening the door to gravitational-wave astronomy). For the world of meaning beyond the laboratory, it could also initiate a new interdisciplinary conversation on the origin of the cosmos itself.

THE THEOLOGICAL TURN

The detection of gravitational waves has the potential, then, not only to reshape scientific cosmology, but also to rekindle philosophical and theological reflection on the question of the origin of the universe.

If the big bang scenario were to receive further confirmation, this would present philosophers and theologians alike with the opportunity to reflect anew on the question of the origin of the universe. Would new evidence for a cosmic beginning lend further weight to the claim that the observable universe must have its origin in some larger physical reality? Or would such evidence support the claim that the universe has a transcendent cause? If a $t = 0$ moment appeared to be ruled out, what would this imply about the character of the preexisting realm?

Chiao and I have deliberately designed our research project to let the actual and unpredictable advance of scientific work shape the philosophical and theological agenda.

Of course, different religious frameworks provide alternative accounts of cosmic origins and the nature of transcendence. Whatever new cosmological data does become available in the future, it will inevitably be construed differently by those working within different religious frameworks. We are pursuing the interpretive dimension of our own research with reference to the *ex nihilo* framework of Christian theology, but we believe that both the scientific and theological dimensions of the project are relevant to believers in other religious traditions and nonbelievers alike.

▶ Online Extra

Watch Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics Wesley J. Wildman discuss the science of religion in “Spirituality and the Brain: A Scientific Approach to Religious Experience” at www.bu.edu/phpbin/buniverse/videos/view/?id=134.
TURNING MEMORY into ACTION

BY ROBERT ALLAN HILL, PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY
A single photograph from 1955 sparks a personal remembrance of a preacher whose influence loomed long and large over the School of Theology and the Civil Rights movement. From that snapshot comes a sermon calling us to remember the lessons of Allan Knight Chalmers.

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” [Matthew 22:34–46]

I am holding a worn black-and-white Kodak photograph from 1955. In it, a black-suited man with a great shock of white hair is holding a baby boy. The white hair is that of the late Allan Knight Chalmers, former professor of homiletics and giant of the Civil Rights movement.

This sermon was lit by the match of a friend’s single sentence. She said: “It is so sad when people lack access to their own best past.” It is. It is tragically sad when a country, or a people, or a denomination lacks access to its own best past. Here is one definition of hell: losing access to your own best past. Here is one description of heaven: finding access to your own best past.

Over thirty years of pastoral ministry, I have seen women, men, and groups lose their way, lacking access to their own best past. They can be cut-off from such blessing through accident, change, job-loss, migration, divorce, or other endings in relationships. Over thirty years of pastoral ministry, I have seen women, men, and groups find their way home, gaining access to their own best past in memory, dream, reconnection, reading, and prayer.

Isn’t this what happened to Martin Luther, blocked from his best past in the dark loneliness of his monk’s cell, blocked by fear and anguish and dread? He found the Psalms, and understood them. He found the letters of Paul, and interpreted them. He found Augustine, and learned from him. He found freedom.

About the Author

Robert Allan Hill is professor of New Testament and pastoral theology, as well as dean of Marsh Chapel and chaplain to the University. His research interests include the Gospel of John and Gnosticism and preaching in ministry. Many of his weekly sermons have been published and broadcast.
and grace by gaining access to his own best past.

I want to offer you the gift of memory as a help for imagination. I want to offer access to your own best past, in the specific memory of a forgotten person, whose legacy is our best past and our desired future. Allan Knight Chalmers expressed and embodied preaching, change, and wholeness.

RECALLING A PREACHING VOICE

Matthew 22 offers a wonderfully broad gospel, for those with eyes to see it and ears to hear it. One of the dangers of interpretation, compounded by years of study, can be the inability to see the forest for the trees. How shall we summarize religious teaching? Love God, love your neighbor. Granted, the long histories of rabbinic debate about the law and its summary; granted, the further Messianic dispute underneath the argument about David; granted, the particular changes Matthew makes of his inheritance from Mark here; still, the main point holds. In Christ, there is no east or west, in Him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide Earth. The river of love will ever surmount the banks of law. The river of love will ever surmount the banks of religion. The river of love will ever surmount, and ever overtake, the endless banks of boundaries we seek to set. Such breadth is at the heart of Allan Knight Chalmers. Here is a taste of his pulpit voice from *Candles in the Wind.* Chalmers preached:

> You will in many cases fail to understand with absolute correctness the meaning of words, since words are symbols of thought and are not accurate; but you will come closer to the truth if you give the benefit of a deep desire to reveal a truth and not to hurt, to any set of words you hear or see.

Chalmers told his students that a B was required to pass the preaching class; a lower grade meant taking the class again. Chalmers encouraged his students to read a book a day; he meant the habit to continue through a lifetime. Chalmers believed in preaching without notes; still, if the student wanted to become a manuscript preacher, Chalmers would aim to make them a strong manuscript preacher. His classes met three times a week, an hour at a time. He required weekly two- or three-paragraph reflections on a moment, experience, event, theme, or idea.

My dad remembers hearing Chalmers in the spring of 1950. Pacing the platform of the Oneida Methodist Church, New York (where in 1968, aged 13, I was confirmed), Chalmers held a packed sanctuary enthralled in the retelling of the Scottsboro Boys story. Chalmers led that early Civil Rights crusade to free nine unjustly convicted black teenagers, a successful crusade that, over a decade, freed them all. He whispered. He shouted. He stepped out the exact measurement of the prison cells in which the Boys had been held. He kicked the pulpit (I have no idea what that gesture aided). He placed before that gathering of 500 young adults the cause of justice in their time.

A SOCIAL GOSPEL

The other day I feasted in the stacks of the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. I sat with pencils, paper, white gloves, and three
long folders of original Chalmers writings. One contained letters from and to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Another contained writings related to the NAACP—of which Chalmers served as treasurer and legal defense fund president—and the Civil Rights movement, plus correspondence with Thurgood Marshall. A third contained two reflective essays by Chalmers, one written at the behest of journalist Harrison Salisbury and the *New York Times*. I also found the following gems:

• A handwritten short letter from a young boy accompanied a gift to the NAACP of $22: “My mother is writing you this check in her name because I don’t have a checking account—I’m only ten years old,” it reads.

• Writing to King, his student, colleague, and friend, Chalmers strongly pronounced time to think:

    A man gets thin if he does not read, becomes inaccurate if he does not write, but most of all loses profoundness if he does not think; or if he is deep he may only be in a rut because he has not had time to think anew as time and circumstances have gone on. [AKC-MLK, 3/6/60]

• Writing to donors, raising money for Freedom Riders’ legal defense, Chalmers urges action:

    Each of them faces four months imprisonment, $200 fine, and a permanent record of criminal conviction that can mar his future. Their only offense was: they had faith in the rule of law in our country. [AKC, 11/20/61]

• Writing to the *New York Times* editor—we’re transported now to the 1970s—Chalmers offers an exemplary rendering of responsible Christian liberalism:

    ...the silent generation slogged; the violent generation slugs. Too many did not think back historically or ahead creatively... Separate is not equal... [This generation] has not yet produced leaders, both intelligent and selfless... We are in a phase where the icons and the iconoclasts are in control. Where are the bulldozers who know that what they do is part of a building plan? Time will have to tell.

**REMEMBERING CHALMERS TODAY**

I looked recently at Chalmers’s books: *Candles in the Wind, As He Passed By, A Constant Fire,* and others. The rhetoric is dated, but the passion is timeless. Chalmers believed that this world could change for the better. People, individuals and groups, could turn around, think again, change their mind, think twice. Change happens. Real change is real hard, but this world can become a better place.

This country is beginning to remember Chalmers. We are beginning to remember that our differences are not our definition. Remember that, in
the balance of liberty and justice, those who have much should not have too much, and those who have little should not have too little. Remember that a passion for justice comes in more than one shade, more than one hue, more than one color. Remember that love of God and love of neighbor are love together. Remember that real liberation means the possibility of salvation for all, not some. Remember that you whose commonwealth is heaven are citizens of the globe.

MY PHOTOGRAPH, MY STORY

After about twenty years of preaching, and with much reluctance, I finally enrolled in a continuing education program. I had come to the edge of these waters other times, sometimes even showing up for opening events, only to turn around and head home. In the winter of 1999, I went to Princeton for a preaching week. One evening, a man whose name I vaguely knew, stood to preach. An African–American, the venerable dean of a venerated university chapel, the man drew me with his subtlety. He preached on the Psalms, and as he

preached, the other failed educational moments of other years and of the days preceding began to fall away. He turned his slight frame, twisting in an elliptical pose. He darted and wove and scampered and paused. Then, unexpectedly, he stopped and said, apropos of what I know not: “No one here will remember Allan Knight Chalmers. But let me tell you who he was.”

It was a strange, wonderful, true moment. When you gain access to your own best past, then you are set free. When you gain access to your own best past, then you are given grace.

You see, as with all sermons, this one is very personal. I was named Robert Allan Hill, named for Chalmers. I am holding a worn black-and-white Kodak photograph from 1955. In it, a black-suited man with a great shock of white hair is holding a baby boy. The white hair is that of Allan Knight Chalmers, for whom I was named, by whom I am held.

He holds me still. 

This article is based on the sermon, Remembering Chalmers, first given at Marsh Chapel in October 2008.

Get in Touch

Share your memories with us. BU School of Theology is compiling a People’s History of the School of the Prophets and would like to include the memoirs of alums. You can find out more—or send your story—by contacting Maggie Keelan at mkeelan@bu.edu.
IT’S AS IF YOU NEVER LEFT.

Wherever you are in the world, you never have to leave Boston University School of Theology behind. Visit www.bu.edu/sth to watch free videos of faculty lectures, get updates on our latest research and publications, or just catch up with news from your old classmates.

STH is your home for lifelong learning at

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If teaching is a sacramental act, imagine what it can achieve: lessons can nourish life, help repair the world, and mediate God’s grace. In this extract from her book, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, Dean Mary Elizabeth Moore offers six acts of sacramental teaching that reach far beyond the walls of the School of Theology.

Sacramental living is a way of life fueled by God’s hope, incarnate in Jesus Christ. This is not naïve hope, nor gentle hope without pain. It is a powerful, God-centered hope that evokes self-giving and full living. This hope cost Jesus his life; it also opened the way for new life to emerge. This is the same hope that ordinary people and flawed human communities are promised. The promise itself calls forth the need for sacramental teaching so that God’s hope might be proclaimed and actualized in people’s lives.

My purpose is not to multiply the number of formal sacraments in the church by adding a sacrament of teaching alongside others; my purpose is to cast a bright light on the sacramental nature of teaching. The close relationship between sacraments and education is natural. Baptism is a rite of initiation, and eucharist a rite of ongoing nurture. These are functions of education, as of liturgy.

In both initiation and nurture, the results may be damaging, as well as positive. Consider the dangers of initiating and nurturing people into patriarchal communities: “The rites themselves, because they are rites of initiation and sustenance, serve to initiate both women and men into a patriarchal ecclesial structure and to maintain their identity with that structure even when it is oppressive.”¹ The alternative is to be alert to danger and alert to the empowering, converting, liberating work of sacraments. We need, thus, to engage in lifelong learning, to revere sacramental power, to critique distortions in the church, and to open ourselves for ongoing transformation. In short, we need sacramental teaching that, like the sacraments, mediates God in the church and world.

**EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**

The first act of sacramental teaching is to *expect the unexpected*—to expect that God is present and *will* act. One mark of the sacraments is that they convey mystery and point to mystery even

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¹ Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite*, 125; cf. 123, 140–51.


Mary Elizabeth Moore is the dean of the School of Theology and a professor of theology and education. Recent publications include *Children, Youth, and Spirituality in a Troubling World*, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, *Ministering with the Earth*, and *Teaching from the Heart*. 

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beyond what they can convey. Expecting the unexpected has to do with traveling with others on the long journey of faith, expecting surprises along the way. The surprise may be the end of apartheid in South Africa, or the amazing strides in that same country to recreate its many selves into the “New South Africa.” It may be the recovery journey of an alcoholic from binding addiction, or a family’s recovery from a long-standing feud.

Congregational studies uncover such unexpected encounters with God as:

- **In an intergenerational weekend retreat**, a young girl withdrew to the sidelines. She ignored other children and walked away when adults reached out to her. An older woman decided to spend time with this child, inviting her to make hand puppets and, later, to join a session of storytelling. The girl followed along, but showed no interest, never cracked a smile. The older woman, exasperated, decided to stop reaching out to this child, who was not responding. The next morning, all of the retreatants—young and old—were asked to paint a rock to give someone as a sign of their love. The room buzzed with activity as people painted rocks and set them aside to dry. At the end of the morning, people were invited to give their rocks to someone in the room or to pack them away to share back home. The little girl who had been withdrawn throughout the weekend ran across the room to give her rock to the older woman who, by that time, had given up on her. The rock was painted bright green with black letters that read “You Are My Sunshine.” The unexpected had happened!

…[This story reveals] the power of expecting the unexpected, which sometimes comes after we have abandoned hope and sometimes when we are walking boldly with naïve optimism…Teaching [is] walking with, sharing with, acting with, remembering with, and constructing meaning with people in a learning community. If this journey is permeated with God’s presence, it will be filled with surprises…Teaching for such a journey is planned with prayer, enacted with prayer, and opened to unexpected movements of God’s Spirit.

**REMEMBER THE DISMEMBERED**

A second act of sacramental teaching is to **remember the dismembered**…Consider a congregation that has experienced the death of its pastor while preaching in the pulpit, or a congregation that has lived through the death of several youth within a span of six months, or a congregation that has struggled with the hasty departure of their choir director and a choir member, who had an affair and left their respective spouses to live with one another. These are difficult times for congregations as they mourn their losses and struggle with ethical issues. The same **remembrance** discussed in relation to sacramental theology is needed for such communities to be freed from the debilitating effects of hidden memory and to witness God’s Spirit amid tragedy and loss.

“One surprising insight arising from congregational studies is the degree of dysfunction that creeps into a congregation when it experiences tragedy or loss and does not take time to grieve, reflect, and rebuild.”
One surprising insight arising from congregational studies is the degree of dysfunction that creeps into a congregation when it experiences tragedy or loss and does not take time to grieve, reflect, and rebuild. Some congregations become known for their squabbling, unjust expectations of pastoral leaders, or instability. Consider some cases:

- **One thriving congregation experienced** the suicide of its beloved pastor forty years ago, and the sudden death of another a few years later. This congregation developed a relational pattern that isolated its pastoral leaders thereafter, while expecting them to do miracles in resolving their internal conflicts...

- **Another congregation had quietly** arranged to move its pastor to another church after alleged affairs with several young people in the congregation. Twenty years later, they discovered that they had never dealt with their anger and grief. They had driven the young people out of the church, blaming them for the troubles. They had removed the offending pastor from collective memory and repressed their feelings about the situation, only to put heavy pressure on their pastoral and lay leaders from that time forward. The result was that yet another pastor (twelve years later) had an affair with a congregant, and the church’s lay leaders continued to bicker among themselves. In the meantime, the young people who had left the congregation during the first uproar never returned to that church or any other.

These stories could be multiplied, but the heart of [both] is the dismemberment of people within a congregation, effecting dismemberment of the congregation. Submerged memory contributed to further dismemberment and to diminished relationships with God, one another, and the church’s mission. While these cases do not suggest easy answers, and no one “solution” is called for, the need for remembering the dismembered is clear.

**SEEK REVERSALS**

A third act of sacramental teaching is to **seek reversals**. In one Kenyan confirmation story, the Presbyterian moderator preached from 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [that person] is a new creation; . . . behold, the new has come.” The sermon invited an encounter with New Creation, which is usually a bold reversal in the status quo. Jewish and Christian traditions abound with such reversals, which are nowhere more evident than in the Bible. Note the reversals in Exodus 3:1–6. Moses, an immigrant child and a
shepherd in Midian, sees a burning bush while tending sheep. First, the bush was not consumed. Second, God was speaking out of the burning bush—the God of Moses’ ancestors—but God was not appearing in conventional ways. Further, God was mourning the pain of the people and sending Moses to the Pharaoh to deliver the people (the same Moses who had fled the former Pharaoh after he murdered an Egyptian).

Consider the New Testament tradition, which reveals Jesus—the teller of parables—as the one who proclaims reversals at every turning, whose very life is a reversal. As Luke tells the story, Jesus’ birth is announced to Mary by an angel—a reversal—and Mary responds by sharing the news with her cousin Elizabeth in the Magnificat—a song of reversals:

My soul magnifies the Lord, . . . for [God] has looked with favor on the lowliness of [God’s] servant . . . [God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; [God] has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. [Luke 1:47–48, 52–53]

The opening chapter of Luke prepares people to seek reversals in the life of Jesus. And Luke, as a teacher seeking reversals, leads readers through the birth of Jesus in a stable, the revelation of this mystery to common shepherds and to Simeon and Anna, the curiosity and wisdom of twelve-year-old Jesus, the subversive teachings of the man who ate with sinners and told the parable of the prodigal son, the death and resurrection, and the suspenseful ending when Jesus ascended into the heavens while his confused disciples looked on. Readers remain in suspense until Luke’s next installment in the book of Acts, which opens with the same ascension theme.

In Luke, as in the other Gospels, we see Jesus’ life and teachings as a parable, a life that “brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly,” a life that stirred reversals. To follow this man Jesus and to live in the biblical tradition that we inherit is to seek reversals and to participate in reversal living: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2a).

So how do we engage in sacramental living in such a tradition? I will draw a few clues from this hasty journey through our reversal tradition: (1) Christians can expect the tradition to offer as many questions as answers and to upset comfortable beliefs, values, and social structures; (2) teaching can be an opportunity to follow Jesus in telling parables and follow Luke in telling the parable of Jesus; (3) teaching can open questions without answers, as Jesus did with his parables and Luke did with his Jesus stories; (4) teaching can engage people with tradition when they are confused, and can support people when they find no comfort in their tradition—when it intro-

“Teaching can engage people with tradition when they are confused, and can support people when they find no comfort in their tradition.”
duces new questions, upsets the status quo, or gives rise to something new (new insight, new action, new life).

GIVE THANKS
A fourth act of sacramental teaching is to give thanks. This act came to my consciousness through the study of sacramental theology, which is permeated with symbols of God’s work in creation. Giving thanks is an act of wonder before God. Consider:

• In [one] Kenyan congregation, the spirit of thanksgiving is... expressed in many ways. The children are celebrated on their birthdays in a large Sunday school assembly, where some two hundred children sing to them and teachers give thanks for their lives. In the same congregation, people express gratitude for the freedom of their country and the possibility of Kenya’s giving leadership in Africa and the world—in social, political, and ecological relations. They openly identify problems that face their country, but quickly reiterate their thankfulness for the opportunity to build a strong nation in the spirit of harambee ['all pull together’ in Swahili].

• Paul opens his letter to the Romans with a greeting, followed with a prayer of thanksgiving: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world” (1:8). As in the Kenyan congregation, thanksgiving is the foundation upon which the Roman community can continue to build, even as Paul lays out his concerns and challenges.

In these cases, we see teaching as giving thanks. The people of the
Kenyan congregation have made intentional decisions to be thankful. They pass on their thankfulness by acts of commemoration, celebration, and conversation. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he gives thanksgiving through prayer—a practice that also marks the Kenyan church, whenever people gather.

**NOURISH NEW LIFE**

This leads to the fifth act of teaching as sacrament—to nourish new life. In the earlier analysis, we discovered that the opening stories reveal communities embroiled in conflict and pain and living in a world of turmoil; we also recognized their avid search for life. Sacramental teaching is teaching that encourages people to look for the promise of new life in every text they study, and to look for the promise of new life in their own lives. In so doing, sacramental teaching embodies the theological theme of communion, for God’s work is discovered in relating fully and deeply with diverse peoples and communities, diverse texts and situations.

The sacramental role of teachers is to nourish seeds of new life wherever they are found…In the church in Kenya, seeds of life may have been efforts of this local congregation to be unified and to witness to their unity in a confirmation service with young people who would soon be leaders of their country. In the church of Rome, the seeds may have been in the community’s questions and conflicts, and also in Paul’s urging of the community to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Though more could be said, the challenge for sacramental teaching is to seek and nourish seeds of new life, even unpleasant ones, in ordinary communities.

How can teaching respond to such communities and texts? To answer that question, we turn to a story. I knew a woman in a small town in Louisiana who gave leadership to a five-member Presbyterian church. Together, the five congregants cleaned and polished their sacred space, maintained the grounds, and kept the sanctuary alive with growing plants. The congregation rented their manse for income and brought ministers from all over Louisiana to preach and administer the sacraments. They always paid the ministers and gave them a nice meal after the service; the ministers often returned the money, however, because they enjoyed being with the community.

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O’Keeffe, Georgia (1887–1986)
Church Steeple, 1930
Oil on canvas
30 x 16 in.
Gift of The Burnett Foundation (1997.06.17)
The life of this congregation, when viewed from the outside, was minimal; however, viewed from the inside, they were a community that nourished life in one another and in their town. They visited the ill, welcomed visitors, and often joined with other churches for ecumenical events. When the leader of the congregation spoke, she never mentioned the woes of her church, although she laughed when the congregation dwindled to two on a Sunday morning and the music was off-key. What she did discuss was her excitement about what happened last Sunday, or what their little church would be doing with the Methodists next month.

Reflecting on this story as a metaphor for sacramental teaching, one sees that: (1) small communities can be powerful teachers in their way of being community; (2) sacramental teaching involves caring for the space and daily routine of church life—tending the church as sacred space and tending Sundays as Sabbath time; (3) sacramental teaching can be done by one energetic, loving leader, who includes others and inspires them to join her; and (4) sacramental teaching is an act of joy that mediates the joy of God’s Spirit to others.

To say that teaching is sacramental is to say that it nourishes life, even when life is a small seed or remnant. If life is God’s creation, then nourishing life is participating with God in the creation and care of the world.

RECONSTRUCT COMMUNITY AND REPAIR THE WORLD

This leads to one final act of sacramental teaching—to reconstruct community and repair the world. Some readers may be nervous in reading the last story because denominational leaders often worry about churches that hold on when they dwindle to five people. The purpose here is not to evaluate any particular congregation in this regard, but rather to suggest how communities can be transformed and can be agents of transformation...

Sometimes the promise of transformation calls a congregation to fan sparks of life from their dying embers; sometimes a congregation is called to die and be reconstituted; and sometimes congregations are led into ministries quite different from those they have practiced in the past. The question I raise now is not directed toward one kind of community, but to all communities that are dwindling in their ministry, aliveness, or sense of direction. What does sacramental teaching have to do with them?

Sacramental teaching has to do with more than expecting, remembering, seeking, thanking, and nourishing; it has also to do with mediating God’s prophetic call in the church and world. The accent in Christian tradition has often been on prophecy as the ministry of a few daring and charismatic leaders—Jeremiah, Amos, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But prophecy is an action of God to be received and enacted by all God’s people; the roles of Jeremiahs,
BRINGING MISSION to LIFE

BY ADA FOCER ('05, GRS'09)
I entered the master of divinity program in 2002, a woman just over 50 with lots of professional and personal achievements behind me, but in need of new ideas to fuel a new fire. I found them in abundance through interactions with my teachers, my classmates, lectures, and books. Perhaps most surprising was my discovery of mission history. Mission was part of my family story. A cherished cousin of my mother—a nurse—had been a missionary in China and Africa.

But mission history as taught by Dana Robert, the Truman Collins Professor of Global Christianity and History of Mission, gave me a glimpse of the big picture of Protestant mission. I was particularly interested in the opportunities for American women in mission, and by the central importance of students and student-oriented organizations like the YMCA, YWCA, and the mission-focused Student Volunteer Movement (SVM).

When I began a PhD in religion and society at Boston University in 2005, I took Robert’s course *Women and Mission* and read Sara M. Evans’s *Journeys That Opened up the World*. It was there I first encountered Margaret Flory, Ruth Harris, and Peg Rigg—three towering figures of mainline Protestant student ministries in the 1950s and 1960s. Rigg was the art editor of *motive*, the Methodist student magazine, from 1951 to 1965. Harris worked for the SVM in the 1950s, and was the secretary of student work for the Women’s Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Board of Missions for much of the 1960s. Flory led student ministries for the Presbyterians during both the 1950s and 1960s.

I wanted to meet these creative dynamos who had propelled some of the most exciting things happening on American campuses in the 1950s, and 1960s. In 2009, travel for my dissertation research took me near enough to each of them. Flory is 95 and lives in Brevard, North Carolina. Harris is 89 and lives in Claremont, California. Rigg is 80 and lives in St. Petersburg, Florida. [Margaret Flory passed away October 1, 2009, after this article was written—ed.]

**MISSION EDUCATOR**

Margaret Flory, Ruth Harris, and Peg Rigg are all mission-formed women who contributed mightily to the reformation of mission in the post-colonial world that emerged after World War II. They gave students and young people opportunities to form relationships with people in newly independent nations and churches; it was hoped they would help the churches shape new models of mission for this emerging world.
Margaret Flory was attending language school in Berkeley, California, and preparing to go to China as a missionary, when church officials decided they needed her more in New York. Beginning in 1944, Flory worked as staff for the Presbyterian Board of Missions, but was also given latitude to engage with students. She then spent a year traveling and working with students in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and China, before being appointed to head the Office of Student World Relations for the Presbyterians in 1951, a post she held until 1970.

When I asked Flory how she described her profession to others, she thought a moment and said: “Mission educator.” It seemed appropriate for someone who developed the first broad-based junior year abroad program, in 1953. In 1960, she started the ecumenical Frontier Internship in Mission program that placed new college or seminary graduates on a mission defined not geographically, but as a strategic frontier, such as race relations; students would spend two years working with local Christians on projects, some traditional, like teaching, and others innovative, like slum organizing.

PEOPLE POWER
Ruth Harris grew up in Nebraska, the granddaughter of a Methodist preacher and daughter of a Methodist temperance activist. After college, she became a choral music instructor. Her Sunday school teacher suggested she might want to use her choral music teaching skills as a missionary. She then attended a missionary training program: “It was good, wonderful theology and really opened up my eyes,” says Harris. “It was so exciting to be in that kind of intellectual ferment all mixed up with the Christian faith.”

Harris began her mission in China in 1947, two years before Mao Tse-tung took over, and was assigned to teach at a girls’ high school. She stayed after the revolution and became a believer in people power. Later, her enthusiasm for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was based, in part, on his making it clear that people power could be Christian too.

“My world opened up in China when I was a missionary there at the time of the revolution and was able to perceive there, then at home with Martin Luther King, how God was working in that,” says Harris. Her goal for students was “to have the same kind of experience that I did.” Two of the many programs Harris ran were citizenship seminars so students could spend part of a week at the United Nations and the rest in Washington D.C., and a Latin American study tour.

THE ART BEHIND A MOVEMENT
Peg Rigg is now a Quaker but was raised a Methodist. When she was a junior at Florida State University, she discovered German-French theologian Albert Schweitzer and was so excited that she ended up teaching a short course about him. “I wanted to be something in my life that was like that,” she says. “I liked the way he combined science and his music. He gave me the strength to go to seminary and combine theology and psychology.” And significantly, it would transpire, art.

Rigg was still at the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, in 1951 when Roger Ortmeyer, then editor of motive, hired her and gave her lots of running room. “I’d studied the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, and I loved what
the prophets were all about,” says Rigg. Artist Robert Hodgell’s woodcuts of the prophets were among motive’s best-known works, but Rigg also used art that was new for a Protestant publication, including crucifixes and works by Roman Catholic artists, such as the Catholic Worker’s Fritz Eichenberg.

One of the things Rigg liked best, though, was to take art directly to the students on their campuses. “They got involved because of motive,” she says, “and then they wanted to go to church and find out what was going on.” Rigg also put her own prodigious artistic talents to use — among her many works was the intertwined black cross and orange flame now hanging at Methodist churches nationwide. When she left motive in 1965, she became an art professor at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg.

END OF AN ERA

In the 1950s and 1960s, the pews in mainline Protestant churches were packed. By the early 1970s, however, everything had come apart. The University Christian Movement, the U.S. arm of the World Student Christian Movement, voted itself out of existence in 1969. Church attendance, and revenues, plummeted. Demands from church leaders around the world that missionary structures be dismantled and missionaries come home were met.

So what was the fruit of the labors of Flory, Harris, and Rigg? What of all those changed lives? If many of the students who participated in these programs might have become missionaries in the past, what did they end up doing instead? That is the subject of my dissertation. I have found about 115 of the 139 people who participated in the Frontier Intern program between 1960 and 1974 and am interviewing them, in person, if possible. My hope is this: that they are as wise and thoughtful today as documents in the program archives suggest they were then, that they have something important to say to the church, and that it is not too late to listen and learn.

Share Your Stories

Ada Focer would like to hear from anyone influenced by motive magazine or the Student Volunteer Movement. Send your memories and stories to afocer@bu.edu.

Online Extra

Read the latest mission research and news at www.bu.edu/cgcm.
FINDING THECLA

BY KRISTA MILLAY ('05, '10)
A student’s search for an image of the apostle Paul in the mountains of Turkey instead reveals the shining story of his steadfast follower, Thecla.

On the steep Turkish hillside of Bülbül Dag (Mount Nightingale), well beyond the limits of the excavation at the ancient city of Ephesus, resides one of the oldest extant images of the apostle Paul. Tucked away in a small, dark cave, the astonishing fresco, preserved for centuries beneath layers of plaster, is a portal of sorts, offering its visitors an easy threshold through which to experience the world of early Christianity.

Centuries after the fresco was painted, I climbed the mountainside of Bülbül Dag to the small cave. On a warm spring day, I hiked up to Paul, bursting with curiosity to see his image. But I encountered someone else too: Thecla. Her brightly colored depiction, facing Paul’s on the dim cave wall, intrigued me.

I’d traveled to Turkey in March 2009 with a group of graduate students and professors from the School of Theology on an expedition to study Greco-Roman life and customs during the time of the first Christians. Led by Associate Professor James Walters, we explored the ancient city of Ephesus—once part of ancient Greece, now in modern-day Turkey—and the cave of St. Paul. Each student brought his or her own interests to the trip, but the immersion into ancient cities through archaeological exploration raised new questions and enabled new thinking about early Christianity. The ancient...
ruins came to life for us—streets bustling with life, temples alive with activity, theaters filled with people—through research and imagination.  

THE BRAVE AND BOLD THECLA  
The story of Paul and Thecla was an especially popular one in the first centuries of Christianity, telling of the brave and bold Thecla, who abandoned the life prescribed to her for one of preaching the gospel. Whether she initially discarded her fiancé, Thamyris, for the apostle Paul under the influence of romantic or virtuous feelings—or a combination—is something that remains ambiguous in the late first-century apocryphal text that tells her story. But what is not ambiguous is Thecla’s determination in finding her own way in her faith and apostolic ministry. Refusing marriage and then the overtures of a wealthy man, Thecla remained steadfast in her aim to follow Paul. But Paul was no steadfast companion to Thecla. He refused to baptize her and abandoned her twice, each time leaving her to almost certain death by public execution (although she was miraculously saved). Thecla ultimately took matters into her own hands and baptized herself. After finally receiving Paul’s affirmation of her apostolic calling, Thecla spent the rest of her days teaching the Word of God.

Thecla’s story is certainly dramatic and exciting. It is amazing that such an intrepid young woman has not regained more popularity; we tend to love the women of antiquity who demonstrated such audacity and courage in the face of patriarchy. But Thecla’s story evokes something more quietly profound. Thecla represents what we seldom think about—the understated, unglamorous...
ways that women in antiquity negotiated their religion and culture in order to be active agents, while remaining within their respective traditions. Despite the many restrictions placed upon them, women found ways to remain present within religion and to be active forces for it. And so it was with Thecla. Instead of sitting by the wayside, Thecla made a way for herself, while remaining within the burgeoning Christian tradition.

There was some resistance to such activity by women in early Christianity. Both from inside and outside the movement, there grew pressure for women to conform to certain social expectations. The real threat of Thecla’s story was not so much that she was a radical whom other women might wildly imitate. The true peril was the reality that women did make decisions—sometimes large and sometimes small—for a more active role within their religious and cultural systems. Thecla reveals the persistent, though often inconspicuous, ways of women negotiating their religious tradition.

THECLA IN OUR TIME
Thecla’s story is a thrilling portrayal of a female apostle in the first century. But we needn’t project upon Thecla a radical feminist consciousness from our own century. Instead, Thecla continues in the lives of women today, who negotiate the terms of religion prescribed to them and who find ways to actively participate and influence religion.

My own research and writing centers on the negotiations that women of antiquity had to make—and that contemporary women continue to make—in their devotion to religious traditions often entrenched in patriarchy. When I came face-to-face with the woman next to Paul, I felt I had encountered an ancient relic of an earlier feminist theology. It has often been the work of feminist theologians to retrieve the multitude of women’s voices, and it struck me, as I stood in that cave, that I was encountering one such voice.

I admire the valor with which Thecla both held on to the apostle Paul and disregarded him, the way that she negotiated her conversion, baptism, and ministry. She claimed Christianity, as rightfully as anyone else, along with its patriarchal trappings. She also negotiated that faith, on her own terms. And such are the lives of women in religion today. In my own work at the intersection of theology and biblical studies, I can see a breadth of ways in which women have negotiated and continue to negotiate religion. No one woman negotiates her participation in the exact same way as another woman. And yet there is a tradition to be discovered—a tradition of the ways in which women choose how they will believe and how they will participate. Maybe we should call it the tradition of Thecla? Whether or not, this tradition should not be forgotten in the darkness.
A DEGREE *that* MAKES YOU THINK, "WHOA"

AN INTERVIEW WITH C. MICAH CHRISTIAN (’11)
From supporting a prison inmate to building a mission retreat in Honduras, master of divinity student and seminary singer C. Micah Christian ('11) is making sure he gets more than a degree from the School of Theology.

LIFE OUTSIDE OF CLASS

Focus: Tell us about your journeys behind bars.

Micah: The Partakers is a group of students from the School of Theology who go out and meet with an inmate at a correctional facility. We talk about his goals, things he wants to do when he gets out, his own faith journey, and what it’s like being in prison, the things that he struggles with. I was nervous about it at first; I didn’t know what I was going to be able to say. When we started talking, it was just natural.

You were recently awarded a Theological Education Fellowship to fund a ministry project of your choice. How might you use it?

It’s supposed to help you with your ministry, with spiritual growth, and to be used for something that may be very difficult to do later in life. I’ve been building a house in Honduras for mission retreats, to go down there for a mixture of service and spirituality. I was thinking about finishing that house with the money and then maybe even leading a week-long retreat.

Why Honduras?
I originally went there for an alternative spring break in my junior year and I wanted whatever it was that was changing in me to last for a longer period of time. I came back and felt so different, and after a couple of weeks, I felt exactly the way I was before, so I asked the head nun down there if I could go back for a year. I just wanted to have an experience that would last and stick with me. I think I accomplished that in a way, but I would like to have Honduras be a part of my life.

LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM

Have any STH classes sparked an interest you continue to explore?
I took a class called *Spiritual Guidance in the Christian Tradition* with Associate Professor Claire Wolfeich. I felt it was something I can use in everyday life. We talked a lot about spiritual practices, ways to make prayer a central part of our lives, and also how to be available to others who are in need of spiritual direction and guidance. I think that class sparked my interest in spirituality.

Has anything you’ve learned scared you, made you wonder, ‘What am I doing here?’
I wrote a series of papers in my theology class on time and eternity. I became interested in it when I read St. Augustine’s *Confessions* — it brought me to some places where I thought, “Whoa,” and realized I didn’t understand
as much as I thought. One of the things he wrote was that everybody thinks they understand time until they really think about it and how it relates to eternity. What does it mean to live forever? In Christianity, we talk a lot about living for eternity and when I think about that, it makes me both hopeful and nervous. Has STH made you look at anything differently? A lot of us are coming from different perspectives. For instance, I grew up in the Pentecostal church and they have ideas about what being a Christian is, and another denomination has other ideas about what being a Christian is. I’m trying to figure out what exactly I’m leading people to when I lead them towards Christianity or a Christian life.

MINISTRY AND THE FUTURE
What qualities do you think you need for ministry? I have a love for people and a love for God, and so I think that’s the foundation. I try to just walk with that, live with that. What I love about ministry is that there are numerous ways to be a minister. I can become a pastor, a missionary, or even a public school teacher, and still be doing ministry. Ministry is a lifestyle, not a profession.

What’s on your mind as you consider a future in ministry? The type of service we’re getting into is a big job. You can look at the world in a negative way because there’s a lot of bad things going on right now, but it just means I have to take my job seriously; I think about what it is that I’m getting into, and know that it’s going to be challenging. It’s a 24-hour job; you have to be available for people at all times. A lot of people are just looking for hope, for some place to turn. —AT

C. Micah Christian with children from a Honduran orphanage
ALUMNI/AE AWARDS 2010

YOUR NOMINATIONS

We take great pleasure in honoring outstanding alumni and alumnae with the School of Theology Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards. Your nominees should reflect the values of the School’s mission statement: creative and critical inquiry in the theological disciplines; responsible Christian engagement with the world and its peoples, cultures, and issues; and the formation and development of maturing communities of faith. Nominees should be role models with a sustained record of achievement and service.

How to Make Your Nomination: You can e-mail the name of your nominee, including your reasons for choosing him or her, to Maggie Keelan at sthalum@bu.edu, or fax or mail this form (see below). The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010.

Name of nominee
Reason for nomination:

Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Young Alumni/ae Awards 2010: You can also make a nomination for the Young Alumni/ae Award 2010, recognizing the achievements of those alums under the age of 35 who have shown great promise as servants of their community and the world.

Name of nominee
Reason for nomination:

Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Your Information

Your name
Your relationship to the nominee
Your address
City
State
Zip code
E-mail address
Telephone
Fax

Have you nominated a candidate before? □ Yes □ No

Forms can be mailed to BU School of Theology Alumni/ae Office, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 109, Boston MA 02215, or faxed to 617-353-3061.
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What’s on your mind as you consider a future in ministry?
The type of service we’re getting into is a big job. You can look at the world in a negative way because there’s a lot of bad things going on right now, but it just means I have to take my job seriously; I think about what it is that I’m getting into, and know that it’s going to be challenging. It’s a 24-hour job; you have to be available for people at all times. A lot of people are just looking for hope, for some place to turn. —AT
YOUR NOMINATIONS

We take great pleasure in honoring outstanding alumni and alumnae with the School of Theology Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards. Your nominees should reflect the values of the School’s mission statement: creative and critical inquiry in the theological disciplines; responsible Christian engagement with the world and its peoples, cultures, and issues; and the formation and development of maturing communities of faith. Nominees should be role models with a sustained record of achievement and service.

How to Make Your Nomination: You can e-mail the name of your nominee, including your reasons for choosing him or her, to Maggie Keelan at sthalum@bu.edu, or fax or mail this form (see below). The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010.

Name of nominee School(s)/Year(s)
Reason for nomination:

Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Young Alumni/ae Awards 2010: You can also make a nomination for the Young Alumni/ae Award 2010, recognizing the achievements of those alums under the age of 35 who have shown great promise as servants of their community and the world.

Name of nominee School(s)/Year(s)
Reason for nomination:

Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Your Information

Your name School(s)/Year(s)
Your relationship to the nominee

Your address City State Zip code
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Have you nominated a candidate before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Forms can be mailed to BU School of Theology Alumni/ae Office, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 109, Boston MA 02215, or faxed to 617-353-3061.
I just ...

- published a book
- went back to school
- found my calling
- saw the world
- went on a mission
- got married
- had a baby
- started my first job
- finished my last job

Whatever you’ve been up to, we’d like to hear about it. Send us an e-mail with your stories or photos, and we’ll share them in Class Notes.

sthalum@bu.edu
1950s

Robert Crabbs (’52) is a retired minister who now works at Walt Disney World, Fla. Crabbs was recently honored by Disney for his 25 years of dedicated service. On comparing his former career as a minister with his current one as a merchandise host and entertainer, Crabbs says: “The only similarity is people, lots and lots of people. It’s very enjoyable because you meet so many people from all over the world… it’s a stimulating kind of an environment.”

J. Donald Hughes (’57, GRS’60) has published An Environmental History of the World: Humankind’s Changing Role in the Community of Life (Routledge).

Robert Dean McNeil (’58) has published Clarence Darrow’s Unlikely Friend: Clarence True Wilson (Spirit Press).

1960s

Robert Reber (’64, GRS’73) has been appointed president pro-tem of Bexley Hall Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.

Dave Stum (’69) has, after 35 years of parish ministry, begun a new career. He’s now human resources manager for the American Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia. His wife, Sheila Lutjens, is deputy director for the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Lusaka. Dave writes that: “There is life after ministry!”

1970s

Kenneth Grinnell (CFA’74, STH’76) has been given a Good Samaritan Award in Religion by Pastoral Counseling Services of Southern New Hampshire.

Rebecca Hardcastle (’76) is the author of Exoconsciousness: Your 21st Century Mind (AuthorHouse).

1980s


Silvester Scott Beaman (’85) was appointed to then Delaware governor-elect Jack Markell’s transition team in November 2008. Serving as co-chair of the team, Beaman was also part of the January 2009 inauguration ceremonies of Governor Markell.

2000s

Heather Josselyn-Cranson (’00, ’05) and her husband Matt Cranson have welcomed a daughter into the world, Seraphina Renee Cranson. Heather continues to direct the music ministry program at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.

Mark Y. A. Davies (’01, GRS’01) was named dean of the Petree College of Arts and Sciences at Oklahoma City University.

Judit Gellérđ’s (’02) translation of Mihály Balázs’s book about early Unitarianism in Transylvania, Ferenc Dávid, received the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Book of the Year Award.

Brian Alston (’03) recently joined a humanitarian team taking medicines and medical supplies from the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation of Randolph, Mass., to Haiti.

Lori Bievenour (’03) has been selected for the two-year Wabash Pastoral Leadership Program for Indiana pastors.

George Walters-Sleyon (’04, ’06) is now pastor at the Weymouth United Methodist Church, Mass., and has published a book on the incarceration of black men in America, Locked Up and Locked Down: Multitude Linger in Limbo. He has also recorded two CDs, which you can listen to at www.myspace.com/sleyon.

Marisa Laviola (’06) has been called to serve the First Congregational Church of Morrisville, Vt. She can be contacted through the church.

Jeremy Smith (’06) is the author of the blog Hacking Christianity, which he writes are the “[m]usings from a United Methodist Pastor who is also a technology nerd. It’s
funny how often the two intertwine…”

Nathan Corl Minnich (’07) was ordained and installed as pastor of Salem Lutheran Church, Elizabethville, Pa. He’s also a licensed funeral director and leads private and group grief counseling. He can be reached at ncminnich@gmail.com or www.salemutheranelizabethville.org.

John C. Brink (’08) is the new associate pastor of Dennis Union Church in Dennis, Mass. His sermon, I See You, was selected for the Inauguration 2009 Sermons and Orations Project, sponsored by the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. John was featured in Bostonia in winter 2009—visit www.bu.edu/bostonia/winter09/act2 to read his story.

David Dyrenforth (’08) announces the birth of Susannah Rose Dyrenforth. David writes that: “Susie appears healthy, alert, and happy. Praise God for the new life.”

Anthony Zuba (’08) was recognized in a Boston Globe article for his work with Righteous Indignation, a Jewish organization voicing issues of social and environmental justice.

Kudzai Mpunzwana (’09) has been appointed associate pastor of Union United Methodist Church, Boston. She will be serving with Latrelle Easterling (’04).
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<td>Allen J. Moore, GRS'63</td>
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<td>Robert C. Neville</td>
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<td>Toby R. Baker</td>
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<td>Robert W. Blaney</td>
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<td>Phyllis D. Chase, COM'80</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. James R. Salmond</td>
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