SINGING THE BLUES ON A NOTE OF HOPE

We can find faith for the future even in the depths of despair
Professor Dale P. Andrews inspired many as a teacher and scholar, ministry and social justice activist. Help us raise $100,000 to endow the Dale P. Andrews Memorial Scholarship in Practical Theology and Race, to support students who will continue his work.

To contribute, email sthdev@bu.edu, call 617-353-2349, or visit bu.edu/sth/giving.

He taught that caring for the soul means caring for the community, too.

We’re carrying on his legacy.

Professor Dale P. Andrews inspired many as a teacher and scholar, ministry and social justice activist. Help us raise $100,000 to endow the Dale P. Andrews Memorial Scholarship in Practical Theology and Race, to support students who will continue his work.

To contribute, email sthdev@bu.edu, call 617-353-2349, or visit bu.edu/sth/giving.

Dean
MARY ELIZABETH MOORE
Director of Development
RAY JOYCE (Quincemur’91)
Alumni Relations Officer
JACLYN K. JONES (’06)
Marketing & Communications
Manager and Journal Reviewer
KIMBERLY MACDONALD (CFA ’06)
Editor
JULIE BUTTERS
Contributing Writers
RICH BARLOW
LARA EHRlich (UN’13)
HALLEY JONES (’15)
ANDREW THURSTON
MEGAN WOOLHOUSE
Design
SHOLA FRIEDENSOHN
Produced by Boston University
Marketing & Communications
focus is funded by donations from alumni and friends to the Boston University School of Theology Annual Fund. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/giving.

Opinions expressed in focus do not necessarily reflect the views of Boston University.

STAY CONNECTED TO THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Keep up with STH's latest news, and access free religious articles at go.bu.edu/focus/alums.

COVER IMAGE
©iStock, by Juanmonino. Posterized interpretation by Shola Friedensohn

Phone recycle
In keeping with Boston University’s commitment to sustainability, this publication is printed on FSC-certified paper.

DEAN’S MESSAGE
2

Singing the Blues on a Note of Hope
By Julian Armand Cook (’16) 20

First Responders to Injustice
Today’s civil rights crises call seminarians to bold public leadership
A Q&A with former NAACP president Cornell William Brooks (’87, Hon.’15) 24

Christianity Can Be Good for the Environment
Local religious leaders have the power to spark reform
By Rebecca Capezio, assistant professor of theology 28

Response, Presence, and Joy
Three keys to leading effectively in tumultuous times
By Alicia Viez Stewart (’18) 32

FEATURES
Tiny Homes for Big Dreams
Faith Fowler makes homeownership a reality for people living in poverty in Detroit 10

Healing Houston
Alexander E. M. Johnson helps Texas’ largest city recover from Hurricane Harvey 14

Road to Equity
Investor Pamela Jolly blends biblical and financial wisdom to help clients of color close the race gap 16

Parity in the Pulpit
Leigh Goodrich leads the UMC’s efforts to end discrimination against women 18

JOURNAL: LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF TURMOIL
Dean’s Message 2

SINGING THE BLUES ON A NOTE OF HOPE
By Julian Armand Cook (’16)

‘AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?’
Love means recognizing others’ distress as our own
By Nikki Young (’18) 40

WOMEN SHARING POWER
Female pastors are challenging male images of leadership with a focus on collaboration
By Choi Hee An, clinical associate professor of practical theology 44

A Q&A with former NAACP president Cornell William Brooks (’87, Hon.’15)

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED
Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).
SINGING THE BLUES AND LEANING INTO HOPE
BY MARY ELIZABETH MOORE

The New Orleans tradition of the jazz funeral is one of singing blues and leaning into hope. It is practiced largely in African American communities, especially after a musician has died. As a jazz band processes with family and friends to the cemetery, the music is soulful, slow, and somber. After the casket is set in its place (or at some similar moment), the music begins to change from a lament of death to a brighter motif until, finally, it becomes a grand jazz celebration. A jazz funeral enacts the verity of what Julian Armand Cook (’16) writes in this issue of focus: “[The blues] is what you get when life forces you to hold to hope while your heart is breaking.” The blues include despair, but also the “blue note of hope.”

Our country—and our world—cries out for hope amid devastating plagues of racism, homophobia, classism, religious discrimination, violence, and ecological destruction. In such a context, despair is a natural response, and words of hope sound shallow and untrustworthy. Yet, this issue of focus highlights people who feel despair as a result of what they see in the world, and who nevertheless draw hope from deep spiritual wells. These stories reveal the abundant power of choosing to lean into hope and of becoming agents of change. Faith Fowler (’86) leads the tiny house movement in Detroit to serve persons who cannot otherwise afford housing, while Alexander Johnson (’20) helps organize his church’s relief work in post-hurricane Houston. Pamela Jolly (’99) guides African American communities toward long-term financial well-being, and Leigh Goodrich (’03) works in a denominational agency to teach and support equity for women clergy.

Konnel Williams Brooks (’87, Hon. ’15) spearheads justice movements and prepares future clergy and lawyers to be first responders in outbreaks of injustice. These leaders represent a vast range of concerns, but they share a common spirit—a desire to convert their concerns, and their spiritual, physical, and intellectual resources, into meaningful responses. They choose to lean into hope.

All members of the STH community carry a similar passion for change. They cry out their concerns, work in and with their faith communities, and join marches and prayer vigils. They work on relief for Puerto Rico, form small faith-sharing groups, seek spiritual direction, partner with churches and agencies in justice-building, volunteer in prisons, build a more ecologically sustainable STH, and prepare to continue this work as pastors, deacons, nonprofit leaders, social workers, researchers, and educators. This is ecumenical and interreligous work, and our Wesleyan Student Association and Anglican/Episcopal and United Church of Christ Communities of Learning share in this work, as does our interreligious partnership with Hebrew College in Newton, Mass.

The bifurcation of despair and hope is one of the tragedies of this moment in history. People have good reasons for despair; yet, despair can lead people to search deeply for glimmers of hope. Hope is not expectation that everything will work out for the best; it is a decision to seek sparks of hope when the world is cold and dim. Most theologies of hope were written in such times. They did not wipe away tragedy and suffering; they leaned into God’s promises of what can be. In the 12 years that I have been interviewing youth for the Wisdom of Youth Project, I have consistently found that those who have faced tragedies in their lives are typically the ones who speak most boldly for hope.” The journal authors in this issue of focus echo a similar refrain. They present pictures of our past and present that, while grim, include real possibilities for change. They are leaning into hope. May we also take courage to face the world as it is and lean into holy hope!
CAMPAIGN UPDATE
ONE YEAR TO GO

More than $24.4 million of STH’s $25 million campaign goal has been raised thanks to alums and friends. Professor Kathe Darr has been installed as the Harrell F. Beck Chair of Hebrew Scripture (see p. 49), and $2.5 million has been contributed to endowed student scholarships. With one year left in the campaign, the school is now focused on supporting new funds needing a minimum endowment of $100,000—including the Korean Students Scholarship Fund and the Dale P. Andrews Memorial Scholarship in Practical Theology and Race—as well as the funds on this page.

CONFRONTING WHITE PRIVILEGE

BY RICH BARLOW

A psychic earthquake rocked Elisabeth Smith about five years ago, when her father revealed that their family had owned slaves during the Civil War. Smith felt guilty. “I had to go back and almost rethink my whole identity,” the Methodist cleric from Rhode Island shares with fellow students in her Dismantling White Privilege, Power, and Supremacy class. “Of course, I’m not the one who even did it, but it’s like, why didn’t anybody ever tell me that before I was 50 years old?”

Recognizing one’s own race-based privilege is a key theme of this STH class. Most of the students are younger than Smith (she’s enrolled through STH’s Pastor Scholar Program of continuing clergy education). But they’ve still witnessed people denying identity-rooted sin. Amie McCarthy (’19) recalls a high school discussion of the Holocaust: a German exchange student “stood up in class, slammed his book down, and said, ‘None of this ever happened. You’re lying,’ and left. He was told all of it was a lie, his whole life.”

On this day, the class has broken into discussion groups after watching a PBS documentary describing how visually obvious differences between people, such as skin color, have been extrapolated by many white people over the centuries to reflect assumed biological differences—in areas of ability such as intelligence—that have no basis in genetics or biology.

“If we believe that God created all of us equal, there can be no looking down on, discriminating against, or exercising power against persons of other backgrounds,” says Susan Hassinger, a lecturer and Methodist bishop in-residence.

Hassinger coteaches the class with Karen Montagno, an adjunct instructor and Episcopal priest. Montagno is the only African American in the room (although several of the 15 students are of Asian ancestry).

“Underlying this course,” Montagno says, “is the assumption that white people in America experience a privilege that they may or may not be aware of. It can be as simple as the fact that their skin is white, and it can be as complex as privileges that come from economic status.” She hopes the class will help students “know privilege when they see it, and ways in which they can resist.” The syllabus includes scholarly works on topics such as the history of slavery, the psychology of racial identity, and the roles of black people in the Bible, but student experiences complement the textbooks.

Students learn to recognize and resist white privilege in Dismantling White Privilege, Power, and Supremacy.

Tory Shane Dillard (’20) explains that in his rural hometown in Tennessee—one of the state’s poorest—white people who are economically struggling think it’s better to be poor than black, since even disadvantaged white people have better access to jobs than their black neighbors. He took the class to learn how to talk about white privilege with such people. “When I was younger, there were times when we probably worried if we would even pay the electric bill. And if someone were to come to me and go, ‘You have privilege,’ I would have completely rejected them.”

Hassinger’s life story is a tonic against despair of eroding privilege. In 1968, she was the first woman Methodist minister ordained from her neck of central Pennsylvania. “People had a hard time accepting, ’you have privilege,’ I would have completely rejected them.”

Hassinger’s life story is a tonic against despair of eroding privilege. In 1968, she was the first woman Methodist minister ordained from her neck of central Pennsylvania. “People had a hard time accepting, ’you have privilege,’ I would have completely rejected them.”

“They had a hard time accepting, ’you have privilege,’ I would have completely rejected them.”

She says, “But eventually, the system changes.”
A CHALLENGE FOR THE SOUL OF THE BLACK CHURCH

BY LARA EHRLICH

Theodore Hickman-Maynard, an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and STH’s new assistant professor of black church studies, explores how black Christians grapple with a religious tradition that evolved in the shadow of white oppression. Hickman-Maynard talked with Ehrlich about how worshippers’ diverging perspectives on their faith are causing a crisis in the black church, and how they’re shaping future leaders.

focus: You’ve said you seek to understand “what it means to be a black person of faith in our contemporary moment.” How would you define “our contemporary moment”? Hickman-Maynard: The broad term we’d use is postmodernity. Interpretive freedom is part of the black church’s very existence. White Christians employed messages as control tactics: slaves were to obey their masters and God would bless them for their servitude; God blesses those who suffer. The black church reinterpreted those stories so they were preaching about how God told Moses to tell Pharaoh, “Let my people go.”

But that interpretive freedom developed in a complex way along with a conservatism on issues like sexual orientation that sought legitimacy within white culture. The black church allowed black people a certain measure of entry into white society, a respectability. Now, in this moment of rapid change, these traditions are colliding.

And so, you have a crisis in the black church, where primarily younger people don’t want to adhere to modes of discourse and behavior that allow them to be accepted by wider white society. They are more social justice-oriented, saying, “If we are going to be a church for liberation, we have to be a church for liberation of all people, so we have to challenge the prevailing doctrines that have manifested in ways—like sexism and homophobia—that are deeply oppressive to people within our own community.” There’s a serious challenge for the soul of the black church.

How are black church leaders responding? Pastors are trying to spawn ministries that allow for the diversity of approaches that this new generation requires in order to feel authentic. They’re preaching on Sunday morning to a traditional crowd, then leading a discussion on Sunday evening to a traditional church. They’re looking for communities of whatever this next version of Christianity looks like.

What is your students’ role in shaping this version of Christianity? People in seminary now don’t necessarily see themselves going into pastoral ministry—but they do see themselves as faith leaders. They’re looking for communities of faith that are different from the institutional options. We’re preparing a generation of indigenous missionaries where the American religious landscape is the mission field. People are saying, “I’m a Christian, but I don’t love the Church. I want to be in community, but I can’t be a part of that community.” What are the alternatives for those people, and who will midwife the birth of these new communities? We’re preparing students to identify the seeds of organic postmodern Christianity and help cultivate them.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.
STH'S NEWEST DISTINGUISHED ALUMS

STH presented Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards to four graduates in 2017. The recipients were, from left: Melissa Cooper ('09), an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church and an associate with Vibrant Faith—a ministry coaching organization in Naugatuck, Conn.—who was recognized in the category of emerging leader; Jung Sun Oh ('01), pastor of Weston United Methodist Church in Weston, Mass., and a member of the STH Dean’s Advisory Board; Ronald Carter ('74, GRS'85), retired president of Johnson C. Smith University; and Robert E. Reber ('64, GRS'73), retired dean of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, N.Y.

MERLE R. JORDAN (1931–2018)

Merle R. Jordan, a professor emeritus at STH and former executive director of BU’s Albert & Jesse Danielsen Institute, passed away March 25, 2018, at age 87. He was ordained a minister in the United Church of Christ in 1956 and joined STH in 1969 as an associate professor of pastoral psychology. Jordan founded the South Shore Pastoral Counseling Center in Hingham, Mass., in 1970 (now the South Shore Counseling Center in Norwell, Mass.) and was interim dean of STH from 1974 to 1977. Memorial contributions may be made to The Merle Jordan Conference Fund, c/o The Danielsen Institute, Boston University, 185 Bay State Rd., Boston, MA 02215 or to VNA-Care, Fund Development, 199 Rosewood Dr., Suite 180, Danvers, MA 01923.

CHRISTIANITY IS GLOBAL.

HELP STH MAKE AN IMPACT IN AFRICA AND BEYOND.

STH’s Center for Global Christianity & Mission gives faith leaders the skills and knowledge they need to help the Christian Church thrive in the non-Western world. It studies new Christian movements growing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; provides tuition grants to international doctoral students; publishes works about mission history; and sponsors distance learning for leaders of indigenous churches in southern Africa.

To help us raise $100,000 to endow the Center for Global Christianity & Mission Fund, which will support this work, email sthdev@bu.edu, call 617-353-2349, or visit bu.edu/sth/giving.
TINY HOMES FOR BIG DREAMS

BY MEGAN WOOLHOUSE

The house is tiny, just 350 square feet, but to Gladys Ferguson, it feels much bigger. The widowed 64-year-old loves her yellow miniature Colonial, with its new appliances, air-conditioning, and its own little garden. And if she continues to pay $350 a month for seven years, she will own it.

“It’s my own teeny-weeny mansion,” Ferguson says. “It’s a tremendous blessing.”

Ferguson’s house, in a blighted corner of northwest Detroit, is one of 25 such homes under construction by Cass Community Social Services, a Detroit nonprofit led by Methodist minister Faith Fowler (’86). While the little homes look like those miniatures featured on cable TV—one is a shrunken Tudor, another a scaled-down Victorian—these weren’t built for baby boomers looking to downsize or young couples on a budget. The occupants are, probably still are, the only agency ready to move out of the shelters or supportive housing in their lives, like having to pay for a relative’s funeral, needing car repairs, or losing a job. When that happens, they turn to one of Cass’ traditional safety net programs, like its shelter or food pantry.

One in five children in the United States lives in poverty, and the majority will remain there.

Fowler says her two decades at Cass have shown her that many disadvantaged people can make progress toward financial stability until a major setback occurs in their lives, like having to pay for a relative’s funeral, needing car repairs, or losing a job. When that happens, they turn to one of Cass’ traditional safety net programs, like its shelter or food pantry.

“My goal is to target folks who are ready to move out of the shelters or bad rental situations,” says Fowler. “We were, probably still are, the only agency to provide ownership opportunities for people making as little as $8,000 a year.”

That’s less than what’s required for a maximum-security prison in Walpole, Mass. After graduation, the Methodist Church assigned her as a minister to the area (bottom right).

GETTING ALONG VS GETTING AHEAD

Fowler grew up in Detroit and its suburbs, the granddaughter of a man who survived polio as a child and unemployment as a young man and died a wealthy businessman. While she sees a hopeful role model in his pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps story, she’s not sure that it could happen today.

“We live in a different time,” she says. “Large numbers of people, despite amazing drive, resilience, and hard work, do not experience comebacks or economic mobility. While polio no longer plagues the United States, poverty does.” Wages have been stagnant for 40 years, she says, and incomes have not kept pace with spiraling healthcare costs. One in five children in the United States lives in poverty, and the majority will remain there.

Fowler says it’s been a wild ride. She recently self-published Tiny Homes in a Big City, both as a guidebook and a response to an outpouring of social media criticism questioning the merit of giving homeless people free houses and naysayers who simply think the idea is doomed.

“The Cass Tiny Homes project is a pilot program, an experiment if you will. It may not work or it may need to be modified over time,” she writes. “Ours was a calculated risk.”

And helping people get ahead is a big part of a religious calling that Fowler says she felt as early as junior high. Painfully shy, she says she didn’t take action on that calling until she graduated from Albion College and had a job counseling at-risk and abused youth. When a minister in the program couldn’t give a scheduled sermon and asked if she would fill in, Fowler conquered her fear of public speaking and decided to pursue a life of ministry. The next year, she enrolled in STH, drawn by its Methodist history and the social justice legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon’59).

At BU, Fowler worked with prison inmates, mostly at MCI-Cedar Junction, a maximum-security prison in Walpole, Mass. After graduation, the Methodist Church assigned her as a minister to the...
Cass Community United Methodist Church in Detroit, a church that also operated social service programs. Those programs eventually became the independent nonprofit Cass Community Social Services. In her current role, Fowler works as a senior pastor delivering sermons at Cass Church and as executive director of Cass Community Social Services, where she oversees a $6.9 million budget and a wide array of services, including a homeless shelter and food pantry, a residential program for homeless men with HIV/AIDS, and a plant that employs 80 people who recycle tires into welcome mats and flip-flops.

Cass’ services are badly needed in Detroit, a city that filed for bankruptcy protection in 2013 and, nearly five years later, has more than 80,000 vacant lots and abandoned buildings. One-third of its households have an annual income of $15,000 or less, and people pay what Fowler calls an obscene proportion of that income for rent.

She doesn’t recall how she first heard of tiny houses, Fowler says, but she was intrigued and started researching and visiting communities around the United States geared for the homeless. One was Occupy Madison, a mobile tiny-house village in Madison, Wis., and another was Quixote Village in Olympia, Wash., an area of 30 micro homes funded by government sources.

She liked what she saw, but was concerned about the village aspect, segregation, and the potential for stigma. Cass spent $15,000 to buy much of a nearby neighborhood that was a collection of empty and abandoned lots. The agency has subdivided it into tiny-house lots just 30 feet by 100 feet.

Fowler raised the money from private sources, foundations, and other donors, including $400,000 from the Ford Fund, to pay for materials. She says the agency currently has enough funds to build 19 of the 25 planned houses, each costing $40,000 to $50,000. From foundation to furnishing, each one takes about four months to construct.

**HOMEOWNERSHIP BY 2023**

In 2016, when the first six homes were completed, 122 people applied in person, as required, for a residence. Residents must live in Michigan and earn at least $8,500 a year, and many made the cut because they work low-wage jobs or live off social security or disability benefits.

Anyone convicted of a violent offense within the last decade, drug dealing in the last five years, or a sexual offense was not considered. Using a numerical scoring system, a Cass committee scored the anonymous applicants, weighing their residential history, financial readiness, and personal references.

The age of the first group of seven residents ranges from 24 to 74. All but one are people of color. One has a prison record. They earn an average income of $988 a month.

Gladys Ferguson, resident of the yellow Colonial and part of the inaugural group, says soaring rents and an arthritic condition had made finding a place to live difficult for her. “Here you got white, black, young, old,” Ferguson says. “I like that.”

Fowler raised the money from private sources, foundations, and other donors, including $400,000 from the Ford Fund, to pay for materials. She says the agency currently has enough funds to build 19 of the 25 planned houses, each costing $40,000 to $50,000. From foundation to furnishing, each one takes about four months to construct.

The Cass program requires residents to meet with a financial coach and eventually join a homeownership association. They must also attend monthly financial literacy classes and volunteer eight hours a month on projects like a neighborhood crime watch.

Tracey Harris, a sociology professor at Cape Breton University, is writing a book about the broader tiny houses trend. She predicts that the key to Fowler’s success will be the availability of continuing support for residents to help them meet the goal of ownership.

“The community-building aspect is really important,” Harris says. “With a tiny house, you can have all those things that are important to building a resilient and compassionate community.”

If everything goes as planned, the first tenants will own the deeds to their tiny homes around 2023. At that time, they can choose to keep their tiny homes or sell. Fowler thinks many people want to live tiny, and that most will stay in their homes. But troubled by critics who have accused her of forcing poor people to live in small spaces, she decided to downsize her home in a big way.

Last October, she sold her 2,000-square-foot Victorian and moved into a windowless former boiler room on the first floor of the Cass administrative office building. She wanted to see what living in a 350-square-foot space was like. Seven months later, she says it’s required more of an adjustment than she thought it would. For example, at night there’s no getting away from the sound of a ticking wall clock. And she shares what little space she has with a boiler.

“Tiny homes are not for everyone,” she says. “They are for people who want to do it.”

Adapted from BU Today (bu.edu/today)
HEALING HOUSTON

ALEXANDER E. M. JOHNSON HELPS TEXAS’ LARGEST CITY RECOVER FROM HURRICANE HARVEY

BY ANDREW THURSTON

As Hurricane Harvey charged toward Texas in late August 2017, Alexander E. M. Johnson reached his Houston church to serve as an emergency shelter—when hunkered down at home. The associate pastor at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Johnson (’20) expected that whatever havoc the storm might wreak, Sunday services would go on. They’d never been canceled in his lifetime; when Hurricane Ike knocked out power in 2008, the congregation gathered in Wheeler Avenue’s fellowship hall without lights.

Harvey proved to be different, dumping more than 50 inches of rain in just one week and damaging tens of thousands of homes. “Members of our congregation spent hours in their attics waiting to be rescued,” says Johnson, whose home suffered only a glancing blow. “Streets were impassable, streets that never flooded were flooded.” The road into the church’s parking lot was inaccessible—unless you were prepared to paddle.

Wheeler Avenue canceled its services for the week.

Although the church, which has 15,000 members, had been on standby as a possible shelter for displaced residents, Harvey’s devastation meant bigger spaces would be needed. Johnson and the team at Wheeler Avenue decided to turn the church’s gymnasium into a donation and distribution center—once the waters had receded. It opened on August 31.

“We put out an all call for our church, utilizing social media and our e-blast, and we requested donations of clothing, cleaning supplies, linens, household items, toiletries.” They also asked for financial support and volunteers—to work at the center and to join teams removing furniture from storm-lashed homes.

Johnson says supplies came in from across the nation as word spread. Local universities sent sports teams and student groups to help. On the distribution center’s first day, he says, “we had lines literally wrapped around our gymnasium.”

During the two months it was open, Wheeler Avenue estimates its donation center served 25,000 people with the help of nearly 4,000 volunteers. The supplies that weren’t used in the Harvey effort filled two shipping containers, and were redirected to the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as they, too, recovered from 2017’s bruising hurricane season.

Johnson says the center was open 24/7, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. “We had to be here from start to finish, because she recalled being helped in her time of need and, consequently, she wanted to be of assistance in the time of need of others.”

During the center’s early days, Johnson says the church’s focus was on “primarily practical and financial support with pastoral care soon meant handing out the day-to-day running of the center to church staff. He turned his attention to reassuring those dealing with the emotional aftereffects of the storm “that their church was concerned about them and connected to them.”

The center closed in November 2017—“At some point, we needed to get back to the discipleship effort,” says Johnson—but Wheeler Avenue continues to have a role in helping Houston heal. The church recently published a disaster recovery business directory filled with the names of members providing contracting, legal, financial, and mental health services. It also surveyed its members to gauge physical and spiritual needs.

As of early 2018, some congregants were still not able to return to their homes. Johnson says the church’s focus is “primarily practical and financial support for those who experienced more significant home damage.” Wheeler Avenue has a long history of disaster relief—it was a shelter after Hurricane Katrina, and sent teams to Moore, Okla., after a tornado killed 24 in 2013—but Johnson says Harvey showed the church needed to codify its response plans. He’s hoping better documentation can inform future decisions about how much capacity the church has to help or the best ways to mobilize volunteers.

“You learn from everything you do,” says Johnson. “Perhaps we may have overworked our volunteers in the first few weeks—we did see some volunteer fatigue as time went on.” As a result, he’s considering ways to proactively schedule those willing to give their time rather than issuing an open plea for help.

Johnson, who “was born and raised in this church,” juggles that work and his regular duties at Wheeler Avenue with adjunct teaching at the University of Houston and his studies in STH’s doctor of ministry in transformational leadership program. The lessons he’s learning at STH directly inform the work he’s doing in his home city.

“I think we should hope to leave the world a better place than we found it,” he says.
INVESTOR PAMELA JOLLY BLENDS BIBLICAL AND FINANCIAL WISDOM TO HELP CLIENTS OF COLOR CLOSE THE RACE GAP

BY JULIE BUTTERS

By 2053, the average black household is projected to have zero wealth: their debts will cancel the value of what they own. Strategic investor Pamela Jolly wants to avert that bleak future by putting more African Americans on a stable financial footing.

Today, black people own only about two percent of firms with paid employees; they’re also less likely than white individuals of similar economic backgrounds to earn a higher income than their parents. Many men of color don’t have the financial education to understand how wealth is made.

“Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in black men over the past 10 years, but the investment has concentrated on fatherhood, education, and workforce development,” says Jolly (’09), who’s interviewed nearly 4,000 African American men about finances through her work. “There’s been little to no conversation about wealth creation.”

Even those who do bank some money might find it transitory. “Gains made in one generation are often lost in the next,” says Jolly. “A focus on legacy, versus poverty, is essential to in something you studied, owned, and at funerals, while for the wealthy, it is something you talk about in small groups.”

For too many ‘regular people,’ legacy is something you talk about in small groups and at funerals, while for the wealthy, it is something you studied, owned, focused on, and kept passing forward,” she writes in The NarrowRoad: A Guide to Legacy Wealth (Torchlight Publishing Inc., 2015). She also discovered that faith gives underserved people of color the power to believe things can improve, that they can overcome the race wealth gap. Financial education, she says, allows them to act wisely on that faith.

Jolly developed a wealth strategy tool, NarrowRoad, that uses biblical narratives like the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) to help provide guidance in five areas, which include using data-driven strategies and creating consistent actions across local, regional, and national levels. Are they like the servant who buried his master’s money, or those who produced a profit by investing it? Jolly uses the systems to work with clients, which include organizations such as the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB). She advised NAREB, as part of its strategy to create two million new black homeowners within five years, to work with their affiliate, a credit counseling agency, to host a series of conferences around the country for aspiring home-owners. Some participants, says Jolly, had believed a stereotype that black people have bad credit; they were shocked to learn they were actually eligible to buy a house. This advice drew on Proverbs 23:7 (“‘For as he thinks in his heart, so is he’” (NIV)).

A constant in Jolly’s efforts is providing culturally relevant tools to people of color to build legacy wealth.

Her next goal is to work with African American men to find ways to improve their financial status by establishing a nationwide equity syndicate, focused on increasing ownership and ending the cycle of generational poverty in the black community. She’s formed a partnership with the Campaign for Black Male Achievement to host a 12-month Black Male Equity Initiative in Detroit. Successful applicants, chosen from a range of socioeconomic and professional backgrounds, are learning how to increase their income-earning capacity, create a budget for a seed capital fund, and pool capital to acquire land in Detroit, which they will develop and sell to become equity shareholders. Working together to build legacy wealth, African Americans can finally exit what Jolly calls a financial wilderness, and enter their own promised lands.

Pamela Jolly (’09)

The company provides strategic financial advice that draws inspiration from biblical texts—Habakkuk 2:2’s lesson on writing down God’s vision becomes a process for drafting a written plan to reach financial goals. Jolly hopes integrating faith and finance will encourage clients to create responsible plans to build wealth that continues for generations.

The former banker, corporate strategic consultant, and market strategist founded Torch in 2004 after seeing a need for education that would help women and people of color advance their businesses. “I realized if I don’t do this work, we will continue to wait to take full possession of our promise—living an abundant life and having abundant communities,” she says.

Helping rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 showed Jolly that faith had a critical role to play in strategic financial advice. The Federal Emergency Management Agency had hired Torch to help assess damage and rebuilding needs in the New Orleans area. A lot of people Jolly met, especially pastors, believed God would provide financial help and a vision for how to spend it. But that faith was rarely backed by a financial plan, and some pastors wanted to use relief funds on pet projects instead of rebuilding.

Jolly decided to explore the connections between faith and finance by studying theology at STH and Christian education at the Graduate Theological Foundation to accompany her Wharton MBA. As part of her studies, Jolly interviewed African American individuals, business owners, and pastors across the country, asking, “If this is our social-economic position, what’s the promised land? How do we get there together? How do we fund it, and what do you need to feel more confident of your purpose?”

Through her studies—and her work—Jolly says she learned each person needs to create their own definition of wealth in order to achieve it; our perspectives on wealth are shaped by culture, experiences, and relationships.

“All roads lead to the promised land. The way you get there is the same as how you get anywhere else. We all want to have a need for education that would help see our futures,” she says. “For those of faith, the way we get there is different.”

Jolly interviewed the 4,000 men who were featured in her book and learned they had the same needs. For African Americans, the connection between faith and finance is key. "If we want to help people achieve wealth, they have to know how to make it,” she says. "They have to know why it is important to have wealth, and how to get it."
PARITY IN THE PULPIT

LEIGH GOODRICH LEADS THE UMC’S EFFORTS TO END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

BY LARA EHRLICH

In 2004, Leigh Goodrich (’03) became the associate pastor of a United Methodist church in Massachusetts, but she wasn’t supplied with a parsonage—or a standard housing allowance. When she asked why, the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee told her they’d assumed her husband would provide a home. Goodrich appealed to the New England Conference response team, who helped her negotiate for a housing allowance. The church complied, but compensated Goodrich much less than she was owed. The experience was eye-opening, she says. “I came to the conclusion that there was a difference in the way men and women are treated as employees of the Church.”

Today, as senior director of education and leadership at the United Methodist Church’s General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, Goodrich helps other women respond to gender discrimination, and counsels the UMC on how to eradicate it. As part of the six-person commission, she monitors inequity in the Church, spearheads research, and develops guides for welcoming female clergy and directing them toward leadership roles. She also trains Church leaders and laypeople around the country in antidiscrimination practices.

Women have been ordained in the United Methodist Church since the late 1800s, but they weren’t until 1956 that they received full clergy rights, including the ability to serve in UMC appointments and become members of annual conferences, the UMC’s regional governing bodies. There’s still a long way to go, Goodrich says. “Gender inequity has existed for so long, and has seeped into our society at so many different levels, that in many cases people don’t even know where those inequities exist.”

It’s part of Goodrich’s mission to point them out, so that the 56 annual conferences—each of which has its own, smaller group dedicated to the status and role of women—can create change on a local level. A 2017 study Goodrich helped lead, for example, found that women comprise 58 percent of the UMC membership, but only 27 percent of its clergy. They’re also paid 16 cents less per hour than their male counterparts. The commission posted the salary gaps for all the annual conferences on its website (gcsrw.org) to help hold them accountable. It also developed recommendations that Goodrich promotes in training sessions with the conferences’ listening sessions to hear women’s concerns, updated policies on gender discrimination, and mentoring programs for lay and clergy women.

The Church appointment process also needs to change: Goodrich asks resident bishops and district superintendents to consider at least one woman for each position they fill. “We’re not suggesting that women should be put in appointments for the sake of having equity with their male counterparts,” she says. “We’re saying there are skilled and talented women out there who can offer an awful lot to congregations, and they should be considered for higher-paying appointments.”

“We’re not suggesting that women should be put in appointments for the sake of having equity with their male counterparts. We’re saying there are skilled and talented women out there who can offer an awful lot to congregations, and they should be considered for higher-paying appointments.”

—Leigh Goodrich

The commission is developing programming to tie into the #MeToo movement, and hosts a sexual misconduct help line. Goodrich is also writing a curriculum for 2019 on welcoming women to leadership appointments that will offer advice for the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the outgoing pastor, the congregation, the district superintendent and cabinet, and the incoming female pastor.

“It is our hope that in focusing on all aspects of the appointment process, we can train everyone to welcome the new pastor, nurture her gifts, grow through the experience of a female pastor, and avoid discrimination and unfair practices,” she says. “All of these groups are part of the dynamic that will make women more welcome as leaders in their congregations.”
We are living in earthquake weather. It feels as if dysfunction has gripped the throat of our world with renewed intensity. Nobody wants to die, but we are killing ourselves to live. What is it that makes us get up in the morning, when experience has proven that we do not know what life has waiting for us that day? What gives us the ontological audacity to go on working to cultivate children who are ethical leaders, when the most prominent leaders of this day have proven themselves more interested in “Trumping” people than serving people? How can we sing in a strange land (Psalm 137:4)?

Some have argued that what keeps humanity going is the “will to power”—the will to make ourselves permanent, bigger, and better. You see it in the toddler, who—before they’ve worked a day in their life—stands in their parent’s home and announces with righteous indignation, “You’re not the boss of me!” The “will to power” argument sounds convincing, but it’s too theoretical. Most of us have no desire to take over the world; we’re just trying to survive. Paul Robeson, the civil rights activist and actor who sang “Ol’ Man River” in the 1936 film Show Boat, was right: we’re tired of living, but scared of dying, so we just keep rollin’ along. So, what is it that makes us go on living in earthquake weather?

Something happened recently that deepened my understanding of this question. A college friend—a white man—expressed deep concern for America in the aftermath of the 2016 election. He wrote:

I know that I’m Christian. I know that the work is ahead of us, but is it alright if I am just angry right now? Is it alright if I’m angry that the country I thought was finally dealing with the ugliest parts of itself has just been doing a good job of camouflaging its racism? Is it alright if I’m angry that...
What is different about this political moment is that people who have never had to sing the blues are singing it now, because the systems that have never worked for some of us did not work for more of us this time.

The blues is not simply the anthem of Mississippi Delta dwellers who had enough Holy Ghost power to pick cotton and plant hope. The blues is the creative masterpiece of discipleship. It is what you get when life forces you to hold to hope while your heart is breaking.

The Israelites in Psalm 137:1–4 knew something about the blues. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, had destroyed Jerusalem. The people who had been freed by God from slavery in Egypt were again captives in Babylon. What happened in the strange waters of Babylon wondering, “Did we do something to deserve this?” “Where is the God who cared for us before?”

The Israelites were sitting beside the strange waters of Babylon, atop grass fertilized by their dead dreams. If you’ve been there, you know something about the blues.

For eight years, the world watched as a black man—Barack Hussein Obama—led the highest office in our land. Those of us who wanted to believe that America could one day live out the “true meaning of its creed” sang, because we never imagined that Barack Obama could one day lead the country where there had been Bull Conner. We played the harps of hope as we watched a black family live in a White House built by their enslaved ancestors. Hope was easier then.

Now, we stand by the strange waters of Babylon wondering, What happened to our song?

Our song is more than pitch and lyrics. It’s about our existence. The day we stop singing is the day we stop existing. What is the heartbeat’s hum but a song? What is the whisper-tone of our lungs inhaling and exhaling but a physiological improvisation on the symphony of existence? Our song is about our identity. I sing because it sanctifies my survival. I sing because God is in my voice.

But how do you sing when you’re strangled by struggle and harassed by hell? Sing the blues! Singing the blues is more than complaining. The blues would be nothing but groaning without the blue note of hope.

The “blue note” is the basis of blues music. It is both musical and philosophical, a sound and a way of life. You can’t find it on the piano, because it exists somewhere in the cracks between the keys. The blue note cannot be played, it can only be sung. It cannot be charted, seen, or written because—like the grace of God—it cannot be explained, only experienced: when it touches you, you know it. The blue note is hope that cries out, “I’m still here!” When it touches you—somewhere between the cracks of life—something happens.

Don’t be ashamed if you have to sing the blues. The blues isn’t the opposite of the gospel. Despair isn’t the antithesis of hope. Thomas Dorsey, the father of gospel music, said that “one cannot sing the gospel without knowing how to sing the blues.”

In Christ, we sing the blues with a note of hope. Hope and despair are a strange marriage. Tears are often followed by the deepest moves of the Spirit. Jesus was a crowned, but it was a crowned of thorns. The central statement of our faith—the resurrection of Jesus—happens in a grave-yard, proclaiming that the living God works in dead places.

At the cross, Jesus sang the blues: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” or, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). In that moment, there was a peculiar concoction: the despair of forsakenness mixed with the hope that allowed Jesus to still say, “My God!” That’s what it means to sing the blues on a note of hope.

Keep on singing! Singing will keep you from dying, because if you can sing, you can breathe. If you can breathe, you’re alive. And, if you’re alive, then there is hope.

6. Nick Salvatore, Singing in a Strange Land: C.L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 32.

TODAY'S CIVIL RIGHTS CRISIS CALLS FOR SEMINARIANS TO BOLD PUBLIC LEADERSHIP, SAYS FORMER NAACP PRESIDENT CORNELL WILLIAM BROOKS ('87, HON.'15)

Too often, says Cornell William Brooks ('87, Hon.'15), moral leaders aren’t engaged in critical policy work against injustice: they may lack self-confidence, or bow to political pressure. Brooks—a civil rights leader and former president of the NAACP—recently taught an STH and School of Law class, Violence, the Vote, and Hope: An Examination of Ethics, Law and Justice Movements, as the visiting professor of social ethics, law, and justice movements for 2017–2018. He spoke with focus editor Julie Butters about training a new generation of seminarians to engage in policy, and demonstrate the prophetic moral leadership needed to meet today’s sociopolitical and civil rights challenges.

*focus*: What do you hope students learn from your class?

Brooks: The class last semester formally focused on the right to vote and to be free from violence. But it was also a seminar on the leadership of justice movements. My aspiration was to convince a group of seminarians that they have not only the moral legitimacy, but the policy expertise to go beyond the stained-glass boundaries of the Church and into the sphere of public policy, public debate, voting rights, civil rights, and police misconduct. When there’s a major civil rights crisis, governors, mayors, senators, and congressional representatives call on clergy first. When you have people who are at odds with each other, who want to take up arms out of frustration, it’s the clergy who have the legitimacy to say, “Wait and discuss.”

*focus*: How many times do you walk into a situation where the problem is not that you lack options, it’s that there’s a lack of a moral imagination to actually use the options? Seminarians are trained to walk into situations and inspire people.

*focus*: How do your students’ views on leadership compare with those you and your fellow students had at STH?

This Twitter-age generation of activists is much more sophisticated in their messaging and much more global in their understanding of the interrelatedness of injustices. They see the relationship between [racial profiling and police violence] in Ferguson and the Netherlands, between the alt-right in the United States and white nationalism and ultranationalism in Europe, between postcolonialism and the excesses of over-militarized police departments.

(Continued)
On the flip side, there’s been talk about “slacktivism,” where people say, “I commented on that post, so I’ve done my duty in standing up for what’s wrong.” How do you see technology helping or hindering leadership? The major challenge is that we conflate models of communication with models of leadership. Knowing how to post and tweet is different from knowing how to organize a meeting, encourage people, and from understanding the importance of the eloquence of example.

As a leader, your job is not merely to communicate effectively, but to model effectively and get people to follow you effectively, which is a matter of deep sacrifice.

In terms of the role of “slacktivism,” we conflate communication with participation: having communicated the message, we assume that we’ve had an impact on the goal. I can’t tell you the number of times when the assumed goal of activism is the expression of outrage and not merely to communicate effectively, but to model effectively.

What kind of leaders will be needed to do that?
I think it will be leaders who are culturally multilingual—able to converse and engage many communities, for which seminarians are ideally suited. It will require leaders who are multilingual in terms of discipline: they understand ethics and theology and Church history and the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, but they’re also at least conversationally literate when it comes to the prevailing social injustices of the day. When Dr. King was here, he studied Boston Personalism, but he was also conversant with civil rights challenges as they related to public accommodations—like people having to sit in the back of the bus—and the ins and outs of a commercial loan, the way we prepare for leadership as it relates to policy. Because in this diverse democracy, prophetic leadership without policy is vacuous. Railing against injustices from the mountaintop without designing to get down into a state legislature is just moral entertainment.

In this diverse democracy, prophetic leadership without policy is vacuous. If that policy element is woven into the classroom, what might be the short-term impact on the nation?
I believe that when you have people on the forefront of leadership who have the most moral credibility and the policy literacy to lead the debate, you get the country to where it should be faster. Too often, folks with the most moral credibility find themselves on the policy periphery. You see moral leaders being co-opted by the left and the right all the time. They use them for their voting rights; he understood we need people to monitor the polls. And we can’t raise up leaders who are risk-averse.

And so my choice is, when I look at this Joshua generation of leaders, when I look at the diversity, the moral enthusiasm, that gives me hope. I think about Samiam, that gives me hope. I think about the fact that some of the most dim and dark chapters of American history have been condensed and edited for clarity, at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=77042, accessed April 25, 2018.


I like to remind myself
hope is a moral choice;
it’s not empirically obvious.
At any given point in history,
a compelling case could be made for despair.
We choose to believe.

And so my choice is, when I look at this Joshua generation of leaders, when I look at the diversity, the moral enthusiasm, that gives me hope. I think about the fact that some of the most dim and dark chapters of American history have been condensed and edited for clarity, at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=77042, accessed April 25, 2018.

I like to remind myself
hope is a moral choice;
it’s not empirically obvious.
At any given point in history,
a compelling case could be made for despair.
We choose to believe.

And so my choice is, when I look at this Joshua generation of leaders, when I look at the diversity, the moral enthusiasm, that gives me hope. I think about the fact that some of the most dim and dark chapters of American history have been condensed and edited for clarity, at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=77042, accessed April 25, 2018.

In a sermon from 1789, John Wesley attempted to answer the question, “Why has Christianity done so little good in the world?” This question remains relevant more than two centuries later, as environmentally minded Christians wonder why their religion has done so little good for the world. Numerous studies of Christian communities and individuals from the last 50 years show negative correlations between Christianity and environmentally protective beliefs and behaviors. In fact, a 2013 study found that “Christians reported lower levels of environmental concern than non-Christians.” In other words, Christianity is demonstrably bad for the environment. In 1967, historian Lynn White, Jr. connected the burgeoning environmental crisis to Western Christianity’s patently anthropocentric worldview. In the half century between then and now, theologians have done a substantial amount of work retrieving, analyzing, and reconstructing the Christian tradition in order to find ways in which it might foster behaviors that safeguard the Earth. Most denominations have issued position statements on a wide variety of environmental issues, many congregations have undertaken energy audits and implemented environmental programs, and some individuals have adopted environmentally protective behaviors. All of these groups—scholars, denominational leaders, and individual practitioners—are relating their activism to their faith commitments. On the basis of these and similar activities, some have proposed what Bron Taylor calls the “Greening of Religion Hypothesis”: the belief that more environmentally aware religions can and do inspire more environmentally protective behavior, and that they “are critically important in the quest for environmentally sustainable societies.” Unfortunately, as mentioned above, social-scientific studies of Christian communities do not seem to support this hypothesis. Despite the work being done by individuals, it appears that Christianity more generally is not yet the positive force for environmental good that we might like it to be. The extant literature indicates that Christians are less likely to hold pro-environmental beliefs or engage in pro-environmental behavior, but it does not answer the question of why this is so. While some might argue that Christianity itself is bad for the environment, or ineffective at changing the behavior of its adherents, I would argue... (Continued)
that the data offers greater grounds for hoping that it can be redeemed. I suggest that Christianity has not been good for the environment because most Christians are not being introduced to the idea that environmental concerns are religious issues. If this is correct, reform lies in the hands of local religious leaders.

In 2014, the Public Religion Research Institute and the American Academy of Religion published a study about religion’s impact on attitudes toward climate change. While only half of the general population reported being somewhat or very concerned about climate change, those numbers increased to 73 percent of Hispanic Catholics and 58 percent of black Protestants. This increased concern correlates to increased attention from their clergy: 70 percent of Hispanic Catholics and 51 percent of black Protestants report that their clergy leaders speak about climate change from the pulpit. In contrast, only 30 percent of white Protestants report that their pastors speak about the issue of climate change. It is not at all clear, however, that those statements have any impact on the behavior of their members. It is unlikely that parishioners will view environmental problems as issues of religious concern if their clergy remain mute on the subject.

David W. Orr, Paul Sears Distin-
guished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics Emeritus at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, stated that “All Christian leaders take up environmental issues, their congregations do as well.” Recognizing this, many theological schools have begun to incorporate environmental education into their general curriculum. In 2017, STH joined the third cohort of schools pursuing certification from the Green Seminary Initiative, a project that involves integrating environmental education into all aspects of theological training.

Many theological schools have begun to incorporate environmental education into their general curriculum. In 2017, STH joined the third cohort of schools pursuing certification from the Green Seminary Initiative, a project that involves integrating environmental education into all aspects of theological training. This initiative, and others like it, will help prepare future faith leaders to address some of the most pressing issues of the 21st century. These problems, however, are too serious to wait for the next generation to address. When local Christian leaders take up environmental issues, their congregations do as well.
Our current social and political climate has created a desperate need for effective leaders who can balance power with compassion, and privilege with equity. True leaders must be able to harness the passion of those they lead, share the power they hold, and make space for marginalized voices. I know this to be true in the spaces where I am blessed to lead, and I will admit this is no easy task.

The STH Students of Color student interest group often discusses how to be a leader within the spaces we inhabit. This incredible collective of students, faculty, and staff of color has been active since fall 2016, and I am honored to be one of its founding members and leaders. It is here that I have learned the keys to effective leadership in tumultuous times: response, presence, and joy.

RESPONSE

There is a fine line between reaction and response. Being responsive requires not just countering current issues, but also anticipating future needs. It is more than a one-off reaction; it is a sustained action.

Initially, Students of Color was proposed as a networking association for racial and ethnic minority students. This was after students had raised concerns that they had few organized opportunities to meet other students of color, especially if they did not fall easily into membership with the Association of Black Seminarians, Raíces Latinx Student Association, or the Korean Student Association. Attendance at our inaugural gathering represented the diversity of STH, and we felt it was successful enough to plan another for the spring. Then, on November 8, 2016, the United States elected a new president.

The morning after the election, several students of color reached out to us, seeking a safe space to discuss fears for our nation, as well as lament the election results. It was clear that a community of color was required for more than just networking, or even to process the initial reaction to the election of our current president. Students of Color is now a recognized student interest group that also includes faculty and staff. We meet regularly, and have taken an active role in the life of STH.

Response does not end with our own community, however. In every space we inhabit, our student leaders respond to concerns that affect all of us at BU. In 2017, we spoke up at town hall meetings, organized a vigil addressing the travel ban, DACA (Deferred Action

(Continued)
for Childhood Arrivals), and undocumented student concerns; drafted a statement condemning racially charged violence in Charlottesville; and helped organize students for the Boston Fight Supremacy rally. This ability to respond enables us to lead with our presence.

**PRESENCE**

I have learned from my Students of Color siblings that being present is so much more than sharing space. It’s being visible and vocal, while empowering those at the margins to do the same. It’s being in real solidarity with our communities, by showing up and showing support both on the front lines and behind the scenes. I have experienced the power of presence at our Students of Color gatherings, when we listen deeply to one another, share our collective experiences as people of color in ministry or academia, and show support by attending events held by member groups, participating in celebrations, and collaborating on projects.

Leading through presence also requires us to reach beyond the confines of our location and foster relationships with others—for example, engaging in dialogue with those from different social positions, political ideologies, or faith traditions. This means there will be times when our presence is questioned or makes some people uncomfortable, and it will be easy to shut down and become insular in the face of oppression or discrimination. I go to locations not necessarily created with people of color in mind, to ensure that STH’s diversity is seen and heard. I’ve delivered sermons in Marsh Chapel, where I’m sure BU’s founders never would have imagined a woman of color preaching. I’ve held conversations around micro aggressions in the faculty lounge, surrounded by alumni photographs that include few people of color. This form of leadership is vital in our current social and political climate. Being present is also exhausting, which is why finding joy in leading is imperative.

**JOY**

So often, we focus on the challenges of leading. This is certainly the case for persons of color in academia and ministry. While it is important to pinpoint a particular issue that requires a response, we must also shed light on the joy that calls us into leadership. This is the source of our passion, the spark that keeps us working for change and allows us to be responsive and present.

I convened a panel discussion where students and faculty of color talked about how their identities inform their understanding of themselves and their work. Here we could state where joy is present in our lives, vocations, and calls to ministry. As a leader who is also a woman of color, I find joy in my “otherness,” even when the work I do is demoralizing. As a Latina, I am able to provide a unique perspective for the communities I serve as we tackle topics like racism and discrimination, what it means to welcome the stranger, and how power is used. I find a life-giving quality in that work, and that is what sustains me as I lead. Leadership is demanding, and difficult even in the best of times. Those who have joined Students of Color truly embody the qualities leaders need to remain effective today, when autocratic leadership, and its demand for blind obedience, is damaging our most vulnerable communities. We diligently work to find new ways of ministering: with joy, a constant presence, a willingness to respond, and space for those on the margins to speak their truth.
Martin Luther initiated one of the great seismic shifts in the history of Christianity. In 2017, the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation, there was an outpouring of publications about Luther’s life and contributions, both fresh biographical studies and new presentations of the oldest biographies of the reformer.1

Luther’s own assessment of his role was typically dismissive:

“I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip [Melanchthon] and [Nicholas von] Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.”

Yet recent accounts from historians have illuminated how carefully engaged Luther was with the publication and presentation of his ideas, in the form of pamphlets and hymns as well as Bibles and catechisms—texts that were central to his influence.3

Luther began his career as an obscure friar and professor at an upstart university. The text that thrust him into public prominence, Ninety-Five Theses on the Power of Indulgences, was an ordinary part of his work as an academic theologian, and the act of posting it on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg—which probably did take place, despite a half-century of modern debate over the question—was the standard procedure for announcing academic exercises, not the dramatic act of defiance imagined in 19th-century German nationalist art.4

In the following years, Luther became the center of an unprecedented flood of printed words, predominantly in the German vernacular. He was spurred to publish not only by the vituperative official response to his ideas from Rome, but also by a desire to fulfill his responsibility as a preacher to the laity. Luther sought out the most proficient printers for his work, and enlisted artistic collaborators like Lucas Cranach the Elder, who supplied woodcut illustrations and title pages for his published materials, and the musician and composer Johann Walter, who supplied polyphonic settings for Luther’s hymns.5

Historian Andrew Pettegree has argued that Luther not only took advantage of the printing press, but, in fact, saved the nascent printing industry.

(Continued)
from economic collapse. He played a key role in creating a literate public by providing content the public wanted to buy. Though Luther’s own literary production declined in quantity after about 1526, his name and his words were the foundation of the intellectual and cultural context of the reformed community, appearing in Bibles, hymnals, and catechisms for centuries to come. He inspired a host of other voices as well, often adding his own lyrical and performing texts to the reformed communities’ books. The solo voice of 1517 had become the conductor of a vast chorus.

Luther’s contemporaries were deeply divided over what to make of him and the “Lutheran rumpus” (as one of his Catholic opponents, Henry II, duke of Brunswick-nentents, Henry II, his Catholic opponent) regarded “divided over what Luther not only as a heretic but as a controversialist Johann Cochlaeus, regarded for centuries to come. The theologian who had not confined himself discreetly to Latin, who was a married man and father—and worst of all, married to a former nun—was an incomprehensible monstrosity for traditional believers. Friends and students of the reformer, however, saw Luther as a precious and prophetic witness to Jesus Christ. Johann Bugenhagen, who preached Luther’s funeral sermon, described him as a faithful pastor of the Wittenberg congregation and “the face and picture of the Church whom God sent,” associating him with the “angel flying in mid-heaven with an eternal Gospel to proclaim” of Revelation 14:6.

Melanchthon, a reformer and theologian, saw Luther as part of a historical succession of witnesses to God that stretched from the biblical prophets and apostles down to Church fathers like Irenaeus and Augustine, and medieval teachers like Bernard and Tauler. While acknowledging that Luther had seemed immoderately harsh to some, Melanchthon appealed to the scholar Erasmus’ verdict that perhaps “God gave this last age a severe physi- cian on account of the gravity of its illnesses.” Whatever his roughness, Luther had been a “sacred instrument of God” who had drawn people’s minds back “to the sources”—the scriptures themselves.

Others prized Luther precisely for his stvarlag pugnacity. The musician Johann Walter, who had collaborated with Luther for decades, hailed him in a 1564 ballad as a spiritual knight who had taken a valiant stand against the powers of Church and state alike. The most comprehensively early interpreter of Luther was his student Johann Mathesius, who delivered and published a series of 17 sermons on Luther’s biography over the course of 4 years. The Luther portrayed by Mathesius is not a gilt icon, but a human being whose faults served to magnify God’s grace. Mathesius denied not only Luther’s piety but also his sociability: he drank with friends and is cheerful, is generous to a fault, engages in banter and jest, and takes pleasure in singing secular motets around the table. Mathesius also reminded audiences of Luther’s physical frailty, demonic attacks, and corporeal symptoms of his episodes of illness. Luther’s own physicality, even as reflected in scatology that later modern readers have sometimes found distasteful, was prized as a reminder that presence in the world, not ascetic withdrawal from it, was pleasing to God.

Luther’s own physicality, even as reflected in scatology that later modern readers have sometimes found distasteful, was prized as a reminder that presence in the world, not ascetic withdrawal from it, was pleasing to God.
“AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?”
LOVE MEANS RECOGNIZING OTHERS’ DISTRESS AS OUR OWN

Nikki Young (’18) delivered a version of this sermon on Genesis 4:1–16, Cain’s murder of Abel, at Marsh Chapel on September 6, 2017.

I’m not quite sure how preachers write sermons anymore. It feels like in order to remain relevant, to speak gospel truth, there is simply no way to prepare eloquent poetics connecting well-thought-out themes in the biblical text with the everyday moral and ethical complications of our current estate. A sermon written on a Saturday afternoon to address the devastating effects white silence has on the moral consciousness of America can be obliterated by Facebook posts attributing hurricanes to God’s will by Sunday morning. The world is moving so fast, and the hits are coming so hard, that it feels like our embrace will never be wide enough to catch all that pain we want to hold. Yet somehow, even though the roller coaster of CNN updates is enough to give us whiplash, we persist.

I can’t escape the story of Cain and Abel. We know how it starts: “God created the heavens and the earth,” and the scripture says, “it was good” (Genesis 1:1, 10). Creation is good. Creation is beautiful. It’s living, breathing, life-giving. A gift from a Creator God. But even that Creator God has warnings, telling Cain to watch out for the sin “lurking at the door” as he wrestles with what it means to inhabit the same world as his brother.

We don’t often like to talk about sin, because of the ways it’s been used as a means of control or coercion, abuse and shame. But that’s not the story being told here. Sin is something that sneaks in quietly, changes you, causes you to make decisions you never thought you’d make—decisions that pull you farther and farther away from the idea that in the beginning, there was a God who created you, and it was good.

Cain ignores this warning. He feels upset and rejected—embarrassed, even. And all he can think about is alleviating his own shame. And so, Cain invites his younger brother out to the field and murders him in cold blood. God comes to Cain and asks him, point-blank, “Where is your brother?” And Cain replies, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” It’s almost as if he’s deflecting, by saying, “Well, you’re God. Shouldn’t you know?” Isn’t he your responsibility?

(Continued)
God cries out, “What have you done?” “What have you done?”

In the beginning, God created and it was good. In the beginning, God created and breathed life where there was none, and then that life was carelessly and needlessly taken away.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” There is something about that phrase that refuses to leave me alone, because the question speaks something so theologically profound into the present moment. Cain refuses to say what God already knows: that the spilled blood of Abel cries out from the ground that has absorbed it. He is raising one of the most pertinent social questions of our time: Do we have a responsibility to one another, must we take care of each other, or is it every person for themselves?

Maybe I want to hold on to this text—“Am I my brother’s keeper?”—during these turbulent times because today, in 2018, it’s almost as though Cain has never stopped killing his brother Abel. The fact is, the very salvation of the person sitting next to you is so intimately tied up in your own that there is no difference. Jesus says that if you cling to any two commandments, let them be this: that you love God with every fiber of your being and that you love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36–40).

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” is not just a cute phrase, or a hashtag. To be called to love is to roll up your sleeves and dive right in, even if you are uncertain. Because here’s the thing about love: love is hard, and messy. It requires so much of your guts that sometimes you have to swallow something like your own shame, rejection, and failure to realize that it isn’t and can’t be all about you, because in the beginning, God created, and you did not. Love means that I can’t sleep at night if you don’t have a place to lay your head.

What are the ways we’ve failed our brother? Maybe we didn’t kill him by our own hand, but we pretended like he wasn’t there for so long that we allowed somebody else to do it. I think about the ways that we’ve even refused to call our brother our brother, whether that’s because of the color of his skin, his country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. I think about how many times God warned us, as he did Cain, to watch out for the sin lurking at the door—the sin that, when we are too caught up in our own lives, can so easily change us into something we were never meant to be. And I think about how, when the world aches, God groans, “What have you done? What have you done?” as he cried in Eden. On days when we’re quiet enough, I wonder if we can hear it.

After Cain leaves Eden, he settles in the land of Nod. The poetry gets lost in the English translation, as “Nod” literally means “Wandering.” Cain attempts to settle in a land of wandering. He is a restless wanderer, because he now knows exactly what human beings are capable of. Because spilled blood cannot be covered up. The human heart is a muscle, and muscles have to tear in order to grow stronger. Sometimes I wonder if the Church has been trying to settle in a place of wandering. What would it look like for us to move in such a way that salvation becomes not about the singular, “I,” but the plural, “we,” and the distress of another is counted as our own? It’s this restlessness that allows us to be forever discontent with the way things are, to go into spaces and ask, “For whom is this gospel good news?” Because when that restlessness is gone, that’s when you know you have a problem. May we, too, wander restlessly, recognizing the distress of our brother wherever we go.
FEMALE PASTORS ARE CHALLENGING MALE IMAGES OF LEADERSHIP WITH A FOCUS ON COLLABORATION

Collaborative, open to others, willing to listen, visionary, prophetic, strong, knowledgeable, inspiring. These are some of the qualities STH students told us they associated with leaders during the Telling Stories of Your Leadership Experiences program in December 2017. The program was sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry’s Division of Ordained Ministry and run by the Anna Howard Shaw Center, which builds female empowerment through research, education, advocacy, and other support. The students named these characteristics after reflecting on their own experiences and ideals of leadership.

Although the exercise highlighted some of the qualities people expect from those who are in charge, the answers would have been very different 100 years ago. Views on leadership shifted during the women’s movement of the 20th century. Before this time, certain characteristics stereotypically associated with men—such as being charismatic, authoritative, loyal, and paternalistic—were depicted as essential to leaders, while “female” attributes, such as being collaborative and listening to others, were considered typical of followers. People often ignored the fact that the subjects of leadership studies were exclusively male kings, autocrats, government officials, CEOs, and clergy. Masculine traits became the mark of leaders, regardless of race, gender/sex, class, and nationality.

These ideas have been challenged since the women’s movement. Many women, people who are LGBTQ, and young generations are rejecting the notion of a leader as someone dictating from the top. Rather, they’re developing a new leadership model based on collaboration, trust, listening, and openness to others. They struggle against the hierarchical model, and demand a horizontal relationship based on justice and equality. They insist on sharing power together. This movement brings about a paradigm shift from exercising authority to earning respect.

As women become leaders, they gain respect by working not as bosses, but as coworkers and co-leaders. Many leadership scholars agree that collaboration is preferred by younger generations and is the most common type of leadership women have practiced; they also recognize it as one of the most effective and advanced styles.

A similar change has happened to leadership in Christianity...
male authority were powerfully produced and inherited throughout the history of the Church, and exclusive male clergy leadership has been the only legitimate form for many centuries. Even since the approval of women’s ordination, male-exclusive images have been consistently generated and exercised in every aspect of Church life. There have always been common sexist barriers against which female clergy of all ages have had to struggle. They remain today. Research including the United Methodist Church Salary Study; studies by the Shaw Center on women and leadership, immigrant women and the Church, and the retention of United Methodist clergy women;¹ and findings from a female clergy support group run by the Shaw Center from 2011 to 2015 have shown that women’s leadership continues to be seriously challenged—and in some cases, dangerously threatened. In particular, the salary study—which uncovered how salaries differ by gender and race—and the support group reveal that all ethnic minority female clergy experience oppression in areas including salary, church size, institutional support, and job opportunities. They confess that they are spiritually, psychologically, and physically tired of these endless fights, and lament their losses.

Despite facing such barriers, these women do still share amazing leadership stories. As male images of leadership are challenged, and as many women demonstrate shared leadership in secular society, female pastors are developing a new collaborative leadership in ministry with laypeople. They create small groups to nurture lay influence, and work with community leaders to establish cooperative projects beyond their own church boundaries. Many female pastors emphasize that listening to others is the most important leadership quality they have learned and that they want to work with others more harmoniously.

This “shared leadership” model is not naturally created by the powerful and privileged, but intentionally developed by many dis-privileged people out of their need for survival.

Despite facing such barriers, these women do still share amazing leadership stories. As male images of leadership are challenged, and as many women demonstrate shared leadership in secular society, female pastors are developing a new collaborative leadership in ministry with laypeople. They create small groups to nurture lay influence, and work with community leaders to establish cooperative projects beyond their own church boundaries. Many female pastors emphasize that listening to others is the most important leadership quality they have learned and that they want to work with others more harmoniously.

This “shared leadership” model is not naturally created by the powerful and privileged, but intentionally developed by many dis-privileged people out of their need for survival.

All ethnic minority female clergy experience oppression in areas including salary, church size, institutional support, and job opportunities.

¹ See United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Studies I (bu.edu/shaw/publications/united-methodist-clergywomen-retention-study-i-2) and II (bu.edu/shaw/publications/united-methodist-clergywomen-retention-study-ii-2).
LEADING THE MESSY, HOLY WORK OF RECONCILIATION

IS THERE REALLY SUCH A THING AS A SAFE SPACE?

BY HALEY JONES (’15)

On June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Tension was high afterwards, as those who voted to stay accused “leavers” of being shortsighted at best, racist at worst; “remainers,” or stay-voters, were in turn labeled bad losers. I was working as an intern program associate in the Reconciliation Ministry at Coventry Cathedral in Coventry, England, a city that voted for Brexit. After the vote, the cathedral held a “Circle,” which gathers people for conversation about potentially divisive topics. I facilitated the post-Brexit discussion and set out to build a space where leavers and remainers could try to find humanity in each other, even if they could not find understanding.

In reconciling work, we often say we are creating a safe space. We certainly need to create room where marginalized voices can be heard. But in my studies of reconciliation theology and practice at STH and at Coventry Cathedral, I discovered that saying “This is a safe space” negates the tough and messy nature of reconciliation work. Part of healing is being able to tell our story, and if we are always measuring what we say, the hard stuff never comes up. We have to be able to call each other out and challenge injustice.

People on both sides of the Brexit vote felt demonized and ignored.

“My hope is that this is a safe enough space where we can engage in the hard things.” After participants declared their views on the vote, they asked each other tough questions to understand their choices. Toward the end, one man said that while he still disagreed with the leavers, hearing their personal stories helped humanize them.

The work of reconciliation is hard, it is wild, but it’s most certainly holy. The way we engage with one another in these conversations prepares us to interact every day with people who are different from us. Bringing people together across difference requires us to act boldly when we are afraid, be truth-tellers when we have been silenced, seek justice when all we have witnessed is injustice. It calls us to search for the possibility of forgiveness and to create communities of peace. My prayer is that our encounters may be “safe enough” to hold all of these things, and be carried by a fierce love that speaks truth to power and creates holy relationships.

Haley Jones is the pastor of community engagement at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Ark., where she connects members of the congregation with opportunities to take part in transformative justice.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Kathe Darr fell in love with the Hebrew Bible at age seven, when she read tales like Noah and the flood and the Israelites’ flight from Egypt in a storybook. In September 2017, in a service at Marsh Chapel, she became STH’s first Harrell F. Beck Chair of Hebrew Scripture. The occasion was three decades in the making—not just for Darr, who has taught Hebrew Bible at STH since the 1980s, but for the School of Theology. STH created the Harrell F. Beck Chair of Hebrew Scripture in 1987, after the death of the longtime, beloved professor. After 30 years of fundraising, the professorship was permanently established as a chair thanks to more than $1 million in gifts and pledges from nearly 700 alumni and friends.

“Harrell excelled at evoking scripture’s meaning and its boundless relevance for faithful, prophetic living,” Darr said at the service.

“It’s a legacy that Darr, a 1989 recipient of BU’s Metcalf Award for Excellence in Teaching, continues in her classroom. One way she challenges students to discover what scripture says to today’s world is by teaching contrasting biblical passages together, she said in an interview with The Prophet, STH’s student journal. “We need to put texts in dialogue to realize the Bible doesn’t speak with one voice about much of anything, and to do the hard work of figuring out which voices demand our greatest attention.”

—Julie Butters

Watch the Beck Chair installation at bu.edu/buniverse (search “Kathe Darr”).
“At STH, I was surrounded by professors and supervisors who were passionate about preparing me for the journey that followed, and colleagues who were exploring how God was involved in their lives and in the world. The impact of my theological education on my personal and professional development has been long-standing, for which I am very grateful.”

Frank J. Richardson, Jr. (’77,’82)
Richardson has included a gift to STH in his estate plans.

Education is a gift. Pass it on.
MAKE YOUR IMPACT THROUGH A PLANNED GIFT
Contact us today at opg@bu.edu or 800-645-2347

Boston University Planned Giving