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**Immigrant Abrahams and Sarahs
in America**

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OVERCOMING RACISM

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Cyndey Scott

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DEAN'S MESSAGE



Dean Mary Elizabeth Moore

JUSTICE DEMANDS OUR ALL

By MARY ELIZABETH MOORE

Without justice, peace will fail
Without peace, justice will flee
Without compassion, neither justice
nor peace can abide.

We are witnessing horrific violence in the United States and around the world. This violence shines a light beneath the surface of human politeness and tolerance to reveal violent forces of racism, Islamophobia, heterosexism, classism, ableism, sexism, and interreligious intolerance. How can this be? What can we do?

On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown, a young African American man, was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri; the aftermath revealed deep patterns of racism in US society. In response, I wrote a message to the STH community: *“Enough talk!*

*Enough inaction! Enough turning aside from racism!”*¹ In June 2015, after the mass shooting in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, I wrote: *“Hate has to end!”*² In November 2015, after the brutal attacks in Paris, I stated: *“The horror is unthinkable—almost unbearable.”*³ Since then, more horrors have taken place, including the fatal shooting of 14 people in San Bernardino, California. As I write to you now, I am pulled between horror and numbness, depression and blame, but the heart of Christian faith—and the heart of most faith traditions—is that the hurting world does *not* have the last word. In the-istic traditions, we turn to God and the ever-moving presence of God to hold our pain, to move redemptively, to inspire our visions and guide our actions, and to create anew. These are *real* promises. Human as we are, we will not agree on the causes of social problems or on the solutions. However, we have the capacity to hold one another’s dignity and work together to build a just peace, brick by brick.

Sadly, the promises of God do not remove human anguish. We remember the senseless killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Terence Avery Green, Alex Yazzie, Mya Hall, and the people of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. We remember people killed by violence—more than 1.3 million people worldwide each year⁴—and the nearly 4.6 million Syrian refugees who have fled their country with no place to go and

nowhere to return.⁵ We remember that in the United States, more than 33,000 people are killed by firearms each year⁶ and that the gun murder rate is more than 20 times the average rate of other developed countries.⁷ Further, we know that human violence extends to all parts of God’s creation: ten of the warmest years on record have occurred in the last 12 years, with carbon dioxide levels surpassing 400 parts per million.⁸

We cannot continue these patterns, either in the United States or in any other country. We are destroying one another; we are destroying God’s precious creation. We have passed the tipping point for taking a few well-placed actions. We need to be transformed from the inside out—and the outside in—if we are to turn our culture of hate into a culture of hope. Such transformation is very demanding. It will not allow us to fall into easy patterns of scapegoating—blaming a particular political party, racial group, religious community, or set of leaders. We are all to blame, and we can all be part of moving forward.

In order to change these patterns, we need to rethink social symbols that degrade and dehumanize others. As a young girl, I graduated from an all-white Robert E. Lee High School, where we were known as the Rebels and carried the Confederate flag into football games. The school’s mascot was finally changed in 2005, but the culture of the rebel flag remains subtly present in the lives of people shaped by it, not just in this high school but

Chitose Suzuki

throughout a large portion of the United States. Not until the mass murder of nine people in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2015 would the country rise up again to protest the flag’s continued symbolic use. Originally created by William P. Miles, the flag was used by Confederate soldiers in battle; it was later adapted by William T. Thompson as a flag of the Confederacy.⁹ Both men were ardent defenders of slavery, and Thompson explicitly described his version of the Confederate flag as a symbol of white supremacy.¹⁰ Indeed, the flag was used in marches of the 1950s and ’60s to support segregation. While some say the flag stands for Southern pride, the record reveals its origins and continued use as a symbol of white supremacy.

This is where we are challenged as human beings. When a symbol evokes pride for some people and

degradation for others, we need to rethink and reform that symbol. Surely, Southern pride can appeal to values that defy hatred and racism.

We have passed the tipping point for taking a few well-placed actions. We need to be transformed from the inside out—and the outside in—if we are to turn our culture of hate into a culture of hope.

Surely, people of one race can be their best selves without denigrating those in other races. Surely, people who are heterosexual and cisgender can be their best selves without iso-

lating and oppressing those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. If we truly trust a God who created this world and called it “good,”¹¹ we can open ourselves to learn from and walk with people we do not understand.

Justice demands our all. It demands that we be truly open and compassionate toward all human beings—not that we *like* everyone, but that we hope and act for the well-being of all. It demands that we protect the cosmos from human destruction, not just for the sake of human beings, but for the sake of creation itself. Justice demands that we foster a just, compassionate spirit within and that we live justly in all of our daily actions and major decisions. I hope this issue of *focus* will inspire our collective reflection and action so that together, we can give our best for a world of justice, peace, and compassion. □

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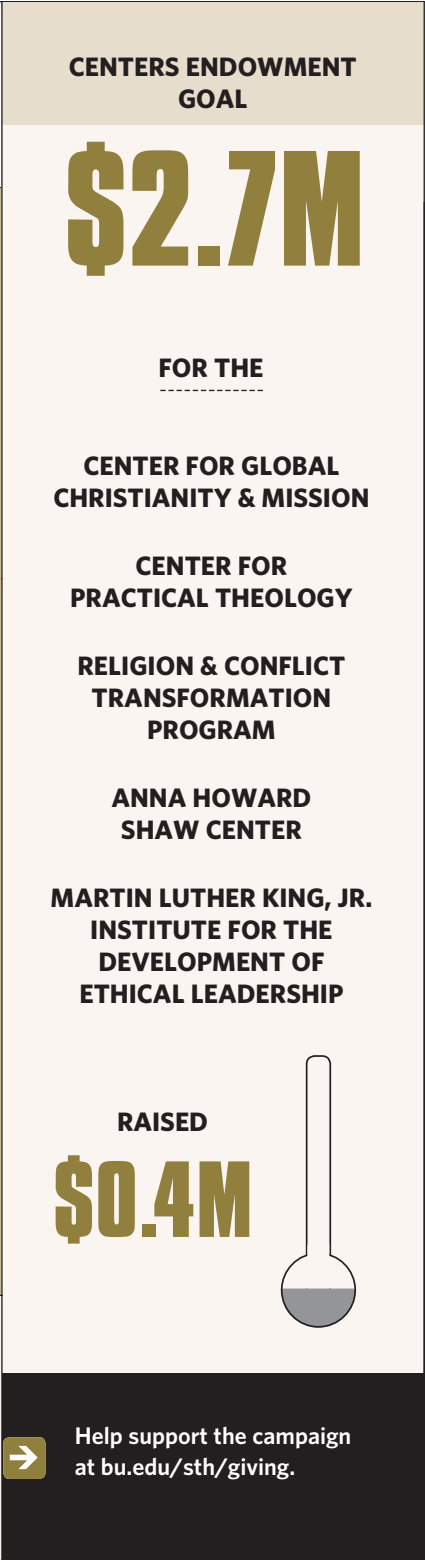
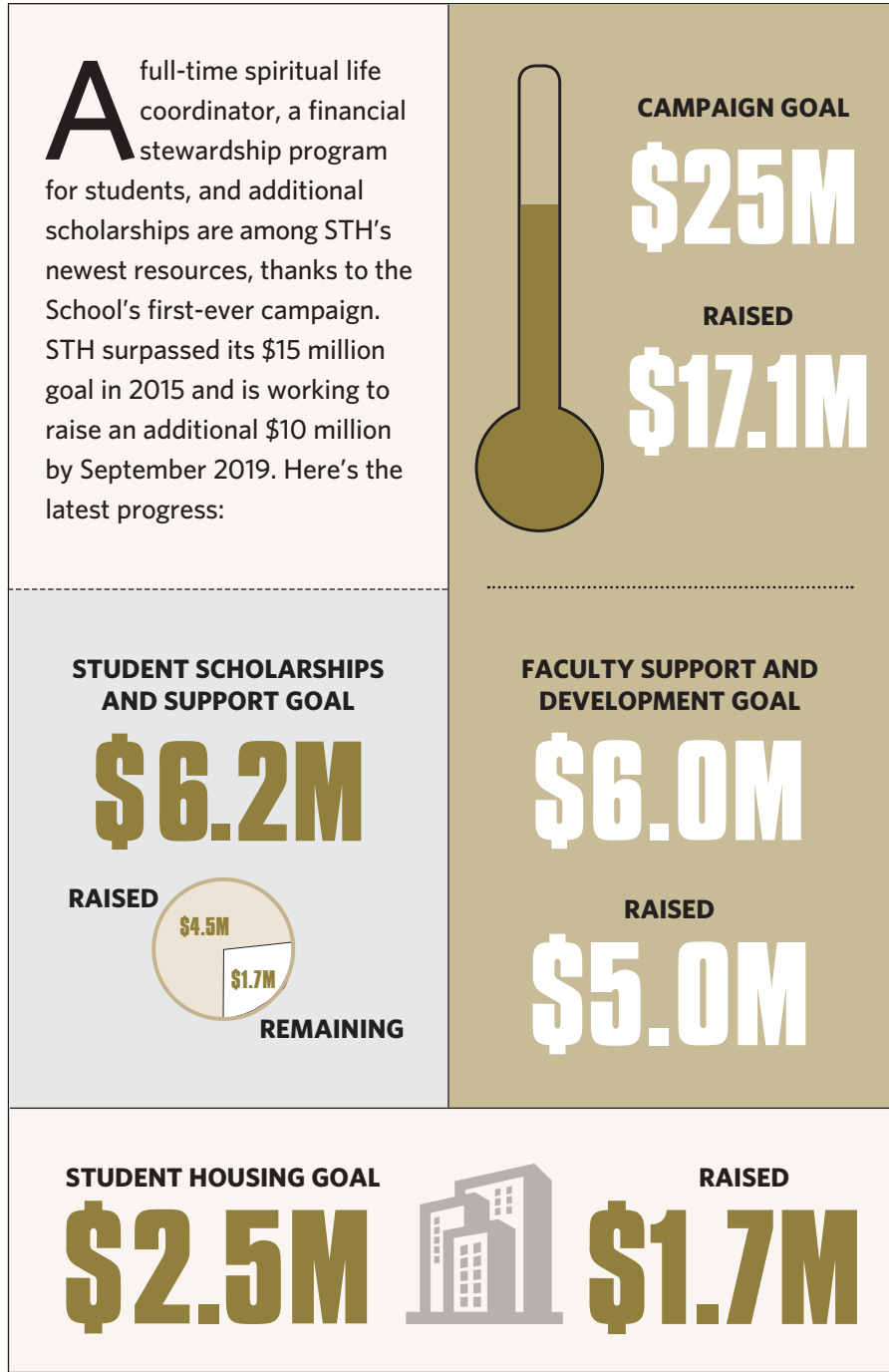
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CAMPAIGN UPDATE

A GROWING VISION



All dollar figures are accurate as of February 2016.

A TIME MACHINE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS

It's the next best thing to time travel, says Wesley J. Wildman: computer software that helps scholars test theories about the role religion played in shaping historical events and make better-informed predictions about the future. Wildman, professor of philosophy, theology & ethics, is the principal investigator for a three-year project to develop the software. The program is part of a broader scientific study of religion project that received \$2.4 million from the John Templeton Foundation and other organizations in 2015.

The free, web-based software, Complex Learner Agent Simulation Platform (CLASP), will function a bit like a world-building strategy game. You select or adapt default settings, or input unique data on elements including geography, water sources, and the culture, society, and beliefs of your human inhabitants. Then you run the model. Does it produce the results you expected, or do you need a new theory?

For example, let's say no one knows why an ancient civilization stopped worshipping one god and began worshipping another within 25 years. You theorize a severe drought was the cause. You would feed CLASP your information about this civilization, including the drought and people's religious beliefs, and run the simulation. If your simulated citizens are still worshipping the same god, per-

haps there's a hole in your theory. There might be another factor—for example, the rising power of a nearby community that believes in the competing god—that you may not have taken into account and that could explain the change in belief.

Wildman believes simulation software like CLASP has a critical role to play in moving religious studies away from conjecture and toward testable hypotheses. "People are starting to see that you can handle complicated issues and clarify complicated theoretical situations using modeling and simulation that you just can't any other way," says Wildman. And this new technology isn't just for the computer-savvy: CLASP requires no knowledge of coding, which Wildman says will "open up a world of research" opportunities for people working in the scientific study of religion.

The software is being developed at the Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion (IBCSR), a Massachusetts-based nonprofit cofounded by Wildman to explore the science of religion. In one recent study, Wildman believes the IBCSR resolved a 200-year-old dispute about how violence spread among some post-Reformation Anabaptists. Wildman says that, using computer analysis to compare data sets for two competing theories, the institute's research team showed the evidence best supports the claim that the violence was



Wesley J. Wildman

passed down from generation to generation within congregations—as opposed to by traveling preachers. The institute has also been experimenting with predicting the future. Using data about human beliefs from the World Values Survey, it built a computer model to show how religion might evolve in the next 50 to 100 years under the hypothetical conditions of more widespread science education and sufficient global access to food and water. Wildman says a possible outcome is that superstition would decrease, leading to an age where reverence for nature overtakes belief in the supernatural.

Wildman predicts that eventually, a religious scholar will have to test any new theory with a computer simulation so others can compare the scholar's predictions "against a dataset to see whether the theory holds water or not." He says that though the preliminary technology is imperfect, "it sure is a lot more precise than what we've got at the moment: people sitting in their bathtubs having ideas about things." □

Cydney Scott

TRAILBLAZERS AND HISTORY-MAKERS



STH's 2015 Distinguished Alumni/ae are, from left: Alex Froom ('12, SSW'12), Alexander Veronis ('60), Lallene J. Rector ('78, GRS'86), and William Bobby McClain ('62,'77)

Between them, they marched for civil rights in Selma in 1965, made important strides for women in academia, created leadership opportunities for Navajo youth, and helped bring God's Word to some of the most disadvantaged communities on Earth. STH recognized these alums with its 2015 Distinguished Alumni/ae Award:

The Civil Rights Sage: In 1963, Alabama native William Bobby McClain ('62,'77) helped desegregate the public library of Anniston, Alabama, despite being assaulted by the Ku Klux Klan. In 1965, McClain and his STH classmates marched from Selma to Montgomery. As Gilbert H. Caldwell ('58) wrote in his nomination, McClain "has always been on the cutting edge of confronting the evils of racism as expressed in church and society," whether through preaching, research, or

teaching the seminarians who will carry on his legacy.

The Glass-Ceiling Breaker: Lallene J. Rector ('78, GRS'86) made history in 2013 when she was elected the first woman president (and first lay president) of the then-160-year-old Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. Wasting no time in helping others break barriers, she immediately appointed the seminary's first Hispanic academic dean. Retired seminary president Neal F. Fisher ('60, GRS'66) says Rector has taken other important steps to strengthen the school's relationship with the area's large Hispanic population. One of these is to help recruit Hispanic students.

The Hopeful Healer: Alex Froom ('12, SSW'12) studied this question at STH: since Christian theology was partly responsible for the devastation of Native American communities, what can today's

Christians do to help heal these communities? Froom, who had previously worked with the Navajo in church ministry in St. Michaels, Arizona, became executive director of the nonprofit Rez Refuge in Arizona after leaving Boston. He served for three years, spearheading projects such as vocational programs for teens. Today, Froom is consulting on agricultural education projects in Virginia and Washington State and remains on the board of Rez Refuge. Froom was given STH's emerging leader award.

The Missions Master: Alexander Veronis ('60) estimates that he baptized, married, or buried more than 2,000 people as a Greek Orthodox priest in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. But he also impacted lives outside his parish, whether by rallying clergy against the KKK in the 1960s or serving as the first president of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center Board of Missions in the '90s and '00s. In the early '60s, his parish launched the first international mission efforts of North American Orthodox Churches, which eventually evolved into the Mission Center, which recruits, trains, and sends missionaries to disadvantaged communities around the world. □

→ Watch the distinguished alums discuss "The Three Greatest Challenges Facing Us in the Next Decade" at bu.edu/sth (click "video archive" under "news & media").

Alisa Harris

RETURN TO NORTH KOREA

It was the last film she had to make, she told her husband—the one about the country she'd left as a little girl but had felt a longing for ever since. Filmmaker Dai Sil Kim-Gibson ('69, GRS'69) was seven when her family left North Korea in 1945, crossing the 38th parallel looking for democracy. Never having felt fully comfortable anywhere else she'd lived, she wanted to revisit the country of her birth. After more than a 65-year absence, would the Democratic People's Republic of Korea feel like home?

In November 2015, Kim-Gibson visited BU to screen *People Are the Sky: A Journey to North Korea* and discuss the film for the School of Theology's Lowell Lecture. Believed to be the first Korean-American filmmaker to receive permission by the North Korean government to film inside the country, Kim-Gibson aims to share a rare view of her birthplace—one focused not on its defectors, infamous leaders, or human rights violations, but on its ordinary citizens. The documentary explores Kim-Gibson's personal journey and the relationships between North Korea, the Republic of Korea, and the United States.

After her childhood departure from North Korea, Kim-Gibson studied in South Korea and the United States. She settled in the United States, marrying an



Dai Sil Kim-Gibson's film *People Are the Sky: A Journey to North Korea* features interviews with North Koreans including these soldiers she met at a flower show.

American and becoming an established filmmaker. Her work, she says, is influenced by an idea she encountered in her studies at STH: theology is worthless without social action. Her 2000 film *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* featured women who were sexual slaves of the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII—a dark moment in history some Japanese officials still deny. She hopes her latest film will enlighten audiences on struggles she says Koreans have faced as a result of America's intervention after the war. The United States caused harm by maintaining the 1945 division of Korea and imposing its own values and needs on Korean people, she says. While Kim-Gibson says America "means a lot" to her, she believes it merits criticism for what she perceives as an ongoing pattern of abusing its superpower status.

Visiting North Korea cemented Kim-Gibson's belief that for her, it is people—not place—who signify

"home." Though her hometown had changed beyond recognition, the friendliness of the Koreans she met on her journey made her feel "as if people whom I had left 70 years ago were there to greet me." She writes in the film's press notes that she hopes the film will encourage audiences to reject an "us versus them" mentality—to "think about the likeminded people everywhere as home."

Kim-Gibson had hoped her husband of 29 years, Don, would travel with her to North Korea to make this film. But his health was poor, and "he knew he was going to die." After grieving his death in 2009, she gave herself a talking-to: "Get up, Dai Sil. Go to North Korea. Don will come with you in spirit and make that last film." □

→ Watch Kim-Gibson's Lowell Lecture at bu.edu/sth (click "live streaming" under "news & media").

Courtesy of Dai Sil Kim-Gibson

BOLD SEEKERS, BIG QUESTIONS

Should we adopt a global currency to address inequity? How did practices of medieval monks prefigure psychotherapy? How can we improve interfaith relations? Could our daily habits unknowingly dispose us toward war? STH's newest professors are exploring these and other questions in their work.



David Decosimo, assistant professor of theology

Some say religions are simply “different paths up the same mountain.” It’s understandable that people may wish to downplay differences in the name of harmony, but David Decosimo argues this can amount to “dodging the hard theological questions.” How people of varying religions can uphold the truth of their traditions while being “maximally hospitable” to each other is a conundrum he

tackles in his work in Christian ethics and comparative theology. Decosimo says we are called to “acknowledge the depth and the reality of the disagreement and nonetheless expect that God is speaking and working in these lives and communities in ways” we may not see.

Decosimo, the author of *Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue* (Stanford University Press, 2014), says Church tradition has much to offer in tackling challenges such as interfaith dialogue and social justice. Pointing out that Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59) quoted Aquinas’s views on unjust laws in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Decosimo says he wants to help students recognize the ongoing relevance of early Christian theologians.

Nimi Wariboko, *Walter G. Muelder Professor of Social Ethics*

A former consultant to top investment banks, Nimi Wariboko left Wall Street to study theology—but not to stop analyzing capital. In economic



ethics, just one focal point of his work, Wariboko explores how to create a more just economic system without entirely doing away with capitalism. He advocates a single global currency to help close the gap between rich and poor nations, though with a recognition that “the political and nationalistic sentiments against it are enormous.”

Wariboko, who still puts his Wall Street wisdom to work as an advisor for clients including the Central Bank of Nigeria, says “most students in seminaries and divinity schools have an almost visceral fear of economics,” but that “no theologian, ethicist, or minister can affectively understand the time that we live in, let alone effectively serve any faith community, without a good grasp of the existing economic order of being in his or her society.” The distribution of

Decosimo photo: Alisa Harris; Wariboko photo: courtesy of Nimi Wariboko

resources resulting from economic policies, he explains, impacts how humans live together and flourish. “Karl Barth once said to do theology we need the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. But I say today, we need the Bible in one end, the *Wall Street Journal* in the other, and a smartphone in the pocket.”



Andrea Hollingsworth, assistant professor of theology

Latin, theology, and... brain science? Andrea Hollingsworth, a former psychotherapist, uses them all in her research on how mystical religious texts can “lead the mind of the reader or the practitioner along a kind of healing journey.” Hollingsworth says that these writings described or facilitated practices used to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior in ways similar to those often used in modern psychotherapy.

Hollingsworth photo courtesy of Sarah Morreim Photography; Salimi photo courtesy of Barbod Salimi

One such text is *De visione Dei* (*On the Vision of God*), which was written for a group of Benedictine monks by 15th-century theologian Nicholas of Cusa and sent to them with a religious icon whose eyes seemed to follow the viewer. Hollingsworth says Cusa instructed the monks to use the icon for a communal ritual. Walking across the room while regarding the icon, each monk believed the icon’s gaze followed himself alone. But his fellow monks, walking in different directions, had the same experience. This helped the monks to appreciate God’s concern for each and every person.

Hollingsworth says this ritual “shares striking affinity” with “simulative and imaginative” exercises used in psychotherapy to develop self-awareness and empathy. She believes *De visione Dei* and similar works could be “interpreted not just as an abstract theological discourse on God, but... as a practical tool or ‘technology’ for entraining empathy, reeducating the emotions, and aiding the reader’s self-transformation” that modern readers can still experience today.

Barbod Salimi, *instructor of philosophical psychology, theological ethics & peace studies*

Barbod Salimi is working to raise awareness of how everyday activities, habits, and beliefs can predispose people to conflict and war. Many preexisting views on why humans act violently—it’s in



our DNA, it’s society’s fault—are too simplistic, he says.

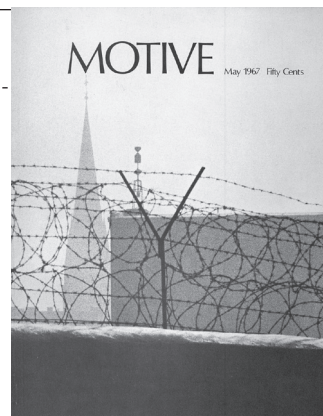
Salimi, whose work touches on philosophy, psychology, religion, and ethics, says the common practice of walking by the homeless without acknowledgment is one example of problematic behavior. Though that’s a “vastly different action” from, say, killing by drone, “I think that the habitual formation of somebody who has literally been trained to... walk right by suffering human life [uses] the same sort of muscle that needs to be flexed when obliterating human life.” Salimi believes these kinds of actions “shape us in ways that really form our ethics and therefore give us a particular kind of potential to then make decisions about war... It’s not about foreign policy, it’s about who we are, who we’ve become, what our ethics are.”

Turn to page 32 to read an essay by Salimi on this theme. □

MOTIVE MAGAZINE DEBUTS ONLINE

The defunct magazine of the Methodist Student Movement that became famous for its radical views on justice is online for the first time. The magazine, *motive*, was published from 1941 to 1972 and inspired students, clergy, and activists—former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has cited *motive* as a major influence.

Harold Ehrensperger, once a professor at STH, was its first editor. STH and the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry of the United Methodist Church collaborated on the digitization project. The website organizes the magazine by decade and allows users to bookmark and share pages. Read *motive* at go.bu.edu/focus/motive. □



Courtesy of the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry of the United Methodist Church

PHOTOGRAPHING *the* DIVINE

The Boston University Religion & the Arts Initiative (RAI), which launched in 2014 with financial support from STH, has announced its **second annual arts competition**. BU alumni, students, faculty, and staff are invited to submit an original photograph through which they see or connect with God. The deadline is March 31, 2016, and the winning photos will be displayed at STH in April. Submit your photo at sites.bu.edu/religionandthearts. □

The winner of the 2015 RAI poetry contest was “Marshchurch” by Zachary Bos, an administrator at the College of Arts & Sciences:

Marshchurch
by Zachary Bos

*Shaking the grassfringe the greenfrogs startled
drumeared and spearsharp jump in and ruffle
the brownwater bog while boy who I was
sits on the shoreline halfway in dozing
dreaming the meaning of birdrasp and wail,
of rainpatter on peltmarsh, of barespike
swamp snagtrees tautjutting who stand there with
beaver-chewed belts to serve the blue herons
and redshoulder crows as nestperch and mast,
of the round riverstone turtles baking
to stoneshell hardness unyielding on logs
mossrough submerged. That's how a boy dreams—like
he owns all the meaning—as around him
suckflies come clouding to sip their small sips.*

See the world, CHANGE THE WORLD



“The India Travel Seminar allowed me to use the training I received at STH to participate in interreligious dialogue outside the classroom. Exploring the beauty and richness of Indian culture and religion helped me appreciate the diversity our world has to offer.”

—LAUREN DELANO ('16), front row center in skirt

Take the challenge: send students around the globe to do good

At STH, we encourage our students to lead change beyond the classroom. The Global & Contextual Engagement Fund awards fellowships to STH students participating in educational enrichment experiences in the Boston area and beyond. The Religion & Conflict Transformation program

pioneers courses that take the classroom into the world in the pursuit of just peace. Generous donors will double your donation to these efforts, up to \$500,000 for the Global & Contextual Engagement Fund and up to \$100,000 for the Religion & Conflict Transformation program.

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FROM SELMA TO STONEWALL



Gil Caldwell

GIL CALDWELL DEMONSTRATED ALONGSIDE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., AND HAS BEEN ARRESTED FOR PROTESTING ANTIGAY POLICIES. AT 82, HE'S STILL AGITATING FOR CHANGE.

BY ANDREW THURSTON

One month after his historic marches in Selma, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. arrived in Boston to demonstrate against the city's festering school segregation. On April 23, 1965, in a light rain, he led singing protesters more than two miles, from the predominantly African American neighborhood of Roxbury to the Boston Common. There, he told a crowd of 22,000 that it was "the time to make real the promise of democracy." The *Boston Globe* called it the city's "first gigantic civil rights march."

One man was close to his side throughout: pastor and activist Gil Caldwell.

In the press photos of the day, Caldwell ('58) appears next to King as the civil rights leader addresses a growing throng in Roxbury, joins King in song at the head of a reported "mile of marchers," and stands on a temporary Common stage, fresh from introducing King to the crowd.

Caldwell was a self-described foot soldier in the civil rights movement: he marched on Washington, called for voting rights in the heat of the Mississippi summer, and walked from Selma to Montgomery. He later broadened his demand for equality, advocating for gay rights. In 2000, he was arrested twice for protesting the United Methodist

Church's policy that the "practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching."

Later that year, a brain tumor left Caldwell with nerve damage in his right leg, so arrestable acts of civil disobedience are consigned to history. Now 82 and retired, he's producing and starring in a 56-minute documentary, *From Selma to Stonewall: Are We There Yet?* The film, which is expected to release this year, is an exploration of the similarities, differences, and conflicts between the civil and gay rights movements. To Caldwell's disappointment, not everyone who stood alongside him during the heyday of the civil rights struggle supports his advocacy of gay rights. Some dissenters are caustic; the more reasonable argue that the push for black justice is incomplete. But after a lifetime of striving against discrimination, Caldwell counters that no one deserves to be excluded in the drive for social justice.

"DR. KING'S ROOM, PLEASE"

Caldwell was born in 1933 in a segregated hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina. He grew up in a segregated neighborhood and was educated in segregated schools. The son—and grandson—of a minister, he attended a black church (it would have welcomed whites, he says, but the welcome was never tested). In 1955, Caldwell tried

Cydney Scott

Gil Caldwell ('58), far left, joins Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59) in a protest against segregation in Boston schools on April 23, 1965. The group marched from the predominantly African American neighborhood of Roxbury to the Boston Common, where King gave a speech. The event is one among many marches and protests for justice in which Caldwell has participated over the years.



to break the cycle of racial inequality and applied to study at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. At the time, Duke didn't accept African American students—and wouldn't until 1961. Like so many other blacks in the South, Caldwell crumpled his rejection and headed north for a master's degree.

At Boston University, Caldwell sat for the first time in classrooms with students who were not black. It was, he says, a "new interracial experience...just a marvelous barrier-breaker for me." He also studied with two of King's major influences—Deans Howard Thurman (Hon.'67) and Walter G. Muelder ('30, GRS'33, Hon.'73).

The first time Caldwell met with King was in 1958. The civil rights leader—by then a *Time* magazine cover star—was in town to make a

speech, and Caldwell, vice president of STH's student association, decided to ask King to visit the University he'd left three years earlier. "I called the hotel where he was staying, asking for Dr. Martin King. Lo and behold, they put the call into his room and he picked up the phone." King agreed to speak at the School. Caldwell can't recall the topic, but he remembers relaxing with King and other students afterwards in the School's basement refectory. Unlike other famous people Caldwell has met since who were "impressed by their own charisma," King wanted to learn about those sitting with him. Caldwell found himself "bonding with him and knowing that he would be a person I would love to follow."

(continued on page 14)

Associated Press

Gil Caldwell ('58) speaks with LGBT equality pioneer and former United Methodist minister Jimmy Creech during a 2015 social justice gathering in North Carolina. Caldwell is an advocate of LGBT rights and is working on a documentary about the intersection of the civil rights and gay rights movements.



By 1965, Caldwell was pastor of Boston's Union Methodist Church and heavily involved in the Massachusetts division of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. When King came to Boston in late April to meet with legislators and decry school segregation, it was Caldwell who presented him to the crowd on the Common.

BLACK, AGAINST A "WHITE BACKGROUND"

In the years between the two meetings—and before joining Union in 1963—Caldwell had been the first black pastor of two predominantly white churches in Bryantville and West Duxbury, both in southern Massachusetts. When he started in Bryantville, some families left the church; he visited them anyway. “You can imagine the tension at the door,” he says. Someone else had planned a more sinister welcome: “The first day, I got an anonymous call saying there’s a bomb in the church.” He went looking for the device; the threat was an empty one.

Caldwell, who served four white and five black churches during his career, believes that living his life “against the white background” made him “more conscious of race or color” and more receptive to black theology. In 1968, he became a founding member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and of the National Conference of Black Churchmen. His activism didn’t end in the ’60s. In 1971, he inaugurated his rap sheet while protesting a supermarket’s discriminatory hiring; in 1985, he was arrested again after condemning apartheid outside South Africa’s Washington, DC, embassy.

RETURN TO SELMA

When protesters disrupted the 2000 United Methodist Church’s annual conference in an attempt to overturn its policies on homosexuality, Caldwell joined them, ready, once again, to make a stand—even if it meant another spell in cuffs. He’d first confronted his views on gay rights in the late ’70s when activist priest Malcolm Boyd

Religion News Service photo by Travis Long

The United States, Caldwell says, needs to make reparations, including financial ones, and “revisit its antiblack history and be more honest about today’s antiblack reality; the truth of that effort would shape new responses and ultimate healing for the nation.”

came out; Caldwell liked Boyd’s writings and decided his sexuality would do nothing to change that. Caldwell later became publicly involved in advocating

for gay rights because, he says, the movement merited a place alongside that for racial equality. “We can no longer engage in silo justice movements,” Caldwell, a prolific letter writer, wrote one of his colleagues in 2015. “Until all of us are free, none of us are free.”

Caldwell hopes his forthcoming documentary can bring the movements together. In the film, he joins author and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights activist Marilyn Bennett on a journey to Selma and other landmarks in the civil and gay rights movements. The two share their own stories, as well as those of other activists, religious leaders, and academics, exploring how the two movements intersect—and where they collide. In Selma, for instance, Caldwell talks about James Reeb—the white minister killed in the city in 1965—and his role as an ally of the black civil rights movement. Caldwell calls Reeb, with whom he flew from Boston to Selma, “the model for what I’m attempting to be as an ally-advocate of LGBT people and same-sex couples.”

When he returned to Selma for the documentary, Caldwell felt some in the city were reluctant to talk with

him, wary of associating an emblem of the civil rights movement with a call for gay rights. Caldwell says he’s even received abrasive letters accusing him of betraying his legacy of civil rights engagement and of betraying King.

“I’ve been disappointed that many of my civil rights movement colleagues have not joined me in being ally-advocates of gay rights,” says Caldwell, who officiated his first gay wedding in 2014 and is a former national board member of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. “I am appalled and overwhelmed at how I think black persons in the Church hew to a literalistic interpretation of scripture on gays and lesbians, when a literalistic interpretation of scripture was what enslaved our forebearers and racially segregated us.”

Others have argued there’s still too much to do in the fight against racism. Caldwell doesn’t disagree: his euphoria about a first black president has been beaten down by the killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray. “We’re repeating the past,” he says, “because we’ve not really exorcised it.” The United States, he says, needs to make reparations, including financial ones, and “revisit its antiblack history and be honest about today’s antiblack reality; the truth of that effort would shape new responses and ultimate healing for the nation.”

But that doesn’t have to happen at the expense of equality for all, Caldwell says.

With so much work still to be done, he isn’t giving up the struggle. “I’m hoping that what I say will speak to the future. How this old dude, Gil Caldwell, is living life on tiptoe, peering over to see what it’s like beyond.” □

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



Kyle Bozentko

IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN-WEARY OHIO, KYLE BOZENTKO HELPS MILLENNIALS TUNE IN TO CIVIC LIFE

BY JULIE BUTTERS

Young people have the power to shape US history, but they're not using it. In November 2014, an NBC News poll revealed that in that month's mid-term elections, people under age 30 accounted for only 12 percent of the vote; those over age 60 made up 37 percent. That's reported to be the largest age gap in at least a decade. Why aren't more young people voting, and what can be done about it? Kyle Bozentko is working to find out.

Bozentko ('10) is the executive director of the Jefferson Center, a non-profit civic engagement organization in St. Paul, Minnesota. He's also the project lead for Up for Debate! Ohio, a Jefferson Center initiative that received \$35,000 from the Knight Foundation to increase "political knowledge in Ohio through community deliberation, online engagement, and the media to provide citizens the opportunity to discuss issues and campaigns thoughtfully and civilly." The project aims to get millennials (people roughly ages 18 to 34) to the polls and "find ways for communities themselves to support young people in getting involved and staying involved [in local government] outside of elections," says Bozentko.

Some might question whether millennials actually care about their communities. If they did, wouldn't they

show up at the polls? Not necessarily, says Bozentko, who received STH's 2014 Distinguished Alumni/ae Award in the category of Young Alumni/ae. "It's not that they don't care, it's that they express their commitment in different ways—through community work, through neighborhood programs, or anything else that just doesn't fit the standard political mold, because [they see politics as] an area where you go to waste time, or waste your energy, because nothing's changing there."

Overcoming young people's antipathy toward government is a major challenge of Bozentko's work. "Having seen voting in politics play out so dysfunctionally on larger levels—whether that's changes in voter restrictions or voter ID laws or...the Bush-Gore election mishaps—has turned young people off from the premise that their vote makes a difference [and created] distrust," he says. Getting people to care about elections and civic life can be even more difficult in swing states like Ohio, where residents are bombarded for a year or more by media coverage and mudslinging campaign ads. "People just check out," he says.

Up for Debate! Ohio made its initial foray into increasing engagement in the months leading up to Akron's first open mayoral election in 28 years, which took place in November 2015. It organized discussion gatherings of

young people to learn about their priorities and ideas for connecting with local government. On one such occasion, they paid a group of millennials \$75 each to spend a day brainstorming how to engage young people in politics. Participants subsequently met with then-Republican mayoral candidate Eddie Sipplen.

Young Akronites are not, "in most cases, looking for drastic changes," says Bozentko. Their suggestions included expanding mentoring opportunities for students within city government and creating an app to keep citizens up to speed on elections, community projects, and other events. They also proposed a policy roundtable, in which Akron officials would solicit solutions to the city's challenges from local millennials.

Recognizing that media plays a key role in informing and engaging (or turning off) citizens, Up for Debate! Ohio is also working with outlets such as the *Akron Beacon Journal* and WKSU, Kent State University's public radio station, to provide "insight into what younger people want to learn about local politics, so that they could provide better coverage." Bozentko hopes this content will become an appealing alternative to

information provided by campaigns, offering "better information and resources for people who do want more substantive policy conversations."

But conversation alone isn't Bozentko's goal: it's action and engagement. The Jefferson Center is still crunching numbers to learn whether its efforts around Akron's mayoral election increased voter turnout, but past research shows such programs increase voting and civic participation. Participants in Jefferson Center electoral initiatives "have an increased sense of civic agency, feel that government or political officials are more likely to be open to solving their problems, and that they have more trust in government," says Bozentko. "People feel they're more equipped to be strong or autonomous civic actors."

Up for Debate! Ohio's next steps are to implement ideas from the millennials' discussions, develop relationships with the mayor and area partners, and continue engagement efforts for the 2016 presidential election. Bozentko hopes any civic interest Up for Debate! Ohio inspires will outlast the initiative. The Jefferson Center is currently expanding partnerships with Ohio-based organizations such as the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, The News Outlet (a journalism collaborative), and the *Akron Beacon Journal* to give voters the resources and skills to become more informed and involved in the 2016 presidential election process. □

"Having seen voting in politics play out so dysfunctionally on larger levels—whether that's changes in voter restrictions or voter ID laws or...the Bush-Gore election mishaps—has turned young people off from the premise that their vote makes a difference [and created] distrust."

—Kyle Bozentko

Melissa Ostrow

MISSION TO BREAK THE STAINED GLASS CEILING



HiRho Park

HIRHO PARK HAS HELPED DOUBLE THE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE PASTORS LEADING LARGE CHURCHES, BUT THAT'S ONLY THE START OF HER QUEST TO PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

BY LARA EHRLICH

In the 1970s, young women in the Republic of Korea were generally encouraged to keep their ambitions small: marry well and stay at home after graduating from college. HiRho Park was determined to go against convention. “I wanted to be a pioneer,” says Park (’07, ’11), who immigrated to the United States in 1986 to “be myself as a woman, do the things I wanted to do, and be treated equally.” When the aspiring pastor arrived in the United States, however, she was hit with a double whammy—sexism and racism. Caucasian males make up about 94 percent of the clergy in large United Methodist churches, and many district superintendents and church members questioned whether Park was qualified for ministry due to her gender and ethnicity.

Park resolved to smash the glass ceiling. In 1990, she became the first Asian woman ordained in the Oklahoma Annual Conference and the first racial-ethnic (racial and ethnic minority) pastor at the Glen Burnie UMC in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1995, she became the first racial-ethnic pastor in the Salem UMC in Baltimore, and, a decade later, the first Asian woman to serve the General Board of Higher

Education & Ministry (GBHEM). Now, as director of Clergy Lifelong Learning for GBHEM, Park advocates for other female and racial-ethnic clergy.

UMC research shows how sorely Park’s advocacy work is needed. The Church reported in 2005 that of the 1,154 large United Methodist churches in the United States (those with a membership of more than 1,000), only 64 had lead female pastors. In 2008, the UMC revealed that although women in these roles generally garnered higher average membership and worship attendance, supervised more staff, and handled more responsibilities than their male counterparts, their average salaries were approximately 27 percent lower.

In a 2008 survey of lead women pastors Park conducted for GBHEM, she learned that women not only face institutional barriers to the ministry—navigating the appointment process and gaining acceptance as leaders among them—they also confront self-imposed hurdles. Male clergy are more likely to request an appointment at a large church, for instance, while women are reluctant to self-identify as lead pastors.

“There is a need to challenge clergywomen to recognize and affirm their gifts” for serving large churches, as well as for the Church to nurture cler-

gywomen with leadership potential, Park wrote in a summary of the survey results. In 2008, she founded the Lead Women Pastors Project, a program of retreats, online continuing education, and coaching for young clergywomen. She also established the United Methodist Clergywoman Leadership

Seminar and spearheaded the publication of the e-book *Breaking Through the Stained Glass Ceiling: Women Pastoring Large Churches* (GBHEM, 2013), a collection of encouraging essays by female pastors. Through this work, Park provides women with peer mentorship and churches with training to support female leaders (e.g., facilitating sexism- and racism-related interventions). As a direct result, says Park, the percentage of lead women United Methodist pastors serving large churches has

more than doubled since 2008.

Racial-ethnic clergy are equally in need of support, Park says. In a 2011 GBHEM study, she found that of the 1,070 pastors then serving large congregations, only 20 were racial-ethnic. While these pastors were generally more highly educated than their

Caucasian counterparts, their salaries were lower. And because UMC leadership is still predominantly Caucasian, there are few mentors for young racial-ethnic clergy. The Church community must provide a platform for racial-ethnic clergy and highlight these individuals as examples for the next generation, Park says. She has initiated a mentoring program that will begin in 2016; the 20 racial-ethnic clergy currently serving large churches will mentor young clergy recommended by bishops and cabinet members.

While Park credits the UMC with supporting this work and including cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in its *Book of Discipline*, “in reality and practice, we have a long way to go,” she says. It is still rare for a Caucasian pastor to pursue an appointment serving a racial-ethnic congregation, for instance, and when she addresses this issue with colleagues, Park finds Caucasian pastors often claim the difference in language as justification.

Her response: “There are 10,000 racial-ethnic clergy who are willing to learn about different cultures, customs, and languages so we can serve Jesus Christ in this Church,” and the education should go both ways. As a first step, she proposes the Church make learning a language besides English an ordination requirement. “It takes the entire Church consciousness to implement what we say in our *Book of Discipline*, and beyond that, what God has commissioned to us: love all people as they are.” □

Courtesy of HiRho Park

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Today's activists protest oppression with a new prophetic power

BY PAMELA LIGHTSEY, *associate dean for community life & lifelong learning, clinical assistant professor of contextual theology & practice*

We came to affirm our commitment to types of scholarship and activism that prizes justice and works for transformation. We came prepared to lend our hands, heads, and hearts to catalyze a movement—to do the work of transforming the death of Michael Brown, Jr. and so many others into new life. We knew that it had been done before.¹

—“*Learning From Black Lives Conversation: A Statement of Solidarity and Theological Testament*”

More than two years after the killing of Trayvon Martin, and only three weeks after the killing of Eric Garner, the body of Michael Brown lay for nearly four hours decomposing on a sun-scorched Ferguson, Missouri, street after Brown was shot by police officer Darren Wilson. While the US Department of Justice subsequently determined “there is no credible evidence that Wilson willfully shot Brown as he was attempting to surrender or was otherwise not posing a threat,”² the killing of these three African American men fomented a summer of national unrest and the most significant black protest movement since the 1960s civil rights era. From the steady cadence

of “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” to the #BlackLivesMatter campaign, activists have demanded the American political machine give an account for the legislative and socioeconomic systems that oppress black people and perpetuate privilege—and these activists have called with a new prophetic power.

Economic discrimination is one of the founding pillars of societal racism. The racist transatlantic slave trade helped many owners of enslaved Africans amass wealth that continues to be passed on to their progeny, some of whom balk at the very idea of white privilege. Author Ta-Nehesi Coates³ and the cofounders of the nonprofit legal firm ArchCity Defenders⁴ have written in-

About the Author



Pamela Lightsey is a scholar, social justice activist, and military veteran. An ordained elder in the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, Lightsey has recently received awards for her justice work from the New England Conference and the North Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, Reconciling Ministries Network, and Black Clergywomen of the United Methodist Church.

1. “Learning From Black Lives Conversation: A Statement of Solidarity and Theological Testament,” accessed February 11, 2016, <http://kineticslive.com/learning-from-black-lives-conversation-a-statement-of-solidarity-and-theological-testament>.

2. US Department of Justice, “Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson,” (Washington, DC, 2015), 86, http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf.

3. Ta-Nehesi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631>.

4. ArchCity Defenders, *Municipal Courts White Paper*, accessed October 8, 2015, <http://03a5010.netsolhost.com/WordPress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ArchCity-Defenders-Municipal-Courts-Whitepaper.pdf>.

depth articles describing the economic and education disparities between black and white citizens in cities like Ferguson, Baltimore, Chicago, and yes, Boston. Coates poignantly describes the conditions of oppression concretized in cities across America, including poverty, unemployment, mass incarceration, and inadequate education. From these writings and similar research, we have learned that discussions about policing in America cannot ignore the injustice of municipalities deriving funding from what are now called “poverty violations”—traffic tickets assessed to citizens who could not afford the costs associated with operating an automobile (e.g., insurance, registration, title, tags). Racism has also been the cause of housing and job discrimination, which continues to perpetuate the poverty that burdens many descendants of enslaved Africans and other people of color.

LIVING WHILE BLACK

Each time I travel to Ferguson—or for that matter, most segregated communities of people of color—I see the currency of racism continues to destroy both oppressed and oppressor. I participate in the Movement for Black Lives optimistic about what shall be accomplished but at the same time lamenting

how little has been gained. The memories evoke anger and determination. I cannot remember a time when I was not acutely aware that *living while black* is a struggle against racism and its concomitant poisons, the likes of which can only be resolved by prolonged work. I remember that my education at one of the finest black schools in my county was ended when I, along with other young children of my community, was forced to board a bus to desegregate a

Discussions about policing in America cannot ignore the injustice of municipalities deriving funding from what are now called “poverty violations”—traffic tickets assessed to citizens who could not afford the costs associated with operating an automobile.

white school—not because my school was inadequate, but because the price for desegregation would not be paid by white children being bused away from their familiar neighborhoods.

Today, when I see housing that should be condemned, I remember the abandoned laundromat behind my family’s tiny apartment with

its “White Only” and “Colored Only” signs still visible—a reminder of the Jim Crow laws under which I was born. The racial category “colored,” printed on my birth certificate, and the story of my siblings being born—some alive, some stillborn—at home or clinics for the poor continue to remind me how racism often intersects with poverty. My birth certificate also has inscribed upon it evidence of the economic impact of structural racism upon black people during the days of my upbringing: “Father: Laborer.” Race

5. The remainder of our thoughts is contained in the document quoted at the beginning of this article. I do hope you will take the time to read it in full.

6. “Learning From Black Lives Conversation: A Statement of Solidarity and Theological Testament,” accessed February 11, 2016, <http://kineticslive.com/learning-from-black-lives-conversation-a-statement-of-solidarity-and-theological-testament>.

7. Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 148.

is not only a social construct, it is the mechanism by which many privileges are conveyed and assumed as deserved.

UNDIMINISHABLE POWER

Admittedly, there are different forms of privilege: class, education, physical ability, gender. (I have wrestled with my own privilege each time I board a flight to travel—by invitation—to support the work of local activists.) And just as there are different forms of privilege, there are different forms of power. The longevity of the #BlackLivesMatter protest is due to an organic power that neither white supremacists nor the status quo can diminish or control. It is a palpable energy. It provokes soul-stirring cadence, fists clenched in the air, social media strategies, sophisticated marketing, and the brilliant articulation of national goals. As activists, we simply offer our skills, when appropriate, as much as is needed.

This was the mindset of about 200 scholars and activists as we gathered in Ferguson in August 2015: to come together to determine how we might be helpful in the movement. The conference, located a few blocks from the local police station, was intentionally planned to take place around one year after the killing of Michael Brown. We listened to one another—activists, local clergy, and politicians. We wept and

The longevity of the #BlackLivesMatter protest is due to an organic power that neither white supremacists nor the status quo can diminish or control. It is a palpable energy.

were stirred by the prophetic, embodied in young activists. And we shook our heads in agreement when time after time we were asked, “When can we come together like this again? *We need this!*” We were thankful for and took note of the support of bold and courageous schools like STH.

We learned much during those two days. Among the outcomes of the gathering⁵ was an agreement to make this movement a centerpiece of our work and repent for ways we have left blacks to fend for themselves. We also committed to calling out any form of religion that dehumanizes blacks, and to urging the Church “to claim a new prophetic witness in the present rather than reviving a witness of ‘old wineskins.’”⁶

The late civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer once said, “There is one thing you have got to learn about our movement. Three people are better than no people.”⁷ It’s great that #BlackLivesMatter has been a well-supported movement full of leaders. It will be better when we no longer need movements to ensure justice. Until such time, the words commonly attributed to activist Angela Davis aptly convey the activist attitude about the work that lies ahead: “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” □

ABRAHAM & SARAH IN AMERICA

1. Haeyoun Park, “Q. and A.: Children at the Border,” October 21, 2014, accessed October 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/15/us/questions-about-the-border-kids.html?_r=0.

Immigrants have always been vulnerable. Mercy charges us to act on their behalf.

BY SALLY DYCK (CAS’76, STH’78),
*bishop of the Northern Illinois Annual
Conference of the United Methodist Church*

It was a peaceful demonstration, beginning at the back of the sanctuary of the Chicago Temple (First United Methodist Church) on March 27, 2014. About 50 United Methodists, both laity and clergy, had gathered from across the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. We began with a joyful recognition of each other’s support and prayer. Then we walked to Chicago’s Federal Plaza, where we heard from families who have been separated from loved ones due to deportations. There were prayers and statements by political and religious leaders. Several hundred people continued the march to the Homeland Security building, where a dozen of us from the Conference joined others in civil disobedience by blocking the doorway, resulting in arrest.

We believed it was incumbent upon those of us who have some degree of power and privilege to provide prophetic witness for those who are struggling as immigrants in our country.

The challenges faced by immigrants—with or without documents—lead them to make difficult decisions. One of those decisions is coming to this country, to protect children from violence in their homeland and to find economic solutions to the poverty they experience. Tens of thousands of unaccompanied children—fleeing

violence from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries—entered the United States in the last two years.¹ Honduras has become one of the murder capitals of the world and gang violence has increased tremendously in these countries. Many children have had “join or die” gang recruitment or gang threats against them or their families. Some families with support back in the United States are vulnerable as targets for kidnapping.

I don’t think those of us who’ve never been forced to flee our homes fully comprehend why people make some of the choices they make; that’s the definition of privilege.

SURVIVAL TACTICS

Difficult decisions have always been a part of immigrants’ lives. Every year, I

About the Author



Sally Dyck (CAS’76, STH’78) is the bishop of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She and her fellow protesters who were placed under temporary arrest as a result of the anti-deportation rally in Chicago were charged with a fine.

read through the Bible and I encounter the stories in Genesis where Abraham and Sarah are traveling through a foreign land and Abraham passes Sarah off to the foreign king as his sister: “Abraham traveled from there toward the land of the arid southern plain, and he settled as an *immigrant* in Gerar...”²

This is an immigrant’s story. I am deeply indebted to the Common English Bible for opening my eyes to this story, because instead of using the word “sojourn-ing,” the translation clearly refers to Abraham and Sarah as immigrants.

When immigrants find themselves in any kind of trouble, they have to make hard choices, just as Abraham did before Abimelech, the king of Gerar. Abraham was trying to keep himself alive; without him

alive, Sarah had no hope as a foreign woman.³ Yet in order to do that, he had to say that Sarah was his sister, a half-truth because they had different mothers. Sarah is incredibly vulnerable in this story—Abraham knows it, but he is powerless himself as an immigrant to do anything to protect her except to try to stay alive himself.

Abraham had to make hard choices in the hope of survival and keeping his family alive and together. Just like immigrants today facing deportation,

abuse, and vulnerability. For instance, some of today’s Abrahams suffer physically when they’re forced to work in substandard conditions. If they complain, they could lose their job, at best, or be turned in to the authorities for deportation.

LIVING IN FEAR

What happens to the Abrahams of today if they are deported? In addition to being separated, often abruptly, from their families, many are used by the federal government to provide essential labor at the detention centers where they are being held. In 2013, at least 60,000 immigrants worked in federal detention centers—more than worked for any other single employer in the nation, according to data from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE).⁴ The government pays these immigrants roughly 13 cents an hour, or one dollar a day, instead of the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. These Abrahams are slaves in our country.

But the face of an immigrant is predominantly a female face; there are slightly more female than male immigrants. Today’s Sarahs are often left to fend for themselves, not because their husbands, fathers, and brothers are the cads that the biblical commentaries make Abraham out to be, but because their

2. Genesis 20:1 (Common English Bible), my emphasis.

3. Genesis 20:11 (Common English Bible).

4. Ian Urbina, “Using Jailed Migrants As a Pool of Cheap Labor,” NYTimes.com, May 24, 2014, accessed October 1, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/us/using-jailed-migrants-as-a-pool-of-cheap-labor.html?_r=0.

5. Linda Burnham and Nik Theodore, “Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work” (New York: National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2012), <http://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/HomeEconomicsEnglish.pdf>.

6. “Home Is Where the Work Is: Inside New York’s Domestic Work Industry” (New York: Domestic Workers United and DataCenter, 2006), <http://www.datacenter.org/reports/homeiswheretheworkis.pdf>.

7. Exodus 22:21 (Common English Bible), my emphasis.

male family members had to make a hard choice to work wherever they could in the United States, even in risky and unsafe situations.

Imagine dropping your child off at school every day, afraid that you’ll be detained by ICE. Imagine arranging for a neighbor to take care of your children in case you disappear. Imagine staying with a violent partner because calling the cops could get you deported.

Forty-six percent of domestic workers are immigrants.⁵ In New York City, 33 percent of immigrant domestic workers have experienced abuse of some kind in their workplaces, often because of their race or immigration status.⁶ An

abuser can use the woman’s immigration status to keep her from leaving an abusive marriage or workplace or from reporting abuse. In the Bible, it says that Abimelech “took her [Sarah] into his household” (Genesis 20:2). Do we think she suddenly became the queen of the land? I don’t think so. Who knows what Sarah’s future would have held in Abimelech’s palace?

The next generation was seriously jeopardized in this story, too. If Abraham’s and Sarah’s immigration experience had gone badly, there would be no Isaac, no Jacob, no people of Israel.

If we were Abrahams and Sarahs, what would we do?

SPEAK UP, ACT OUT

Our Hebrew scriptures are filled with admonitions to provide mercy and care to immigrants, including: “Don’t mistreat or oppress an *immigrant*, because you were once *immigrants* in the land of Egypt.”⁷ Likewise, the prophets admonish people to live rightly, which includes seeking justice for the poor,

orphans, widows, and immigrants.

The lives of immigrants in our country are at risk, especially in our present political climate. Every day, they make difficult choices. Many of them can’t raise their own voices because of their tenuous situation with the US government. And so the task comes to

those of us who believe that justice and mercy require not just speaking up, but acting for those who are voiceless and vulnerable.

I could have written about the immigration issue forever with few people paying attention, but when clergy and laity were arrested for taking a stand, people took notice. Taking that step provided an opportunity for prophetic witness throughout the Church. □

A portion of this essay was adapted from “A process and penalty for disobedience,” about Dyck’s anti-deportation protest, at bishopdyck.org.

OVERCOMING THE WOUNDS OF RACISM

1. Josh Levin, “The Judge Who Coined ‘Indict a Ham Sandwich’ Was Himself Indicted,” Slate.com, http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon_valley/2014/11/25/sol_wachtler_the_judge_who_coined_indict_a_ham_sandwich_was_himself_indicted.html.

2. Bull Connor was the commissioner of public safety in Birmingham, Alabama, who achieved notoriety for turning fire hoses on civil rights campaigners in the '60s.

Yesterday’s problem was the color line.
Today’s is admitting it still exists.

BY ART J. GORDON ('16)

It was November 24, 2014. As a nation, we went about our average day: Starbucks, work, school, pastoral visits. But this was the day we looked forward to hearing the results from the grand jury in Ferguson, Missouri, investigating the death of black teenager Michael Brown. Many were hopeful—after all, it is 50 years removed from Selma and the Voting Rights Act. We have a black president and black attorney general.

But at 9 p.m., after a 20-minute speech by Prosecutor Bob McCulloch, the grand jury decided not to indict Officer Darren Wilson. A prosecutor with the power to indict a “ham sandwich”¹ could not indict Darren Wilson. Riot and protest ensued. Less than two weeks later, there was reason to hope the grand jury investigating the death of 43-year-old Eric Garner in police custody would secure an indictment—after all, there was video footage. But again, there was no indictment—except for Ramsey Orta, the 22-year-old Hispanic who recorded the event. The challenge for racial justice of the 21st century is not the blatant “Bull Connors”² of old, but the quiet, aversive racism that sneaks up as a cancer, hard to prove or be conscious of until its culmination.

The night of the Garner decision, it felt like a part of me died. I couldn’t muster the strength to do anything. How could the justice system fail its

own people again? It was a sad time in this nation, and many mourned.

Perhaps Jeremiah would understand the pain we are in. In the early seventh century BC, the Kingdom of Judah had initiated reforms to bring the nation to spiritual unity and social continuity. But along the way, the people who said they were a nation after God oppressed foreigners and ignored the poor. In a situation so broken and unjust, Jeremiah loses hope for any cure and utters the rhetorical question, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jeremiah 8:22)

This present moment is painful for those hurt from the wound of racism and the challenges that hinder racial justice. We are hurt by legislation that says “stop and frisk” and “stand

About the Author



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Courtesy of Art J. Gordon

your ground,” and by Senate Bill 1070, Arizona’s draconian anti-illegal-immigration law. Our prophetic witness, like Jeremiah’s, gets discouraged sometimes. It’s the same discouragement Martin Luther King, Jr. felt after the 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church, the same discouragement activists in Ferguson felt. Racial justice seems like an idealistic hope that can’t fully be realized.

W. E. B. Du Bois proposed that the problem of the 20th century was the color line;³ but the problem of the 21st is acknowledging the color line. In 1986, social psychologist John Dovidio proposed a theory called Aversive Racism, contending that this form of racism essentially denounces racism while upholding it.⁴ It is conscious in its efforts to be anti-racist and subconscious in racism. It’s dangerous. Cancerous. Difficult to prove.

It’s dangerous because it says, “Our university is diverse, and has a 20 percent Asian population,” yet denies that the same 20 percent is voiceless on campus. It’s cancerous because it says, “We have a multicultural congregation,” but fails to mention that the leadership is not diverse. It’s difficult to prove because it will march with you at night in the streets of New York City, Boston, and Washington, DC, chanting “black lives matter,” but that same very night will switch sidewalks as you approach.

Jeremiah realized that same contradiction. His people felt God was on their side even while they oppressed others. After all, were they not a chosen people? After all, aren’t we America—the city on a hill, the land of hopes and dreams, “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all”⁵? But how can

we be when we deny racism with our lips but support it through our hearts? We need healing.

With the words “Thus says the Lord,” Jeremiah spoke truth to power, and critiqued the strongholds of national pride and denialism. He challenged the egotistical prophets who only mustered Band-Aid solutions to the wound of idolatry. Today calls for a prophetic witness across denominations and the nation to expose the cancerous wound of covert racism. Prophetic witness can expose corporations that profit on prison labor, businesses that exploit undocumented immigrant labor, Islamophobia in universities, and white privilege in society.

This is where the Church can be a living witness. To be truly prophetic, we must follow what Howard Thurman calls “the religion of Jesus,” which encompasses the virtues of love, justice, and righteousness.⁶ This is the balm in Gilead. It is when public policy reflects Christ’s ethic that wounds can begin to heal. It is when the judicial process makes justice its nature that we can begin to heal. It is when one uses benefits of racial privilege to make change in social structures. Under Christ’s Spirit, laws can be inverted: we can “stand our ground” against aversive racism, and “stop and frisk” unjust legislation.

It is a new day. Yet the wounds still hurt. But let us not “be weary in well doing,”⁷ for we shall reap justice. It’s a new day, so let us proclaim that “there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole, there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.”⁸ □

Condensed and adapted from the sermon that won Gordon the 2015 Donald A. Wells Preaching Prize from the Massachusetts Bible Society.

3. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Pocket Books, 2005), 3.

4. John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner, “The Aversive Form of Racism” in *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, ed. Dovidio and Gaertner (Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, 1986), 61–89.

5. Pledge of allegiance to the flag; manner of delivery, 4 USC § 4.

6. Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1981), 114.

7. Galatians 6:9 (King James Bible).

8. “There Is a Balm in Gilead,” African American spiritual.



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MISSING IN ACTION

1. *Batman Begins*. Directed by Christopher Nolan. Hollywood, CA: Warner Bros., 2005.

2. D. W. Winnicott (1960a), “Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self” in *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International UP Inc., 1965), 140–152.

3. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (speech, Washington, DC, August 28, 1963), *American Rhetoric*, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>.

Does what we believe line up with what we do?

BY BARBOD SALIMI, *instructor of philosophical psychology, theological ethics & peace studies*

In the 2005 film *Batman Begins*, the main character—Bruce Wayne—receives a sobering message from his love interest during a charged interaction. “It’s not who you are underneath, it’s what you do that defines you,”¹ Rachel Dawes proclaims. For the audience, and for Bruce, this moment is marked with painful irony: Rachel does not realize his true identity and activity in Gotham City. She is later stunned to find out who Bruce is—or more importantly, what Bruce does as Batman.

The notion that what people do defines them contrasts with what we are used to hearing, both in pop culture and in academic circles—that identity is contained in some less concrete realm, independent of action in the world. This takes familiar forms such as, “It’s who you are on the inside that matters most,” or, in academics, what psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott called the “true self.”² These ways of thinking seem to locate the essence of personhood in a place thought to be “internal” and thus wholly independent of the external.

There are obvious ways that this works toward good. For example, one’s value and worth should not be assigned based on a phenotypical externality such as skin color. (Think

of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s emphasis on the “content of character” in his “I Have a Dream” speech.³) Similarly, there is good reason to think that a person’s beauty is indeed more than skin deep. But Rachel was implicitly highlighting the cold, hard truth that gets overlooked when these otherwise good messages lose nuance and are applied too heavy-handedly: what one does speaks volumes in a way that what one says cannot. Rachel points out that what people believe about themselves is hardly as telling as how people actually live. In essence, she pathologizes the disjunction between thought and action.

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About the Author



Barbod Salimi’s teaching and research interests lie in the intersection of philosophy, psychology, religion, and ethics. His scholarly work has focused on areas as diverse as psychological formation and existentialism, and he has published a chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*. He aims to deepen the understanding of peace and violence through examinations of culture, discourse, embodiment, and everyday life.

Courtesy of Barbod Salimi

MIND, BODY, AND WITNESS

This disjunction is common in our sociocultural contexts. We find ourselves comfortably accepting of the thought that our true selves are morally intact and tucked away in their safe havens, untouched by the grim realities of our day-to-day happenings. It is comfortable to think that poor actions do not define us and that some inner self can persist and maintain an unblemished identity in spite of our missteps. This sort of disjunction is a luxury afforded by a type of dualism that pervades Western notions of personhood. When Descartes famously asserted

“*Cogito ergo sum*” (“I think, therefore I am”), he effectively made it philosophically permissible for subsequent generations to split mind from body, thought from action,⁴ mere beliefs from concrete ethics, and so on.

I submit that the luxury of viewing our lives through such dualistic lenses constitutes a maneuver of power and privilege that we do well to work against.

By orienting ourselves toward a deeper unity of thought and action, we may find ourselves living more faithfully in the practical sense while also becoming more holistically positioned to occupy the space of prophetic witness.

Prophetic witness would necessitate the dismantling of our own power

and privilege, averting our tendencies toward denial (which Anna Freud defined as “getting rid of unwelcome facts”⁵), and speaking truthfully about that which we do repeatedly and unconsciously in our everyday lives. As cultural beings, we embody habits and meanings that define us and shape us into the people we are. This happens regardless of what we “believe” or say we believe.

MONEY TROUBLES

The pervasive monetization of our daily lives, for example, potentiates the violent capacity for dehumanization.

By orienting ourselves toward a deeper unity of thought and action, we may find ourselves living more faithfully in the practical sense while also becoming more holistically positioned to occupy the space of prophetic witness.

in themselves, humanity becomes overshadowed as people are made “into machines.”⁶

Reducing human worth in such ways engenders perceptions of human beings as monetized, disposable, or usable. Take, for example, the tendency of politicians and non-politicians

This occurs by virtue of the very nature of capital—when it becomes so central to a culture, it engenders an ethic of expendability. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels referred to this as commodification, noting that in capitalistic societies where human beings operate as means to ends (namely, instruments used to make money, or build more capital) rather than as ends

4. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).

5. Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, trans. Cecil Banes (London: Hogarth Press Collection, 1937).

6. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 73.

7. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

alike to speak of war through dollars and cents. Often, sociocultural attitudes of aversion to war are articulated in strictly economical terms that tend to sound more like, “We can’t afford another war” than, “We ought not kill our fellow human beings.” It is important to notice that in this view, the obliteration of human life becomes blurred—and even goes unnoticed—by virtue of conflating capital with humanity. Such views do not arise from out of thin air. They are shaped by our everyday cultural embodiments, of which the pervasive monetization and commodification of life is a prime example.

Contrast this violent and dehumanizing reduction with the sort of ethic that French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas advanced that rested upon the refusal to reduce the other or deny the infinitude of the other.⁷ When we encounter the world without a sense of mystery and radical openness, we commit the grave mistake of appropriating it and all it contains, including other human beings. Avoiding this mistake does not necessarily need to come in the form of full-scale, anarchistic revolution (though one could make the case that Jesus’s prophetic witness constituted a theologi-

cally informed mode of anarchism). Rather, we can take moderate steps toward “de-monetizing” our perceptions of the world by simply being more mindful about the ways that our culture collapses capital and humanity into one another.

One way to promote this mindfulness is through a more careful monitoring of our everyday use of language. When we catch ourselves speaking of others in financial terms, we do well to pause and reformulate our words. Rather than allowing ourselves to make utterances like, “That person is worth every penny,” we should strive for statements like, “That person is so intrinsically valuable, a blessing.” The way we speak goes a long way in not only reifying

perceptions of reality, but in shaping ethics and ultimately illuminating our true identities.

There is prophetic witness to be found in Rachel’s admonition in *Batman Begins*. Whether we like it or not, our everyday cultural embodiments say more about who we really are than we can or do try to say for ourselves. The moment we forget or deny that, we succumb to our power and privilege and lose our capacity for prophetic witness. □

Rather than allowing ourselves to make utterances like, “That person is worth every penny,” we should strive for statements like, “That person is so intrinsically valuable, a blessing.” The way we speak goes a long way in...shaping ethics and ultimately illuminating our true identities.

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

1. Learned ignorance is the “immediate but unselfconscious understanding which defines the practical relationship to the world.” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 19.

2. “Might we think of identities as narratives or roles which subjects decide to perform as a matter of identification, not as fixed identities?” Stuart Hall, “Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities,” in *The House That Race Built: Black Americans, U.S. Terrain*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 299.

3. David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 106.

4. Ed. Walter Earl Fluker and Catherine Tumber, *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 307; see also *Howard Thurman, The Inward Journey* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1961), 106.

T

he oppressed urge us to cry out for justice

BY WALTER EARL FLUKER
(GRS’88), *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
Professor of Ethical Leadership

There are many voices calling us from the wilderness. They talk, walk, and stalk us in our gardens of innocence—our learned ignorance and forgetfulness¹—demanding how we will identify and locate ourselves in the human struggle for justice.²

These voices—belonging to the muted, missed, and dismissed, the wretchedly fated of society—transgress borders, categories, and the order of things. They intrude, disrupt, and interrupt our quiet complacency—making us anxious and afraid. They often cry out in extremes, without respect to persons, places, or heritages because they are unheard, unacknowledged. Unlike many of us who benefit from the privileges of academic and ecclesiastical authority, they do not seek to make *straight* that which is crooked nor *right* that which is not in alignment with the order of things. These are subaltern voices that have no recourse but to cry out. As Father David Tracy writes, “The final indignity for anyone is to be forbidden one’s own voice or to be robbed of one’s own experience.”³

Tragically, the comfortable and secure seldom, if ever, *really* hear these voices until they scream. The terrible reality is that we have missed or dismissed these voices in places like Sanford, Florida; Ferguson, Missouri;

and Staten Island, New York—and we are shocked when they speak up and act out in tragic, tormented violence in places like Brooklyn, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; Boston, Massachusetts; or Paris, France.

In one sense, the wilderness is a dangerous, complicated space where people compete to be heard. The wilderness is not merely a geographical and political location—it is also embodied history. To quote Howard Thurman, we come into the world and even before God with “the smell of life upon us.”⁴ Much of the violence in our world is a result of long, complicated, embodied histories that collide at the intersections

About the Author



Walter Earl Fluker (GRS’88) is a leading authority on Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr. The editor of the Howard Thurman Papers Project, which recently published the third volume of Thurman’s papers, he is also the author of *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* and the forthcoming *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America* (NYU Press, 2016). Fluker was previously the founding executive director of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College.

of our everyday worlds. These histories remind us of our vulnerability, detachment, and complicity because the wilderness is a mirror of our own wildness, desertion, loneliness, and alienation.

Should we be surprised, then, that there are so many voices crying in the wildernesses of 21st-century America and the world who appear as wild men and women, who haunt our sacred stories of religion and nation, and call us to accountability where injustice reigns among the poorest of the poor; among black, brown, red, white, female, male, crip,⁵ and queer broken bodies that are crucified daily by the relentless pursuit of capital and power?

JUSTICE
THAT SEEKS
COMPASSION

The wilderness is indeed dangerous, but it can also be a space of grace, freedom, liminality, transition, transformation, and hope—it can be a site where a liberating word comes our way.⁶ The liberating word, writes the apostle⁷, is near and calling us, intimately connected and configured into our very existences; it is in our faces, in our minds and hearts like a champion fighting for the silenced, daring us to hear, see, believe, speak, and act. We are all haunted by a word that comes our way in the wildernesses of our small, incomplete, and lonely lives and that

“liberate[s] [us], both from the frightening restrictions that bind [us] to what is present and from the anxiety of [our hearts].” In fact, “[we need] language more for hearing than for speaking, for believing than for acting.”⁸

How shall we hear this liberating word until we have given attention to our own voices? How shall we learn to listen for the liberating word in the voices of others with whom we strongly disagree? And how shall we insure that our voices are voices of justice and not self-aggrandizing babblings of which we hear so much? It begins with hearing, seeing, and believing in justice that

seeks compassion. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in the Tibetan language, compassion is called *shen dug ngal wa la mi sö pa*, which means literally, “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering.”⁹

Compassion calls us “*alongside* the other to share in her sorrow and tragedy, but also in her hopes and aspirations”¹⁰—

alongside the mothers and fathers of murdered children; *alongside* the spouses and children of slain police officers; *alongside* the suffering people of Boston and Bosnia, Paris and Palestine, Nigeria and Nicaragua; *alongside* the frightened and hungry and broken bodies of immigrants crossing borders in Europe and the United States; *alongside* those who have no one

5. The word “crip” is used to reference disabled and queer bodies. See Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: NYU Press, 2006); Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the Global City* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); and Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

6. Walter Brueggemann, *Journey to the Common Good* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 15–17.

7. “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)” (Romans 10:8).

8. Gerhard Ebeling, *God and Word*, trans. James Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 30.

9. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 64.

10. Walter E. Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 146.

11. Dorothee Soelle, *Revolutionary Patience*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974; England: 1977).

12. “There is in every person something that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine within herself. . . . There is something in everybody that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in other people.” Howard Thurman, “The Sound of the Genuine,” Baccalaureate Address, Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, May 4, 1980.

13. Ray L. Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination: Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 28.

to speak on their behalf; and *alongside* those with whom we disagree as we enter into difficult conversations about the future of our existence in this nation and on this Earth.

REVOLUTIONARY PATIENCE

How might such conflicts find resolution in a complex, multicultural environment where all public actors can have their say? The resolution

begins not with *speaking*, but with *listening*. Listening involves a type of social patience—cultivating the practice of allowing the other to have her say, especially the voice of the marginalized and muted. Listening involves

waiting, a type of “revolutionary patience,”¹¹ which is intimately connected with social change. To be *alongside*, therefore, means to actively listen to the other, even in our most challenging disputations; and it is also an opportunity to hear, maybe for the very first time, the sound of the genuine in the other and to hear one’s own voice.¹² This is the sphere of discourse where we are given grace to receive the other in all her difference and to relive our stories in justice-seeking-compassion.¹³ Being a justice-seeking, compassionate voice in the wilderness for those who cannot speak for themselves and for those who will not speak to us is

perhaps the greatest service that we can offer to God.

If only we could hear the sound of the genuine—a liberating word that comes our way—we might believe that it is possible to work for justice in the wildernesses of the world and to join John Wesley and Martin Luther King, Jr., Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, Harriet

Tubman and Fannie Lou Hamer, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, Ella Josephine Baker and Dorothy Day, and so many others who spoke from their wildernesses. Until we learn to hear and speak in our own justice-seeking-compassion voices, sing our own justice-seeking-compassion

Being a justice-seeking,
compassionate voice in
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songs, dance our own justice-seeking-compassion movements, and practice justice-seeking-compassion communication, we are but inauthentic actors in a grand narrative that we had no part in authoring—a script that was written *for* us, but not *with* us.

There is a particular service that you and only you can do, in a voice which only you can speak. When we cry out for justice in this world, we are the voice—and that voice is the voice of the divine. □

Adapted from Fluker’s sermon delivered at Harvard Memorial Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 18, 2015.

Preaching

IN A POSTCOLONIAL AGE

1. Martin Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation,” in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 31.

2. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

Telling the truth about our past allows us to be faithful in the present

BY DAVID SCHNASA JACOBSEN,
*preaching professor, director of the
Homiletical Theology Project*

A common sobriquet for the School of Theology is *schola prophetarum*, or school of the prophets. The name calls to mind the prophetic witness at the heart of what the institution does and how its students, alumni, faculty, and staff have sought to engage in the world. We gratefully recount the prophetic memory that makes us want to celebrate this place and its prophetic preachers: Anna Howard Shaw (1878, MED 1886), Martin Luther King, Jr., Howard Thurman, and so many others.

At the same time, it is exceedingly important for us to be honest about our identity and our witness for the sake of preaching gospel prophetically today. If we mistake our sense of memory and identity for uncritical hagiography, we are not truthful about our past, nor can we be prophetically faithful in the present. At the very least, some grounding in a critical reading of history and a truthful theological perspective should give us pause.

In the *Heidelberg Disputation*, Martin Luther argues that the chief virtue of a theology of the cross is to “[call a] thing what it actually is.”¹ A theology of glory runs the risk of occluding the truth; a theology of the cross acknowledges the troublesome truth that the gospel and the call to prophetic wit-

ness meet us where we really are. Somehow we in STH need to learn to speak of ourselves historically and theologically in an even more truthful way: a way that acknowledges all the differences among us and the cruciform shadows in which our prophetic calling is issued.

Some of this naming of the cruciform truth of our identity and witness is already a topic of conversation in the Church. Thirty years ago, postliberal theologians like Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon invited main-line churches to embrace their loss of cultural power and any pretensions to a universal liberal “we” and hold instead to a Church with a *counter-cultural identity*, as “exiles” or a colony in a secular world.²

(continued on page 42)

About the Author



David Schnasa Jacobsen is the preaching professor at the School of Theology and directs the Homiletical Theology Project. He is the author of *Mark* in the Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries series (2014) and editor of *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology* (Cascade Books, 2015).

INVISIBLE PRIVILEGE

In my view, this shift away from liberal universalism to ecclesial particularity is just the beginning of what needs to take place.³ My quarrel with the postliberal view held by Hauerwas and Willimon is that it has often not come fully clean with its identity and the nature of its prophetic witness in a world that doesn’t feature just one dominant culture, but many cultures and identities. My concern is that both mainline liberalism and a culturally wary postliberalism have inadvertently occluded the complexities of identity and privilege that even now are too often unspoken features of common life. STH and the mainline Church are neither chaplains to some universal order nor the vanguard of a pure, countercultural ecclesial body. We are, in truth, largely white institutions for whom our privilege has too often been invisible to “us.”

I place the pronoun above in quotes because, as every preacher knows, it is often difficult to speak in the first-person plural. Postcolonial theory and theology actually problematize the way in which we construct our identities, reinscribe often unnamed points of

view, and understand our realities not in terms of some monolithic culture, but in intercultural relation.⁴ The problematic “we” of homiletic discourse reveals the difficulty we have of understanding our identities and the nature of prophetic witness itself. Implied underneath it

is the idea that the largely white mainline Church needs not only to acknowledge its disestablishment, but its racial privilege and its need for decolonization.

The goal of all this, however, is not an extra dollop of white, liberal guilt, but responsible and faithful prophetic witness, calling a thing “what it really is” in the shadow of the cross. This will not be easy, and may also require an honest, intercultural capacity that is both painful and life-giving.

It is painful because it means embracing the truth of memory and acknowledging the corruption that attends any institution’s desire to *possess* its identity as a reified essence. Prophetic witness may just mean that we take seriously postcolonial theology’s commitment to identity as being formed in intercultural relation with others. Postcolonial theology acknowledges that identities in a colonial (and now neocolonial)

3. For more details about the critique of this classic liberal view of prophetic preaching, see my article, “*Schola Prophetarum*: Prophetic Preaching Toward a Public, Prophetic Church,” *Homiletic* 34:1 (Summer 2009), 12–21.

4. The term postcolonial names a set of relationships that continue to haunt the realities of life in a neocolonial world marked by the migration of peoples, economic oppression, intercultural meetings and conversations, and the privileging of certain American or Eurocentric ways of doing things, thinking, and speaking. For postcolonial theory, culture and identity are not fixed essences, but interactive.

For a helpful introductory summary of postcolonial theory and theology, one may wish to read Ania Loomba’s *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 2005) and Kwok Pui-lan’s *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

For a brief overview of how postcolonial theory and theology might impact contemporary homiletics, see my articles, coauthored with Yohan Go and Duse Lee, “Introduction to the Essays of the Consultation on Preaching and Postcolonial Theology” and “Making New Spaces in Between: A Post-Reflective Essay Weaving Postcolonial Threads into North American Homiletics” in *Homiletic* 40:1 (Summer 2015), 3–7, 56–62.

5. James M. Childs, Jr., *Preaching Justice: The Ethical Vocation of Word and Sacrament Ministry* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 40. Childs writes about the Spirit of Pentecost in connection with deepened ecumenical relationships. I press Childs’s language further by viewing creating alliances with others across cultural and even religious lines as the Spirit’s ongoing creative task in the world, in connection with the prophetic Word.

context are often reified so as to disavow the complexity of relationships across groups and their identities. It may not be easy for the white mainline Church and its institutions to acknowledge the painful truth of the ways in which its identity has been constructed to keep others at bay and away. Postcolonial theory invites us to see ourselves as entangled in our identities with others and therefore not heirs to some preserved purity.

CALL IT LIKE IT IS

In Germany, many communities have begun placing inscribed stone memorials—*Stolpersteine* (“stones of stumbling”)—in the uneven cobblestone surfaces of the streets outside the homes and businesses that once belonged to Jews and had been appropriated during the Holocaust. The point of these *Stolpersteine* is to keep the memory and therefore the truth of that memory alive. It requires contemporary Germans to be aware of the complexities of identities, both past and present, so that what happened then might never again. Here, memory and identity are not hidden, but brought out into the open, where they help sponsor responsible living with others

today. I suspect for “us” it is also about offering prophetic witness that exposes power and privilege in the cruciform shadow of calling a thing what it really is. This is a piece of the work that remains for “us” going forward—where the gospel must be named in the presence of who “we” really are in *relation* to neocolonial others.

And yet postcolonial vision offers still more: a life-giving pneumatology for what is otherwise a dislocating experience for people of privilege who share this neocolonial world. In a volume on prophetic preaching, ethicist James Childs makes the case that “the Spirit makes alliances.”⁵ Perhaps the greatest possible shift in the mainline Church’s prophetic witness would be to

recognize that the Spirit of God animates prophetic witness not just by the “no” in the face of human idolatry, but also by the “yes” in seeing God’s Spirit already at work in the wider world beyond our ecclesial circled wagons, beyond the purity of self-enclosed identities. If the Spirit makes alliances, we may find ourselves engaging a prophetic witness for this time, one that both sees and embraces a Church that is being disestablished *and* decolonized in God’s good time. □

The problematic “we” of homiletic discourse reveals the difficulty we have of understanding our identities and the nature of prophetic witness itself. Implied underneath is the idea that the largely white mainline Church needs to acknowledge its racial privilege and its need for decolonization. The goal of all this, however, is not an extra dollop of white, liberal guilt, but responsible and faithful prophetic witness.

It may not be easy for the white mainline Church and its institutions to acknowledge the painful truth of the ways in which its identity has been constructed to keep others at bay and away. Postcolonial theory invites us to see ourselves as entangled in our identities with others and therefore not heirs to some preserved purity.

THE KINGDOM

— and —
The Kitchen



Building God’s kingdom is like baking bread.
We work—and then we wait.

BY LINDSAY POPPER ('15)

I baked bread this morning.

It’s a recipe I learned from a friend, for a sourdough that uses the yeast from a saved bit of last week’s dough. Up until Sharon’s lesson, I thought all yeast came in neat foil pouches, an even 2¼ teaspoons premeasured and hermetically sealed.

To help me begin my own lineage of dough—a starter—she told me to mix just water and flour. While I kneaded, the little particles of wild yeast—the ones that are always floating in the air, living on countertops, and colonizing our skin—worked their way into my dough.

I did not think it was going to work.

I saw no change for the first or second day, no frothiness or lightness or rising. On the third day, still nothing. The recipe said more flour, more water, more kneading. By the fifth day, I was finally willing to say that there was yeast in my dough.

In Luke 13:20–21, Jesus says, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

Because Jesus was likely talking about a process fairly similar to what Sharon taught me, interpreting this scripture requires knowing something about baking. His metaphor gets us out of the library and into the kitchen, out of our overworked minds and into

our ready bodies, out of the world of theory and into the world of lively, messy, embodied, delicious practice.

There is a tendency among interpreters of this parable to reduce the metaphor to this single meaning: something very small becomes very big. But I believe that Jesus, with his consistent use of story, parable, and metaphor, complicates such a straightforward approach.

In Luke 17:21, Jesus will go on to say that “the kingdom of God is in your midst—is within you, is in your hearts and all around you” (my paraphrase). Yeast—wild yeast—really is within us, and all around us. The yeast-like kingdom may be small—it may be hardly perceptible sometimes—but my goodness it is pervasive. So how does this kingdom come?

About the Author



Lindsay Popper ('15) is a preacher, poet, and the minister of Christian education at Allin Congregational Church in Dedham, Massachusetts. She is interested in social justice and issues of grief and loss.

Courtesy of Ashley Anderson

We are tempted to believe that we build the kingdom of God every time we go to marches, cook meals for the hungry, and start social justice programs. We are tempted to believe we build it when we teach Sunday school and campaign for the good candidates and stand for the rights of the disinherited. But when we convince ourselves that we build the kingdom, we are buying into a dangerous and exhausting lie that has been plaguing liberal Christianity for the last hundred or so years.

We have bought the lie that building the kingdom of God is on our shoulders, and that it will come when we are good enough, strong enough, persistent enough, smart enough, steady enough. That lie will always and only leave us feeling tired and insufficient.

The kingdom of God is like yeast: you couldn't make yeast if you tried. Yeast is a living, growing being that cannot be manufactured by people, no matter how crafty we are.

Baking bread is always an act of faith. As a baker, I can provide the right conditions for the yeast. I can buy good flour. I can get the water warm enough but not too warm. I can remember the salt. But at the end of the day—at the end of all of my mix-

ing and kneading—my job is to wait.

That it is the yeast (wild and omnipresent, only barely controllable) that makes flour and water and human work into bread is a truth that carries an incredible bit of good news about the kingdom of God. Just as the success of bread rests ultimately on the presence and action of yeast, the bringing and the building of the kingdom of God rests ultimately on God's action.

In Luke's gospel, the leaven parable follows a teaching on the Sabbath; Jesus reminds his crowd that this sacred day has always been a time for remembering God's liberation. When he goes on to talk about the kingdom of God being like yeast, I submit that he does so to underscore the good

news of the Sabbath: human work is not the basis of the universe. God's work, God's sustaining presence, God's healing and redemption is infinitely more powerful, enduring, and efficacious than the work of any one person, or even any one community.

God freed us from bondage in Egypt and from our bondage to the death-dealing systems of sin. God frees us from the lies that we must work endlessly. God frees us from the lie that the kingdom could rise or fall on our efforts. And God frees us from our belief that we are the world's last best hope.

We have bought the lie that building the kingdom of God is on our shoulders, and that it will come when we are good enough, strong enough, persistent enough, smart enough, steady enough. That lie will always and only leave us feeling tired and insufficient.

1. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, HarperOne, 2008), 193.

2. Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:18–19.

3. Wright, 193.

Because the kingdom is wild. The kingdom is all around us. Jesus is the one who inaugurated and announced the now and coming kingdom, and Jesus is the one whose power and love and grace will bring that kingdom into fullness.

Now, our job is not to sit back eating bonbons and drinking martinis while Jesus brings the kingdom in. In light of the fact that the kingdom of God is like yeast, we have real work to do.

Scholar N. T. Wright makes a helpful distinction between building the kingdom and building *for* the kingdom. An individual stonemason does not build a cathedral; no single person has the knowledge, skill, foresight, power, ability, or time to build a cathedral alone. But a stonemason can dedicate his or her life to building *for* the cathedral, knowing that what he or she makes will be used.¹

And so, in light of the good news that God is the builder and the bringer and the architect and the fulfiller of God's kingdom, what are we to do?

We work. Bakers know that yeast is everywhere in the air, but that it will only turn into delicious bread if they follow the right steps. This work requires their whole selves. Likewise, we must work with our whole selves to live in line with the kingdom of God. We must preach good news to the poor, proclaim release for the captives and recovery of sight for the blind, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.²

Wright puts it this way: “What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, cam-

paigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—*will last into God's future*. These activities . . . are part of what we may call *building for God's kingdom*.”³

We wait. The bread recipe I use takes about two and a half days. The kingdom of God may be all around us, but it is also not yet here, and so we wait for it. This requires stubbornness, patience, and a certain persistent hope.

We witness. We witness the ways God is at work in our world, what God has already done. We keep our eyes open to what is happening, to where we see the kingdom breaking in on our tired and small lives. We look for places where the last are first and the first are last, we look for places where justice is being done, where love is being lived out in radical and surprising ways.

And we wonder. Every single time I make bread, I am amazed. It always feels like a miracle. Wonder keeps us alive to the knowledge that we are participating in something way bigger, way more beautiful, than anything we could imagine.

Hear the good news: the kingdom of God is present in the world. It is wild and persistent, it is surprising, it is growing, it is coming. The kingdom of God is rising like leavened dough and we are invited to work and to wonder at the stunning beauty of it. □

Condensed from Popper's winning sermon for the 2015 David H. C. Read Preacher/Scholar Award competition, held by Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City.

A PERFECTLY UNJUST STORM



Mariama White-Hammond

RACISM, POVERTY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE ARE A DEADLY MIX

BY MARIAMA WHITE-HAMMOND ('17)

In 2005, I went to the Gulf Coast to provide support after Hurricane Katrina. I saw how the devastation of the wind and water was compounded by poverty and racism to create a perfectly unjust storm. As I witnessed the suffering, I began to see how climate change could devastate our planet and our most marginalized people. Since then, I have been trying to speak prophetically about the injustice of human-made climate change.

There are days when working for climate justice makes me feel like the prophet Jeremiah, whose heart was heavy as warnings to his people went unheeded. It is easy to get depressed when we see how wasteful our society is and when we hear political leaders dismiss scientific evidence of human-made climate change. It is frustrating when people in the environmental movement use the urgency of climate change to avoid necessary conversations about race, class, power, and privilege. Faced with challenges like police brutality,

educational inequity, and health disparities, it can be hard to even get attention from fellow black people.

Part of my motivation for coming to STH was to figure out how to mobilize people of faith to engage in the climate justice movement. In classes, I am exploring the connections between ecology, economics, theology, and practice. My contextual education placement allows me to engage in interfaith organizing around Massachusetts' energy policy.

God has helped me to see climate change as an opportunity for miraculous transformation. Averting this crisis requires us to work across national borders, build relationships between neighbors, reduce our consumption, and live more simply. It seems like a "mission impossible," but with my faith in the transcendent power of the Holy Spirit, I accept the assignment. □

Mariama White-Hammond ('17) is a second-year Master of Divinity student. She serves on the ministerial staff of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston and on a number of local and national nonprofit boards.

As I witnessed the suffering [caused by Hurricane Katrina], I began to see how climate change could devastate our planet and our most marginalized people.



PILGRIMAGE to SELMA

An estimated 80,000 people visited Selma, Alabama, on March 7 and 8, 2015, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the “Bloody Sunday” march for black voting rights. But for Woodie W. White (‘61), this pilgrimage is an annual event. The retired United Methodist bishop (center) has been taking students from his Methodist Church and Race class here for roughly the past six years. White is bishop-in-residence of Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and a member of STH’s Dean’s Advisory Board.

During the anniversary weekend, White joined others—including his wife Kim (right) and Ruby Shinhoster of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Women’s Organizational Movement for Equality Now (left)—in crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge, where state troopers attacked marchers on March 7, 1965. Also during the weekend, fellow alums Donald E. Messer (‘66, GRS’69) and Kent Millard (‘66, GRS’70), who participated in related marches at Selma in 1965, gave a talk about the historic march.

White, who will return to Selma in 2016, says he wants to give his students “a greater appreciation of how far we have come in the area of race in the nation in the past 50 years, and a greater commitment to continue the work for equality and justice still sought in the nation today.”


Adapted with permission from United Methodist News Service reporting by Joey Butler. Additional reporting by Julie Butters.



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A portrait of Sandra Olsen, a woman with long blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark purple velvet top with a floral pattern and a necklace with a circular pendant. The background is a bookshelf filled with books.

“ BU School of Theology gave me tools to think about faith and religion in a new way. Now, as a chaplain and parish minister, I am able to help people embrace their questions and doubts as companions that guide them to deeper faith. Thank you, BU! **”**

Sandra Olsen ('82)

Olsen has included a gift to STH in her estate plans

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