

UNION COLLECTIVE

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From the President



“As we face the effects of climate change, we must accept responsibility for the ways in which we have contributed and then affirm our commitment to creation care.”

—President Jones

Dear Friends,

As this new decade begins to reveal what it may become, I can't help but think of the opportunity it brings: a chance for each of us to display a greater appreciation for humanity and to treat each other, our nation, all nations, this planet, and our universe with more care and more conscious, active love. It's why I'm pleased to share this issue of *Union Collective* with you—with its focus on eco-justice and the ways in which Union has been, and continues to be, a home for ecotheology and environmental justice.

From pioneer professors Roger Shinn '41, '51, and Larry Rasmussen '70, who both held the position of Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics, to Karenna Gore '13, director of the Center for Earth Ethics at Union, to our students, who recently formed an eco-justice caucus, Union remains committed to protecting the future for all people. As we face the effects of climate change, we must accept responsibility for the ways in which we have contributed and then affirm our commitment to creation care.

It is in our classrooms, in courses like “Creating Rituals in Community: Mourning the Earth,” taught by Professor

Cláudio Carvalhaes '07, that our students learn how liturgical action can help preserve the sacredness of God's creation. Union has always been a place where students wrestle with deep, theological questions. It is imperative in this present time that Union continue to develop well-trained spiritual leaders who will be able to address these complex issues, while understanding what it is we value and what our role should be.

Though the state of our world may seem to signal hopelessness, I find hope daily here at Union. I see it in the curious and probing minds of our students and the profound explorations and teachings of our faculty. As I look ahead to what is to come, it is this hope that buoys me: a belief that our nurturing care of each other and the earth will manifest the environmental justice we seek.

Peace,

The Rev. Dr. Serene Jones
President and Johnston Family Professor
for Religion & Democracy

COVID-19 Addendum

IN THE WEEKS FOLLOWING the submission of the articles for this magazine, our country found itself in the grip of a global pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 was swift, and on campus we were forced to quickly shift gears in an effort to try to keep our students, faculty and staff healthy. We moved to remote learning for our students and were forced to cancel all campus events. As the crisis in the city worsened, we followed the advice of health officials and asked our students on dorm floors to consider leaving campus if they had another place to go. Many of them did, and that freed up space in the event we needed to quarantine or isolate a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus.

This unprecedented situation was stressful for everyone, and we were truly all in this together. Our remarkable community rose to the challenge of difficult personal decisions for the collective good of others. It was simply a reminder of Union at its very best—a seminary where the “needs and cares of the world” remain our first concern. —SJ

UNION MAKING NEWS



📍 Joshuah Brian Campbell, M.Div. '21, escorts his mother to the 92nd Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles.

An Oscar Nominee in Our Midst

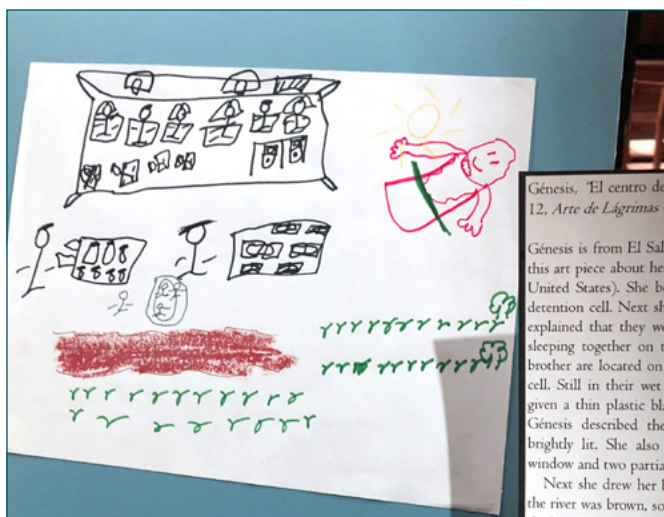
JOSHUAH BRIAN CAMPBELL, a second-year M.Div. student studying Bible and theology and the arts, has added a new title to his name: Oscar nominee! Campbell was nominated for Best Original Song, with Cynthia Erivo, for “Stand Up” from the movie *Harriet*. The song also received a Golden Globe nomination. Though the song did not win, it is fair to say that Campbell has made his mark.

The 25-year-old Campbell has been a singer for most of his life but only began songwriting during his undergraduate years at Harvard. It was a viral video of a song he wrote and performed at his alma mater's commencement in 2018 that attracted the attention of the movie's composer. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Arte de Lágrimas (Art of Tears)

IN DECEMBER, Union hosted a traveling art exhibit featuring drawings made by Central American refugee children after crossing the Texas-Mexico border and being released from the McAllen, Texas, detention center. Daisy L. Machado, M.Div. '81, Union professor of church history, hosted the event.

📍 Artwork on display in James Chapel brings awareness to the immigration crisis through the eyes of some of its youngest victims.



Supreme Court Justice RBG Visits Union

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the featured guest for the ninth annual Judith Davidson Moyers Women of Spirit Lecture in February. In a conversation with veteran journalist, Bill Moyers, Justice Ginsburg discussed her career, protecting liberty, remaining collegial despite disagreement, and her optimism. She said, “My faith is in today’s young people. ... I think there is a spirit among today’s young people that wants to combat injustice. I would do everything I could to encourage that.”

📶 **WATCH THE FULL EVENT:** utsnyc.edu/event/live-stream-rbg



“I think there is a spirit among today’s young people that wants to combat injustice. I would do everything I could to encourage that.”

—Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Lifetime Achievement Award Presented to Don Shriver

IN JANUARY, the Society of Christian Ethics gave Union President Emeritus Donald W. Shriver Jr. its 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding and substantive contributions to the field of Christian ethics. Shriver, who was president and then professor at Union from 1975 to 1996, served as president of the Society in 1979. The citation he received noted his lengthy career that “traversed the terrain of Christian social ethics with a distinctive combination of pastoral care, prophetic anti-racist vision, scholarly rigor, interdisciplinary conversation, and global reach.”

In Church and in Theater, It's O.K. to Just "Let Things Be Messy"

Interview with SHANNON TL KEARNS, M.DIV. '09



Why did you start the Uprising Theatre Company?

I grew up doing what I affectionately call a lot of church-basement drama—a lot of really terrible theater that was focused on justice issues or on trying to win people over. And when I got back into theater, after a long time away, I did a production of *The Laramie Project*, which is about the murder of Matthew Shepard. Because I was struck by people's responses to that piece, I started to wonder if

there was a way to do really high-quality theater about social justice issues that immediately connected people to organizations working on those issues. We started Uprising in 2015 with that kind of broad social justice mission. Over the last several years, we have figured out that the place that we want to stand is doing work by transgender and nonbinary playwrights about justice issues, so sometimes trans-related, sometimes not. And then doing that partnership with local organizations. So that's what we are doing now.

Why do you feel that theater is effective in changing people's minds or resonating emotionally in ways that other forms of persuasion aren't?

I think storytelling is the number-one way to develop empathy in people, and by developing empathy to change people's minds. So, I think that storytelling across the board is crucial, whether it be film or documentaries or novels. But I think theater has something really unique; it puts bodies in a room together and gets them breathing together, laughing together, and responding to live bodies on stage in a way that something mitigated by a screen, like film or television, just can't achieve. Conversations can happen, empathy can be raised, and people can let down their defenses when they see a person right in front of them. We perform in really small spaces, so you could literally reach out and touch the actor, you're that close.

What do you think it is about proximity that is so rejuvenating to the human soul?

I think that's where the juice is, right? We see that from the time of Jesus—how he was in proximity to disciples and communities. It's a life-changing thing, essential to any kind of justice work. It seems that you have to create some kind of proximity in

order to get people to change. Being able to know someone, to tell a story, to put a face on an issue helps people engage in a different way.

How have you seen the impact of your theater company on the community in Minneapolis?

Our unique model of partnering with local organizations has made a big difference for those organizations; they get new volunteers right on site. Sometimes they are asking for a physical item that we've collected; we've partnered a bunch of times with an organization called the Sexual Violence Center and have done various donation drives for them—from underwear for people who have had an assault experience to self-care bags delivered to people in the hospital. It is great for them to be able to say, "This is what we need," and then have the Uprising community just step up and fill that need.

Around trans issues, we are doing more and more shows written by trans playwrights. This season we will be doing all shows written by trans playwrights, watching mostly cisgender audiences learn about trans lives and really see that there is more to being trans than medical transition. There are all of these other stories that can be told.

“I think storytelling is the number-one way to develop empathy in people, and by developing empathy to change people's minds.”

What is your approach to playwrighting?

I came from a more traditional playwrighting school where the “kitchen sink” drama was the norm into a world where more conventional models are widely disparaged, and people demand things that are new and edgy. Personally, I'm not willing to give up on the kitchen sink drama just yet. I find myself writing a lot of dramas, because I want to put people in the kitchen who have never been able to be in the kitchen before and have those conversations. I think that there is something really powerful about doing traditional drama or plays to give people an insight into an experience that they won't have on their own. We are really working to raise awareness and empathy in folks and channel that empathy into action. Sometimes it feels easier to do that if the container is less destabilizing.

What is the overlap between theater and theology?

It's funny because when I first started to write plays again, I was trying for there not to be any overlap. Just because so often Christian theater companies do really terrible work or the work doesn't feel honest. Yet, as I was writing, theology and God kept working its way into my work, and so now I have started to embrace that. Theater very much feels like church to me; it's a community of people coming together and trying to make some kind of meaning out of life.

That is how I understand theology: trying to make sense of who we are, trying to make sense of our relationship to the divine, our relationship to each other. I feel like theater is asking those same questions: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to help other people? What does it mean to seek justice? They dovetail so well together, whether it is a piece that talks about God or not.

What insights have you gleaned from your theater work that might be useful for ministers to hear?

The big thing for me is to let things be messy; we don't always have to answer the question. Sometimes it is more fruitful with a play, or a sermon, to leave it unresolved and let that then become the community's work, to solve on their own. We have a lot of plays that end either literally with a character asking a question or with an unresolved social justice issue where you could go a bunch of different ways. I think that is a really fruitful place to end up because then it asks the community to come together and say, "How do we want to handle this?" "How do each of our experiences reflect on this situation?" "How do we carry all of this forward?"

What do you feel you learned from Union that has helped you in your current work?

I started at Union pretty much just out of fundamentalism and just coming to terms with my sexuality and then started my transition at Union during my second year, so there was a lot happening. I am so grateful for the space that Union provided me, to be a mess and to have that be okay.

The thing that continues to resonate is a class I took with Dr. Hal Taussig [former professor of New Testament]. It was the first time that anyone encouraged me to bring my own story to the biblical text and to see how those things interacted, if they did. That impacted the way that I do theology, and it continues to reverberate in my life. I am so thankful for that nudge. I have done a lot of work around trans theology because of that class, and I continue to take the tools that I learned there and put them to use. ¶

Shannon TL Kearns is the founder and Artistic Director of Uprising Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Minn. He is the co-founder of QueerTheology.com. He is the Transgender Council Liaison for Mixed Blood Theatre in Minneapolis. He is the director of Faith Formation at St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Shannon is a Finnovation Fellow for 2019/2020 and a Lambda Literary Fellow for 2019.

Center's Work Focuses on Homelessness and Other Injustices

BY NYYA TOUSSAINT, M.A. '19

IN 2018, UNION CREATED a new center, with the aim of offering students unique educational programs and practical experiences to develop leaders who could make a greater social impact in their chosen communities. In just a short time, the Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice, under the leadership of former associate vice president of strategic initiatives, Jonathan Soto, launched various student-led programs as a way to respond to pressing issues in New York City. Through the Center, seminarians have created projects

focusing on homelessness, community land trusts, and Caribbean immigration through a theological lens.

Sixteen students participated in the inaugural Homelessness Fellowship Program, in which they learned from organizations and individuals with deep experience responding to the homelessness crisis. Union alumna Nehemoyia Young, M.A. '19, led a project entitled



"Understanding + Undoing Displacement Culture: Economic and Ecological Justice at the Crossroads," which hosted a series of roundtable discussions with community leaders about community land trusts in Brooklyn. During the fall, spring and summer of 2018, alumnus Nyia Toussaint, M.A. '19, directed an initiative entitled "Theologizing the Caribbean's Decolonization" that culminated with an immersion experience in Puerto Rico. Those involved in the initiative published *Caribbean Power* magazine, which showcases some of the conversations that have come out of the project over the last year.

The Center has steadily grown into a place for Union students to wrestle with the injustices that are taking place in our city and consequently showing up right outside Union's doors. Future plans for the Center include finding new partners to bring the community into Union's doors and helping seminarians to engage in more proximate ways with hopes of having a lasting impact. It is through the work of the Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice that Union will remain the seminary in the city that is for the city. ¶

📶 READ MORE ONLINE:
utsnyc.edu/life/institutes/community-engagement

Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876–1978)

A Prophetic Voice at Union and Beyond **BY JAN CARLSSON-BULL, M.Div. '69**



Children's religious development, Fahs taught, was driven by their sense of wonder and a questioning mind, not by the prescribed beliefs of others.

How is it that when I studied at Union in the 1960s I had never heard of Sophia Lyon Fahs? It wasn't until I received a Ph.D. in developmental psychology and became a Unitarian Universalist minister that I learned of this remarkable woman, a fellow Union alumna (B.D. '26) and faculty member in Union's department of religious education from 1927 to 1944. Sophia grew into her name, reaping a bountiful harvest of books, articles, workshops, and lectures rich with a prophetic vision of how religion becomes meaningful—or meaningless—to children.

Born August 2, 1876, to Presbyterian missionaries in China, Sophia returned to the U.S. and Wooster, Ohio, with her family when she was barely a toddler. There she excelled academically and graduated with honors from the College of Wooster.

Sophia Lyon married Charles "Harvey" Fahs, who shared her dream of missionary work. Plans change. The young couple headed to New York City for Charles's work. Motherhood and academia consumed Sophia. She earned an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, and taught in a number of Sunday schools. She and Charles became parents of five children, two of whom they lost to illnesses now readily treatable.

At the age of 47, Fahs began classes at Union Theological Seminary, graduating with a B.D. in 1926. The next year, she joined the faculty of Union's department of religious education and within a few years began teaching at nearby Riverside Church.

Children's religious development, Fahs taught, was driven by their sense of

wonder and a questioning mind, not by the prescribed beliefs of others. Her teaching drew the imperious criticism of Union faculty Reinhold Niebuhr and John Bennett. She persisted.

Fahs had long been intrigued by the Unitarians' curricula in religious education. In 1934, Beacon Press invited her to become editor of its course material. As editor, author, and sought-after workshop leader, she thrived with the Unitarians and in 1945 became Unitarian. At the age of 82, she was ordained as a Unitarian minister. As the Rev. Sophia Lyon Fahs, she continued on the staff of what had become the Unitarian Universalist Association until retiring at the age of 88. She continued to write and teach into her 90s.

Fahs received accolades from luminaries in religious education across faiths and honorary degrees from multiple institutions. Chicago's Meadville Lombard Theological School honors her with the Fahs Collaborative, a cohort of religious educators overseeing programs and research. Is it not time for recognition by the institution where she studied and taught and whose glass ceiling she managed to dent if not crack?

A passion for understanding how children learn and grow, Unitarian Universalism as her chosen faith, ordination into the ministry of this faith, and writing and speaking of her faith encapsulate Fahs's professional path. Commitment to marriage and family mark her personal life. While I defer to the seasoned wisdom of Sophia, we are kindred spirits. I am ever grateful for her life and legacy. **U**

The Rev. Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull, M.Div. '69, is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister. She holds a Ph.D. from Yeshiva University in developmental psychology with a focus on imagination in young children.

SOURCES:

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Sophia Lyon Fahs: A Biography, by Edith Hunter (100th birthday edition), Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.
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God, Liberation, and the Ballroom Community

A Q&A with Michael Roberson, M.Div. '13

Michael Roberson is a senior scholar for the Center for Race, Religion, and Economic Democracy and an adjunct professor at the New School. He is also a creative consultant for the FX series *Pose*, and recently did a TED Talk entitled, “The Enduring Legacy of Ballroom.”

Before you were a student at Union, you worked in public health. How did you make the transition from public health to theology?

I started doing public health, concentrated on black and Latina LGBT folk as well as the house ball community, particularly HIV prevention. And I began wrestling with this notion around the increasing numbers of HIV, prevalence and incidence, with black gay men particularly, and why, with increasing access to HIV testing and education, the numbers were not decreasing. And I begin saying part of it is because there's something around the abomination, I didn't say theology but I knew it was religious texts, something about that that's getting in the way.

One of my great comrades, Dr. Edgar Rivera Colon, a Puerto Rican gay man, was trying to get me straight to a Ph.D. program, and he said, “Michael you always talk about this theology. I think you should go to Union.” I had never heard of Union. And when he brought me up here I immediately knew. And then I applied and got in.

I came to Union because I wanted to get into the Ph.D. program, and not to work for the academy but to place the theological “abomination” thing in conversation with public health. It was my assertion that the abomination narrative had a direct impact on health disparities impacting black gay men. You tell these people, you tell us, that we are the antithesis to God—that our very being is abominable—and that to me was the most disadvantageous, detrimental thing to tell a human being. So where do you go for refuge from that? I wanted to change the narrative, and that's the only reason I came.

What has the ballroom community taught you about God?

Theology for me is about making meaning of our life and suffering. Ballroom personalities, particularly these black trans women,

theologize about “why I suffer.” To borrow from Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas [’82, ’88], that is faith seeking understanding. I had faith in this organizing thing called ballroom, and I came here to seek the understanding of that faith. And so, in that sense, the ballroom, I call it the black church. I call it God enacting its magnificence.

There's a video I show when I do lectures of this trans woman named Raquel, an icon of the house ball community and the pageant community, and she's doing a lip-sync performance. She's so great at it, and towards the end, you hear people saying, ‘Raquel, Raquel,’ while she's still lip-syncing, and I say, here's the space. What does it mean for a black trans woman—where there's no place in this universe that says being black and trans is Godly—hearing their names screamed at a space that I call church, like they're screaming “Jesus.” This to me is Christology at its best.

What do you think churches can learn from the house?

One of the things that ballroom could be in conversation with church about, particularly black church, is how can we reconcile that we have crucified black women, both cisgendered and trans women, for the enemy.

Ballroom has the same patriarchy-patriarchal bulls__t. Black gay men, with our inability to recognize our patriarchy, have crucified black trans women and invisible-ized them—and they created the lane for us.

And so now you look at a community where black gay men are in charge, like black preachers, and are articulating how trans women are supposed to show up, how they're supposed to look, how they're supposed to be, and all this other stuff. And so, I think that this moment, this *Pose* moment, is really sort of this atonement, trying to reconcile. I think the black church needs to do the exact same thing. ¶

Understanding the Border Through Experiential Education

A GROUP OF EDS at Union students, staff, and one board member arrived at Casa Vides, a house of hospitality for migrants and refugees operated by Annunciation House, in El Paso, Texas, on January 10. For six days, they participated in a “Border Awareness Experience” aimed at introducing the group to the culture and realities of the many people and groups that live and work in the border region of El Paso. This pilgrimage was part of a semester-long focus on the experiences of immigrants and asylum-seekers, especially unaccompanied children.

Participants were asked to reflect on this experience, and shared their thoughts with *Union Collective*.

What is an image that will remain with you from this pilgrimage?

Mary Barber, M.Div. '21: The image that is sticking with me from the trip is the wall itself, the steel Bollard-style structure we saw, peered through, and touched. Through it is the Anapra neighborhood of Juarez, an impoverished shantytown created by U.S. policies that led to the flourishing of *maquilas* (sweatshops, most for U.S. companies) on the Juarez side of the border. There was suffering through that wall, surely, but all the life was over there. The U.S. side was desolate, military, dead. And it all felt so wrong, in a stark



↑ EDS at Union students and staff gathered at Casa Tabor, a site of peace and justice in Ciudad Juarez directed by Fr. Peter Hinde and Sister Betty Campbell.

and tangible way. The image stays with me because there are borders and walls everywhere in our world. I was reminded on this trip of the fencing and razor wire that kept my patients confined inside the state psychiatric hospital where I worked for eleven years as a psychiatrist. That fencing dehumanized the staff as well as the patients, just as the border wall dehumanizes us, as well as immigrants.

Galvin Mathis, M.Div. '22: The image that will remain with me is the cross made of fencing materials holding the dusty, well-worn shoes of migrant children found

in the desert (*below, far left*). It reminds me that these physical barriers are keeping me and us from seeing Jesus.

In reflecting on the informational presentations, what was something you wish the general public knew?

Carl Adair, M.Div. '21: I wish that more Americans understood that the crisis at the U.S. Southern border is the direct result of U.S. economic and military policy over the past five decades. “America First” isn’t a solution to the migration crisis: it’s the cause. The political instability and gang violence in Central America is a legacy of U.S. support of right-wing paramilitaries and their dirty wars; the punishing inequalities in Mexico and the political power of the cartels are due in part to U.S. strong-arm tactics that have been narrowly focused on U.S. advantage. After what I’ve learned on this trip about how the U.S. has spent decades pursuing its own interests without hardly giving a thought to the effects of those choices on the people in Mexico and Central America—effects which are pushing people out of their homes—it makes me furious and sad to hear American media and politicians framing the migration crisis as something that is happening to us.



Where did you find hope on this pilgrimage?

Nicole Hanley, M.Div. '22: In Juarez, a women's sewing cooperative was born out of a prayer group started by Roman Catholic nuns for poor women. But the origins of that prayer group betray the extreme poverty and devastation: the original site was a garbage heap that starving women and children were combing through for food. The nuns realized quickly that faith demanded justice, and so they helped form a sewing cooperative that would allow these women to earn a living wage, together. Everything that is sold is split equitably among the women. I was personally struck by their faith and their joy; the most powerful part of their story for me is how they are able to earn wages in solidarity together but also that they are able to care for their children close by where they work. This is in contrast to, thanks to NAFTA, when working in the U.S. factories, they had to leave their children for extremely long days and low wages, often a distance away from home.

This pilgrimage included learning about and standing near the immigration detention centers that exist across the country. What was your response to these centers?

Ronnie Ward, M.Div. '22: The desperation and pain of those confined in the detention center. That's a nice-sounding name for prison or internment camp. Learning of the heart-breaking conditions makes me ashamed and then angry toward what the U.S. government is doing in my name. I don't agree and want to see a change in policy. As my Muslim friends say, *Inshallah*.

What is something you hope to learn more about as you return to New York?

Nicole Hanley: I am leaving behind my privilege to choose whether I will work for immigration justice or not, and I am taking with me the gospel imperative to work for justice through the work of accompaniment. I now cannot unsee the human rights issues that have been in play for decades in the U.S. Because of the power of stories and the witness I encountered on this pilgrimage, I am a changed person with a heart bent toward immigration justice. ¶



EPISCOPAL DIVINITY SCHOOL at UNION

A Message from the Dean

The Very Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas, Ph.D.

I PRAY THAT YOU are well in the midst of these difficult and anxious times as we all navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. While Union has joined schools across the country in moving to remote classes, our EDS at Union students are staying connected through virtual morning prayer and online peer group sessions. Our focus this semester is on immigration—specifically the perilous journey that asylum-seekers take to get to the United States, and the role that faith leaders can play. From our pilgrimage to El Paso and Juarez, to our Community Read discussion with the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *Enrique's Journey*, Sonia Nazario, and field visits with the Episcopal Migration Ministries, we shared unique and thought-provoking experiences. We also launched our Spanish Lab this semester, to equip our students for bilingual worship. EDS at Union remains committed to fostering lay and clergy leaders to bring the Church and world ever closer to God's just future. I am proud of the work our students have engaged in this semester, and look forward to the ways they will continue the EDS legacy of conducting ministries that matter. I hope you enjoy these highlights from the semester at EDS at Union.

A Night of Song and Celebration

FOR THE SECOND YEAR, EDS at Union celebrated Absalom Jones Day by hosting a Hymn Sing. Partnering with The Rev. Henry Allen Belin III, pastor, First A.M.E. Church: Bethel (*below right, standing*), students and guests honored and reflected on the lives and ministry of Absalom Jones, the first black Episcopal priest; and Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first national black church in the United States. ¶





HEARING THE CRY OF THE EARTH

The roots of ecotheology and environmental justice at Union run deep, and its tendrils and branches reach far. And, in both Union's and the movement's long history, the cry of the Earth is inextricably linked with the cry of the poor.

BY EMILY ENDERS ODOM, M.DIV. '90



For Brigitte Kahl, professor of New Testament at Union since 1998, the seeds of ecojustice were planted, quite literally, during her childhood in post-World War II East Germany.

“Growing up poor, we were subsistence gardeners, my mother, my grandmother, my sisters and I,” she says. “Because, as a gardener, you are dependent on the natural world, I was always appalled that nature and theology were a ‘no-go’ in many ways. Nature is pagan, I learned. We have to rule over it rather than taking care of it, as a still widely prevalent interpretation of the biblical ‘mandate to dominate’ in Genesis 1:28 posits—very bad theology!”

A world and a generation away in Brazil, Cláudio Carvalhaes, Ph.D. ’07—who has widely acknowledged Union’s role in his transformation from “a shoeshine boy into a scholar”—also invoked a childhood in poverty. “I grew up in São Paulo in the midst of concrete,” recalls Carvalhaes, associate professor of worship, “and I didn’t know—as I still don’t know—the most elementary things about nature. I just had my mother, who grew up grounded in the earth, talking to plants and singing to them throughout the day and treating them as her babies.”

For recent graduate Katilau Mbindyo, M.Div. ’19—whose journey led her to the U.S. from her native Kenya to pursue her education at Vassar College, Union, and now Harvard’s Ph.D. program—discerning and understanding God’s plan for her life in light of the climate crisis is central to her vocation.

“When the call to seminary came, I realized that just as much as we would need doctors to care for the sick and suffering, we would also need ministers to tend to the soul,” she says. “The question that kept on running through my head was, ‘Who will tend to the spirit as we all stop ignoring what is imminent? Who

will be the voice of comfort when we realize that this Earth is the promised gift from God, which we have squandered because bad theology informed us that heaven was elsewhere?’”

At Union, Mbindyo found that she had the freedom to put together her own curriculum, which she designed to honor Black religion, ecoethics, and ec thought. As a student, she chose Union’s interdisciplinary track and designed a concentration in African Spirituality and Ecological Theology.

“After the passing [in 2018] of Dr. [James] Cone, I found myself kind of lost and realized that I had to piece together a Union that would feed my academic endeavors,” Mbindyo says. “I got involved with the Center for Earth Ethics, where I was able to work with Geraldine Ann Patrick Encina and Mindahi Crescencio Bastida Muñoz to learn more about indigenous wisdom. I took Dr. [Aliou] Niang’s Bible and Nature class, as well as a class he taught on African Traditional Religion. ... Meeting Dr. Larry Rasmussen [Ph.D. ’70] was also eye-opening to me.”

Ecojustice Pioneers

Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics Emeritus, is widely acknowledged as having launched the study of environmental justice at Union. But he cites other, earlier proponents, namely Roger Shinn, M.Div. ’41, Ph.D. ’51 (d. 2013), whom he says initiated the movement some 20 years before Rasmussen’s own arrival in 1986.

“Even when I was a student in the mid-60s, Roger was teaching ‘the limits to growth’ and planetary well-being,” recalls Rasmussen of Shinn, who held the same emeritus title. “Though I left Union in 1969, I remember Roger waving the book *The Limits to Growth* (1972) in the air when we and others met at Society of Christian Ethics conferences. The premise of the book—and Roger’s mantra—was, ‘You cannot have infinite growth on a finite

Unending economic growth was orthodoxy, even fundamentalism, and still is, despite the destruction it brings to nature’s economy.

planet.’ While it was true, it was also ignored. Unending economic growth was orthodoxy, even fundamentalism, and still is, despite the destruction it brings to nature’s economy.”

Shinn and his friend Paul Abrecht, M.Div. ’46 (d. 2005), the church and society staff person for the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the 1960s, collaborated on several WCC projects. With the help of later leadership, their work eventuated in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation conciliar movement of churches around the world and the emergence of the Justice, Peace, and Creation unit of the WCC. Rasmussen, who served as co-chair of that unit’s commission for 10 years through the ’90s, says that, in a sense, he followed Shinn’s leadership on these WCC issues.



Larry Rasmussen, Ph.D. '70, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics Emeritus, is widely acknowledged as having launched the study of environmental justice at Union.

members of their team visited Borneo to study the problems of rain forest devastation and resistance of indigenous populations.

"I still remember how we were shocked in Canberra at what we learned," says Kahl. "After that, we got motivated, and that's when Larry started his work on ecojustice at Union, I believe. His Harlem project was a new approach to doing theology."

Kahl's reference is to Rasmussen's teaching at Union in the '90s, with its distinctive attention to what the Big Ten environmental organizations were overlooking—urban ecology and environmental justice. An article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. XLII, #30, April 5, 1996, highlights the fact that Rasmussen's class took place in New York City neighborhoods with organizations addressing local health/environmental issues, such as West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) and Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the South Bronx.

The Legacy of Bonhoeffer and Cone

Such rootedness and engagement continue into the present day at Union through a variety of classes in ecology and Bible taught by Kahl, Carvalhaes, Niang, John Thatamanil (associate professor of theology and world religions), and others, as well as the collective community's attention to composting, rooftop gardening, work on the "Green New Deal," and more.

But the story of environmental justice at Union would not be complete without acknowledging the theologian who anticipated it, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as well as the seminal work of Paul Tillich.

"Without the vocabulary of either ecology or the Anthropocene, Bonhoeffer wrote that an age of unprecedented human power and knowledge that affected everything everywhere had arrived—that's the Anthropocene," says Rasmussen. "This unprecedented, pervasive human power requires, for Bonhoeffer, rethinking all the base points of theology for the sake of a new account of human responsibility. 'Who is God,' he asks, 'who is Jesus Christ for us today, what do salvation, redemption, the new life, eschatology, et al., mean in this new epoch? What would liturgy be, a sermon, prayer and Christian practices, etc.?"

And long before the ecological crisis first burst onto the consciousness of American Protestantism in 1970, Paul Tillich—then

"The WCC was far ahead of its own member churches by linking justice, peace, creation, and sustainability from the 1980s and following," he says. "The 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* was a more powerful and influential statement; but the WCC had connected the dots well before—the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

It was, in fact, at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC at Canberra, Australia, in 1991, where Rasmussen and Kahl first met. On that occasion,

teaching at Union—was among the progenitors of Post-World-War II discussions of the interrelationships of religion and nature, and Christianity and ecology. "Nature, Also, Mourns for the Lost Good," was the title of a chapter in his book, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1948). Also in 1948, he wrote, in "Nature and Sacrament," an essay published in *The Protestant Era* (1948), "The bread of the sacrament stands for all bread and ultimately for all nature."

Theologians today—many of them at or formed by Union—are everywhere taking up Bonhoeffer's and Tillich's agenda, responding out of their particularity as Black, womanist, Native American, Latinx, LGBTQ+, interfaith, and more. One of the first major statements on Black theology and ecology, "Whose Earth Is It, Anyway?," was delivered in October 1998 by James Cone (d. 2018), Bill and Judith Moyers Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology, at an international conference on social justice and ecology at Union.



Rasmussen, who organized the conference with Dieter Hessel, recalls asking Cone, not for the first time, to address environmental justice. "Ecology was new territory for him at the time, and he told me he read all summer long in preparation for that address," says Rasmussen. "It was typical of his discipline, I came to learn. I was deeply moved by his engagement with the issues and the power of his address."

"People who fight against white racism but fail to connect it to the degradation of the earth are anti-ecological—whether they know it or not," wrote Cone in his often-anthologized essay, which first appeared in the volume *Earth Habitat: Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response*, Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen, editors (Fortress Press, 2001). "People who struggle against environmental degradation but do not incorporate in it a disciplined and sustained fight against white supremacy are racists—whether they acknowledge it or not. The fight for justice cannot be segregated but must be integrated with the fight for life in all its forms."

A New Approach to Worship

Today's scholars—with Union at the forefront—are also creating new and different hymns and rituals about the planet.

Carvalhaes, whose rituals in both classroom and chapel have garnered national if not worldwide attention, speaks of the

impact that plant ecologist, Robin Wall Kimmerer, has had on his life and work.

“Since Robin came to Union for a conference when I was on my sabbatical, I was listening to her on YouTube,” says Carvalhaes. “She said, ‘We need to create new rituals; we do not have rituals for this time.’ And when she said that—and because I also deal with rituals—I started crying, saying, ‘My goodness, I need to change.’ And from that day on I decided I needed to change my entire scholarship: I need to change every class that I teach.”

With the Doomsday Clock now closer to midnight than ever before, theologians, scholars, activists, and practitioners are everywhere raising the stakes.

In one class that I taught about extractivism, we started to do rituals. In another class about mourning the earth, we were doing the mourning and then creating rituals out of the community.”

New rituals and experiences of worship were also forged by Mbindyo and the other members of the 2018-2019 Chapel Team, which she has called “an ecoministry caucus in its own right.”

“We had our own unique relationship with Earth and the commitment to the liberation of poor and indigenous people, which is probably why almost every chapel that year had to be connected in some way to Earth-centered spirituality,” says Mbindyo. “If we could be outside, we were outside; if we could include fire, water, and earth on the altar, we did so. From Indigenous Peoples Day to the Thursday communion services, to Earth Day, to All Saints Day, to an African traditional ritual led by Professor Niang, to the final chapel which the six of us planned where, in the garden, we gave the final sermon of the school year, it was just a really incredible opportunity to encourage a Christian seminary to worship God’s presence within non-human beings and the elements.”

With the Doomsday Clock now closer to midnight than ever before, theologians, scholars, activists, and practitioners are everywhere raising the stakes.

“We reach for indigenous wisdom and new narratives, institutions, and lifeways just when the margin of error is so small that it generates extinctions on a mass scale,” says Rasmussen, “and we continue to live late-Holocene and fossil-fueled lives. In a word, ours is a very creative, adaptive, and resilient moment in an extremely dangerous time.” ¶



LISTENING AND TEACHING

BY RYAN FELDER, M.DIV. '21

WITHOUT THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE, I find it impossible to grasp the magnitude of the ecological crisis and understand what my corresponding commitments are. In choosing to study eco-theology at Union, I was really choosing to study social ethics, education, and community development. This is because, from my Christian perspective, I understand the ecological crisis as the voice of Abel’s blood crying out to God from the earth (Gen 4:10). I understand the ecological crisis as a crisis rooted in social domination; in colonialism, in racism, in capitalism, in militarism, in patriarchy, in poverty, in heteronormativity, in a Christian hegemony, in our general alienation from each other, from the means of production, from political power, from the land.

In Gen. 4:10, God tells Cain to listen, and I think this implies a reflective practice that takes into consideration not just what scientists are telling us about crossing four out of the nine planetary boundaries that ensure stable and resilient global ecosystems, but to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed throughout history and today. There is no solution to the ecological crisis rooted in the forms of social dominance that have emerged throughout history. Instead, by listening to our ecosystems in crisis and the voices of the marginalized and

oppressed, what are forms of ecological freedom and justice that we can begin to practice as communities?

This is the question that I wrestle with as an aspiring ecotheologian and community educator. For me, it looks like direct democracy, mutual aid, municipalism, democratic socialism, and a Green New Deal. For the Eco-Justice Caucus, this has looked like restoring human systems and increasing ecological awareness in our community at Union Theological Seminary.

With the community dish washing station, we hoped not only to increase awareness about our community’s use of disposable plastics, but to also provide a new form of collaboration, interaction, and dailiness to our community. In calling for Union to declare a climate emergency, we are asking Union to engage in a reflective practice that acknowledges the ecological crisis in its institutional operations. ¶

Ryan Felder, a second-year M.Div. student, is co-chair of the Eco-Justice Caucus.

ECOWOMANIST VISION: A UNION STORY

BY MELANIE L. HARRIS, PH.D. '06, UNITAS DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA '17

a sacred dance of movement
the air moves differently at Union
the call for justice lives, breathes, and has its very being
in every space

from the window one can see the very heart of earth
living with human community

the complicated nature of life in concrete,
the herculean hope of holding on in spite of
insurmountable pressure

the despair of a climate winter set into motion
by those in power
mingles with a grief-stricken people
who no longer have access to food and water

just outside the gates humans are constantly in motion
while fossil fuels burn
the choir of metal on metal is heard singing across the subway

the addiction to keep scrolling is interrupted by a reminder
to stop from the River
Holy and impure this blood of the planet runs
through the city like truth
stubborn sometimes like ice and
other times as free flowing as a dove

sit in any seat at Union and you will feel again
the paradox of terror and triumph
in black theology
the fight, the struggle, and the power of anger
ignited in feminism

the gift of womanist theology and ethics to hold us
accountable to justice

queer theology pokes holes in the empires' "new clothes"
claiming everybody, trans, queer, gay, straight
has a right to the tree of life

at Union even the tables testify,
one can still stand your ground on three legs or less
and miracles come from those of us who do not walk at all

we are miracles ~ as we are

the hinges on the great wooden doors
at Union preach ~ giving off a holy energy
once you cross through the threshold
every student ~ every mind is considered great

scholar.
writer.
poet.
preacher.
prophet.

while surely the anointing that falls on us
helped us pass our exams and complete our papers for ST 103
it is grace that helps us now pass the greater test

i think the birds flying above the quad knew much more than me
avoiding the smoke and life billowing from the twin towers at the
corner of Liberty and Church streets, they flew with ease
taking root in the knowledge that ~ all shall be well

Earth speaks too at Union.

Tree sinews meet the mind present and in the by and by
African wisdom pours from the tombs of buried souls. Royalty
stolen, they would become resilient survivors of the atrocities
of the Middle Passage, enslaved but not broken
today their bones mix with sweat and blood seeping into
the water we drink. If you listen closely to your veins swallowing,
you'll hear the undercurrent of those ancestors calling us home

Come. Come. Come into the classroom. Come into the teaching
space where life is honored, where there is still hope for the planet,
hope for the people, hope for the church.

Come. Come. Come put your feet on the path where each strives
to be one living with the earth.



“Since social justice is earth justice, it becomes central from an ecowomanist perspective to develop an intersectional lens through which one can examine what one believes about God, the earth, and the right of all beings to have equal access to environmental health.”

Ecowomanism is critical and contemplative reflection on the environmental crisis from the perspective of women of African descent. Connecting ecological justice with Womanist theology and ethics, the new lens argues that intersectional race, class, and gender analysis be applied when examining environmental racism. The first step of ecowomanist method is to honor experience. Eco-poetry helps us to do just that. The poetry written above is reflective of one Union experience. As a graduate whose entering class was confronted with the realities of September 11, 2001, I enter the world of environmental ethics through the doors of comparative and constructive theologies, because it is central to recognize the truths in many religions if we are to face climate change. Honoring our experiences, be they filled with racial tensions, intellectual bliss, or conflict, this methodological step invites us to reflect on how our theological frameworks concerning the earth may be shaped by our passion for social justice. Since social justice is earth justice,

it becomes central from an ecowomanist perspective to develop an intersectional lens through which one can examine what one believes about God, the earth, and the right of all beings to have equal access to environmental health.

Step two of the method uncovers the power of critical reflection. Beckoning us to “crawl back through history” and examine the “cargo cults,” to borrow a phrase from historian Charles Long, this step pushes us to confront the normativity of value hierarchies that place human life over other life. Claiming that the legacy of white supremacy that argues that racially categorized white humans are superior and more deserving of air, water, earth, and fire is unjust, ecowomanism critically examines racially biased and colonial concepts that are laced throughout the environmental movement. White supremacy is not healthy for the planet. Delores S. Williams [Ph.D. '91], Tillich scholar and professor emerita at Union, invites us to consider the parallels between the ways that enslaved Black women were used

for breeding during American slavery and the ways the earth has been used and exploited since before the Industrial Revolution. When we do so, we are faced with a harsh truth. There is something eerily familiar about the logic of domination at work in scenes at the lynching tree, because that same logic of domination is interlaced with anthropocentrism.

In James H. Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, the father of Black theology reminds us of the powerful resilience of Black peoples to believe in the power of Jesus' resurrection in spite of the death-dealing harshness of white hate, violence, and anger. In his essay “Whose Earth Is It Anyway?” Cone points to this same kind of resilience, courage, and faith. Recalling the image of Black church women protesting dump trucks filled with toxins to be dumped in their neighborhoods, Cone reminds us of the systemic ways environmental racism has attempted to snuff out the lives of Black women, men, and children. Cone, along with Ben Chavis, Dorceta E. Taylor, and others, shows how fighting for racial justice is directly tied to environmental justice. Decades after Chavis first coined the term environmental racism, we are living in a time when we cannot ignore the past. If we are to heal from racial injustice and all forms of injustice of the past, we have to stop, listen, and heal. Ecowomanism provides one pathway towards healing. ¶

The Rev. Dr. Melanie L. Harris is founding director of African American and Africana Studies and Professor of Religion and Ethics at Texas Christian University. A former American Council of Education Fellow and graduate of Harvard Leadership Programs, she is a consultant for Diversity, Equity, and Access in Higher Education. She is the author of *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths and Gifts of Virtue: Alice Walker and Womanist Ethics*. She is editor of *Ecowomanism, Religion and Ecology* and co-editor of *Faith, Feminism, and Scholarship: The Next Generation* with Kate M. Ott. Harris is an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a graduate of Iliff School of Theology and Spelman College.

📶 **WATCH AN INTERVIEW:** utsnyc.edu/eco-video

ACTIVISTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

So many Union alumni/ae are activists for environmental justice that we can't highlight them all. But, equal among their peers, here are a random few:

Phyllis Trible, Ph.D. '63, Unitas Distinguished Alumna '09, and Baldwin Professor Emerita of Sacred Literature, has written and lectured on Genesis 1, dominion, and ecology. She calls pollution the "fruit of our sin," and says "we need to understand and affirm our dominion even as we seek forgiveness for our sins." Trible says there should exist no conflict between technology and dominion, but technology must be grounded in "liturgy for ecology" (Genesis 1) and must not harm the earth.

John M. Ankele, M.Div. '67, and his co-producer and co-director at Old Dog Documentaries, Anne Macksoud, have released a new film, *Rollbacks: An Assault on Life On Earth*, about the Trump administration's rollback of 95 environmental policies, putting at serious risk our natural resources and our health. The 30-minute documentary is meant to be used as a tool for discussion and a resource for knowledge and action and may be viewed and downloaded for free on the Old Dog website.

Daniel T. Spencer, M.Div. '83, Ph.D. '94, is professor and director of environmental studies at the University of Montana, where he teaches courses in globalization, greening religion, earth ethics, and ethical issues in ecological restoration and encourages community participation in ecological restoration. While on sabbatical 2018–2019, he examined ecological restoration and sustainable energy projects in Iceland and Greece and attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ph.D. '85, Unitas Distinguished Alumna '10, is a senior lecturer and research scholar at Yale University, where she has appointments in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies as well as the Divinity School and the department of religious studies. She is co-founder and co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale with her husband, John Allen Grim. They have organized a series of 10 conferences on World Religions and Ecology.

Fletcher Harper, M.Div. '91, an Episcopal priest and the executive director of GreenFaith, develops programs linking religious belief and practice to the environment. He led multifaith organizing for the 2014 and 2017 People's Climate Marches; has played a lead role in the faith-based fossil fuel divestment movement; and has coordinated the development of GreenFaith's international work. He is the author of *GreenFaith: Mobilizing God's People to Save the Earth*.

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Ph.D. '01, professor of theological and social ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of California Lutheran University, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, has lectured or consulted in five continents on economic globalization, moral agency and hope, public church, faith-based resistance to systemic injustice, ethical implications of resurrection and incarnation, Bible and ethics, theo-ethical method, and climate justice as related to race and class. Her approach weds Earth ethics to liberationologies including ecofeminist theology.



Center for Earth Ethics

LED BY FOUNDER and director **Karenna Gore, M.A. '13**, the Center for Earth Ethics is an integral institute at Union with a mission centered on eco-justice. From hosting conferences to teaching classes, the center bridges the worlds of religion, academia, policy and culture to pursue the changes needed to stop ecological destruction. In the fall as part of Climate Week, Gore (*center*) and other religious leaders and environmentalists held an interfaith ceremony to address the risks to sacred rivers from climate change and development. The group walked from James Chapel down to the Hudson River, with water from the Jordan and Hudson Rivers that was blessed and then released. Just one example of the eco-ministry programs that are at the core of the Center's work. **U**

Serious Play

Text and photos by MOHAMMAD MIA, M.DIV. '21

“What looks like fun is preparation for life.”

—Charles Burnett, American film director

LAST SEMESTER, I sleepily made my way to a Monday evening field education class and arrived to the surprising sight of toys—tables filled with clay, crayons, coloring books, blocks, and an aptly named game, “Pie in the Face.” A smile spread across my face when I remembered that our class would be dedicated to exploring the spiritual significance of play. The tiredness I grew accustomed to seeing in myself and others lifted for an evening. Instead there was laughter as we ran beneath a colorful parachute, and nostalgia as we recalled playing Red Rover and stacking blocks precariously higher until they crashed to the floor.

Before class came to a close, Professor Su Yon Pak [Ed.D. '99] gathered us for a moment to remind us that play and joy are as integral to the human experience as loss and sorrow. Over the years, she said, she had observed students, many still uncertain about embracing their gifts, rely upon being serious in order to have their tenuous authority taken seriously. This class was her invitation to reimagine, to write a relationship to authority and the Creator from an ethic of play rather than dominance.

This exploration of play remains central to my ongoing discernment of art as ministry—a sacred practice of healing, reorienting, and expanding an imagination distorted by the terrors of white superiority, capitalism, and patriarchy. Recently it led me to an exhibit at the International Center of

Photography, *I Can Make You Feel Good*, by the young and supremely talented Tyler Mitchell. A 25-year-old photographer from Atlanta, Mitchell caught my eye in 2018 when his photos of Beyoncé cemented him in history as both the first African American and the youngest photographer to shoot the cover of *Vogue*. Mitchell insists upon imagining a Black utopia continuing in the imaginative lineage of Roy DeCarava, Toni Morrison, Liz Johnson Artur, and Sun Ra. “I often think about what white fun looks like, and this notion that Black people can’t have the same,” Mitchell confides in his statement. “Growing up with Tumblr, I would often come across images of sensual, young, attractive

white models running around being free and having so much fun. I seldom saw that freedom for Black people in images.”

What is striking about Mitchell’s work is his capacity to merge the politics of critique with the poetics of possibility. His is a radical endeavor to imagine a world into being—one that is Black, subtle, and as soft as the silk his images are printed upon. This utopia does not ignore the historical legacy of being Black in America, with visual signifiers of plastic water guns and a scene at



the infamous Howard Beach, but rather transforms it through the serious play of reimagining (re-imaging) that which has been inherited. In Mitchell’s world we hear the sound of a child swinging back and forth against an out-of-focus park, feel the summer sun against our skin as we watch the melting drops of an ice cream cone, and witness the tenderness of two Black boys trying to catch gummy bears in their mouths.

As faith leaders, we undertake the tremendous responsibility of sitting together in the dark. Of walking alongside communities of accountability, assessing the state of our collective spirit, and sharing gifts that ideally land as a mercy upon our congregants’ hearts. If our rituals and practices have any intention of preparing us for the fullness of life, then we cannot ignore the necessity of modeling play, curiosity, and imagination within our respective calls. The biblical scholar and Union alumnus, Walter Brueggemann, Th.D. '61, once observed that the task of the prophetic call is to engage in futuring fantasy, “to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one that the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one.” How then must we hold our positions of authority while refraining from replicating the values of a culture that has reduced humanity to productivity, ability, gender, race, or some other form of difference? Perhaps it is through an ethos of serious play—that lifelong commitment to reimagining what we have inherited from our tradition, to creating sites of possibility that sit within the silent softness of not knowing, or to practicing an invitation to curiosity rather than an assertion of control. In taking the work of play seriously in our lives, perhaps we may come to know the joy only found in justice. **U**

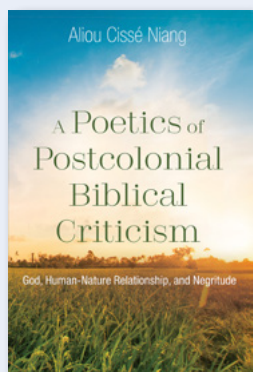
Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Fortress Press, 2018. | The title for this piece comes from an essay by Teju Cole published in *The New York Times*.

Faculty News



Kelly Brown Douglas Named to Moyers Chair

Episcopal Divinity School at Union dean and professor of theology the Very Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas, M.Div. '82, Ph.D. '88, has been named to the Bill and Judith Moyers Chair in Theology. The chair was previously held by the late Rev. Dr. James H. Cone. Douglas, a renowned womanist theologian and former student of Cone's, will assume the chair July 1.



New Faculty Book

Associate professor of New Testament Dr. Aliou C. Niang has published a new book, *A Poetics of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: God, Human-Nature Relationship, and Negritude*. The book provides a multidisciplinary, cross-cultural look at Scripture, ecology, and postcolonialism, drawn from insights of Léopold Sédar Senghor.

Meet Union's Newest Faculty Member

Julia Kelto Lillis Joined in Fall 2019 as
Assistant Professor of Early Church History



Q: What brought you to Union?

A: The fit between my goals as a teacher and scholar and what students look for at Union. In teaching, I ask students to broaden their horizons, find themselves on a larger map, and see the terrain around them in a new light with the help of conversation partners in texts and classrooms. Union is a place where people constantly work to expand their maps and constantly question categories and boundaries that divide us. Students here are eager to do expansive and creative thinking about the world around them.

Q: Why do you study history?

A: When I was in seminary, history courses brought much-needed chances to reflect on the present through learning about past Christians' cultures and their efforts to live faithfully, to urge others to live faithfully, to shape or defy social norms, to address problems, to survive and thrive. Studying history gives us conversation partners we didn't know we needed and ancestors we didn't know we had. Their ideas remind us that our own ideas are culture- and context-specific—but also that we can find commonality with people of distant cultures and learn from them as we're imagining better futures.

Q: You specialize in ancient constructions of gender and sexuality. In what ways does early church history illuminate today's conflicts in these areas and today's theological/ethical crises?

A: By teaching us that disagreements and struggles are not new. They're part of the fabric of Christian history. Ancient Christians drew conflicting conclusions about the roles women could have in

church life, what makes someone a virgin, what kinds of sexual desire are normal, and whether gender is an essential or ultimately inconsequential part of being human. We aren't the first generations to ponder questions about gender and sexuality; these are aspects of human life that seem and feel natural but are heavily shaped by the cultures we live in and are routinely up for debate.

Looking at ancient Christians' conflicting and creative reasoning about social difference and theological boundaries, especially at times of change and crisis, provides a fresh perspective on difference and power today. And the disagreements and struggles don't always have to result in division or oppression. Historically, Christians create divisions and draw boundaries, but they also question boundaries, cross boundaries, and sometimes choose to unite across boundaries. There's a long legacy and under-recorded history of positive ecumenical and interreligious relationships as well as complex and varied perspectives on social difference.

Q: What courses do you teach at Union?

A: I teach an introductory course on the first millennium of Christianity and a broader introductory course that acquaints students with the big picture of Christian history and with approaching Christian thought and practice in historical ways. In the fall I started offering a course about Mary in the first millennium. I'm developing a future course on early Christian genders and sexualities, and some other course topics I'm considering are Christians and medicine, Christians and pre-modern slavery, and early Christian biblical interpretation. ¶

Class Notes

1950s

Morgan F. Simmons, S.M.M. '53, D.S.M. '61, continues to pursue his avocation of needlepoint, which he began at age 18. His “stitching by color” pieces hang prominently in Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago and include 16 bench cushions in the chancel. From 1968 to 1996, he served as organist and choirmaster of the church. He and his wife, Mary, S.M.M. '53, were married 66 years ago by Prof. Lewis J. Sherrill in James Chapel on May 17, 1953.

Francis G. Fike, M.Div. '57, has published a new book of poetry, *Dune Tracks*. Many of the poems celebrate Michigan lakeshore landscapes and birds, but a mix of additional poems spans centuries and countries: a contemporary adaptation of Geoffrey Chaucer's prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* and translations from Spanish and French poems by authors such as Jorge Luis Borges and Théophile Gautier. Fike is professor emeritus of English at Hope College, where he taught from 1968 to 1998. He served as poetry editor of *Perspectives* from 2000 to 2005.

1960s

Katherine Womeldorf Paterson, M.R.E. '62, has published a picture book, *The Night of His Birth*, that recounts the birth of Jesus from the perspective of Mary, offering a mother's reflection on the joyous arrival of a child, with illustrations by Lisa Aisato. Paterson is the author of more than 35 books for children and young adults. She has twice won the Newbery Medal and the National Book Award, and also has won the Hans Christian Andersen Award and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. The Library of Congress has named her a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature and a Living Legend.

David J. Roomy, M.Div. '64, has been reflecting on his career. His book, *Muslims Like Us: A Bridge to Moderate Muslims* (iUniverse, Inc., 2005), is once again topical (it was re-advertised in the *New York Times Book Review* as recently as 2015 and is still in print). As associate director of the Episcopal Council for Foreign Students and Other Visitors, Inc., Roomy worked toward avoiding nuclear war during the height of the Cold War, bringing 200 graduate students to the U.S. from five European border countries in 1970 alone. From 1967 to 1970 he was counselor for the Ecumenical Fellows Program at Union. He is grateful to his mentor at the Episcopal Council, William Harrison Kennedy, who made a difference in world tensions.

Martin C. Lehfeldt, M.Div. '65, and Jamil Zainaldin, president emeritus of the Georgia Humanities Council, have published *The Liberating Promise of Philanthropy: Stories of Grant-Makers in the South*, an extensive study of the unique role that grantmaking foundations have played in the cultural and economic development of the southeastern U.S., as well as a convincing argument for their indispensability in the future. For nearly 10 years, Lehfeldt served as president of the Southeastern Council of Foundations.

John M. Ankele, M.Div. '67, and his co-producer and co-director at Old Dog Documentaries, Anne Macksoud, have released a new film, *Rollbacks: An Assault Against Life on Earth*, about the Trump administration's rollback of 95 environmental policies, putting at serious risk our natural resources and health. The 30-minute documentary, a tool for discussion and a resource for knowledge and action, may be viewed and downloaded for free on the Old Dog website.

L. Scott Harshbarger, part. '67, was selected for inclusion in the 2019 Massachusetts Super Lawyers listing. Harshbarger is senior counsel at the Boston law firm Casner & Edwards, where he serves in the litigation and nonprofit departments. For more than a decade, he has specialized in providing strategic counsel for business ethics, corporate investigations and defense, compliance and risk management, corporate and governance, and government regulation. Harshbarger was a member of Union's Board of Trustees from 2003 to 2009.

1970s

Duncan Newcomer, M.Div. '70, has published *Thirty Days With Abraham Lincoln: Quiet Fire*. Newcomer has hosted more than 200 episodes of the nationally syndicated radio series *Quiet Fire: The Spiritual Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

Dan C. Hoffman, S.T.M. '76, an Indianapolis-based spiritual director and monastic, was elected Guardian of the Community of the Gospel at its 2019 Convocation in October at the Transfiguration Spirituality Center in Cincinnati. One of 22 nonresidential religious communities recognized by the Episcopal Church, the Community of the Gospel claims 15 vowed members as well as 12 oblates, novices, and postulants in several parts of the U.S. and the Bahamas. As an expression of the “new monasticism,” CG members engage in monastic practice while living outside the cloister. The Guardian is the spiritual leader and overseer of the community.

Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos, Ph.D. '76, has published a new book, *The End of the Beginning: Joshua and Judges*, which takes the reader through the story of Israel from the entry into Canaan up to the time of Samuel. Van Wijk-Bos weaves together the memories of ancient Israel's past into a story that speaks to the traumatic context of postexilic Judah. This is the first volume of *A People and a Land*, a multi-volume work on the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Marvin E. Henk, S.T.M. '78, was honored October 30 in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Eliot L. Engel of New York's 16th district.



33 MEMBERS OF UNION'S CLASS OF 1969 gathered on campus from Oct. 2–5, 2019, to celebrate their 50th ReUnion by reconnecting with one another and with the Seminary.



LONG ISLAND (N.Y.) ALUMS gathered for lunch on Oct. 22, 2019. The event, hosted by the Rev. Kymberley Clemons-Jones '05 (far right) and the Rev. Tom Goodhue '75 (third from right), featured Afua Akwaah Ofori-Atta (second from left), director of the W.A.N.T.E.D. Project, in Accra, Ghana.

Engel rose to mark the celebration of Henk's 45th year as pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Mamaroneck, N.Y. The speech was entered into the Congressional Record and later issued by the Library of Congress.

Kenneth L. Sehested, M.Div. '78, received two awards from the Associated Church Press for "He desired a better country: A remembrance of David McReynolds" and "Getting soaked: A meditation on the recovery of baptismal integrity." Sehested is editor of *prayerandpolitics.org*, an online journal at the intersection of spirituality and justice.

Nancy Hastings Sehested, M.Div. '78, Unitas Distinguished Alumna '94, has published *Marked for Life: A Prison Chaplain's Story*. She served 13 years as chaplain of the Marion (N.C.) Correctional Institution, until her retirement in June 2013. One of the founding mothers of Baptist Women in Ministry, Sehested is currently co-pastor of Circle of Mercy Congregation, in Asheville, N.C.

1980s

William P. Crawford, M.Div. '81, S.T.M. '90, concluded his full-time service as interim dean of student affairs at Union December 20. Following the holidays and a trip to South Africa, he returned to the seminary January 21 on a 3-4-days-per-week basis, until the arrival of the new, permanent dean of students. He recently retired as senior pastor of the Larchmont (N.Y.) Avenue Church.

Marvin M. Ellison, Ph.D. '81, and Tamara Torres McGovern, M.Div. '12, have launched a talk radio series called "Queer Spirit," exploring the intersections between spiritual and religious

life in Maine and the lives of those who identify as members of the larger queer community. The show is broadcast on WMPG 90.9 FM, and is available online at the station's archives. It's hosted by OUTcast, a weekly LGBTQ-themed community radio show. Ellison has been on the frontlines of LGBTQ civil rights activism and reproductive justice movements in Maine for decades and is the author of *Making Love Just: Sexual Ethics for Perplexing Times*. Torres McGovern is a queer faith leader who heads Arise Portland, an emergent inter-spiritual community in Portland, Maine, that focuses on bringing people together to celebrate and foster wholeness.

Kelly Brown Douglas, M.Div. '82, Ph.D. '88, Unitas Distinguished Alumna '13, has been appointed to the Bill and Judith Moyers Chair in Theology at Union, previously held by the late Rev. Dr. James H. Cone. Douglas, who will continue to serve as dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union, will assume the chair July 1. She is the author of *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (2015), and *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (1999). Prior to coming to Union, Douglas was the Susan D. Morgan Professor of Religion at Goucher College in Baltimore.

Craig J. Lindsey, M.Div. '84, has been called to be pastor of Valley Presbyterian Church in Green Valley, Ariz. Previously he was at First Presbyterian Church of Skaneateles in Upstate New York. A founding member of the John Dau Foundation, he traveled to South Sudan solo in 2005 to find and reunite "Lost Families," building trust to encourage volunteer contractors and medical personnel to go there. He holds a D.Min. from Columbia Theological Seminary.

CLASS NOTES

William Henry "Bill" Koch Jr., M.Div. '88, had a reading of his play, *Two Visits About Visitations*, about Mary and Elizabeth, staged at the Theatre of the Elephant and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Chelsea, in New York City in December. The theatre presented *Provincetown Poems*, written and performed by Koch himself, in November. He is St. Peter's Chelsea Playwright-in-Residence.

Bonnie A. Perry, M.Div. '88, was ordained and consecrated as the 11th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan on February 8 in Dearborn. She became the first woman bishop as well as the first lesbian bishop in the diocese since it was formed in 1836. The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, led the service as the chief consecrator. Prayers and readings in Arabic were featured, honoring the diocese's ministry in the Arab American community. Previously Perry served as rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Chicago. She holds a D.Min. degree from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

Laura Jane Sliva Benson, M.Div. '89, has retired as executive director of Durham's Partnership for Children, following nonprofit leadership in housing and homeless service agencies in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., since 1997. She has also moved into retired status with the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Her church pastorates extended from 1989 to 1996, in New York, Connecticut, and Texas. She and her husband, Walt, now live in Beaufort, N.C., and recently celebrated their 33rd wedding anniversary. Their daughter is an elementary education major at Berry College in Georgia.

1990s

Irene Monroe, M.Div. '90, is a visiting researcher in the Religion and Conflict Transformation Program at Boston University School of Theology for the second year in a row. Last September, she was interviewed on *Amanpour and Company*, PBS, on LGBTQ Issues in religious communities. Monroe describes herself as a black, lesbian, radical feminist who co-hosts the new podcast *All Rev'd Up*, in which she discusses current issues with an evangelical colleague.

Theresa Rickard, M.Div. '93, has published *Everyday Witness: 7 Simple Habits for Sharing Your Faith*. Rickard is a Dominican Sister of Blauvelt, N.Y., a retreat leader, and the president of RENEW International. She holds a D.Min. in preaching from Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis.

Raphael G. Warnock, M.Div. '94, Ph.D. '06, entered the race for the U.S. Senate seat in Georgia recently vacated by Johnny Isakson, a Republican, who cited ailing health as his reason for resigning with three years left in his term. Warnock, a Democrat, is senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often preached. He seeks to unseat Senator Kelly Loeffler, a Republican businesswoman who was appointed to the seat by Georgia's governor, Brian Kemp.

Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, M.Div. '95, has edited the *T&T Clark Handbook of Political Theology* (Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2019), a comprehensive reference resource informed by the three Abrahamic traditions, with selections spanning religion, philosophy, history, law, and political science from leading scholars in their areas of specialization. Chapters include contributions from Rodríguez, as well as from Union faculty members **Gary Dorrien, M.Div. '78**, and **Cláudio Carvalhaes, Ph.D. '07**, and Union alumna, **Eboni Marshall Turman, M.Div. '05, Ph.D. '10**.

Traci C. West, Ph.D. '95, received a Peace & Justice Award from CONNECT in March. CONNECT is dedicated to safe families and peaceful communities. West is professor of Christian ethics and African American studies at Drew Theological School. Her most recent book is *Solidarity and Defiant Spirituality: Africana Lessons on Religion, Racism, and Ending Gender Violence*.

Winnie S. Varghese, M.Div. '99, was awarded the Doctor of Humane Letters degree at Metropolitan College of New York last June. She also served as keynote speaker at commencement exercises. Senior Priest for Justice and Reconciliation at Trinity Church Wall Street, Varghese is also a blogger for *Patheos*, author of *Church Meets World*, editor of *What We Shall Become*, and author of numerous articles and chapters on social justice and the church. She was recently named one of the Above & Beyond 2019 Women of New York Nonprofits by *City & State*.

2000s

Karla J. Miller, M.Div. '00, was installed February 9 as settled pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Hendersonville, N.C. **Carter Heyward, M.A. '71, M.Div. '73, Ph.D. '80**, conducted the service. Miller began working as FCC's settled pastor a year ago. Previously she was the minister for community life at Old North Church UCC in Marblehead, Mass. She has continuing education and professional development training in marriage and pastoral counseling, women in

ministry, suicide prevention, and ceramics in spiritual expression. Miller is married to Dr. Anne "Liz" Thurston, a college administrator who most recently served as director of student affairs at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

Karen Georgia Thompson, M.Div. '00, has been elected to serve as associate general minister for wider church ministries for the United Church of Christ (UCC), making her the first Jamaican-Caribbean to serve in leadership in the UCC. She is responsible for programmatic ministries of the UCC in the areas of global relations, humanitarian aid and development, ecumenical and interfaith relations, events and scholarships management, and archives. Previously she served as a pastor in Florida and on the Florida Conference UCC staff as minister for disaster response and recovery.

Israel Divaker Anchan, S.T.M. '01, has been called to be rector of Christ the King Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, Calif. Previously he was rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Kankakee, Ill.

Patrick Shu-Hsiang Cheng, M.A. '01, Ph.D. '10, reports that his book *Radical Love* has now been published in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Recently Cheng was appointed theologian-in-residence at St. Thomas Church, New York City.

his father, is first vice president of the Michigan Progressive Baptist Convention. He also serves on boards of the Morehouse School of Religion, Loyola High School, and Ecumenical Theological Seminary. A church leader said Adams "is an anointed spiritual leader who will build upon the legacy of his father's ministry while also following our God's plans into a brighter future."

Nicole Myers Turner, M.Div. '02, has published *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia*. The book reveals how freedpeople in Virginia adapted strategies for pursuing the freedom of their souls to worship as they saw fit and to participate in society completely in the evolving landscape of emancipation. Turner is assistant professor of religious studies at Yale University.

Donald G. Erickson, M.A. '04, has published *A Life Lived and Laid Down for Friends: A Progressive Christology*, in which he reflects on the iconoclastic life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, first and foremost a spiritual teacher who embodied compassion. Last July, Erickson was called as interim minister of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Middletown, Ohio.

Katie E. Givens Kime, M.Div. '05, was a featured preacher on *Day 1* with host Peter Wallace, the nationally broadcast ecumenical radio program formerly known as "The Protestant Hour."



ANNUAL ALUMNI/AE & STUDENT DINNER at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, February 18, 2020, Arlington, Va.

Charles Christian Adams, M.Div. '02, has been called to be senior pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit upon the retirement of his father, Charles G. Adams, who was senior pastor there for 50 years. He was the longest serving pastor in Hartford Memorial's history and only the third pastor of the church. The younger Adams, who served as co-pastor with

Kime is an Atlanta-based Presbyterian minister who serves as Director of Religion and Civic Engagement for Odyssey Impact in New York City. She served Presbyterian churches in New York and Atlanta before earning a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University. She was a post-doctoral fellow for the department of spiritual care, psychology of religion, and religious education at

CLASS NOTES

the Institute for Practical Theology, University of Bern, Switzerland, before joining Odyssey Impact early in 2019.

Emily A. Peck-McClain, M.Div. '05, has co-edited a book with J. Paige Boyer, Shannon Sullivan, Theresa S. Thames and Jen Tyler, *Speaking Truth: Women Raising Their Voices in Prayer*. Written by 92 young women who are clergy or who are not able to respond to the call to ministry because of gender identity or sexuality, the book has a forward written by Vashti McKenzie, the first woman elected bishop of the AME Church. Peck-McClain is visiting professor of Christian formation and young adult ministry and co-director of the certificate program in Children and Youth Ministry and Advocacy at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

David V. Fraccaro, M.Div. '07, is executive director of FaithAction International House in Greensboro, N.C., which recently won a share of a \$1 million grant to expand its ID program. Previously Fraccaro worked as an immigration specialist with Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, educating students and faith communities throughout the U.S. on immigration issues. An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, he has been a human rights volunteer for the UCC in Bolivia, Kenya, and East Timor and with the United Nations. His writing has been featured in the Washington Post, New American Media, the Greensboro News & Record, Sojourners, and the Associated Press.

Ben Sanders III, M.Div. '08, married Lyz Riley on September 27. Sanders holds a Ph.D. from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology and is assistant professor of theology and ethics at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis. Riley is a faculty fellow at the Saint Louis University School of Law and a legal and research assistant at the Deaconess Foundation.

David Frederic Greder, M.Div. '09, was recently hired to the tenure-track position of assistant professor of religion and philosophy at Waldorf University in Forest City, Iowa. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and has been teaching online since 2016.

Stephanie G. Kershner, M.Div. '09, was installed as pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Manchester, Conn., last October. Previously she was pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Scarsdale, N.Y.

Laura E. Palmer, M.Div. '09, was ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia. She has been an oncology chaplain at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia since 2011.



THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2019, program titled “Not Your ‘Model Minority’: Diversity in Asian American History and Theology,” featured keynote addresses by EDS alumnae and former faculty members, **Dr. Gale A Yee, EDS '17**, and **Dr. Kwok Pui Lan, EDS '17**. The half-day conference was moderated by **Dr. Joshua Samuel, UTS '17**, and was followed by a gathering of EDS alumni/ae and friends (pictured here) in the apartment of the **Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas UTS '82, '88**.

2010s

Hannah E. McIntyre, M.Div. '11, S.T.M. '12, has been called to be pastor of Pisgah Presbyterian Church in Versailles, Ky. She started her new ministry last November and was installed February 1. Previously she was associate pastor of youth and families at the Presbyterian Church of Danville, Ky.

Jacob S. Baccus, M.Div. '13, is running for the Oklahoma State House, District 81. Alicia Andrews, Oklahoma Democratic Party chair, attended his campaign kickoff December 5 in Edmond, Okla.

Todd Andrew Clayton, M.A. '14, passed the New York State bar exam and thanks everyone who helped him “over this last hurdle.” Clayton is an associate at the New York office of WilmerHale, a full-service international law firm with 1,000 lawyers in 13 offices in the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

Blair A. Moorhead, M.Div. / M.S.S.W. '13, was ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on February 23 at Clarendon Presbyterian Church in Arlington Va.

William H. Critzman, M.Div. '14, and Patrick Willingham were married September 7 at Old South Haven Presbyterian Church in Brookhaven Hamlet, N.Y. **Micah Bucey, M.Div. '14**, a United Church of Christ minister, performed the ceremony. Critzman is the senior minister of West End Collegiate Church in Manhattan and a resident in psychoanalytic training at the Blanton-Peale Institute and Counseling Center in Manhattan. Willingham is the executive director of New York City's Public Theater and former president and chief operating officer of the Blue Man Group. He also serves on the board of EMC Arts, an arts consultancy.

Clayton White Brooks III, M.Div. '14, filed in December as one of four Democrats seeking the North Carolina District 9 seat in the U.S. House of Representatives currently held by Dan Bishop, a Republican. Bishop won the seat in a special election last fall by defeating Democrat Dan McCready, after the November 2018 election results were voided by the state because of concerns about tainted absentee ballots. Brooks, a Laurinburg, N.C., native, is a Baptist minister and has worked for churches, nonprofits, government, and political campaigns.

Samantha Gonzalez-Block, M.Div. '15, and **Matthew D. Hoffman, M.Div. '15**, were married in Asheville, N.C., on May 4, 2019. Hoffman was ordained December 8 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Asheville.

Maggie A. Jarry, M.Div. '15, was accepted into the Peace Corps as a health extension volunteer in Ghana and moved to Ghana in January.

Rashad Raymond Moore, M.Div. '15, was installed as pastor of First Baptist Church of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y., January 19. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in philosophy and education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is a member of the Academy of Preachers and Phi Sigma Tau, the honor society for philosophers. Previously Moore was assistant minister at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. He serves on the UNCF-New York's Faith Initiative Council, Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services, Inc., and the Morehouse Manhattan Alumni Association. He is also a member of Prince Hall Masons (Boyer Lodge No. 1).

Elise A. Hanley, M.Div. '16, has been called to be associate rector of Church of the Epiphany

on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Hanley is married to **Christopher J. Ashley, Ph.D. '16**, who currently serves as a resident chaplain at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.

Julia N. Khan, M.Div. '16, will temporarily lead the Westhampton (Mass.) Congregational United Church of Christ while the pastor, Tadd Allman-Morton, is away on sabbatical this summer. Since October, she has been a ministry fellow at the church and has started the discernment process for ordination in the UCC. Previously she worked with veterans as a chaplain at Soldier On. Khan and her wife have bought a house in Amherst and intend to make their life in the Pioneer Valley.

Benjamin J. Perry, M.Div. '16, left his position as deputy director of communications and marketing at Union in January to accept a call as minister of outreach and media strategy at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City.

Leonisa Ardizzone, M.Div. '17, began her tenure as minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills last September. Prior to becoming a minister, she was a science and peace educator for 27 years. She holds a doctorate in international educational development from Columbia University's Teachers College.

Ardizzone is also a jazz vocalist who plays many instruments and leads the Leonisa Ardizzone Quartet, which recently released its third album, "All in Good Time." She is an adjunct assistant professor at Vassar College, where she is providing coverage for a sabbatical leave in the department of education.

Chanda Rule Bernroider, M.Div. '17, recently published "Singing the Ole One Hundreds" in both the German liturgical journal *Liturgie und Kultur* and the Liturgische Konferenz' book *Called to Worship—Freed to Respond*. Excerpts of her thesis, "The Midwife, the Mother & the Butterfly," were published in *Jazz und Kirche: Philosophische, theologische und musikwissenschaftliche Zugänge*. Her stories are featured on Vennly, a new spiritual health app that provides audio perspectives on everyday life questions about relationships, parenting, loss, and other topics. She has just released "Hold On," an album of music. She currently lives in Vienna, Austria.

Guthrie L. Graves-Fitzsimmons, M.Div. '17, has joined the Center for American Progress as a fellow in the Faith and Progressive Policy Initiative, where he will help advance the team's progressive vision of religious liberty, including LGBTQ equality

and religious exemptions. Graves-Fitzsimmons specializes in studying the role of faith in progressive politics and is author of the forthcoming book *Just Faith: Reclaiming Progressive Christianity*. He comes to CAP from ReThink Media, where he worked with Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian activists as associate director of the Rights and Inclusion collaborative.

Katherine Newell, M.Div. '17, is co-founder and CEO of The Faith Space, an ethical leadership development nonprofit in Denver. The Faith Space trains and empowers revolutionary, spiritual, and mission-driven leaders through actionable educational courses and inclusive community rituals. Tech Chaplain **Shamika Goddard, M.Div. '17**, recently joined the board of directors and says she envisions The Faith Space "encouraging ethics, ritual, and spirituality across industries and organizations."

Hannah Perdue Capaldi, M.Div. '18, was ordained into the Unitarian Universalist ministry December 1 at First Parish in Concord, Mass. She graduated from Union as Hannah Perdue Gallo; she and Livia Capaldi were married in September.

Eric R. Adamcik, M.Div. '19, has accepted a position as director of campus ministry at Waldorf University in Forest City, Iowa, a small liberal arts school that is historically affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America but became for-profit in 2010. "But the ministry is still run through Immanuel Lutheran Church," he says, "so I'm more accountable to the ELCA."

Kristine Hyun Kyong Chong, M.Div. '19, and Daniel Chou welcomed a son, Francis Min-ki Chou, born August 17, 2019. Chong is the online editor for *Inheritance*, described as "amplifying stories of Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences and faith since 2009." Chou is editor-in-chief. Chong is currently training to be a chaplain, with an aim of integrating liberation, postcolonial, and feminist theologies and social ethics within spiritual care. Chou, who is co-founder of Winnow+Glean, holds an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Karmen M. Smith, M.A. '19, has written a play, *DOJ: The Liberation of Judas*. He has partnered with a community organization, Future Now, to include the formerly incarcerated in the casting process, and the play is in development.

Scott R. Sprunger, M.Div. '19, is enrolled in a one-year residency program in clinical pastoral education at Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health in Lancaster, Pa. He sees hospital chaplaincy as a way to put into practice what he learned at Union to help others. **U**

IN MEMORIAM

AS OF FEBRUARY 14, 2020

Alumni/ae

R. Kern Eutsler '43
Mary A. Weaver Butkofsky '45
Arnold W. Hearn '49, '61
Kjell (P.J.) Jordheim '50
Nicholas M. Iyoya '51
Douglas M. Parrott '52, '65
Ralph Lord Roy '52
Robert K. Shorten '52
Richard C. Vetter '52
Robert D. Newton, Jr. '53
Margaret Hartsell Ranson '55
Clara Fear Hall '57
Elizabeth Lassiter Torre '57
Lois Hampton Waddington '58
Joann Palmer '59
Murray Milner, Jr. '60
Waldo R. Landquist '61, '62
Robert S. Fuller '63
James Parks Morton '64
T. Joseph Collier, Jr. '67
Lawrence Hiroshi Mamiya '68, '75
Cain Hope Felder '69, '82
Richard A. Olson '71
June Ramage Rogers '87
Linda-Sue Larson '91
Suzanne M. Wiedel-Pace '91
Christopher Daniel Suits '14

Faculty, Staff, Trustees, & Friends of Union

David Allen Jones
Betty Lee Ashbury Jones
Juver Londoño
Sandra Jo Bowman McCutchan
Marjean Postlethwaite
Dale E. Rucker
John C. Stahler
Elisabeth Niebuhr Sifton Stern

To submit a class note or death notice, please contact Shana Kaplanov in the Alumni/ae Affairs Office at development@utsnyc.edu or 212-280-1453.

Cain Hope Felder, M.DIV. '69, PH.D. '82

Scholar Highlighted Black People in the Bible

CAIN HOPE FELDER'S PIONEERING work showed that Scripture is full of racial diversity, said Daniel Silliman in an obituary published in *Christianity Today* following Felder's death October 1, 2019.

"By showcasing the numerous people with dark skin mentioned in the Bible," wrote Silliman, "the longtime Howard University School of Divinity professor argued that white interpreters had erased black people from the text. That erasure, he said, enabled modern, racist readings of the Scripture."

Felder's death was announced by Howard University, where Felder taught for 35 years until his retirement in 2016. He was 76 and had been under hospice care at home in Mobile, Ala., for some months. He died with his wife, Jewell, at his bedside.

Felder was ordained in the United Methodist Church and worked as the first national director of Black Methodists for Church Renewal from 1969 to 1972.

After earning a joint doctorate in biblical languages and literature from Union and Columbia University, he became one of only about 30 African Americans with doctorates in biblical studies. He taught briefly at Princeton Theological Seminary, then went on to serve as professor of New Testament language and literature and editor of *The Journal of Religious Thought* at Howard University School of Divinity. He was also chair of Howard's Doctor of Philosophy program and immediate past chair of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Combining linguistic investigation with exhaustive research into cultures of the ancient Near East, Felder concluded that

Moses' wife, Zipporah, was black; that there were black soldiers in King David's army in 2 Samuel; and that Ebed-Melek, the royal official who saved the prophet Jeremiah's life in Jeremiah 38, was also black. Felder thought it possible that the prophet Zephaniah was black as well.

Noting the racial and ethnic diversity in the Bible, he believed, enabled scholars to correct "Eurocentric" interpretations, which can impose racism and white supremacy onto the text.

"Black people are not only frequently mentioned," he wrote, as quoted in *Christianity Today*, "but are also mentioned in ways that are favorable in terms of acknowledging their actual and potential role in the salvation history of Israel." He pointed out that Jesus himself was a person of color who might look black in modern America—and who certainly wasn't the blue-eyed, blond European depicted over the centuries.

"Christ's church is always a stronger witness when all believers affirm, heal, and accept the mosaic of difference among God's people," Felder said. "Jesus Christ inspires the church not just to tolerate difference, but to affirm the talents and gifts of each human being, and to then celebrate the rich diversity among God's people with justice and mercy for all."

Felder is survived by his wife, Jewell Richardson Felder; one daughter, Akidah H. Felder of Bethesda, Md.; one brother, Robbie J. Felder (Ruth), of Salley, S.C.; and one sister, Mary Harvey of Moorestown, N.J. ¶

Lawrence Hiroshi Mamiya, M.DIV. '68, PH.D. '75

Professor Emeritus of Religion and Africana Studies at Vassar College

LARRY MAMIYA, CO-AUTHOR of the authoritative history *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, who received "a baptism by gunfire" when he went to join the Rev. Charles Sherrod's Southwest Georgia Project with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement, died peacefully at his home in Hawaii, January 7, 2019. He was 76.

His death was announced by the president of Vassar College, Elizabeth H. Bradley, who noted that Mamiya had been "an inspiring presence on the Vassar faculty for nearly four decades," from 1975 until his retirement in 2014. For 35 years, she added, "he was the guiding spirit behind Vassar's prison education programs, a landmark in our college's partnerships with the greater community." These programs brought Vassar students and incarcerated men from nearby correctional facilities together to learn with

each other. They inspired generations of Vassar students to pursue careers in prison reform, social justice, and law.

A third-generation Japanese-American, Mamiya was born in Honolulu and graduated from the University of Hawaii before coming to Union.

The Black Church in the African American Experience, which he co-wrote with C. Eric Lincoln, won the Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in 1991. Mamiya also published extensive studies of African Americans and Islam, contributed to a history of Riverside Church in New York City, and participated in academic forums across the U.S. and internationally in Japan and Turkey.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, May Lawson Mamiya, and by his son, Ralph, and daughter, Rachel, and their families. ¶

In Gratitude

From the Desk of Rita Walters

Vice President, Development

EVERY DAY HERE at Union we are thankful for our alumni/ae and friends who connect with us in ways big and small—through calls, notes and donations of all sizes. Whether it is supporting our students through annual fund giving, or making a planned gift, your continued support is greatly appreciated. This spring, we have enlisted students and staff to participate in a thank-a-thon. It's one of the ways we are able to express our gratitude for your support.

In a call with the Rev. Dr. John W. Sonnenday III, M.Div. '71, he shared why he supports the seminary: "Union did what it did for me a long time ago; I will continue to support it to the best of my ability." Others shared that though they now live far from New York City and aren't able to visit, they are glad the seminary is still educating faith leaders to face the problems of today. If you haven't received a call yet, you should soon. Until then, let me express our deepest thanks for your support. We couldn't do all that we do without you.



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**WOMEN OF SPIRIT 2020:
Ruth Bader Ginsburg in
conversation with Bill
Moyers.**