

BEESON

DRAWN BY GOD'S BEAUTY | ENGAGING ART WITH THE GOSPEL

2016





In This Issue

This issue of **BEESON** magazine focuses on art and beauty – what they tell us about God, the Great Artist and Source of all Beauty, and how they can be used to spread the gospel story.

The above painting entitled, "The Long Road Home," is the work of artist Naomi Gignilliat, wife of Beeson Divinity Associate Professor Mark Gignilliat. "The Long Road Home" illustrates the winding, complex and beautiful journey of faith toward God's light.

Our prayer is that this issue will encourage, equip and enlighten you in your journey of faith as you seek to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

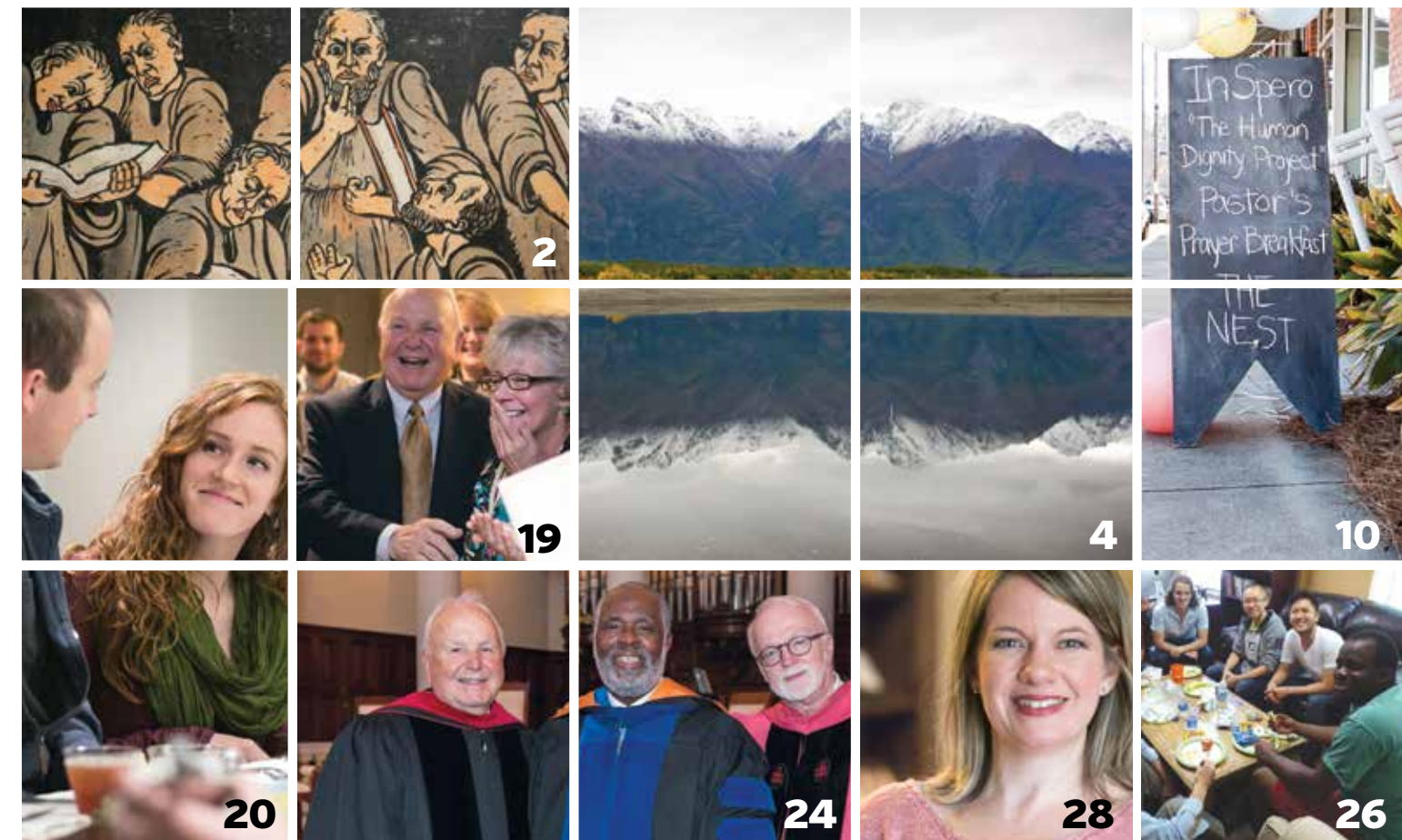
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Page 4-5: Mountain range in Alaska
Page 7: Meredith's daughter, Rachel
Page 6-7: Bear in the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center

Pages 6, 8 art:
Page 6: "Mavora Stars" taken by Tom Hall (Flickr.com)
Page 8: Petal cell picture taken by Umberto Salvagnin (Flickr.com)

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- 2** Remembering Hans Friedrich Grohs
- 4** Drawn by God's Beauty
- 10** Thinking Creatively about Engaging Art with the Gospel
- 19** The Sandy Brinson Room
- 20** Finkenwalde Day

- 22** Reflecting on Finkenwalde Day
- 24** Long in the Making
- 26** Global Center News
- 27** New Faculty and Staff
- 28** Beeson Portrait: Sherri Brown
- 29** Alumni News



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REMEMBERING Hans Friedrich Grohs

[1892–1981]

by Timothy George

The life and legacy of German artist Hans Friedrich Grohs is a remarkable commentary of creativity, courage and faith in an apocalyptic world of violence, death and moral collapse. He was born four years after Kaiser Wilhelm II ascended the German imperial throne; he died nearly a century later in the same decade that witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. He was drafted as a soldier in both world wars and experienced firsthand the Nazi reign of terror in between. Few artists have lived so fully, or recorded so faithfully, such a vast sweep of human history.

Grohs was born in 1892 in the small village of Pahlen, near the Eider River, in the north German province of Dithmarschen in Schleswig

Holstein. The son of a fisherman, Grohs was apprenticed as a painter at age 16 and later studied art at the University of Königsberg and what later became the Bauhaus in Weimar. During World War I, he was stationed near Bruges, Belgium, where he studied the Flemish masters. Returning to Germany, he became a member of the influential Bauhaus art and design school in Weimar, although he later broke with this tradition to develop his own distinctive artistic voice. Grohs represents the best of the German Expressionist school and belongs to the tradition of German art and spirituality that reaches back to Albrecht Dürer.

Pulsating through all Grohs' works is his passionate faith in

God, mediated through the classical Protestant tradition of Lutheran theology and piety. His faith was tested in 1924 when his first wife, Ellie, died from childbirth after two years of marriage. His faith was again sorely put to the test during the 1930s and 1940s when the culture of the Weimar Republic was eclipsed by a ruthless totalitarian regime. In 1934 he became a professor at the Nordische Kunsthochschule in Bremen. For several years he flourished as an artist and teacher. However, in 1937, Grohs' career was shattered and his artworks were declared "degenerate" by Josef Goebbels and the Nazi censors. As a member of the German Confessing Church, Grohs came under grave suspicion. In 1943, at age 50 and in

poor health, he was drafted in the army and sent as a foot soldier to the Russian front.

Some of Grohs' greatest religious art reflects the suffering of his own life and that of his country during this time of devastation. "I am alone, my need is great!" he prayed. "My soul seeks you, Eternal God. Let your eyes be always upon mine, and when all men leave me, oh, leave me not, Eternal God!" In his own depression and distress, Martin Luther found great solace by looking to "the wounds of Jesus." Just so, Grohs depicts the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection as the great turning point in the cosmic drama of redemption.

Following World War II, Grohs returned to his art with newfound joy and hope. He saw his painting as a form of meditation, a prayer to God

the Almighty. Though much of his art had been destroyed, and his own life deeply scarred by the brutality of what has been called "the worst century since Jesus Christ," Grohs himself maintained his integrity, both as an artist and a Christian. He never lost the sense of mystery and wonder in God's creation, seen in his many landscapes, nor the love and gratitude evoked by God's gracious salvation in Jesus Christ. Both his life and art are finely expressed in this Easter prayer first written in 1923: "Oh, give this light again to us! And guide our souls to your eternal home! Carry them in your hands, for without You our being ends."

Thirty-five years after his death in 1981, Hans Friedrich Grohs continues to inspire those who know his art and study his life. The dedication festivities for

Hodges Chapel in 1995 featured an exhibition of his religious art made possible through the generosity of his daughter, Frauken Grohs Collinson, and the Frauken Grohs Collinson-Grohs Collection Trust. Through many troubles, Grohs was sustained by his vision of the Christian faith. His paintings reflect the hard-won Reformation faith of Martin Luther reflected in the first article of the 1934 Barmen Declaration: "Jesus Christ, as he is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death." ♦

You can learn more about Grohs and his artwork in these two books: Hans Friedrich Grohs: A Memento Mori and A Trunk of Memories I: North German Short Stories by Hans Friedrich Grohs both written by Frauken Grohs Collinson and Rose Mary McKinney. Find them directly from The Hanselma Gallery of Art (hfgcollectiontrust@gmail.com). Facebook: Hans.Friedrich.Grohs.1892.1981.

Left: "From the Life of Christ: The Annunciation," 1922. Grohs depicts the scene in which an angel tells Mary that she will be impregnated by the Holy Spirit with God's Son.

Center: "From the Life of Christ: The Good Samaritan," 1955. In this depiction of the Good Samaritan, Grohs depicts himself as the Good Samaritan lifting his long dead father back into his life.

Right: "The Translation," 1923. German Reformer Martin Luther (center) is surrounded by translators as they pour over Scripture in the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

Drawn by God's beauty: The Surprising Jonathan Edwards

by Gerald R. McDermott

Most Americans know Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), if they know him at all, as the preacher of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Many conclude that he is not only intimidating but also repulsive because of the wrathful God he depicts in painful detail.

This perception of Edwards is not new. Harriet Beecher Stowe complained that Edwards’ sermons on sin and suffering were “refined poetry of torture.”

After staying up one night reading Edwards’ treatise on the will, Mark Twain reported that “Edwards’ God shines red and hideous in the glow from the fires of hell, their only right and proper adornment. By God, I was ashamed to be in such company.”

Few Americans have known that Edwards was actually obsessed not by God’s wrath but by God’s beauty.

In fact, historian of theological aesthetics Patrick Sherry has shown that Edwards made beauty more central to theology than anyone else in the history of Christian thought, including Augustine and (20th-century Swiss Catholic) Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Most Americans would also be surprised to learn that Edwards was America’s greatest philosopher before the twentieth century. One measure of his stature is Yale University Press’s critical edition of his works,

which contains 73 volumes, most between 400 and 800 pages. Another token of Edward’s importance is the three-volume *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, which contains more references to Edwards than to any other single figure.

These are some of the reasons that Edwards is widely recognized as America’s greatest theologian. More than 25 years ago Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson published a monograph with Oxford University Press entitled *America’s Theologian*. The nearest competitor to Edwards for that moniker, H. Richard Niebuhr, confessed he was greatly indebted to Edwards and saw himself as extending the Edwardsean vision.



Edwards on beauty

Edwards taught that the essence of true religious experience is to be overwhelmed by a glimpse of the beauty of God, to be drawn to the glory of his perfections and to sense his irresistible love. He argued that the Scriptures often describe the knowing of the regenerate as a kind of *seeing*.

He quoted the statement in 1 John, “No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has seen him or knows him,” and “the one who does evil has not *seen* God” (1 John 3:6; 3 John 11). He reminded his readers that Jesus said, “I have come into this world so that those who do not *see* may *see*” (John 9:39).

But what is it that the saints see? The answer, according to Edwards, is the glory or beauty of divine things, which the Bible calls “the beauty of holiness” (Ps 29:2; 96:9).

This is the beauty, he insisted, that makes the person of Jesus so ravishingly beautiful, that has drawn the hearts of billions to Himself for thousands of years.

The devil and the damned, he added, see the holiness of God, but they do not see the *beauty* of that holiness.

We might wonder how this could be so. Let me try to illustrate. When I was in high school in New York City a teacher took me to an art museum. While my teacher gazed with love and delight at one painting after another, I looked at my watch. I saw the same paintings my teacher saw, but I did not see their beauty. I could not see because my heart and mind did not have the capacity to see and enjoy the beauty of this art. I had eyes to see but could not see.

Helen Keller was struck deaf and blind at the age of two, yet she could see and hear beauty all around her.

She said, “I, who cannot see, find hundreds of things to interest me through mere touch. I feel the delicate symmetry of a leaf. I pass my hands lovingly about the smooth skin of a silver birch or the rough shaggy bark of a pine. I feel the delightful, velvety texture of a flower and discover its remarkable convolutions and something of the miracle of nature is revealed to me. Occasionally, if I am very fortunate, I can place my hand gently on a small tree and feel the happy quiver of a bird in full song.”

“At times, my heart cries out, longing to see these things. But if I can get so much pleasure in mere touch, how much more beauty must be revealed by sight?”

“Yet those who have eyes apparently see little. The



When I first saw Edwards' depiction of God's beauty, it changed my view of God.

panorama of color and action which fill the world are taken for granted. It is a great pity that in the world of light the gift of sight is used only as a mere convenience, rather than as a means of adding fullness.”

Edwards would say that seeing the beauty of Jesus Christ and the glory of redemption is analogous to the capacity to *see* that Helen Keller possessed. People without the Spirit don't see the glory of God and Christ because they are not *able* to. Their eyes have not been opened to divine beauty, so they cannot see it or enjoy it. Just as many cannot see the beauty that is all around them.

Edwards described our side of this experience as like being given a sixth sense: a sense of the beauty, glory and love of God.

This is what has made Edwards so attractive in the last sixty years of what has been called an “Edwards renaissance.” It is part of the reason why historian Joseph Conforti calls Edwards the “white whale” of American religious history—the dazzling mystery that has attracted even atheists such as Harvard historian Perry Miller and Berkeley historian Henry May.

Notre Dame historian George Marsden says that what draws so many to Edwards is the beauty of Edwards’ religious vision: for Edwards “all created reality is like a quintessential explosion of light from the sun of God’s intertrinitarian love.”

I would add that for Edwards the world is full of beauty because beauty and light constitute the essence of its Creator. Listen to Edwards’ lyrical words:

God is the foundation and fountain of all being and all beauty, from whom all is perfectly derived, and on whom all is most absolutely and perfectly dependent; of whom and through whom and to whom is all being and all perfection; and whose being and beauty is as it were the sum and comprehension of all existence and excellence: much more than the sun is the fountain and summary comprehension of all the light and brightness of the day (*The Nature of True Virtue*).

Edwards goes further to link the beauty of this world to the beauty of the Creator: “All the beauty to be found throughout the whole

creation is but the reflection of the diffused beams of the Being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory.”

For Edwards, then, all earthly beauty flows from God, and more specifically, from the beauty of the Trinity, in which three different Persons give themselves in love to one another, creating a glorious harmony among differences.

Whether or not Helen Keller knew the beauty of the Trinity, she saw its “type” in nature. This is what every human being sees when she sees the power of the ocean crashing on the beach during a storm, or the stunning stars and nebulae of distant galaxies on a clear night, or the marvelous intricacies of a cell under a microscope.

There was once a young man desperately seeking God. He sought out an old man who lived in a nearby beach house and posed the question, “Old man, how can I see God?” The old man who knew God at a depth few ever experience, paused for a long time. Finally, he told the young man quietly, “Young man, I don’t think I can help you. For you see, I have a very different problem. I cannot *not* see him.”

Beauty as consent to Being-in-general

Let’s look a bit more closely at what beauty meant for Edwards: consent to Being-in-general (his term for all of reality, which both lies in God and is separate from that same God). Think of this consent as each part of the creation saying “Yes” to the whole of reality. Even the inanimate creation does this. A falling rock “obeys” the law of gravity, saying “Yes.”

A deer running with elegance across a field is saying “Yes” to its Creator, doing what the Creator created it to do.

Edwards uses another image to depict beauty. He said that it manifests the “proportion” that is a “harmony” among things that are different. This harmony is a pattern that is usually pleasing to those who perceive it. By harmony he suggests not only the symmetrical harmony we see in a French garden at Versailles but also the asymmetrical harmony we enjoy in a Japanese garden—or even the disproportion that is part of a higher proportion or harmony, like a jazz chord

that sounds dissonant when played alone but fits well within a progression of chords.

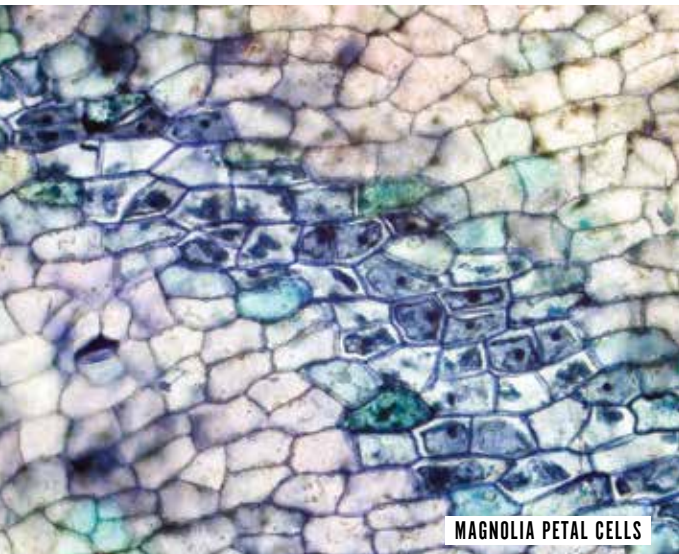
The most beautiful pattern of all and therefore the pattern of all consent and harmony is God’s love among the three Persons. By this Edwards meant each Person’s loving consent to the glory and will of the other two Persons, and



then to the Trinity’s design for the creation. This design required infinite suffering by a human being to redeem lost humans.

Yet only a God could suffer infinitely, as Anselm once argued and Edwards echoed. And the suffering had to be by a human being because it was punishment for human sins. This is why the Mediator had to be a God-man, and why this second Person of the Trinity consented to the design.

The consent, noted Edwards, involved astounding paradoxes. It combined divine infinity with care for finite humanity. It was a joining of infinite greatness with infinite care. Infinite justice somehow became infinite mercy. Infinite majesty displayed itself as stunning meekness. Think of it, Edwards suggested: The infinite God of the cosmos, the King of kings and Lord of lords, permitted Himself to be born in a barn and to be spat on, mocked and nailed to a cross between two thieves.



MAGNOLIA PETAL CELLS

Not fear but attraction

When I first saw Edwards' depiction of God's beauty, it changed my view of God.

I realized afresh that He does not drive us by duty, but draws us by beauty, not by fear but by irresistible attraction.

It is like the way the most beautiful music and works of art draw us closer and closer.

Once we hear and see their beauty, we want more and more. When it is great art or music, and we have eyes and ears to see and hear, we feel overtaken and absorbed by the beauty—so much so that sometimes we forget ourselves and are drawn to that beauty outside of ourselves.

That is how Edwards described true religious experience. It is what compels us to abandon love for self as the central principle of our lives and turn to the beauty of God. We feel compelled, and yet we are not coerced. We are drawn ineluctably.

Implications

This vision of God's beauty has implications for every dimension of the Christian life. It means that conversion, for example, is not simply doing our duty of submitting to the Creator but seeing the beauty of his infinite love in Jesus Christ.

It means that grace is not just supernatural help to do the right thing but seeing more and more of that beauty of truth and goodness in God. And it is not a one-time seeing, but a growing vision of the beauty of the depths of God—like going deeper and deeper into a cell with an increasingly powerful microscope, seeing more and more of its astoundingly ordered complexities.

Seeing God's beauty also means that community takes on new perspective. If the source of all beauty is the Trinity, then God's beauty is relationship. In fact, God is relationship. To experience God is to participate in the inner life of the Trinity. And if God displays His beauty most vividly in His own community of Persons, then we can experience and display God's beauty only in the community of the Church, which itself is participation in the Trinitarian community because it is the Body of Christ.

This gives special meaning to the arts. All cultural gifts—music and literature and drama and the fine arts—can be seen as reflections of the beams of the divine beauty. So, for example, we can say that despite his moral failures and theological myopia, Mozart gave us something of a taste of the music of heaven. Beautiful music conveys something of God's beauty, even if the composers do not know the full beauty of the Triune God.

Edwards' vision also sheds light on the way we think of justice. We can think of it as not simply fidelity to a set of abstract principles, but as

appropriating a vision of the beauty of the divine Trinitarian community. In a community reflecting the divine community, each person gives herself wholly for the good of the others, and therefore reflects, knowingly or unknowingly, the purposes of Being-in-general.

So the pursuit of justice in our fallen and broken world is, among other things, allowing the beams of the beautiful divine light to be displayed in human communities. As we seek justice for others and our own communities, we open space for reflections of the Trinitarian beauty to be seen and enjoyed.

I will close with two statements. The first is by Edwards. It illustrates why his vision of beauty was so central to his theology. In answer to the question of what it is about God that most makes God God, he wrote,

God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above [th]em, chiefly by his divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty. . . . This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of the Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil.

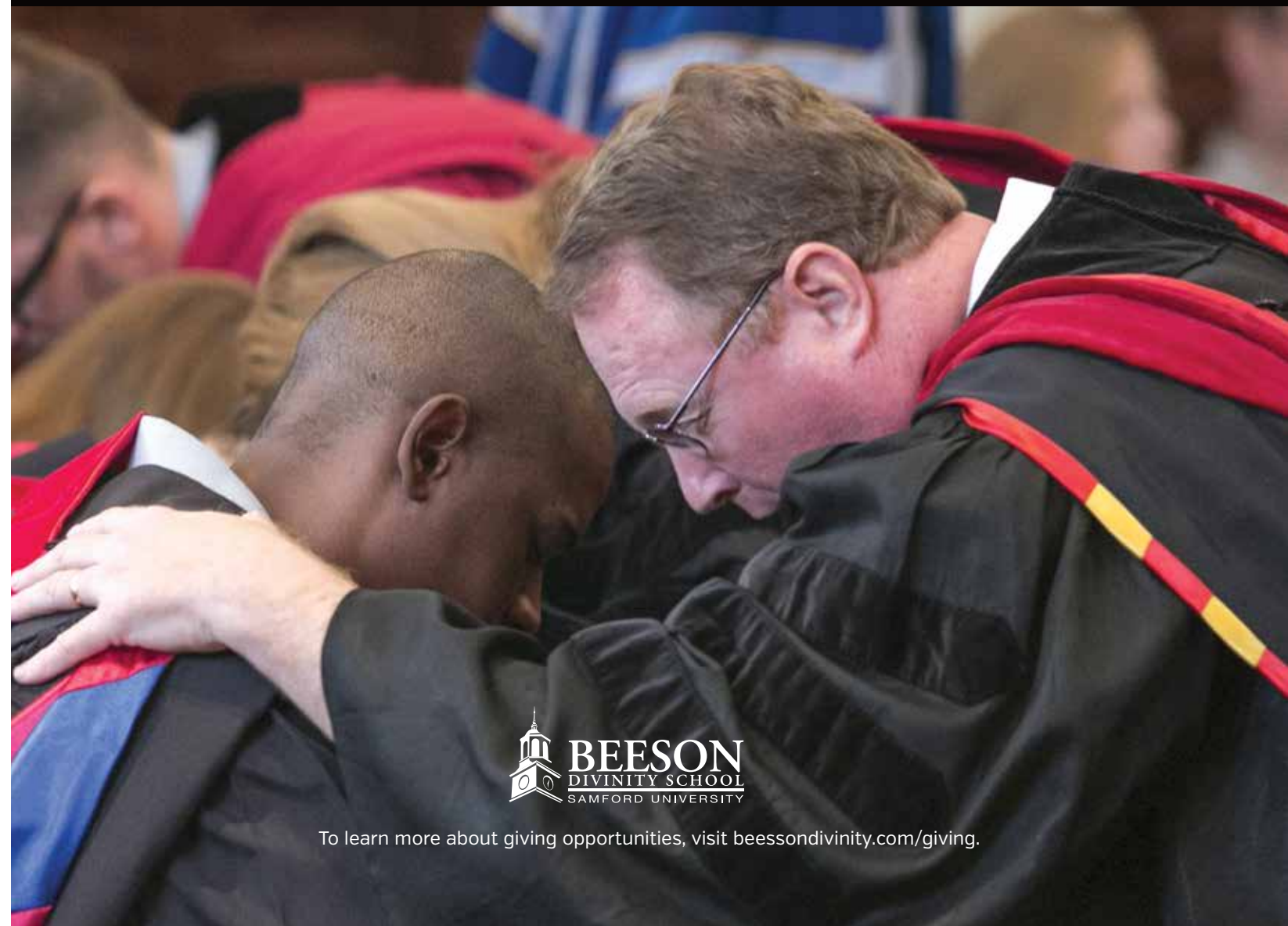
The second statement is by the Princeton theologian Sang Lee, in which he tried to put into one sentence Edwards' understanding of what it means to live in God. "To know and love God, therefore, is to know and love the beauty of God, and to know the ultimate nature of the world is to know and love the world as an image of God's beauty." ♦




Gerald R. McDermott, Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson, is the author or editor of six books on Jonathan Edwards. His latest is *The Other Jonathan Edwards* (University of Massachusetts Press).



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Thinking
Creatively about
Engaging Art
with
the Gospel

Interviews

by Kristen R. Padilla

If we are to understand beauty and art as something that points beyond itself to its source—the Trinitarian God—then how do we approach the arts in a holistic, gospel-centered way?

How do we take Jonathan Edwards' theology of beauty, as interpreted by Gerald R. McDermott (see pages 4-8), and put that theology into practice in our churches, lives and vocations?

In an attempt to begin answering these questions, I interviewed five people who are intentionally and

purposefully integrating art with the gospel. They offer useful examples of holistic, Christian approaches to incorporating art with evangelism and discipleship. These people represent a Birmingham church, a non-profit, a pastoral and leadership training institute, and a graphic design ministry.

My hope is that their stories provide a framework for ways to think creatively about engaging art with the gospel.

Interviews have been edited for length.

Leslie Ann Jones

Leslie Ann Jones is owner and founder of leslieannjones.com, a website that sells paper goods and gifts designed to encourage and inspire people toward a deeper relationship with God and a hunger for his word. A Beeson alumna, she is married to Dennis and mother of their two daughters. She and her family live in Brandon, Mississippi.

K How did the idea come about of integrating your theological degree and ministry calling with graphic design?

LA It's been a long and winding road that has led me to the place I'm at now, but looking back, I can see that this is where I was headed all along. When I graduated from Beeson, I didn't know exactly what I would be doing, but I knew that it would involve writing and teaching. I wrote curriculum for various Christian publishers, but after the birth of our children, I was simply unable to devote the many hours of study necessary for that kind of work. I put writing on hold and returned to my other love—graphic design.



LESLIE ANN JONES

I started up a little stationery business to keep me busy while my girls were little. I always intended to return to writing, but as my business grew and grew, so did my love for what I was doing, and I found myself in a quandary. I loved designing pretty paper goods, and I didn't want to walk away from it, but I knew that the Lord had created me to do more. I began to feel as if I had a split personality. I was both a designer and a writer, and I started looking for ways to bring the two together.



Last spring, I felt the Lord calling me to close my custom stationery shop and develop a line of paper goods specifically designed to draw people closer to him and deeper into his word. I started working on a series of mini art prints highlighting various verses from Psalms, and I began dreaming up designs of guided journals that lead people through personal Bible study.

K What is your purpose and mission in bringing together faith and art?

LA I finally feel as if I'm doing exactly what God created me to do. People come to my website to buy my products, but they stick around and read the blog, which is filled with Bible study tools and reflections on the Christian life. I used to think that I had to work at a church or write books to have an influential ministry. Now I know that the Lord uses all sorts of avenues to reach people's hearts. In this case, it's beautifully designed paper goods and gifts.

My hope and prayer is that the things I create help people put the word of God in a place of importance in their hearts and homes. I long to see Scripture take root in people's hearts and flourish. And that can happen through an art print. I believe that the things we see day in and day out have a way of seeping into our souls. What we put in front of our eyes matters, and my work puts God's word front and center. There's no greater work than that.

K What is the Dwell Journal and why did you create it?

LA We're living in an age when many Christians are functionally biblically illiterate. How are we to know what Scripture says about a given topic if we never read it? The answer to this is more Bible. I believe that most Christians *want* to study Scripture, but many don't know where to start. Instead of reading Scripture and striving to understand it for ourselves, we rely on what we heard that famous speaker say that one time we went to a conference. The Dwell Journal is my rebuttal to that mindset. It's the heart and soul of my new collection. The journal is a 30-day notebook with sections devoted to guide the user through a quiet time. Sometimes people just need a little direction, and the Dwell Journal does just that. It helps, I think, that the journal is also pretty.

K How important is it for you to create pretty things? Why should Christians strive to create quality, beautiful art?

LA When it comes down to it, people like pretty things. They're drawn to them. I'm tapping into that desire and using it to draw people into God's story. Maybe someone ends up at leslieannjones.com because they're looking for a gift for a friend. But then maybe they click on the link to the blog and see that we're reading through a book of the Bible together and discussing it in the comments. In this case, pretty things are a gateway to a deeper, closer relationship with God and a better understanding of his word.

I had a meeting with a printer the other day, and he tried to convince me that it would be alright to use a lower-quality paper for the Dwell Journal than I had originally picked out. Another printer I consulted with suggested that we skip the gold foil imprint on the cover to cut costs. And maybe they were right. I mean, yes, the journal would still function as intended if it was printed on lower weight paper and didn't have the shine of foil on the cover. But would I be happy? No. Because the quality of the finished product is important to me. The things they wanted to cut out are what sets the Dwell Journal apart from all the other Christian journals on the market. They are the very things that make it feel

special to consumers who are accustomed to buying quality products.

At the end of the day, I want to create products that are functional *and* beautiful. I'm not willing to sacrifice one for the other because I know that when we create beautiful things, we're reflecting the ways of the Creator himself. He held nothing back in creation. Why should we?

Learn more about Leslie Ann Jones and her products by visiting leslieannjones.com. Use discount code BDSALUM to receive 20% off on any of Leslie Ann's products. Discount expires April 15, 2016. If a church wants to order journals for a Bible study group, contact Leslie Ann for a special discount. Follow Leslie Ann on Twitter: @leslieannjones; Instagram: @leslieannjones; and Facebook: snippetsbylesieann.

Matt Schneider and Brandon Bennett

The Rev. Canon Matt Schneider is the canon for parish life and evangelism at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. Brandon Bennett, a Beeson Divinity School alumnus, is the young adult and college minister at the Advent. In this role Brandon also assists Matt with arts and culture ministries and the 5 p.m. Sunday service. Advent is one of the Beeson league of churches.

K How do you approach evangelism?

M It's not to be confused with outreach. For me it is about finding access points to meet new people, develop trustworthy relationships and eventually discuss the gospel. Access points take different shapes, but mostly, I try to meet people where they are. Where can we go rather than expecting people to always come to us?

K How is art and culture an access point? Is this something new Advent is doing?

M What's new is perhaps a concentrated effort in the arts—not just visual arts, not just fine arts, but cinema, literature and culinary arts. How is that an access point? The term I like to use is “conversation pieces.” Conversation is big for me. People are watching movies. People are eating good food. These become the topics of discussion for getting at the need for the gospel. It's a sort of roundabout, oblique way to eventually get at the

gospel rather than a direct and impatient approach that often alienates. I'm not doing this just to have fun and talk about pop culture. But if there's one truth in the world all those things out there get at that truth somehow. Rather than talking about Christianity directly, we try to get at it indirectly because people sometimes need warming up.

B It's not a bait and switch technique. Christianity addresses all of life. It's not so much that I'm using the arts as a means to an end to get to the gospel, but I think the gospel addresses all of life in such a way that it addresses the arts too.

M If it's a bait and switch, most people will smell it out. Some Christian leaders actually aren't interested in artistic and cultural subject matters, so it starts to come through as disingenuous. I'm actually interested in art. I'm interested in artists. I consider myself an artist. I'm a writer.

K What constitutes art?

M Art is not only creative and aesthetic expression through different media, but it also confronts our common understandings of reality. Good art expands the imaginations of those who have eyes to see and ears



to hear by uncovering hidden truths. But it's not the same thing as propaganda or a jingle, which typically have obvious agendas. Unfortunately, what I see, widely speaking in American Christianity, especially in evangelicalism but in other places too, is art that's safe and derivative of something that came before it. You see this in music. You see this with the kind of kitschy stuff in Christian bookstores. You see this on T-shirts that people produce. Good examples of Christian kitsch are those statues of Jesus as a skiing coach or a baseball coach. It's bad art, and it's a disservice to the gospel. Jesus is not my swim coach; he's my lifeguard. I think the reason Christians are consuming that kind of art is it's safe. But Christianity is not a safe religion. People are being beheaded in the Middle East for their trust in Jesus Christ, so let's stop pretending it's a romantic, sentimental spirituality.



K This was the first year for Advent to publish a magazine. How is the magazine both art and an access point or conversation piece?

M *The Advent* magazine not only displays art, but is a piece of artwork on its own. We figured if it were beautiful, people would actually spend time with it. They would want to read it; they would want to look at it; and they would want to keep it. And if they keep it, not only will they read it, but they'll also pass it on to others.

The concept comes from Creative Writing 101. The first thing they teach you is to "show not tell." Great literature or nonfiction does a lot of showing. It creates pictures with words. That's why the first issue was a storytelling issue. How do we tell the story of what Advent is about? Very few people want to read a wordy brochure about the church. That's what the website is for; we wanted the magazine to be a piece of evangelism.

B It's interesting to me that I see people not interested in church who might be interested in the magazine. I think

they are fascinated that a church would take such time and care to create something like our magazine. I think it's unique in the Christian community.

M It has the shape and feel of an arts and literary journal, which tends to be on matte instead of gloss paper and on thick instead of thin paper. These are all things we thought about, just as an artist thinks about her canvas. For that reason, it is perfect bound instead of saddle-stitched. Perfect binding has a greater sense of permanence because you want it to go on your bookshelf. It can go on your bookshelf, and you can read on the spine what it is. It is thick, 100 pages. It's colorful. You have the beauty in color like something in *National Geographic* on the canvas of something that's like the *Paris Review*.

K What is the Arts + Culture series? How is this an access point?

M We are trying to get at the arts and at culture as thoughtful Christians. We bring in someone who has something creative and interesting to talk about. We try to avoid a lecture format. Usually it's me and/or another person who has a conversation with a guest on stage. I find this format puts the guest at ease. It also puts the audience at ease, lowering their barriers and defenses. We open it up to audience Q&A at the end for broader conversation. After the event, we create an environment where they'll want to stick around by having good food, music and ambiance, so that people will begin to have conversations with the artist who was on stage or with each other about the artwork. Through conversation hopefully people come to new places about our deepest concerns in life.

So far, our guests have included musicians, visual artists, authors and community leaders. Coming soon, we will be hosting a two-day event with art historian Dan Siedell, who does a lot of work with modern and contemporary art's relationship to theology.

Admittedly, to be just a little hip, we gave the program a plus sign instead of an "&" so it's the Arts + Culture series. For me, though, I think about that as the cross being at the center, which is helpful to look and see that we are not just doing this to talk about art and culture, but that the gospel is at the center. The program is a gift for artists and the community that flows out of an understanding of God's creativity and gratuitous love.

To learn more about Advent's Arts + Culture series, visit adventbirmingham.org/arts-culture-series. Follow the Cathedral Church of the Advent on Twitter: @CathedralAdvent; Instagram: @CathedralAdvent; and Facebook: cathedraladvent.



Nancy Carroll

Beeson alumna Nancy Carroll is co-director and co-founder of InSpero, a nonprofit arts and education organization in Birmingham.

K Tell me about InSpero. How did it come to be? What is it?

N My friend, painter Gina Hurry, longed to cultivate artists in the Birmingham area who are taking risks and shaping culture—those people the Church often doesn't know what to do with. She kept asking herself, "How can beauty help restore our city?"

Gina and I both attend Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church, and we began dreaming and praying together. I'm a writer, teacher and provider of soul care. I love thinking creatively about how we as the Church can connect with this lovely, eclectic (and often unreached) group of people. We began with a few events at our church. We invited artists, songwriters, poets, writers and dancers to create after participating in a *Lectio Divina*. The results were powerful and beautiful.

In 2013, we decided to involve many denominations and have more freedom to engage creatively with those who often steer clear of churches. In 2015, InSpero became its own nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts and education organization.

InSpero comes from *spero*, Latin for "hope," and "in"



from inspire (God breathed). That's our foundation: hope and inspiration. We believe that the creative community has power to bring hope and beauty to our city. We long for the Church to embrace the arts in a meaningful, powerful way. We're starting conversations between the Church and the creative community so that the Church has the courage to invite artists and artisans to be part of better expressing the full beauty of Christ in the Church.

K Tell me more about the dreams and desires you have for InSpero.

N Our dreams are bigger than the two of us. A question haunts us: "What would Birmingham look like if creative souls in this city stepped out in courage, knowing their heart and their gift mattered, and had life-giving, hope-stirring impact?" That kind of impact could transform Birmingham from the "City Broken" to the "City

Bottom right and page 16: Pastors gather for an InSpero sponsored prayer breakfast on Feb. 19, 2015.

Bottom left: Artist Marty Balencie gazes at a fellow artist's artwork at InSpero's Steel City Makers, 5 Man Gallery Show on Oct. 23, 2015.



Beautiful.” Our churches can be part of this transformation and revival and become the Church Beautiful.

Several Scriptures compelled Gina and me in shaping InSpero, especially as we grappled with the reality of the brokenness of our world and longing for the restoration of all things. One is Jeremiah 29:7: “Seek the welfare (*shalom*) of the city for in its welfare (*shalom*) you will find your welfare (*shalom*).” *Shalom* is that beautiful Hebrew word for wholeness, peace, well-being, a sense that all will be made right. It’s the battle cry against brokenness. We believe that when the creative community flourishes our city will flourish.

We disciple a group of about 20 female creatives from about ten different churches. We provide counsel, community, an annual retreat and opportunities for collaborative events, such as the Magic City Storytellers.

We also do events highlighting the liturgical calendar. *Creation Waits* is our Advent offering. Jenny Pruitt sings original Advent songs while Gina Hurry paints live. It’s held at a different church each year. We host a Lenten retreat for those who want to quiet themselves and prepare to create through Lent. We do an Easter People blog, a forty-day Lenten devotion featuring 40 different artists through Instagram and Facebook.

We provide pastor/artist dinners where, in a more intimate setting, we connect eight pastors and eight artists so they can learn to communicate with one another. Creatives often think in story and process slowly, whereas those trained as pastors or theologians think more systematically.

K What kind of art/artists are represented?

N We have poets and potters, singers and sculptors,

florists and filmmakers, dancers and dramatists. One of the foundational arts is hospitality. Hospitality sets the table for beauty and allows people to come in, drop their defenses and have good conversations. There’s an art to providing the environment for this. One of the groups of artists we pursue and convince that they’re artists are those who provide hospitality.

K How have artists in Birmingham responded to InSpero’s work?

N Artists and artisans often feel isolated and marginalized and need to know their work matters. We affirm that not only their work matters, but also that they matter. We’ve seen them flourish as we provide venues and opportunities for them to be with other artists.

K What would be lost if InSpero didn’t exist?

N I believe two things would be lost: a passion for identifying and giving opportunities to creatives to share their gifts for the greater good of Birmingham, and significant conversations and connections between the creative community, the city and churches.

InSpero is in Birmingham because we believe beauty and creativity are powerful agents to enrich lives and transform our city and revive our churches. The creative community has a unique ability to bring healing, hope and restoration to a broken world. One of the mottos we live by is that beauty matters and so do those who create it.

For more information, visit www.inspero.org. Follow InSpero on Twitter: @InSpero_Bham; Instagram: @inspero.birmingham; and Facebook: insperoBirmingham.

Peter Leithart

Peter Leithart is the president of Theopolis Institute, a pastoral and leadership training institute in Birmingham.

K What is the Theopolis Institute? What is its mission and purpose?

P Our name comes from the Greek words for “God” (*theo*) and “city” (*polis*). We’re devoted to training leaders for the church, God’s new Jerusalem, who will serve and witness so that the world’s cities are transformed into an image of God’s own city. We focus on teaching Bible and liturgical studies, and both of these have a cultural dimension.

K What is your/Theopolis’ vision and theology of beauty and art?

P We believe that God is beautiful and, as Creator, is the source of all created beauty. Human beings are made in His image as makers. We are created to be artisans and poets, transforming the beautiful things of creation to make them more beautiful. Adam sinned, and set the human cultural project askew, but in Christ we’re restored. By the Spirit, we are made new so we

can transfigure the world from glory to glory. Bible and liturgy are at the heart of our work because we believe that the Bible and the liturgy are the catalysts of culture and the arts. Much of the great art of Christendom took its shape in the liturgy. Western music grew out of liturgical music. European architecture reached its pinnacle in church architecture. Take a look at the stained glass windows of a cathedral, and you’ll see the Bible translated into colored glass, typology in living color. Cultural renewal flows out of the renewal of the study and teaching of Scripture and liturgical practice. As we like to say, the world is renewed by the waters that flow from the sanctuary, the place of worship.

K On your website it says, “We equip our students for imaginative ministry and foster the development of their particular talents.” Why is imaginative ministry important for the church?

P Imagination gets a bad rap in some Christian circles. Imagination can be perverted, of course, but imagination is one of the glories of being made in the image of God. We have imaginations because we are created as images. And imagination doesn’t just kick in when we start talking about the fine arts. Our imaginations are always at work, even in the most mundane activities of life—a mother looking for new ways to entertain her child, a businessman looking to break into a new market, a pastor praying about how to minister in an inner-city community.

Our imaginations are renewed by Scripture. As my colleague, James Jordan, says, Scripture gives us “new eyes” so we see the world differently. That’s where it starts—the Bible and, once again, the liturgy, which enables us to imagine fresh ways of living as the body of Christ. When we talk about “imaginative” ministry, we’re not talking about making things up as we go along. We’re talking about opening ourselves to the transforming power of the Spirit who speaks through the word.

K In October 2015, Theopolis hosted its first Birmingham Life and Culture Series. What is this?

P October’s lecture was our first, but we hope to make it an annual event. At one level, the series is an expression of local catholicity. The lecture was co-sponsored by Beeson, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Cathedral Church of the Advent, Trinity Presbyterian Church and Theopolis. We’re excited that churches from various denominations are working together on this.

It’s also an effort to help Christians engage with cultural and aesthetic issues. Each year, we hope to bring





JOHN HODGES

an artist, musician, poet, critic or scholar to Birmingham to explain how Christian faith impacts the arts. We'll have some working artists who can talk from the inside, but also some theorists who can talk more generally about faith and art.

K How did John Hodges make the connection between theology and art/music in his talk at the Birmingham Life and Culture Series in October?

P John Hodges is a conductor currently working in Memphis. In his lecture he brilliantly developed this point: form matters. Whether we're talking about how I walk into a room, or how a speech of Shakespeare is written, or how a piece of music develops, the form communicates. Form isn't just a container for content; form is itself full of content. Hodges illustrated with a section of the Brahms' German Requiem. The text is from Isaiah: "All flesh is grass, and its glory as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades." Brahms takes us through that rather depressing text several times before adding the joyous punchline, "But the Word of the Lord stands forever." In the last go-round, the music becomes joyous, almost rollicking. Hodges' point was that without the first few unfinished rounds through the text, we'd lose the overwhelming impact of the final round. The music is joyous because we've been reminded again and again of our mortality. Again, the shape of the music is the message.

Photo above: Conductor John Hodges lectures at the Birmingham Life and Culture Series hosted by Theopolis on Oct. 21, 2015, at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

K How do you understand the arts from a Christian perspective?

P I'd start with trying to demystify the arts. Many think of art as something for elites. In the Middle Ages, every human activity was seen to be an "art." The restriction of "art" to a handful of "fine arts" is recent. I think the medieval view is right: every human activity can be done well, every human activity has a craft to it. We're made in the image of a Creator God, and creativity and craftsmanship is inherent in who we are. So, my first task would be to encourage husbands and wives, children and college students, businessmen and professionals and factory workers to think about how their work is a form of making and a kind of craftsmanship. Look for the everyday opportunities for artistry.

We can apply the same sort of thinking to the Christian life in general. "You are his workmanship," Paul writes, and uses the word *poiema*. You are his "making" even his "poem." God is molding and shaping the life of every Christian into a beautifully crafted thing, a narrative full of tragic and comic possibilities. We're all made from the dust, but God is making us into beautiful vessels, polishing us into jewels and gemstones. ♦

To learn more about Theopolis, visit theopolisinstitute.com. Follow Theopolis on Twitter: @Theopolis and Facebook: theopolisinstitute.com.

'Completely Overwhelming'

New Reading Room Named for Longtime Receptionist

Beeson Divinity School honored former longtime receptionist Sandy Brinson

on Sept. 29, 2015, by naming its new reading room, located in the newly renovated student commons, after her. "Sandy Brinson is one of the most beloved members of our Beeson community, and I am delighted for us to name this special space in our renovated commons, The Sandy Brinson Room," said Dean Timothy George. "Sandy has had an indelible influence on several generations of Beeson students, faculty and staff. We call her our 'sunshine' because she has always been so encouraging and joyful, even in the midst of adversity. Sandy will always be in our hearts, and seeing her name here will remind us of the enduring value of true Christian service."

Brinson, who worked at Beeson for 22 years before her retirement in February, was shocked by the announcement.

"It was completely overwhelming

and very humbling," Brinson said.

"Can you imagine having your name on a room in a seminary?"

She said that she could not have had a better place to work, especially as she experienced the death of her son, parents and grandparents during her time at Beeson.

"I really didn't think I had a place for ministry," Brinson added. "But I know the Lord put me here, and it is wonderful to love and to be loved."

The announcement of The Sandy Brinson Room came at the end of a special service of blessing of the newly renovated student commons led by George and Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

The student commons renovation began in mid-May and was completed in August. It was made possible by the generous gifts of faculty, alumni and friends.

"I do want to join my colleague [Dean George] in thanking those who made this possible for us," Westmoreland said during the service. "We are extraordinarily



Kasey Brinson (left) surprised her mom, Sandy Brinson (right), for the naming of The Sandy Brinson Room on Sept. 29, 2015.

grateful for the vision and for the gifts, for all of those who made this possible." ♦



THE SANDY BRINSON ROOM



FINKENWALDE DAY

More than 140 Beeson Divinity School faculty, staff and students gathered in Andrew Gerow Hodges Chapel on Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2015, for the first Finkenwalde Day.

Finkenwalde Day came a month into Beeson's fall semester theme, "Finkenwalde: In the School of Bonhoeffer," a focus on German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer's vision of theological education. Finkenwalde was a town in Nazi Germany that is most associated with Bonhoeffer's seminary. It was home to the seminary longer than any other location (1935–37).

"From the beginning of Beeson Divinity School Bonhoeffer and his experiment in theological education, centered at Finkenwalde, has been an important paradigm for us," said Timothy George, founding dean. "So we [gave] a whole semester to looking at aspects of Bonhoeffer and his vision of theological education. ... To my knowledge this was the first time any theological school tried to live out a whole day modeled after the Finkenwalde seminary that Bonhoeffer was leading."

The day was designed around themes, such as silence, meditation and recreation, which Bonhoeffer thought were essential for the building of Christian community, and ones that he outlined in his book, *Life Together*, which he wrote during his time as a seminary director.

The day began with morning prayer and worship based on Psalm 119:1–24, followed by two lectures from divinity faculty, Piotr Malysz ("Being the Church in God's World") and Frank Thielman ("Justification and Ministry"). The traditional time of student mentoring groups provided an opportunity for more personal reflection and prayer.

The 11 a.m. weekly chapel service included a message on Hebrews 4:1–4 by Professor of Divinity Doug Webster ("Vision Over Visibility"), Holy Communion, the singing of African-American spirituals (a favorite of Bonhoeffer) and the Aaronic

Benediction (Num. 6:22–26) sung in Hebrew by Rob Willis, divinity media and technology manager. A catered community lunch followed the chapel service with faculty members serving students and staff.

The majority of the afternoon was spent doing recreational activities. The Beeson community came together by playing board games and outdoor games, walking, singing, making music or watching a film.

The day concluded with a worship service led by Professor of Divinity Robert Smith Jr. and the congregational singing of the well-known spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." ♦

To watch a video explaining the Finkenwalde emphasis, day and seal on page 20, visit beesondivinity.com/media. For more pictures from this day, visit our photo album on our Facebook page: [BeesonDivinity](https://www.facebook.com/BeesonDivinity).



A STUDENT'S REFLECTION ON FINKENWALDE DAY

by David W. Dockery

In collaboration with The Bonhoeffer Center website, Beeson hosted a writing contest for students to reflect on what Finkenwalde Day meant to them. The following is the winning piece written by first-year student David W. Dockery. It is also published on thebonhoeffercenter.org.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw the value of taking time to pause. In ministry, just as in study, a pause allows one time to process, to appreciate and to be still. Finkenwalde Day was such a pause for me. In the midst of a busy, difficult semester, it was good to pause and rest. It was good to pause and consider community. It was good to be a community at worship, sharing in praise of our God and Savior. As a community, we paused to share and celebrate communion, remembering how Christ shared himself with humanity. We took time to consider not just our own community here at Beeson but also the larger community of faith—the community of witnesses that have lived the life of faith before us. It was a time to pause and consider the community as Christ. For me, that consideration meant that just as I need Christ, I also need community. The beauty of Bonhoeffer's vision for community is the community as the visible body of Christ. This concept of community is not the "wish-

dream" of men, as Bonhoeffer calls it, which demands an expression of community fitted to ideals belonging to men. In such cases "God's grace speedily shatters such dreams."¹ The root of the community Bonhoeffer has in mind "is the clear, manifest Word of God in Jesus Christ," and its expression is selfless submission and service to one another.²

It was good to pause and converse. It was good to learn to converse in silence with our Lord, listening to his Word without distraction. Taking time to stop and converse with one another—students, staff and faculty—around the table, during recreation and in mentor groups, allowed an opportunity to get to know one another better and view ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. Pausing afforded us the opportunity to talk together about the example of Bonhoeffer and his experiment at Finkenwalde.

It was good to pause and explore. For some, it was an opportunity to go

on a walk of the campus and explore our school's history and surroundings. It was a chance to explore the life and theology of Bonhoeffer in our lecture time. It was an opportunity to explore the depths of silent meditation on God's Word.

The value of a pause is evident in Bonhoeffer's life in the priority he gave to meditation and solitude—pausing to be alone with God and to enjoy his Word—and recreation and table fellowship—pausing to be actively nourished by company, conversation and food. In his discussion of Bonhoeffer's daily routine, Dr. Paul House writes that Bonhoeffer himself "took time for recreation and asked his students to do the same."³

The day taught me the value of taking time to pause—not pausing for the sake of just any pursuit, but pausing in the pursuit of balance. We were seeking balance between diligence and overwork, relaxation and laziness, reliance on God and reliance on self, time alone and time together.

There is a need to pause from solitude and share time with others. Even for a master of the art of solitude, too much time alone led to depression for Bonhoeffer in prison. I am learning a similar lesson, though in far different circumstances. Too much time alone studying is not helpful. Of course, neither is too much time socializing. But I need both.

Finkenwalde Day taught me to pause in my studies and ministry in order to pursue balance, seek community, listen to God's Word and explore silence. I think that was Bonhoeffer's goal for the seminary at Finkenwalde. I think that is a major part of the goal of theological education. Like Bonhoeffer's students, we learn how to study the biblical languages and how to meditate on the same Word of God in order to be formed spiritually as good ministers of Christ. ♦

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. by John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), 26–27.

2. *Ibid.*, 31–32.

3. Paul R. House, *Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 51–52.



LONG IN THE MAKING

by Kristen R. Padilla

Beeson Divinity School Professor Robert Smith Jr. was installed as the first recipient of the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity during community worship Sept. 22.

The Carter chair is the first endowed Baptist chair at Beeson and is named for longtime Samford trustee and Baptist pastor Charles T. Carter. Smith, who has taught Christian preaching at Beeson since 1997, was appointed as the recipient of this chair in 2015 by Samford's board of trustees.

"The installation of Robert Smith Jr. as the inaugural incumbent in the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity recognizes two beloved members of our Beeson faculty," said Dean Timothy George. "Robert Smith and Charles Carter are two of the premiere preachers of our age. They embody the best of the Baptist tradition: faithful proclaimers of God's Word, pastors par excellence and shapers of God-called ministers of the gospel. My prayer is that this chair will serve the work of Christ at Beeson Divinity School for generations to come."

Longtime friend of Beeson James Earl Massey, dean emeritus and distinguished professor-at-large of Anderson University School of Theology in Anderson, Indiana, and Beeson advisory board member, presided over the installation and led the Beeson community in a prayer of

dedication and laying on of hands of Smith and his wife, Wanda.

"To God be the glory for the things he has done," said Smith as he addressed the community after the installation. "I really do feel like the janitor of Michelangelo, who painted the Sistine Chapel."

"To sit in a chair, figuratively speaking, [which bears your name], lets me know that I stand on your shoulders," Smith said to Carter. "I've been doing it ever since I've been here. You've been my pastor; you've been my friend. You've been my brother. It's an honor to be able to be installed as the first recipient of the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity."

Smith, who was joined by friends and family members, paid special tribute to his 91-year-old mother, Ozella, who was recognized by a standing ovation.

Carter, who also was joined by friends and family, gave remarks about this historic event in the life of Beeson.

"Over two years ago the dean called me to his office," said Carter. "He wanted to talk to me about the embryonic idea of naming this chair for me. I felt completely surprised, overwhelmed and humbled. I, of all

people, do not warrant or deserve this."

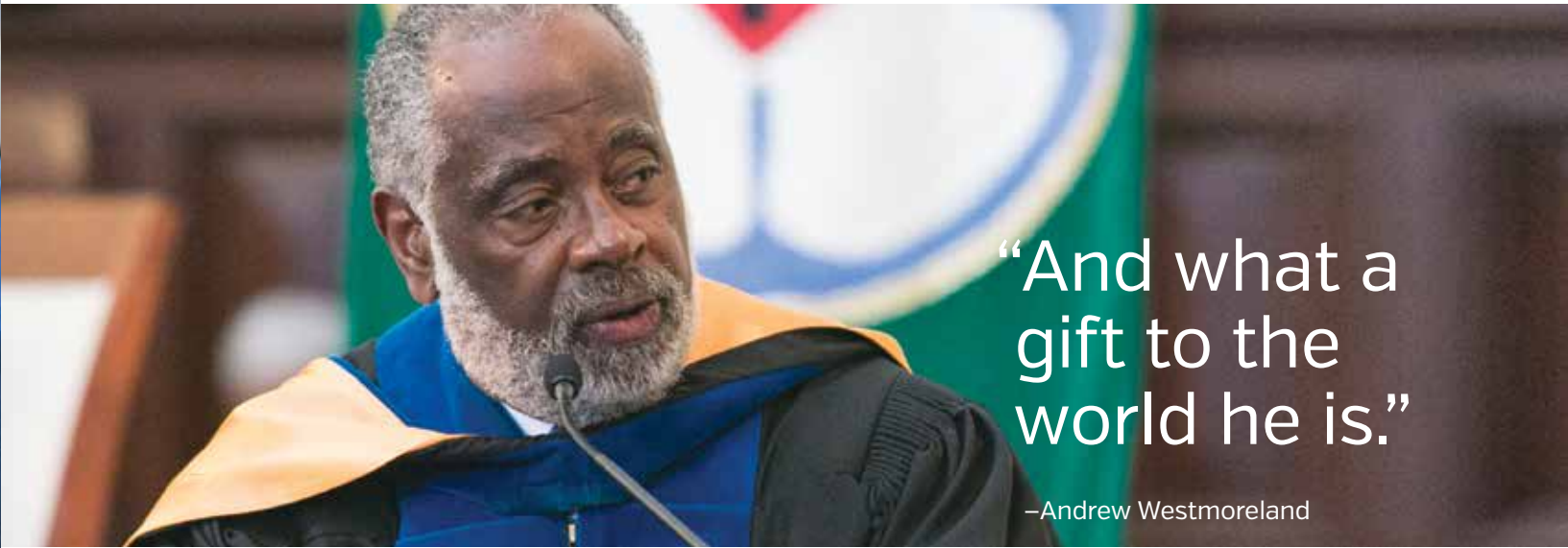
Turning to Smith, he said, "Of all the preachers I know in America today there is absolutely no one I'd rather see be the first occupant of this chair."

Friend of Smith and Carter and Beeson advisory board member Ralph D. West, senior pastor of The Church Without Walls in Houston, Texas, preached on Romans 1:14-17, "Long-Term Debt with High Interest." West's church is one of the largest Baptist churches in the United States.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland, who offered greetings and remarks about the installation, said that this day "has been long in the making."

"Today, friends, we come to install in a new place of service a dear friend, a tower of strength, a Christ follower with a complex mind and pure heart, a gifted teacher, an expositor of Scripture, a human being born, shaped, and inspired and called to preach," Westmoreland said. "And what a gift to the world he is." ♦

To give to the Carter chair, contact Carolyn Lankford at clankfor@samford.edu.



"And what a gift to the world he is."

—Andrew Westmoreland

Global Center Forum on Human Trafficking

On Feb. 12, 2015, the Global Center and the Woman's Missionary Union Foundation co-sponsored "Emancipation Forum: A Christian Response to Human Trafficking." The goal was to shed light on the dark world of human trafficking and to explore how Christians can respond individually and collectively.

Beeson alumnus Dr. Oleg Turlac (left) shared details of the trafficking problem in Moldova as well as ways Turlac Ministries is helping victims. Turlac was joined for a panel discussion by Tajuan McCarty (center), trafficking survivor and founder of the Birmingham-based ministry The WellHouse, and by Cumberland School of Law professor and Beeson alumnus David Smolin (right). A recording of the event is posted at beesondivinity.com/media ♦



Global Center Cultural Conversations

On Friday afternoons the Global Center hums with conversations in various accents and levels of English proficiency. These lunchtime meetings of Chat Club (now called International Lunch Club) provide opportunities for Beeson students to meet the need of international students to practice conversational English. It also allows space for friendships to begin. Over time, Beeson students have had opportunities to share the gospel with students who have had little or no exposure to Christianity before coming to Samford.

Cultural exchange is another valuable part of these meetings. One highlight from the fall semester was the day Beeson students shared college football culture with international students, complete with tailgating food, a coach's pep-talk, a tunnel run-through and games of football on the quad. In another favorite meeting of the semester, international students hosted



Beeson students for a fair celebrating their cultures. There was food, dancing, music and sharing of traditions from more than seven countries. In addition to gaining a better understanding of other cultures, participants in these cultural

exchanges learn and communicate love and respect for others, essential elements of understanding and sharing the gospel. ♦

Faculty Staff In 2015, Beeson Divinity School welcomed two new faculty and one new staff member.

Grant D. Taylor

In July, Grant D. Taylor (M.Div., Ph.D.) became associate dean for academic affairs at Beeson. Before coming to Beeson, Taylor taught New Testament and served as the assistant to Provost Bruce R. Ashford at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. From 2008–10, he served in the Office of the Associate Dean at Beeson. Taylor is an ordained minister in the Southern Baptist Convention. He is married to Rebecca, and they have one daughter.



Gerald R. McDermott

In July, Gerald R. McDermott (M.R.E., Ph.D.) joined the faculty as the Anglican Chair of Divinity. Before coming to Beeson, he was the Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College since 2008 and on faculty since 1989. His academic research focus has been twofold: Jonathan Edwards, of whom he is a renowned scholar, and Christian understandings of other religions. He is an Anglican priest and is married to Jean. Together they have three sons and nine grandchildren.



Kristen R. Padilla

Kristen Padilla (M.Div.) joined the Beeson staff as the marketing and communications coordinator in May. Following graduation from Beeson in 2008, Padilla was a reporter for *The Alabama Baptist*, where she earned an award of excellence and an award of merit from The Associated Church Press, and later worked for Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). She is married to Dr. Osvaldo Padilla, and they have one son. ♦



Introducing the new Timothy George Scholarship for Excellence

We are pleased to announce a new way Beeson friends and alumni can honor our founding dean and help us recruit top students. This month, we are launching the Timothy George Scholarship for Excellence.

Dr. George was financially supported by a generous scholarship during his days in graduate school. This new scholarship in his name will allow Beeson to offer the same financial support to the next generation of pastors and theologians.

For more information, or to make a donation, contact Carolyn Lankford at 205-726-4480 or clankfor@samford.edu or visit beesondivinity.com.

Beeson Portrait Sherri Brown

“If you relish interdenominational dialogue and truly want to engage the entirety of Christian orthodox history and theology, then I really don’t know of a place better or with richer conversation.”

Sherri Brown calls Birmingham home. It is where she was born, spent much of her childhood and all of her adult life. Brown is a graduate of Samford University and Beeson Divinity School. She now serves Beeson as director of admissions. Brown is married to local radio personality, Justin, and they have one daughter, Abbey.

Brown always knew of God’s love for her in Jesus Christ. She was raised in a Christian home and spent much time at the church building where her mom served as secretary. At the age of six she responded to the message of salvation in a Sunday morning sermon.

In high school and college Brown’s childlike faith was replaced with doubt and questions. What had never been a struggle before—her faith—became a stumbling block. By her senior year in college, she no longer knew what she believed. She cried out to God, asking him to make his truth sure to her. It was during that “dark night of the soul” that God answered her prayer, replacing doubt with faith, and calling her into ministry.

Much like her conversion experience, Brown describes her call to ministry as an almost audible experience of God’s voice. But, because she was still wrestling with belief, she did not respond to the call right away. Upon graduation from Samford, she began working as an undergraduate admission counselor, and while she enjoyed the work, the Lord’s conviction and call continued to weigh heavy on her heart. She finally surrendered to this call and began applying to seminaries.

Brown assumed she would go somewhere other than Samford for



seminary. But as she visited other seminaries she did not feel a peace about any of them. As a Samford employee, she was able to study at Beeson while continuing to work as an undergraduate admission counselor. At first she thought she would complete a couple of seminary courses before moving to another school. But from the first day of classes at Beeson, it was clear that this was where she was meant to be.

In 2011, while Brown was serving as academic adviser at Samford’s Brock School of Business, she was asked to come serve as Beeson’s director of admissions.

Looking back, Brown sees how the Lord was preparing her for this role at Beeson. The director of admissions role is a perfect combination of two of her loves: admissions and Beeson. Not only does she enjoy telling prospective students about Beeson but she also loves to hear the stories of each applicant. This is her

favorite thing about her job.

In her role, Brown also has conversations almost daily with prospective students from all over the world about what makes Beeson unique. Her office manages all student scholarships and provides what she calls a “safe haven” for current students to come and share any problems they may have. Along with Sharon Head, assistant to admissions, Brown is a spiritual mentor to many Beeson students, praying with and ministering to them when needed.

The mission of her office, as Brown sees it, is to honor the Lord by trusting him to bring the students he has called to Beeson while at the same time ministering to the current students.

Brown says that she doesn’t have just one answer when someone asks her, “Why Beeson?”

“If you want an academically rigorous school that still stays true to biblical authority, then there are few other schools, if any, like Beeson. If you want to learn in a community where you actually know your professors and meet with them weekly, then Beeson is the place for you. If you relish interdenominational dialogue and truly want to engage the entirety of Christian orthodox history and theology, then I really don’t know of a place better or with richer conversation. And, if you want to learn to preach and teach in a way that illuminates the whole text, is faithful to the original language, and includes the whole gospel message for the whole world, then Beeson is the only place for you.” ♦

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Distinguished Alumni

Ron Sterling (M.Div. 2007, D.Min. 2014) is the pastor of Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Smithville, Alabama, where he has been since 2010. He has served over 18 years as a pastor in the AME denomination. Sterling also serves as a contract chaplain at the UAB Health System, Department of Pastoral Care; as a member of the 9th Episcopal District of the AME Church’s Board of Examiners as a second-year studies instructor; and as a ministry reflection group leader for current Beeson Divinity School students. Sterling has a desire not only to faithfully preach and teach but also to disciple his congregation and future church leaders. He and his wife, Kim, have been married for 40 years, and they have three adult children and seven grandchildren.

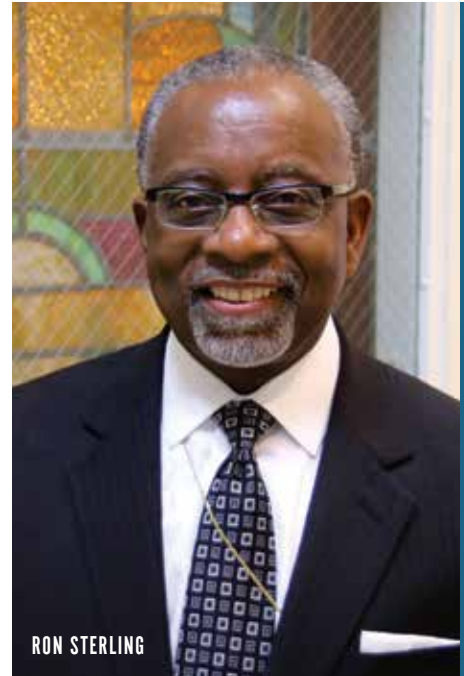
Dr. Thomas Fuller, director of ministry leadership development, placement and assessment, said that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is clearly evident in Sterling. “His humble spirit, his warm smile and his genuine expressions of concern and encouragement bear witness to God’s abundant grace poured out on him. Best of all, Ron knows this, and joyfully serves others for Jesus’ sake. He is a wonderful ambassador for Christ, for his church and denomination, and for Beeson Divinity School.” ♦

Ron Sterling is the 2016 M.Div. Distinguished Alumnus award winner. He was presented his award on Feb. 23 during community worship in Hodges Chapel.

Cole Huffman (D.Min. 2010) is the pastor of First Evangelical Church in Memphis, Tennessee, where he has served for the last 12 years. Before earning the Doctor of Ministry from Beeson Divinity School, he graduated from the University of North Alabama and Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M.). He blogs at colehuffman.com and occasionally writes opinion pieces for *The Commercial Appeal*. He is an adjunct professor at the Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies, where he teaches an annual course on apologetics. He has a heart for connecting with other pastors in the Memphis area in order to reach the city. Huffman and his wife, Lynn, have five children.

Dr. Mark Searby, director of D.Min. Studies, said Huffman is not only a pastor, a preacher and a scholar, but also a friend. “Cole was a committed student in our D. Min. program who implemented a meaningful project and wrote a dissertation that will be beneficial to other pastors for years to come. Cole’s thoughtful contributions to seminar discussions were invaluable to his peers. He is a leader in his church and for other Christian leaders. I am convinced that he will be a mentor to many young Christian leaders in the years to come.” ♦

Cole Huffman is the 2016 D.Min. Distinguished Alumnus award winner. He will be presented his award on April 5 during community worship in Hodges Chapel.



RON STERLING

M. DIV. DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS



COLE HUFFMAN

D. MIN. DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

SPOTLIGHT



Riley Green (M.T.S. 1999) began working at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (ABCH) almost 20 years ago. Around the same time he began theological studies at Beeson Divinity School.

Although balancing work, family and being a full-time student was difficult, the experience was rewarding. Green's studies at Beeson helped him to minister better at ABCH.

ABCH, which began in 1891, serves to protect, nurture, and restore children and families in Alabama through Christ-centered services. These services include providing safe and loving homes for children (campus care, emergency care, foster care, and family care) and exceptional counseling services.

"In the reality of such a broken world, we work to see hope and wholeness for children and families through knowing God," said Green, who has served as vice president of administration of ABCH since 1998. "I've seen an awakening over the last six years of the local church tending to the plight of the orphan. ABCH is on the forefront of this awakening and

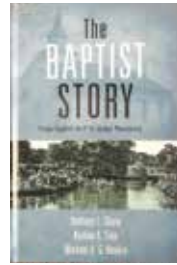
is helping churches across the state with their orphan care ministries."

In his role, Green oversees ABCH's information technology, communications, human resources, accounting, payroll/benefits and risk management programs. He also supports the president/CEO, Rod Marshall, with ABCH initiatives and provides counsel on a broad array of ministry operations and planning.

In addition to his work at ABCH, Green has served for the past six years as an adjunct professor at Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham, teaching courses in leadership and ethics, discipleship and ministry, and small group leadership. He also serves as a ministry reflection group leader for current students at Beeson. Green and his wife of 25 years, Yvonne, have three sons. ♦

For more information about ABCH, visit alabamachild.org.

Anthony Chute (M.Div. 1996), associate dean of the School of Christian Ministries and professor of church history at California Baptist University, has co-authored *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (B&H, 2015) with fellow Baptist historians, Nathan Finn (Union University) and Michael Haykin (Southern Seminary). *The Baptist Story* is designed to be used as a textbook for Baptist history courses in colleges and seminaries.



Scott Carter (M.Div. 1997) published *Popping Pop Christianity* in January 2015. It is available as an e-book on Amazon. Carter is married to Janica, and they have two children.



Russ Quinn (M.Div. 1997) is senior pastor at Enon Baptist Church in Morris, Alabama. He served churches in Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee before coming to Enon. Quinn and his wife, Laura, are the parents of five daughters.



Ed Stetzer (D.Min. 1998) and **Philip Nation** (M.Div. 1994) edited *The Mission of God*, an e-book comprised of letters and essays from pastors and church leaders throughout the past decades. The e-book is available for free download from The Gospel Project.

Daven Watkins (M.Div. 1999) is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Pelham, Alabama. He previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church Pleasant Grove, Alabama. Watkins and his wife, Jane Ellen, are the proud parents of two children, Molly Grace and Nathan.



Steven Echols (D.Min. 2000) is president of Brewton Parker College in Georgia. He previously served as president of Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga.

Mike Watson (M.Div. 2000, D.Min. 2015) and his wife, Stephanie, live in Knoxville, Tennessee, with their two sons, Ethan and Will ("Tuggy"). Mike serves as pastor of adult discipleship at First Baptist Church Concord.

Josh Dear (M.Div. 2001) is associate pastor of Dalton Baptist Church in Muskegon, Michigan. Dear and his wife, Karen, are parents to Luther Martin and Nora Grace. He recently co-authored a chapter on evangelism in *The Beauty and Glory of Christian Living*.

Joby Tricquet (D.Min. 2001) is senior pastor of Fairfax Baptist Church in Virginia. He previously served as pastor of McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham. Tricquet and his wife, Cathy, have three sons, Austin, Tyler and Jordan.

David Wilhite (M.Div. 2002) published the book *The Gospel According to Heretics: Discovering Orthodoxy through Early Christological Conflicts* (Baker Academic, 2015). He is assistant professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.

Tim Corbin (M.Div. 2003) is serving as a church planting catalyst with the North American Mission Board in Vancouver, British Columbia. Corbin previously was involved in ministry throughout Seattle, Washington. He is married to Amy, and they have three children.

J. David Hall (M.Div. 2003) is executive director of Kerygma Ventures, a ministry focused on discipleship and equipping believers to apply the transforming power of the gospel to their everyday lives. He and his wife, Mary Claire, are parents to Samuel and Benjamin, and are actively serving at The Village Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Ryan Hankins (M.Div. 2003) is executive director of Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA). PARCA is housed on the campus of Samford University. Prior to this new role, Hankins served as executive director of MPower Ministries in Birmingham.

Charlie McFarlin (M.Div. 2003) retired as pastor of Spring Hill Presbyterian Church in Virginia July 2015. He was Springhill's second longest serving pastor, and he led the congregation into the ECO (Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians) before his retirement. McFarlin and his wife, Trish, now reside in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Jonathan Bundon (M.Div. 2005) received his Doctor of Ministry from Gardner Webb University's M. Christopher Wright School of Divinity May 2015. He currently serves as worship pastor at First Baptist Church of Kings Mountain in North Carolina.

Seth Tarrer (M.Div. 2005) is visiting assistant professor of Old Testament at Knox Seminary. He previously taught Old Testament at Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia in Medellín, Colombia.



Jacob (M.Div. 2007) and **Suzanne** (M.Div. 2011) **Simmons** returned to Birmingham after serving at a church plant in Chicago, Illinois. Jacob is minister to single adults at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, and Suzanne is completing her Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) residency.

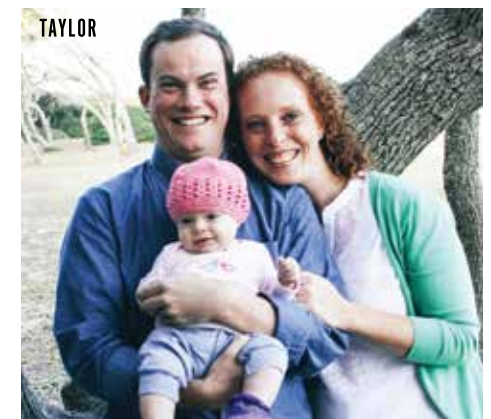
Clayton Speed (M.Div. 2007) accepted the call to pastor First Baptist Church of Hartselle, Alabama. He previously served at First Baptist Church of Trussville, Alabama. Clayton is enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Beeson Divinity School and is married to Mary.

David Faulkner (M.Div. 2008) was called to Trinity Episcopal Church of Pass Christian, Mississippi, as parish priest. He is married to Beeson alumna **Laura** (M.T.S. 2007), who is a music teacher and private piano instructor.



Kristen (Lindsey) Padilla (M.Div. 2008) joined the staff of Beeson Divinity School this May as marketing and communications coordinator. She is married to Osvaldo Padilla, associate professor of New Testament at Beeson. They have one son, Phillip.

Grant Taylor (M.Div. 2008) earned his Ph.D. in biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is associate dean for academic affairs at Beeson Divinity School. Taylor and his wife, Rebecca, are the proud parents of one daughter.

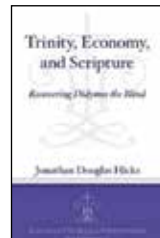


alumni

Chase Kuhn (M.Div. 2010) is on faculty at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia. He served as a member of the ministry staff at St Thomas' North Sydney for several years and completed his Ph.D. in systematic theology from Moore. Kuhn is married to Amy, and they have two children.



Jonathan Hicks (M.Div. 2011) published the book *Trinity, Economy, and Scripture* (Eisenbrauns, 2015). Hicks, his wife, Tess, and their four children moved to the Solomon Islands in 2015, where he teaches at Trinity School for Theology and Ministry.



Dillon Thornton (M.Div. 2011) completed his Ph.D. from the University of Otago, New Zealand. He is currently serving as pastor of Cornerstone Community Church in Greeley, Colorado. Thornton is married to Jamie, and they are the parents of Aiden and Cullen.



Mark Allison (D.Min. 2012) published *Spiritual Blindness: Find Your Spiritual Eyes and Open Them* (WestBow Press, 2015). He and his wife, Susan, have seven children and two grandchildren, and currently live in Meridian, Mississippi.



Kyle Bailey (M.Div. 2013) assumed the role of study abroad coordinator at Samford University. Prior to his new role, Bailey worked closely with international students through Samford's Campus Life office. He and his wife, Ali, have two children, Thomas and Claire.

Josh Hausen (M.Div. 2013) is associate pastor of administration at Redeemer Community Church in Birmingham. He joins fellow Beeson alumni **Joel Brooks** and **Jeff Heine** in offering pastoral leadership at Redeemer. Hausen and his wife, Laura, recently celebrated the birth of their first child, Elliot.



Michael Novotny (M.Div. 2013) was ordained to the diaconate at Christ the King Anglican Church (PEARUSA) in Birmingham February 2015. He is a faculty member at Shades Mountain Christian School. Novotny and his wife, Jen, are the proud parents of Levi.

Peter Smith (M.Div. 2013) and his wife, Kristie, welcomed the birth of their daughter, Hannah Jane, August 2015. They have one son, Cohen, and continue to serve at St. Peter's Anglican Church where Smith is assistant pastor.



Nathan Daniels (M.Div. 2014) has served as senior pastor at Westmont Baptist Church in Birmingham since 2014. He and his wife, Jessica, have two boys, Micah and Luke.

Tyshawn Gardner (M.Div. 2014) began a Ph.D. program in Christian preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is pastor of Plum Grove Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



Clayton Hornback (M.Div. 2014) is college minister of University Christian Fellowship (UCF) at Mountain Brook Community Church in Birmingham. Prior to this new role, Hornback served as worship coordinator for UCF.

Kevin Johnson (M.Div. 2014) and his wife, Janie, moved to Nolensville, Tennessee, August 2015. Johnson serves as associate pastor at Life Community Church under fellow Beeson alumnus **Jay Watson**. Prior to serving at Life Community Church, he worked as student minister at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham.



Trey Johnson (M.Div. 2014) is student ministry coordinator at Redstone Church in Birmingham. Prior to Redstone, Johnson served in youth ministry at Trinity United Methodist Church. In May 2015, he married the love of his life, Shantel.



Taylor (M.Div. 2014) and **Lydia** (M.Div. 2014) **Whitley** moved from Birmingham to Stuttgart, Germany. Taylor is student pastor at International Baptist Church. He and Lydia are passionate about serving their church community and reaching others in the city with the gospel.



Jonathan Goode (M.A.T.S. 2015) is deputy director of Atlanta Community Ministries, an organization that networks volunteers wishing to serve in all socio-economic sectors of the Atlanta-metro area. Goode is married to Ashley.



Betsy (Childs) Howard (M.A.T.S. 2015) is an editor for The Gospel Coalition and resides with her husband, Bernard, in Manhattan. Betsy served on staff at Beeson for many years as web and publications editor.



Samuel Hays (M.Div. 2015) was called as youth pastor by Wright Baptist Church in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Prior to this ministry position, Sam and his wife, Lauren, actively served at Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Eric Parker (M.Div. 2015) is a ministry associate for young marrieds and families at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia. He and his wife, Katie, welcomed the birth of their first child, Hudson, June 2015.



Please submit your alumni updates at www.beesondivinity.com/alumni.

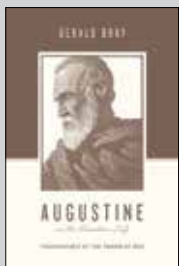
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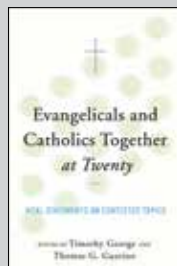
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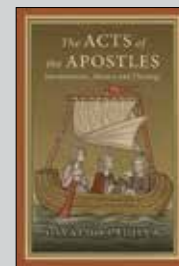
Faculty Bookshelf



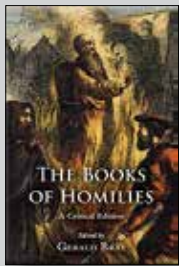
▶ *Augustine and the Christian Life: Transformed by the Power of God*
Gerald Bray
(Crossway, 2015)



▶ *Evangelicals and Catholics Together at Twenty: Vital Statements on Contested Topics*
Timothy George
(Brazos Press, 2015)



▶ *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology*
Osvaldo Padilla
(InterVarsity Press, 2016)



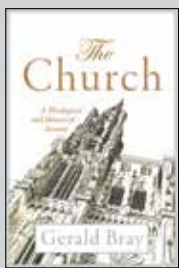
▶ *The Books of Homilies: A Critical Edition*
Gerald Bray
(Lutterworth Press, 2016)



▶ *Psalms 1-72*
(Reformation Commentary on Scripture Series: Old Testament, Vol. 7)
Timothy George
(InterVarsity Press, 2015)



▶ *The Resilient Pastor: Ten Principles for Developing Pastoral Resilience*
Mark A. Searby
(Wipf & Stock, 2015)



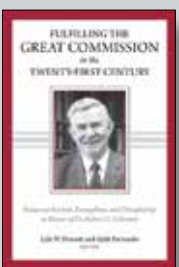
▶ *The Church: A Theological and Historical Account*
Gerald Bray
(Baker Academic, 2016)



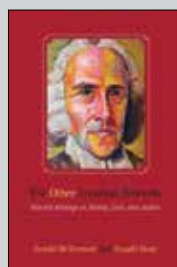
▶ *Luther Refracted: The Reformer's Ecumenical Legacy, edited with Derek R. Nelson*
Piotr J. Malysz
(Fortress Press, 2015)



▶ *The God Who Kneels: A Forty-Day Meditation on John 13*
Douglas Webster
(Cascade Books, 2015)



▶ *Fulfilling the Great Commission in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on Revival, Evangelism, and Discipleship in Honor of Dr. Robert E. Coleman, edited with Ajith Fernando*
Lyle W. Dorsett
(Seedbed Publishing, 2015)



▶ *The Other Jonathan Edwards: Selected Writings on Society, Love, and Justice, edited with Ronald Story*
Gerald R. McDermott
(University of Massachusetts Press, 2015)