

ANNOUNCING THE TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL BLACK RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS GROUP CONSULTATION

MAKING IT PLAIN:
BUILDING A NEW WAY
FORWARD



HONORING

REV. DR. LESLIE D. CALLAHAN

AND

REV. DR. OBERY M. HENDRICKS, JR.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2024

7:00 — 9:00 P.M.

HILTON SAN DIEGO BAYFRONT

INDIGO D

1 PARK BLVD

SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

WELCOME TO THE 2024 BLACK RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS GROUP CONSULTATION

The guiding vision of the Black Religious Scholars Group (BRSBG) is to sponsor consultations and speaking series for the edification of the liberating theology and witness of the Black Church tradition within the academy, church, and wider Black community. This vision originated during a session of the Black Theology Group during the 1996 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in New Orleans, La. Those in attendance realized that the discussion and work of Black religious scholars tend to be situated firmly within academic circles, causing us to lose sight of the goal of Black religion: liberation and human fulfillment in all areas of life.

We recognized that faithfulness to our call as religious scholars, preachers, and community activists requires relevant theological activity that is both committed and accessible to the larger African diasporan church and society. Our annual public forums across North America at welcoming congregations continue the process of exploring ways in which meaningful dialogue and partnership can occur between Black religious scholars and the larger Black community and its churches. It is for this purpose that we assemble consultations that consist of panels of distinguished representatives from the church, community, theological academy, and you, the gathered audience.

We hope that these consultations and the vision they embody will continue the tradition of organizing the church and community for the spiritual empowerment, human fulfillment, and social/economic uplift of Black folk. The BRSBG is committed to facilitating these dialogues in the hope that they will contribute to the well-being and advancement of both our people and communities.



EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rev. Duane A. Belgrave, Sr. Ph.D.

Rev. Dionne Boissiere

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Candace Laughinghouse, PhD

REV. DR. LESLIE D. CALLAHAN



Rev. Dr. Leslie D. Callahan is the pastor of the historic 119-year-old St. Paul's Baptist Church. Dr. Callahan delivered her first sermon as St. Paul's pastor titled "It's Time" on May 31 to an excited congregation of St. Paul's members and friends. After a series of pre-installation celebrations, St. Paul's installed Dr. Callahan as their 5th Pastor on September 27, 2009, as the church's first female pastor. Dr. Callahan delivered her first sermon as St. Paul's pastor titled "It's Time" on May 31 to an excited congregation of St. Paul's members and friends. After a series of pre-installation celebrations, St. Paul's installed Dr. Callahan as their 5th Pastor on September 27, 2009.

A native of Gary, West Virginia, Dr. Callahan experienced her first Christian education and formation at Apostolic Temple Church where she developed an enduring love for Jesus Christ and for Christ's body, the Church. Having experienced her call to ministry at an early age, Dr. Callahan began the public proclamation of the gospel at age 19.

Committed to education, Dr. Callahan earned the Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Harvard University/Radcliffe, the Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Religion from Princeton University. Her research interests include religious history in the United States, particularly independent African American Christianity and Pentecostal studies.

Dr. Callahan was ordained in 1997 at Judson Memorial Church and served as Minister of Christian Education at the First Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey. She also served as interim pastor of Salem Baptist Church of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

A gifted professor, Dr. Callahan, served on the faculty of New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) as Assistant Professor of Modern Church History and African American Studies. Prior to her time at NYTS, she was a member of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania as assistant professor of religious studies.

Dr. Callahan's written expressions and thoughts can be found on her blog, as well as in her published article in the *The Audacity of Faith: Christian Leaders Reflect on the Election of Barack Obama* by Marvin A. McMickle (Editor).



REV. DR. OBERY M. HENDRICKS, JR.



Rev. Dr. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. is a life-long social activist and celebrated commentator on the intersection of religion and political economy in America. He is the most widely read and perhaps the most influential African American biblical scholar publishing today. Cornel West calls him “one of the last few grand prophetic intellectuals.” His most recent book, *Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals are Destroying our Nation and Our Faith* (Beacon, 2021) is hailed as “brilliant” (Eddie Glaude, Jr.) and “a must-read book for this crucial moment in our nation’s history” (Robert P. Jones).

A widely sought lecturer and media spokesperson, Dr. Hendricks’ appearances include CNN, MSNBC, CBS, Fox News, Fox Business News, the Discovery Channel, PBS, BBC, NHK Japan Television and the Bloomberg Network. He has provided running event commentary for National Public Radio, MSNBC, and the al-Jazeera and Aspire international television networks. Dr. Hendricks has been a member of the Faith Advisory Council of the Democratic National Committee, for whom he delivered the closing benediction at the 2008 Democratic Convention; served on the National Religious Leaders Advisory Committee of the 2008 Democratic Presidential campaign and served in the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group at the U. S. Department of State under Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. He has been a Distinguished Senior Fellow at The Democracy Collaborative in Washington, DC; an Affiliated Scholar at the Center for American Progress; a Senior Fellow at The Opportunity Agenda, a social justice communications think tank. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and advisor to the Institute for Christian Socialism and the Abolition Sanctuary, and is Elder Scholar-in-Residence to the Children’s Defense Fund. Dr. Hendricks is a frequent contributor to the Huffington Post, Sojourners magazine and Salon.com, a former editorial advisor to the award-winning Tikkun magazine, and a contributing editor to The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion. The Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation has called his work “the boldest post-colonial writing ever seen in Western biblical studies.”



Hendricks’ bestselling book, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus’ Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (Doubleday, 2006), was declared “essential reading for Americans” by the Washington Post. Social commentator Michael Eric Dyson proclaimed it “an instant classic” that “immediately thrusts Hendricks into the front ranks of American religious thinkers.” The *Politics of Jesus* was the featured subject of the 90-minute C-SPAN special, “Class, Politics and Christianity,” hosted by the Center for American Progress. The tenth anniversary of its publication was celebrated in 2016 at the American Academy of Religion at its annual convention in San Antonio, TX. Governor Howard Dean, former chair of the Democratic National Committee, declared his last book, *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church and the Body Politic* (Orbis, 2011), a “tour de force.”

A former Wall Street investment executive and past president of Payne Theological Seminary, the oldest African American theological seminary in the US, he has been a visiting professor at a number of educational institutions, including Emory University, Union Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in the Departments of Religion and African American and African Diasporic Studies, and Emeritus Professor of Biblical Interpretation at New York Theological Seminary. An Ordained Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Hendricks holds the Master of Divinity with academic honors from Princeton Theological Seminary, and both the M.A. and Ph.D. in Religions of Late Antiquity from Princeton University.

We've Come This Far by Faith Black Gospel Standard

We've come this far by faith Leaning on the Lord;
Trusting in God's Holy Word, God's never failed
me yet.

Oh, can't turn around We've come this far by
faith

*Don't be discouraged with trouble in your life
God will bear your burdens
And move all misery and strife
That's why...*

We've come this far by faith Leaning on the Lord;
Trusting in God's Holy Word, God's never failed
me yet.

Oh, can't turn around We've come this far by
faith

*Just the other day I heard a man say he didn't
believe in God's Word;
I can say God has made a way God's never failed
me yet
Thank God....*

We've come this far by faith Leaning on the Lord;
Trusting in God's Holy Word, God's never failed
me yet.

Oh, can't turn around We've come this far by
faith.

Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Black National Anthem

Lift ev'ry voice and sing, 'til earth and heaven
ring, Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
taught us;

Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us;

Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, Let us
march on 'til victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our [elders] sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been
watered;

We have come, treading our path thru the blood of
the slaughtered;

Out from the gloomy past, 'til now we stand at last
Where the [bright] gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where
we met thee;

Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world,
we forget thee;

Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever
stand, True to our God, true to our native land.

PROGRAM

Processional	“We’ve Come This Far by Faith”
Call to Community & Invocation	Rev. Dr. Melanie Jones Quarles Rev. Dr. Forrest E. Harris, Sr.
Welcome and Statement of Purpose	Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas
Institutional Greetings	Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley President, Fuller Theological Seminary
Celebration in Song	
Introduction of Moderator	Dr. Juan Floyd-Thomas
Introduction of Honorees	Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III
Honorees Exploration of Theme	Rev. Dr. Leslie D. Callahan Rev. Dr. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr.
Celebration in Song	

COUNCIL OF GRIOTS: A CALL AND RESPONSE

Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III
moderator
Rev. Dr. Justin Lester
Dr. Candace Laughinghouse
Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Offering & Remarks	Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III
Celebration in Song	“Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing”

GRIOT'S CALL TO COMMUNITY

A Litany for Those Who Aren't Ready For Healing

Yolanda Pierce, PhD

Leader: Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss. Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child ... someone's beloved son.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not value property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice. Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, the messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those hearts are being torn asunder.

Response: *God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader:

Instead ...

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extra judicially every 28 hours. Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police officer who described him as a demon.

Response: *Let it be so.*

GRIOT'S CALL TO COMMUNITY

Leader: Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease, and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase. Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: Let us listen to the shattering glass and let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

Response: *Let it be so.*

Leader: So, God, in your mercy...

All: *Show me my own complicity in injustice.*

All: *Convict me for my indifference.*

All: *Forgive me when I have remained silent.*

All: *Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.*

All: *Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.*

Amen

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Scholars Group
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2024 GROUP COUNCIL OF GRIOTS

REV. DR. FREDERICK D. HAYNES



Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III is a prophetic pastor, passionate leader, and social activist committed to preaching the gospel, fighting racial and economic injustice, and empowering underserved communities. For 40 years, he has served as Senior Pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, growing its membership from under 100 to over 13,000.

Born on November 10, 1960, in Dallas, Texas, Dr. Haynes moved to San Francisco after experiencing racism in the segregated South. Following the death of his father, Rev. Frederick D. Haynes Jr., Dr. Haynes overcame academic and personal challenges, graduating as one of three valedictorians from Abraham Lincoln High School. He earned a B.A. in Religion and English from Bishop College, a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Doctorate in Ministry from the Graduate Theological Foundation, with studies at Christ Church, Oxford. His dissertation focused on church growth and social justice.

Dr. Haynes is a dedicated community activist, collaborating with leaders and organizations to combat social injustice, poverty, and economic exploitation. His efforts have included advocating against predatory lending and addressing civil rights and economic issues under the Obama administration. He founded the THR!VE Intern and Leadership Program, employing hundreds of young people and expanding opportunities for youth empowerment.

A lifelong advocate for education, Dr. Haynes has led Friendship-West to donate over \$3 million to HBCUs and scholarships. He serves in leadership roles with organizations such as the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, the Conference of National Black Churches, and the Board of Trustees at Paul Quinn College. Dr. Haynes' ministry and activism reflect his enduring commitment to faith, justice, and transformation.

REV. DR. JUSTIN R. LESTER



Rev. Dr. Justin R. Lester is the Pastor of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Vallejo, California. Dr. Lester grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and has Master's of Divinity from Vanderbilt University, Master's of Arts from Marquette University, and Doctorate in Ministry from Boston University with a dissertation entitled, *Let's Play Church: Gamifying New England Black Church Revitalization* where he utilizes the tenants of gaming culture to create a paradigm of cross-generational sustainable ministry. Beyond that, He is the author of *The Church of AI* where he engages in the ethical and theological implications of Artificial Intelligence and the local church.

Dr. Lester's time in ministry has proven fruitful with a track record of debt eradication, technological innovation, social media, church growth, multi-generational engagement, the establishment of discipleship ministries, prophetic engagement in the community, church renovation and more

2024 GROUP COUNCIL OF GRIOTS

REV. DR. JACQUELINE A. THOMPSON



Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson is a Transformational Preacher, Dynamic Leader, and Ministry Trailblazer. Serving as the Senior Pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, since 2019, she made history as the first woman to lead this historic church. Previously, she served as Assistant Pastor at Allen Temple and Youth Minister at Shiloh Baptist Church, breaking new ground for women in ministry.

A scholar committed to excellence, Dr. Thompson earned her Bachelor's degree in Political Economics from UC Berkeley, a Master of Divinity from Howard University, and a Doctor of Ministry in African American Church Leadership from Fuller Theological Seminary. Her achievements include the Nannie Helen Burroughs Award for Academic Excellence and the Henry G. Maynard Award for Excellence in Preaching and Ministry.

Dr. Thompson is a gifted preacher, administrator, and published author, ministering nationally and internationally. She contributes to the Berkeley School of Theology in Public Theology and Preaching and has been featured in works like *The Women of Color Study Bible* and *Baptist Preaching: A Global Anthology*.

A community advocate, she is a member of the NAACP and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and has received numerous awards for leadership and activism. In 2022, she was elected 2nd Vice President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., furthering her mission to inspire transformation in others.

Dr. Thompson's groundbreaking achievements, commitment to ministry, and tireless service continue to impact lives and leave a legacy of hope and empowerment.

DR. CANDACE LAUGHINGHOUSE



Dr. Candace M. Laughinghouse is a distinguished scholar, activist, and musician based in Raleigh, NC. Her groundbreaking work focuses on advancing environmental justice by exploring the interconnections between human, animal, and environmental oppression. With a Ph.D. in theological ethics from Chicago Theological Seminary and degrees from UC Berkeley, Candler School of Theology, and Duke Divinity School, Dr. Laughinghouse brings a unique interdisciplinary approach to her research and teaching.

Currently, a professor of theology and ethics at Gammon Theological Seminary, Dr. Laughinghouse is also deeply committed to community activism. She holds leadership roles in organizations such as Black Workers for Justice and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. Her academic contributions extend to the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, where she serves on various committees, including Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society and the Motherhood unit currently under review.

Dr. Laughinghouse's recent work deconstructs Christian Nationalist worship liturgies in Black Gospel music and explores church growth through the lens of marginalized communities. She skillfully interweaves environmental justice with race, memory loss, and ethnomusicology. As Director of Music at Davie Street Presbyterian Church, she brings a rich musical heritage rooted in the Pentecostal tradition to her multifaceted career.

BRSRG FOUNDERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD

DR. STACEY M. FLOYD-THOMAS



Dr. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas is the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt Divinity School, an ordained Baptist pastoral counselor, and co-founder and executive director of the Black Religious Scholars Group. She is also the past executive director of the Society of Christian Ethics and the past president of the Society of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion. She has earned several degrees: a B.A. from Vassar College, an M.T.S. from Emory University's Candler School of Theology, and an M.A. in comparative Religion, a Ph.D. in religion and ethics from Temple University, and an M.B.A. from Tennessee State University.

As a womanist ethicist, her scholarly research and social activism have been dedicated to examining the effects that institutions such as the church, higher education, family, media, and government have had on defining marginalized groups and these groups' undertaken tasks to define their own identities. Dr. Floyd-Thomas is an award-winning teacher, much sought-after lecturer, and scholar who has taught and lectured throughout the U.S. as well as in West Africa, Brazil, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Spain, and Taiwan.

She has published numerous articles, book chapters, and nine books, including *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, *Liberation Theologies in the U.S.*, *Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins* and *Beyond the Pale: Reading Theology from the Margins*, *The Altars Where We Worship: The Religious Significance of Popular Culture*, *Religion, Race, COVID-19: Confronting White Supremacy in the Pandemic*, and *When the Good Life Goes Bad: The US and Its Seven Deadly Sins*. She is the leading editor of Abingdon Press's *Making It Plain: Approaches in Black Church Studies* series and New York University Press's *Religion and Social Transformation* series, and Orbis Press's *Ethics and Intersectionality* series. She was also a member of the lectionary team for *The African American Lectionary*, a project funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and served as the dean for the *Women of Color in Ministry (WOCIM)* project funded by the Ford Foundation.

REV. DR. JUAN M. FLOYD-THOMAS



Dr. Juan Floyd-Thomas is associate professor of African American religious history in the Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Since 1997, Dr. Floyd-Thomas has been a co-founder and executive board member of the Black Religious Scholars Group. His research and teaching interests include race, ethnicity, and religion in U.S. history and interdisciplinary approaches to the academic study of religious thought, especially cultural, political, economic, and social scientific theories and methods for analyzing the African American Christian experience and at the intersections of popular culture and American Christianity.

Prof. Floyd-Thomas is a world renowned scholar who has lectured at universities and seminaries across North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Canada, West Africa and the Global South. Furthermore, his work can be found in such media outlets ranging from the *Washington Post*, *Esquire*, *USA Today*, *Boston Globe*, *Homebrewed Christianity* podcast, NPR's *All Things Considered*, and WBEZ's *Sound Opinions* to name a few.

Currently, Floyd-Thomas serves as the President of the Society for the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion (SRER) and is also an active member of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Organization of American Historians (OAH), American Historical Association (AHA), American Society of Church History (ASCH), and Collegium of African American Research (CAAR). He also serves as an Associate Editor of the AAR's Reading Religion website.

Among his numerous publications, Dr. Floyd-Thomas has published several books including *The Origins of Black Humanism: Reverend Ethelred Brown and the Unitarian Church* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), *Liberating Black Church History: Making It Plain* (Abingdon Press, 2014), *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Abingdon Press, 2007), *The Altars Where We Worship: The Religious Significance of Popular Culture in the United States* (Westminster John Knox, 2016), *Religion in the Age of Obama* (Bloomsbury Press, 2018) and most recently *Critical Race Theology: White Supremacy, American Christianity, and the Ongoing Culture Wars* (Orbis Books, 2024). He is currently working on his next book project: a history of African diasporic religions in Harlem.

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REV. DR. DUANE BELGRAVE SR.



Rev. Dr. Duane A. Belgrave Sr. is co-founder of the Black Religious Scholars Group. Dr. Belgrave is the co-owner of RankGen Consultants, LLC, an educational and community development consulting firm, and is an adjunct instructor at Biblical Seminary, Swarthmore College, and Eastern University, all located in the Greater Philadelphia area. He has engaged in community development work in Harlem, New York, and in community organizing and community ministry in Chester, Pennsylvania. Dr. Belgrave is also an ordained American Baptist minister. He received a bachelor of business administration (B.B.A.) from Baruch College of the City University of New York (C.U.N.Y.), a master of divinity (M.Div.) from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in theological studies from Emory University.

Dr. Belgrave has taught traditional and contemporary Western theologies and African, African Caribbean, and African American religious studies at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, Earlham College, Earlham School of Religion, and New York Theological Seminary. His current teaching and research involve ecclesiology, missional theology, and public theology.

REV. DIONNE BOISSIERE



Rev. Dionne Boissière is the chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN). Rev. Boissière is the first woman of African descent to hold this position in the history of this New York ecumenical and interfaith landmark. As the chief steward of the CCUN, Rev. Boissière ensures that the Church Center provides sacred space, worship, hospitality, community services, and a forum for partners and civil society to engage in transformative education that seeks to empower and build the things that make for peace.

Rev. Boissière received her master of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York and served the seminary community for over a decade as the associate director of development and alumni/ae relations, as well as staff/student facilitator, and guest lecturer. Rev. Boissière serves as an associate minister at New Hope Baptist Church in Danbury, Connecticut, and is an instructor at the Abyssinian Baptist Church Institute for Christian Education in Harlem, New York, and Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey.

Her passion for helping women has led her to provide leadership for several local women's organizations and larger faith-based institutions—most recently, as the director of the Resource Center for Women in Ministry at New York Theological Seminary and as consultant for Woman Preach! Inc., the premier nonprofit organization that brings preachers into full prophetic voice around issues of equity and justice. Rev. Boissière is pursuing doctoral studies to continue work focused on bridging the gap between the church, the academy, and society through relevant, well-informed, holistic, and integrated teaching and preaching.

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REV. DR. TERESA FRY BROWN



Rev. Teresa L. Fry Brown, Ph.D. is the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Additionally, she is the fourteenth Historiographer, the editor of the A.M.E. Review Executive Director of Research and Scholarship and President of the General Officers' Council of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Fry Brown served as Director of Black Church Studies at Candler 2007-2015. Dr. Fry Brown obtained a Doctor of Philosophy in Religious and Theological Studies from the Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver, with an emphasis in Religion and Social Transformation (1996). She earned a Master of Divinity from Iliff School of Theology (1988), Master of Science degree (1975) and Bachelor of Science degree (1973) in Speech Pathology and Audiology from the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri.

Dr. Fry Brown has extensive teaching and preaching experience in national, international academic and ecumenical settings. A prolific author, Dr. Fry Brown's books include *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body and Animation in Proclamation*; *Can A Sister Get a Little Help: Advice and Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry*; *God Don't Like Ugly: African American Women Handing on Spiritual Values Weary Throats and New Song: Black Women Proclaiming God's Word* Abingdon Press and the 2006 *African American History Devotional*. Additionally, she has published fifty other reviews, chapters, and commentaries.

Dr. Fry Brown is a member of the American Academy of Religion (Steering Committee of Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group), Society for the Study of Black Religion, and the Academy of Homiletics (First Vice President 2021, President, December 2022). She was honored for her academic achievements at the Eighteenth Annual Black Religious Scholar Group Consultation at the American Academy of Religion (2015), Emory-Williams Distinguished Teaching Award (2017), Samuel Dewitt Proctor Beautiful Are the Feet Award (2019), and Turner Theological Seminary Lifetime Achievement Award (2021). She is an ordained Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and an Associate Minister at New Bethel A.M.E. Church, Lithonia, Georgia.

REV. DR. MELANIE JONES QUARLES



Rev. Melanie C. Jones Quarles, Ph.D. is a womanist ethicist, millennial preacher, and intellectual activist. Melanie joined the Union Presbyterian Seminary faculty as Instructor of Ethics, Theology and Culture and Inaugural Director of the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership in fall 2019. Formerly, Melanie served as the 2018-19 Crump Visiting Professor and Black Religious Scholar-in-Residence at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX, and Lecturer at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, TX, American Baptist College in Nashville, TN, Chicago Theological Seminary, and The Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, IL.

Melanie's research probes the scripting of the body in theology and philosophy that fosters religious, cultural, and moral meaning for the present with particular attention to Black women's body politics. Melanie engages womanist theological ethics and sacred texts, millennials and faith, and Black aesthetics and popular culture. For her distinguished research, Melanie has received notable fellowships and scholarships, including The Forum for Theological Exploration, The Louisville Institute, Wabash Center, and Villanova University Center for Church Management.

Melanie is a thinking woman of faith embodying radical love and revolutionary justice in the academy, Church, and global community. Melanie is co-curator of #MillennialWomanism Digital Forum and Co-Founder of The Millennial Womanism Project (TMWP) — an enterprise committed to enhancing the well-being of Black millennial women of faith and justice and fostering trans-generational womanist dialogue. As a global leader serving professional societies and international boards, Melanie is the chair of the board of directors of the Daughters of the African Atlantic Fund.

A third-generation ordained Baptist preacher and sought-after lecturer, Melanie is an emerging millennial voice with noted academic and popular publications as well as features on television, radio, and news outlets.

BRSB FOUNDERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD

REV. DR. JUSTIN R. LESTER



Rev. Dr. Justin R. Lester is the Pastor of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Vallejo, California. Dr. Lester grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and has Master's of Divinity from Vanderbilt University, Master's of Arts from Marquette University, and Doctorate in Ministry from Boston University with a dissertation entitled, *Let's Play Church: Gamifying New England Black Church Revitalization* where he utilizes the tenants of gaming culture to create a paradigm of cross-generational sustainable ministry. Beyond that, He is the author of *The Church of AI* where he engages in the ethical and theological implications of Artificial Intelligence and the local church.

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DR. AUNDREA MATTHEWS



Dr. Aundrea Matthews served as the cultural arts and entertainment manager for the United States Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Matthews received her doctor of philosophy from Rice University in 2016, master's degree in theological studies from Brite Divinity School, and master's in liberal arts and bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Texas Christian University. While at Rice, Aundrea worked as the assistant program coordinator for the Center for Engaged Research and Collaborative Learning (CERCL) at Rice, in addition to serving as an

adjunct professor in the Humanities Department at Lone Star College. Her dissertation is titled "Quilting Faith: African American Quilts as Source Material for the Study of African American Religion." She has curated and managed more than ten art exhibitions throughout Houston and is the founder of the Hearts, Hands, and Heritage Quilt Exhibition at Rice. Dr. Matthews was also the co-author of *Breaking Bread Breaking Beats: Churches and Hip Hop, A Basic Guild to Key Issues* with the CERCL Collective, as well as co-author of a chapter with Dr. Margarita S. Guillory titled "Esotericism in African American Religious Experience: There is a Mystery." She served as a teaching assistant and logistics coordinator for Dr. Anthony B. Pinn and Bernard "Bun B" Freeman's nationally recognized "Religion and Hip Hop" course.

REV. DR. DANTÉ QUICK



Reverend Danté R. Quick, Ph.D., was installed as the fourth Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (FBCLG) in Somerset, NJ on June 12, 2022. Pastor Quick has already established an impactful ministry centered around wellness and faith formation to help disciples of Christ live in their divinity.

Prior to joining FBCLG, Pastor Quick served Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Vallejo, California, for more than 10 years. Previously, he served New Liberation Presbyterian Church in San Francisco.

As a Policy Analyst for the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Pastor Quick developed training materials and instructed African American churches on how to implement community development programming.

Pastor Quick also has served in the offices of Mayor Marion Barry, Congressman John Lewis and Governor Zell Miller, as well as the Legislative Representative for the Atlanta Board of Education. In these roles, Pastor Quick has addressed audiences at the National Conference of Black Mayors, the World Conference of Mayors and the National Conference of Black Men. He also served as the Special Programs Administrator for the Fulton County District Attorney in Atlanta.

Pastor Quick is a graduate of Morehouse College where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a concentration in Pre-Law. He received a Master of Divinity with a concentration in Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was also conferred with his Ph.D. in Philosophical and Systematic Theology with a focus on African American Studies from the Graduate Theological Union, University of California at Berkeley.

BRSB FOUNDERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD

REV. DR. JACQUELINE A. THOMPSON



Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson is a Transformational Preacher, Dynamic Leader, and Ministry Trailblazer. Serving as the Senior Pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, since 2019, she made history as the first woman to lead this historic church. Previously, she served as Assistant Pastor at Allen Temple and Youth Minister at Shiloh Baptist Church, breaking new ground for women in ministry.

A scholar committed to excellence, Dr. Thompson earned her Bachelor's degree in Political Economics from UC Berkeley, a Master of Divinity from Howard University, and a Doctor of Ministry in African American Church Leadership from Fuller Theological Seminary. Her achievements include the Nannie Helen Burroughs Award for Academic Excellence and the Henry G. Maynard Award for Excellence in Preaching and Ministry.

Dr. Thompson is a gifted preacher, administrator, and published author, ministering nationally and internationally. She contributes to the Berkeley School of Theology in Public Theology and Preaching and has been featured in works like *The Women of Color Study Bible* and *Baptist Preaching: A Global Anthology*.

A community advocate, she is a member of the NAACP and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and has received numerous awards for leadership and activism. In 2022, she was elected 2nd Vice President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., furthering her mission to inspire transformation in others.

Dr. Thompson's groundbreaking achievements, commitment to ministry, and tireless service continue to impact lives and leave a legacy of hope and empowerment.

DR. CANDACE LAUGHINGHOUSE



Dr. Candace M. Laughinghouse is a distinguished scholar, activist, and musician based in Raleigh, NC. Her groundbreaking work focuses on advancing environmental justice by exploring the interconnections between human, animal, and environmental oppression. With a Ph.D. in theological ethics from Chicago Theological Seminary and degrees from UC Berkeley, Candler School of Theology, and Duke Divinity School, Dr. Laughinghouse brings a unique interdisciplinary approach to her research and teaching.

Currently, a professor of theology and ethics at Gammon Theological Seminary, Dr. Laughinghouse is also deeply committed to community activism. She holds leadership roles in organizations such as Black Workers for Justice and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. Her academic contributions extend to the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, where she serves on various committees, including Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society and the Motherhood unit currently under review.

Dr. Laughinghouse's recent work deconstructs Christian Nationalist worship liturgies in Black Gospel music and explores church growth through the lens of marginalized communities. She skillfully interweaves environmental justice with race, memory loss, and ethnomusicology. As Director of Music at Davie Street Presbyterian Church, she brings a rich musical heritage rooted in the Pentecostal tradition to her multifaceted career.

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REV. DR. HOWARD JOHN WESLEY



Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley is the senior pastor of the historic Alfred Street Baptist Church (ASBC) in Alexandria, VA, serving as only the eighth pastor in the church's 217-year history. Under his visionary leadership, ASBC has grown from 2,800 members to over 10,000, with 80 active ministries and a strong emphasis on children, missions, and young adults. Known for addressing social and political issues, Dr. Wesley's sermons, including "When the Verdict Hurts," have been nationally recognized and archived at the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC).

Dr. Wesley's impactful leadership extends beyond the pulpit. Under his guidance, ASBC became the first faith-based donor to the NMAAHC with a \$1 million contribution. He has led protests against racial injustice and created the "Faith Forward" broadcast, one of the most popular religious programs in the Washington, DC area. Dr. Wesley's commitment to education is evident through his Ph.D. studies in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric at Christian Theological Seminary, alongside previous degrees from Duke University, Boston University, and Northern Baptist Seminary.

A sought-after speaker, Dr. Wesley has delivered sermons at major events like the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Prayer Breakfast. His work in social justice and ministry has earned numerous accolades, including the NAACP Chairman's Award and the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity's Laurel Wreath Award.

A Chicago native, Dr. Wesley is a fourth-generation Baptist preacher and father to two sons, Howard-John II and Cooper Reece. His hobbies include golfing, cooking, and playing spades. Dr. Wesley continues to inspire through his dedication to justice, education, and spiritual leadership.

REV. DR. HENRY P. DAVIS III



Since 1982, Dr. Henry Pinckney Davis III has been preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, having been licensed and ordained at the St. Paul Baptist Church of Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, under the pastoral leadership of his father, Dr. Henry P. Davis, Jr. His preaching is relevant, challenging, and inspirational. In 2000, Dr. Davis was called to pastor the First Baptist Church of Highland Park in Landover, Maryland. Dr. Davis formerly pastored the Second Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, New York (1993-2000), and the Community Baptist Church in Lakehurst, New Jersey (1988-1993).

Dr. Davis leads a "Bible Believing, Christ Centered & Spirit Led Congregation" with an active membership of over 3,000 Disciples who are engaged in Kingdom Building through more than 80 ministries. The church has five worship assemblies each week with three weekend worship services – Saturdays at 6:30 p.m.; Sundays at 7:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m., and two on Wednesdays, which we refer to as Wonderful Wednesdays With Jesus, at 12:00 noon is The Power Hour and at 6:45 p.m., which is a time of corporate Prayer, Praise, Worship, and The Word. First Baptist Highland Park is a progressive and visionary church that offers a Christian school (Highland Park Christian Academy – Pre-K – 8th Grade) and numerous Bible study groups. The church also has a senior citizens center and offers ministries to reach out to the youth, young adults, couples, singles, prisoners, sick, bereaved and widowed. In 2016 the church marched into their new, 20 million dollar plus, worship center.

Dr. Davis, a native of Wichita Falls, Texas, studied at Oral Roberts University, (Tulsa, Oklahoma) later graduated from Norfolk State University, (Norfolk, Virginia) with a B.A. in English; Fairleigh Dickinson University (New Jersey) with a Master of Public Administration; New Brunswick Theological Seminary (New Jersey) with a Master of Divinity (M.Div.); and United Theological Seminary (Dayton, Ohio) with a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.). Dr. Davis has been the recipient of numerous awards and citations, including being inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers at Morehouse College of Atlanta, Georgia in 2007.

GREETINGS FROM THE BRSB HEADQUARTERS

Vanderbilt Divinity School's Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies welcomes you to the twenty-sixth annual consultation of the Black Religious Scholars Group. Vanderbilt Divinity School is committed to a program of theological education that is open to and takes account of the religious pluralism in our world. Concretely, this commitment entails working for a more just and humane society as well as striving for theological inquiry and leadership in church and society that will help alleviate the social ills and injustice besetting individuals and groups. Thus, we are especially pleased that Vanderbilt's Kelly Miller Smith Institute serves as the BRSB headquarters to further this important work of promoting critical engagement in the academy, church, and society.

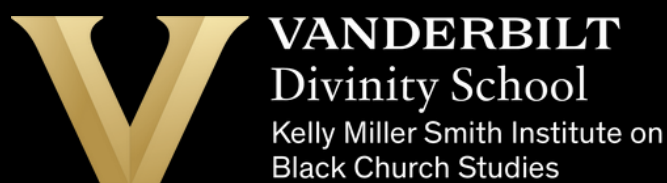
Since the emergence of the BRSB, the Kelly Miller Smith Institute has supported its distinct mission within the American Academy of Religion to advance Black and Womanist theological scholarship that bridges the academy and the Black churches in liberation praxis and social justice ministry. The work of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute brings together Black church communities and educational institutions, as partners with the Vanderbilt Divinity School, in order to study and research issues important to the practice of ministry in the Black church, and do all in its power to combat racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism while also equipping students with a critical and reflective understanding of Christian faith.

As a Divinity School committed to the work of both the academy and the church, we are excited about the BRSB vision of reigniting meaningful dialogue between Black religious scholars and the larger Black community as well as its churches both nationally and internationally. Please accept our best wishes for your twenty-fifth annual consultation.

Forrest E. Harris, Sr.

Director, The Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies

President, American Baptist College





Divinity School

Greetings from the School
of the Prophets

Linking divine justice



to social justice.



November 22, 2024

Dear BRSB Colleagues,

Welcome to California! It is a privilege for Fuller Theological Seminary to be the academic sponsor for this gathering.

Fuller Seminary helps to equip Christian leaders for what God calls them to do with professional and graduate degrees through our School of Mission and Theology and School of Psychology and Marriage and Family Therapy, and our robust suite of life long learning opportunities through our Leadership Formation Division and Fuller Equip.

We are blessed to work within an expression of the vibrant variety of God as seen through our racial-ethnic plurality in our regular rank faculty, student body, and staff and in our student body of more than 2600 students representing 110 denominations, 75 countries, 50 states, and four territories. Our 73 faculty are part of 26 denominations. This is a unique place of Christian higher education.

As Fuller's sixth and first African American President, I am grateful for the new vistas and widening horizons the Lord is opening for us and am thrilled to share this time with you.

Grace,



Rev. David Emmanuel Goatley, PhD
President, Fuller Theological Seminary
Clifford L. Penner Presidential Chair

Headquarters



VANDERBILT
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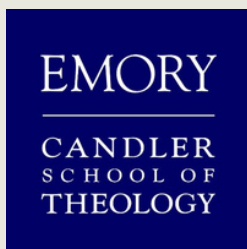


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