Candler Connection is published by the Office of Communications of Candler School of Theology at Emory University and is distributed free as a service to all alumni and other friends of the school. Send correspondence regarding the magazine to: Laurel Hanna, Co-Director of Communications, Candler School of Theology, 1531 Dickey Drive, Atlanta, GA 30322 or email laurel.hanna@emory.edu.

This magazine may be viewed online at www.candler.emory.edu/news/connection

Unless otherwise noted, photography by Emory Photo/Video. Design by Wages Design, www.wagesdesign.com

Copyright 2014, Candler School of Theology, Emory University. All rights reserved. www.candler.emory.edu

Corrections: The print edition of the Winter 2013 issue of Candler Connection contained these errors:
In “Return to Eden,” Sarah Gerwig-Moore’s name was misspelled; in “From Hostility to Hospitality,” Sunlin Korean Methodist Church was incorrectly identified as Sunlin United Methodist Church. We apologize for these errors in the print edition.

in this issue

COMMUNITY:
02 THE COLLECT
The transformative spirit of endings and beginnings

04 NEWS
The latest from Candler

38 GIVING
Gifts that are making a real difference at Candler

44 BENEDICTION
Professor emeritus Don Saliers on endings and beginnings

FACULTY:
16 REQUIRED READING
What faculty are reading now

22 NEW BOOKS
BY CANDLER FACULTY

34 NOW & THEN:
Teresa Fry Brown and Ted Smith talk teaching and preaching

ALUMNI:
27 AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM
A trio of beginnings for Nancy & Shelvis Smith-Mather in South Sudan

40 CLASS NOTES
FEATURES:

10  THE GOOD FUNERAL AND THE EMPTY TOMB
Thomas Lynch explores the link between death and eternal life

18  A TIME TO SOW
A bumper crop of Candler church planters sows the seeds of faith

24  CUT DEAD BUT STILL ALIVE
Greg Ellison’s quest to end the stigmatization of African American young men

30  FIVE DEGREES OF INTEGRATION
Candler’s new degrees expand the possibilities for making a difference
There’s a transformative spirit of both endings and beginnings that leads us to a deeper understanding of ourselves and our call.
Dear Friends,

Woven through the endings and beginnings that punctuate our life’s story is a common thread: change. And the past year at Candler has seen much of it. We’ve witnessed the demolition of long-standing Bishops Hall and the rise of a new building in its stead; celebrated the leave-taking of a graduating class and welcomed an assembly of new faces picking up the Candler mantle right behind them; and embraced the introduction of five new graduate degrees, created so that more real people can make a real difference in the real world.

The stories in this issue of Connection spotlight the transformative spirit of endings and beginnings, exploring the eternal cycling between the two and how both lead us into a deeper understanding and renewal of our call. We consider a range of endings and beginnings, from rituals at the end of life to the birth of congregations in the neighborhoods that surround us; from stemming the tide of systemic injustice to forging new ministries. And of course, as we usher in 2014, we prepare to celebrate Candler’s beginning as we honor the 100th anniversary of its founding in 1914.

This summer, we mourned the passing of John Haralson Hayes, emeritus professor of Old Testament, who served on Candler’s faculty for 35 years and left behind a legacy of words, wisdom, and genuine friendship. His death brings deeper resonance to the final words of his 2010 book of wit and wisdom, If You Don’t Like the Possum, Enjoy the Sweet Potatoes:

And when on our day the sun has set, let us pray that the darkness be not long delayed, that short will be that evening journey into night.
And may that night kiss us softly on the cheek, and embrace us tenderly in its keep.

As Christians, our beliefs are rooted in the ultimate ending and beginning, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of this, we face the future with confidence, even when we do not know what the “evening journey into night” will entail. We stand poised at an exciting juncture here at Candler as we turn from our first to our second century. May we embrace the sacred tension of our endings and beginnings as we continue to do God’s work in the world, both now and in years to come.

Grace and peace,

Jan Love
Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics
Sometimes, there must be an ending before a new beginning can occur. That was the case in spring of 2013 when Bishops Hall, Candler’s home for fifty years, was demolished in order to make way for Phase II of the school’s new building. Built in 1957, Bishops Hall was synonymous with Candler for generations of students, but it was not synonymous with technological advances: It could not support the latest in classroom technology, and the cost to modernize it would almost equal the cost of a new building. So Candler officially took its leave of Bishops in 2008, moving into Phase I of its new building, now known as the Rita Anne Rollins Building.

Before Bishops was demolished, Associate Professor of Worship and Liturgical Theology Ed Phillips led the community in “A Rite to Acknowledge the Razing of Bishops Hall.” And then during spring break, the building was taken down by a process called “munching”—essentially, machines took bites out of the building. Within one week, Bishops was gone, leaving room for a greener, more technology-friendly building to rise from its ashes.

That building is Phase II, which will house Pitts Theology Library and the Wesley Teaching Chapel, and connect to the Rita Anne Rollins Building via a glass atrium. Like Phase I, the building will feature state-of-the-art technology and will conform to LEED “green building” standards.

As is fitting for a theology school building, many of the materials from Bishops will be resurrected. Red roof tiles were put aside for one of Emory’s new residence halls. Most of the unused furniture was donated to local charities. And debris from the demolition was sorted and loaded into appropriate bins for recycling. Of the 880 tons of waste removed from the demolition site in March, 723 tons of concrete, 127 tons of metal, and 12 tons of wood were recycled or diverted—that’s a 97.95 percent recycle rate. Not a bad parting gift, Bishops Hall. Thank you.
Candler Celebrates 100 Years

**If 1914** “was an altogether splendid time to start a school of theology,” as Gary Hauk writes in his forthcoming book on the history of Candler, then 2014 is certainly an altogether splendid time to rejoice in the school’s centennial. 

“The Candler Centennial in Story and Prophecy” is a yearlong celebration of the school’s 100th anniversary, highlighting memories of the past and visions for the future. It begins in August 2014 with Fall Convocation and the dedication of the final phase of our new building and continues through Spring Commencement 2015 with a slate of special guest lectures, musical performances, forums and conferences, room dedications, alumni reunions, exhibits in the new Pitts Theology Library, and the debut of Hauk’s book.


“Story gives expression to the memory of a people: By faithfully and creatively remembering both the good and bad in its experience, the Candler community is prepared once more to move into the future,” he explains.

Prophecy, says Johnson, is not so much about predicting the future as it is about speaking a word to the present and thus affecting the future.

“As a school of theology committed to the service of the church and the world, Candler must seek to discern the word that the church and world need to hear, and speak that word both clearly and compellingly,” he says.

Two phases mark the turn from our first to our second century. In fall of 2014, we focus on “Story: Remembering the Past” in events that highlight Candler’s historic significance within the larger Atlanta community and beyond. In spring of 2015, we move to “Prophecy: Addressing the Future,” as Candler hosts a major scholarly conference on theology to engage the challenges of the next century. Candler faculty will present papers proposing ways forward, and distinguished theologians from outside Candler will respond as panelists.

A full calendar of Centennial Celebration events and related details will be available at candler.emory.edu later this spring.
Candler Welcomes New Faculty

In the fall of 2013, Candler welcomed two new faces to the faculty. Thomas W. Elliott, Jr. ’87T, ’97G is the director of Contextual Education II, assistant professor in the practice of practical theology, and director of the Teaching Parish program and ministry internships. An elder in the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church, he comes to Candler with 26 years of pastoral experience in local parishes. His work focuses on Wesleyan studies, polity, evangelism and mission, and contextual education. Nichole Renée Phillips joins the school as assistant professor of religion and human difference. An ordained itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Phillips focuses on the intersection of religion, psychology, and culture; African American history and cultural studies; practical theology; and cultural anthropology and ethnographic research. She has served on ministerial staffs of churches in New England and in the South.

A Bevy of Laurels for Reynolds, Lösel

Aquinas Professor of Historical Theology Philip L. Reynolds and Associate Professor in the Practice of Systematic Theology Steffen R. Lösel have received abundant honors this year. First the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and The Henry Luce Foundation named them as two of the six Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology for 2013-2014. As Luce Fellows, they will conduct research for a year and then present their findings at a conference and for publication in religious journals. Lösel’s project explores the faith of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart through a musical and textual analysis of anthropological, Christological, ethical, and eschatological themes in his major operatic works. Reynolds will explore Christian mystical theology in the western tradition. Additional honors for both were icing on the cake: Noted as “equal parts pastor, scholar, and teacher,” Lösel received the 2013 “On Eagle’s Wings” Excellence in Teaching Award, given by Candler’s senior class in recognition of faithful and dedicated service. Reynolds was named a senior fellow at Emory’s Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry.

Acing the Third Degree

Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) has awarded Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament Carol A. Newsom a Doctor in Divinity, honoris causa, her third honorary doctorate. “Scholar, mentor, lecturer, teacher, visionary, and interpreter of texts are a few of the terms that come to mind when one thinks of you,” begins the citation from VTS. “Where others have heard discord and contradictions in the text, you have discerned dialogue—a multiplicity of voices that opens up a world of possibilities for meaning. Texts talk to one another and so do disciplines: the way you use sociology, psychology, and literary criticism has given us a new framework for interpreting Scripture. You have inspired a new generation of biblical scholars.”
**Living Out Love 02**

Nearly a hundred attended the Women, Theology, and Ministry program’s Annual Women’s Forum featuring author and women’s advocate The Reverend Becca Stevens on “Living Out Love: Advocacy for Women as a Theological Practice.” Recently named by the White House as one of 15 “Champions of Change,” Stevens is founder of Magdalene and Thistle Farms, a community and social enterprise near Nashville, Tenn., that supports women recovering from prostitution, trafficking, addiction, and life on the streets. Magdalene, the residential model, serves women for two years at no cost to residents. Thistle Farms employs more than 40 residents and graduates who manufacture, market, and sell all-natural bath and beauty products in 200 retail stores across the globe. The forum included presentations by women of the Magdalene community and a discussion session on action strategies for women’s advocacy in Atlanta.

**YTI: 20 Years of Exploring Questions that Shape Us 03**

In the two decades since its launch in 1993, more than 1,000 high schoolers have attended Candler’s groundbreaking Youth Theological Initiative (YTI) Summer Academy, exploring questions about faith, values, and culture that shape their young minds. This past July, more than 100 YTI mentors, staff, and participants from years past gathered at Candler to celebrate the program’s 20th anniversary with a slate of activities, including a panel discussion on 21st century youth ministry, worship, workshops, and a reunion banquet keynoted by YTI co-founders Craig Dykstra and Chuck Foster.

Originally designed as a forum where youth could address theological questions and issues that weren’t discussed in their local faith communities, Candler’s YTI was the first of its kind. Now more than 50 summer youth ministry programs modeled after it are scattered around the country.

“There is no doubt that YTI shapes leaders for tomorrow,” says Elizabeth Corrie, the program’s director and assistant professor of youth education and peacebuilding at Candler.

“Many participants will become ordained clergy, and some will enter other fields. But no matter what their profession, they will have a sense that God has called them to work for the common good, drawing on their religious tradition as a formative resource.”
Bishops Lead Episcopal Studies 04

Candler has tapped two bishops from the Episcopal Church to lead its Episcopal Studies program. The Rt. Reverend Keith B. Whitmore, assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, serves as director of the program, and the Rt. Reverend Robert C. Wright [04], bishop of the diocese, chairs the school’s Episcopal Studies Advisory Board.

“I am thrilled that this team of leaders will build on an already strong foundation in Episcopal Studies at Candler to move us in new and creative directions for the future,” says Dean Love.

Candler features the oldest university-based Episcopal Studies program in the nation. More than 200 students have graduated since the program began in 1974, and they currently serve in churches, chaplaincies, and social service agencies from California to Maine.

Cannon Chapel Freshens Up 05

After more than three decades of almost daily use, the iconic William R. Cannon Chapel underwent its first building-wide renovation this summer. Built in 1981, the chapel—which hosts regular classes and five worship services a week for Candler students, plus gatherings for other religious groups at Emory—was due for a makeover. Candler and Emory’s Office of Religious Life teamed up in the effort to breathe new life into the space.

Though not visually dramatic, the improvements address both the need for more current technology and the need to make the space hospitable for all who worship there. At the top of the list was installing state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment to support enhanced presentations and live-streaming worship services. Also important were attending to long-standing maintenance issues and adding ablution stations for the ritual washing required by some faiths. Besides these larger changes, other nips and tucks included replacing carpeting and flooring, resurfacing the ceiling, improving lighting, installing new furnishings, repainting pews, refinishing the original lectern and altar, ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and rearranging meeting and teaching spaces, including the creation of a room dedicated to spiritual formation.
A SEMESTER WITH BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR 06

Best-selling author, Emory alumna, and Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor ’73C joined Candler School of Theology for the fall semester as the Alonzo L. McDonald Family Chair on the Life and Teachings of Jesus and Their Impact on Culture. During her tenure as the McDonald Chair, Taylor gave three major public addresses: “At Home with Uncertainty,” “Learning to Walk in the Dark,” and “The Virtuous Preacher.” Audio and video recordings of all three presentations are available in the “Jesus & Culture” and “Special Events” albums on Emory’s iTunes U site, itunes.emory.edu.

In addition to these public lectures, Taylor addressed smaller groups, engaged with student organizations, and taught a course that focused on examining the image of Jesus through the eyes of the world’s major faiths outside of Christianity.

LAY THEOLOGY INSTITUTE PRESENTS PACINI, JOHNSON 07

The Bill Mallard Lay Theology Institute at Candler will host two Disciple Scholars events this semester. On February 16, Professor of Historical Theology David Pacini ’07 will present “Four Bibles, Four Christs” at Mulberry Street United Methodist Church in Macon. On March 29, Luke Timothy Johnson, R.W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, will present “The Apostle Paul: Oppressor or Liberator?” at Candler School of Theology. To register, visit candler.emory.edu/calendar and navigate to the date of the event.

THE PROFESSORS ARE IN

Sharpen your tools for ministry by joining us for a free “Office Hours” webinar this spring semester. The line-up includes Don E. Saliers on February 13, “The Psalms of Lament”; Gregory C. Ellison II on March 18, “Cut Dead But Still Alive”; and Carol A. Newsom and Jennifer Ayres on April 24: “Food and Faith: Eating as a Spiritual Practice.” The one-hour webinars use the GoToWebinar platform, enabling you to view a live presentation, ask questions, and engage in conversation with your favorite faculty. Register on the “Alumni & Friends” section of Candler’s website, candler.emory.edu. Can’t make it to the live session? You can access any of the past “Office Hours” webinars from our website.
The Good Funeral and the Empty Tomb

By Thomas Lynch

“A good funeral.” I first heard that from my father, who was a funeral director. He used to come home from work when I was a kid, sit down at the dinner table, and talk about how he’d had “a couple of good funerals” that day—by which he meant, it got the dead where they needed to go and the living where they wanted to be. That became for me a sort of rule of thumb: A good funeral gets both the dead and the living where they need to be.

In my time as a visiting professor at Candler, I’ve learned to provide a scriptural predicate for much of what I do and write and say. And so, this, from the Gospel of John:

> After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. —John 19:38-42, NRSV

Of these verses surrounding the burial of Christ, what always impressed me is the one that reads “according to the burial customs of the Jews,” because it affirms that every tribe and sect, religious and ethnic community is obliged to figure out what to do with their dead. And so when Joseph the Arimathean, in league with Nicodemus, petitioned Pilate for the body of Christ, they were acting out a primal office of their species and the particular dictates of their tribe.

It was much the same eight years ago at the Vatican when Pope John Paul II died. That first week of April 2005 was dominated by images of the dead man’s body vested in red, mitered, and laid out among the faithful with bells and books and candles, blessed with water and incense, borne from one station to the next in what began to take shape as a final journey. The front pages of the world’s newspapers were uniform in their iconography: a corpse clothed in sumptuous vestments from head to toe, still as stone and horizontal. Such images flickering across their ubiquitous screens no doubt gave pause to many Americans for whom the presence of the Pope’s body at the Pope’s funeral struck many as an oddity, a quaint relic of old customs. How “Catholic” some predictably said, or how “Italian,” or “Polish,” or “traditional,” or “barbaric.” Or “when in Rome...” the perpetually beleaguered cable TV commentators would say.

In point of fact, what happened in Rome that week followed a pattern as old as the species—it was “human,” this immediate focus on the dead and this sense that the living must go the distance with them. Most of nature does not stop for death. But we do. Wherever our spirits go, or don’t, ours is a species which has learned to process grief by processing the objects of our grief—the bodies of the dead—from one place to the next. We bear mortality by bearing mortals—the living and the dead—to the brink of a uniquely changed reality: Heaven or Valhalla or Whatever Is Next. We commit and commend them to everyone except the actual corpse, which is often dismissed, disappeared without rubric or witness, out of sight, out of mind. So the visible presence of the Pope’s body at the Pope’s funeral struck many as an oddity, a quaint relic of old customs. How “Catholic” some predictably said, or how “Italian,” or “Polish,” or “traditional,” or “barbaric.” Or “when in Rome...” the perpetually beleaguered cable TV commentators would say.

For many bereaved Americans, the relatively new “celebration of life” funeral involves a guest list open to everyone except the actual corpse, which is often dismissed, disappeared without rubric or witness, out of sight, out of mind. So the visible presence of the Pope’s body at the Pope’s funeral struck many as an oddity, a quaint relic of old customs. How “Catholic” some predictably said, or how “Italian,” or “Polish,” or “traditional,” or “barbaric.” Or “when in Rome...” the perpetually beleaguered cable TV commentators would say.

By Thomas Lynch

An adaptation of a lecture given by poet and undertaker Thomas Lynch during his tenure as the McDonald Chair in spring 2013.
ceasing to be by going the distance with their dead, getting them to the edge of a new reality—to the tomb or the fire or the grave, the holy tree or deep sea, whatever sacred space of oblivion we consign them to. And we’ve been doing this since the beginning.

As Christians, our theology is shaped by our eschatology; our living faith informed by our best hopes for the dead. Thus, the defining truth of our Christianity—the empty tomb—proceeds from the defining truth of our humanity: We fill tombs. The mystery of the resurrection to eternal life is bound inextricably to the certainty of the cross of suffering and death. Indeed, the effort to make sense of it all, the religious impulse, owes to our primeval questions about the nature of death. Save for these uniquely human curiosities about last things and eschatologies and the liturgies we construct to answer them, we would be so much road-kill and windfall, our lives and deaths unmarked and unremarkable. Like baptisms and nuptials, we do funerals to address the uniquely human questions—what is permanent, what is passing, what is the meaning of life and love, suffering and death. Gladioli and goldfish are not much troubled by these things. Only humans are.

Ours is the species bound to the dirt, fashioned from it, according to the Book of Genesis (Gen 2:7). Thus human and humus occupy the same page of our dictionaries because we are beings “of the soil,” of the earth. The lexicon and language are full of such wisdoms. Thus, our “humic density,” as the scholar Robert Pogue Harrison calls it, the notion that everything human—our architecture and history, our monuments and cities—all rooted in and rising from the humus, the earth, the ground in which our dead are buried, is what eventually defines us.

Years ago I took to trying to imagine the first human widow awakening to the dead lump of a fellow next to her, stone still under the hides that covered and warmed them against the elements. I always imagine a cave and primitive tools and art and artifacts. They have fire and some form of language and social orders. This first human widow wakes up to find the man she’s been sleeping with and cooking for and breeding with gone cold and quiet in a way she had not formerly considered. Depending on the weather, sooner or later she begins to sense that something about him has changed quite utterly and irreversibly. Probably she smells the truth of this within a matter of a day or two. And what makes her human is that she figures she’d better do something about it. Let us, for a moment, consider her options.

Perhaps she gathers her things together and follows the nomadic herd of her group elsewhere, leaving the cave, or the ditch or the pit or the fire or the pond or whatever oblivion she has chosen for him. In that pause she stares into the oblivion she has consigned him to and frames what are the signature questions of our species: Is that all there is? Why is he cold? Can this happen to me? What comes next? Of course, there are other questions, many more, but all of them are uniquely human, because no other species ponders such things. This is when the first glimpse of a life before or beyond this one begins to flicker into the species’ consciousness and questions about where we come from and where we go take up more and more of the moments not spent on
rudimentary survival. Maybe the way the sun rises and sets or the seasons change or the tide ebbs and flows begin to replicate her own existence. And maybe whatever made the larger and the smaller lights in the night sky and great yellow disk that moves across the sky had something to do with her and the man whose body she is disposing of.

And here is the point I am trying to make: that the contemplation of the existential mysteries, those around being and ceasing to be, is what separates humans from the rest of creation; and that our humanity is, therefore, directly tied to how we respond to mortality. In short, how we deal with our dead in their physical reality and how we deal with death as an existential reality define and describe us in primary ways. Furthermore, the physical reality of death and the existential contemplation of the concept of death are inextricably linked so that it can be said, in trying to define what might be among the first principles of humanity, that ours is the species that deals with death (the idea of the thing) by dealing with our dead (the physical fact of the thing itself).

Insofar as our first human widow is concerned, it was by dealing with the corpse of her dead man that she began to deal with the concept of death. This intimate connection between the mortal corpse and the concept of mortality, it goes without saying, is at the core of our religious, artistic, scientific, and social impulses.

“No form of human life,” writes the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies, “has been found that failed to pattern the treatment of deceased bodies and their posthumous presence in the memory of the descendants. Indeed, the patterning has been found so universal that discovery of graves and cemeteries is generally accepted by the explorers of prehistory as proof that a humanoid strain whose life was never observed directly had passed the threshold of humanhood.”

I want to emphasize that Bauman finds two elements to this “threshold of humanhood.” First, “to pattern the treatment of deceased bodies,” and secondly, “their (the dead’s) presence in the memory of descendants.” And when we find evidence of ancient graves and cemeteries, crematories or other sites of final disposition, we can assume that they are venues where humans sought to deal with death by dealing with their dead—by treating their deceased bodies in ways that said they intended to keep “their posthumous presence in (their) memory.”

And this formula—dealing with death by dealing with the dead—defined and described and worked for humans for forty or fifty thousand years all over the planet, across every culture until we come to the most recent generations of North Americans who for the past forty or fifty years have begun to avoid and outsource and ignore their obligations to deal with the dead. They are willing enough to keep “their presence in the memory of descendants” (the idea of the thing), so long as they don’t have to deal with “the treatment of deceased bodies” (the thing itself). A picture on the piano is fine, but public wakes, bearing the dead to open graves, are strictly out of fashion.

The bodiless obsequy, which has become a staple of available options for bereaved families in the past half-century, has created an estrangement between the living and the dead that is unique in human history. Furthermore, this estrangement, this disconnect, this refusal to deal with our dead (their corpses), could be reasonably expected to handicap our ability to deal with death (the concept, the idea of it). And a failure to deal authentically with death may have something to do with an inability to deal authentically with life.

It bears mentioning that while this estrangement is coincident with the increased use of cremation as a method of disposing of the dead over the same half-century, and may be correlated to it, cremation is not the cause of this estrangement. Indeed, cremation is an ancient and honorable and effective method of body disposition, but in most cultures where it is practiced it is done publicly in ceremonial and commemorative venues, whereas in North America very often it is consigned to an off-site, out-of-sight, industrial venue where everything is handled privately and efficiently. Only in North America has cremation lost its ancient connection to fire, because it is so rarely actually witnessed. Here, cremation has become synonymous with disappearance, not so much an alternative to burial or entombment, rather an alternative to having to bother with the dead body.

Ours is a species that deals with death (the idea, the concept, the human condition) by dealing with the dead (the thing itself, in the flesh, the corpse). Whatever our responses to death might be—intellectual, philosophical, religious, ritual, social, emotional, cultural, artistic, etc.—they are firstly and undeniably connected to the embodied remnant of the person who was. And while the dead can be pictured and imagined and conjured by symbol and metaphor, photo and recording, our allegiance and our primary obligations ought to be to the real rather than the virtual dead. Inasmuch as a death in the family is primarily occasioned by the presence of a corpse, the emergent, immediate, collective, and
purposeful response to that emergency is what a funeral is. In short, a funeral responds to the signature human concern of what to do about a dead human.

Thus, the presence of the dead is an essential, definitive element of a funeral. Funerals differ from all other commemorative events in that the presence of the dead and their subsequent disposition are primary concerns. Memorial services, celebrations of life, or variations on these commemorative events, whether held sooner or later or at intervals or anniversaries, in a variety of locales, while useful socially for commemorating the dead and paying tribute to their memories, lack an essential manifest and function: the disposition of the dead. In this sense, the option to dispose of the dead privately, through the agency of hirelings, however professional they might be, and however moving the memorial that follows may be, is an abdication of an essential undertaking and fundamental humanity.

A second essential, definitive element of a funeral is that there must be those to whom the death matters. A death happens to both the one who dies and to those who survive the death and are affected by it. If no one cares, if there is no one to mark the change that has happened, if there is no one to name and claim the loss and the memory of the dead, then the dead assume the status of Bishop Berkeley’s tree falling noiselessly in the forest: If no one hears it, it did not fall, it never was. It is the same with humans. And like Bishop Berkeley, it may become for us the case for a god who sees and hears and claims everything in creation.

A third essential, definitive element of a funeral is that there must be some narrative, some effort towards an answer, however provisional, of those signature human questions about what death means for both the one who has died and those to whom it matters. Thus, an effort to broker some peace between the corpse and the mourners by describing the changed reality death occasions is part of the essential response to mortality. Very often this is a religious narrative. Often it is written in a book, the text of which is widely read. Or it might be philosophical, artistic, intellectual—a poem in place of a psalm, a song in place of prayer—either way there must be some case to be made for what has happened to the dead and what the living might expect because of it. “Behold, I show you a mystery,” or words to that effect are often heard.

A fourth and final essential, definitive element of a funeral is that it must accomplish the disposition of the dead. They are not welcome, we know intuitively, to remain among us in the way they were while living. Furthermore, it is by getting the dead where they need to go that the living get where they need to be. And while this disposition often involves the larger muscles and real work, it also enacts our essential narratives, assists in the process of our essential emotions, images, and intellection about the dead, and fixes their changed status in the landscape of our future and daily lives. Whether the dead are buried, burned, entombed, enshrined or scattered, hoist into the air, cast into the sea, or left out for the scavenging birds, our choice of their oblivion makes their disposition palatable, acceptable, maybe even holy, and our participation in it remedial, honorable, maybe even holy.

These four essential, definitive elements, then: the corpse, the caring survivors, some brokered change of status between them, and the disposition of the dead make a human funeral what it is.

Once we can separate the essential elements from the accessories, the fundamental obligations from fashionable options, we might be able to assign relative measures of worth to what we do when one of our own kind dies. We might be able to figure not only the costs, but the values. Thus, coffin and casket, mum plants and carnations, candles and pall, vaults and monuments, limousines and video tributes—all of them accessories, non-essentials. They may be a comfort, but they are non-essential. Same for funeral directors and rabbis, sextons and pastors, priests and clerks, florists and lawyers and hearses/drivers—all of them accessories who may, nonetheless, assist the essential purpose of a funeral. And when we endeavor to serve the living by caring for the dead, we are assisting in the essential, definitive work of the funeral and the species that devised this deeply and uniquely human response to death.

So much of what I know of final things I have learned from the reverend clergy: these men and women of God who drop what they’re doing and come on the run when there is trouble. These are the local heroes who show up, armed only with faith, who respond to calls in the middle of the night, the middle of dinner, the middle of already busy days to bedsides and roadsides, intensive care and emergency rooms, nursing homes and hospice wards and family homes, to try and make some sense of senseless things. They are on the front lines, holy corpsmen in the flesh-and-blood combat between hope and fear. Their faith is contagious and emboldening. Their presence is balm and anointing. The Lutheran pastor who always sang the common doxology at graveside: “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow,” his hymn sung into the open maw of unspeakable sadness, startling in its comfort and assurance. The priest who would intone the Gregorian chant and tribal Latin of the in Paradisum while leading the pallbearers to the grave, counting on the raised voice and ancient language to invoke the heavenly and earthly hosts. The young Baptist preacher who, at a loss for words, pulled out his harmonica and played the mournful and familiar notes of “Just As I Am” over the coffin of one of our town’s most famous sinners.

My friend Jake Andrews, an Episcopal priest, now dead for years but still remembered, apart from...
serving his little local parish, was chaplain to the fire and police departments and became the default minister, the go-to guy for the churchless and lapsed among our local citizenry. Father Andrews always rode in the hearse with me, whether the graveyard was minutes or hours away, in clement and inclement weather, and whether there were hundreds or dozens or only the two of us to hear, he would stand and read the holy script such as it had been given him to do. When cremation became, as it did, the norm among his townspeople and congregants, he would leave the living to the tea and cakes and ices in the parish hall and ride with me and the dead to the crematory. There he would perform his priestly offices with the sure faith and deep humanity that seems to me an imitation of Christ.

It was Jake Andrews’s belief that pastoral care included care of the saints he was called on to bury and cremate. Baptisms and weddings were, he said, “easy duties,” whereas funerals were “the deep end of the pool.” I think he had, as we all do, his dark nights of the soul, but still, he believed the dead to be alive in Christ. He met the mourners at the door and pressed the heavens with their lamentations. It was Jake who taught me the power of presence, the work of mercy in the showing up, pitching in, bearing our share of whatever burden, and going the distance with the living and the dead. He taught me that a living faith ought not be estranged from death’s rudiments and duties. Faith claims based upon redemptive suffering and meaningful death, a risen corpse and an empty tomb lose something of their power when the dead and the living become so distant and estranged from the shoulder work and shovel work the dead require.

So the question presents itself: What harm if we simply forget how to do a good funeral? What harm if we grow more distant from our dead?

2013 marked the ten-year anniversary of the commencement of our nation’s long misadventure in Iraq. To me one of the worst miscalculations was the one that prevented media coverage of the return of our dead soldiers to Dover AFB where our military operates its mortuary services, preparing the dead to be sent back home to towns and cities across the nation. Imposed during the first Gulf War, this ban—which was lifted in 2009—reversed an open media policy that had held from World War II through the invasion of Panama in 1989.

Might we ask ourselves, would we have remained entrenched in that misadventure for more than eight years if every night the evening news included images of the coffins of our dead countrymen and women being carried from the cargo hold of transport planes?

Or ought we ask, as more and more of our fellow Americans are joining the Church of “none of the above” when it comes to religious identity, is there any connection between the slow but steady decline in church attendance and pop culture’s seemingly insatiable interest in True Blood and Twilight and The Walking Dead and the zombie apocalypse? Are the erotically charged vamps and vampires served up by Hollywood somehow connected to “the failure of our eschatological nerve,” as Tom Long elegantly calls the slow but steady decline in the relevance of the Christian message in its current telling?

These are queries beyond my scope or scholarship, but still it seems to me a simple thing, that we should restore to the funeral some aspect of goodness, some gravity and purpose, some shoulder and shovel work, some Christian witness at the very least. Perhaps if the dead are more welcome in church, the living will find more reason to be there.
Required Reading

Pull up an easy chair and immerse yourself in these recommended reads from a few of Candler’s well-read.

Luke Timothy Johnson, R.W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, has been rereading the novels of Amy Tan and Louise Erdrich. Johnson says that for him, the appeal of these award-winning authors stems from their “close attention to specific cultures (Chinese-American and Indigenous American) in transformation.”

Umberto Eco’s novel *Foucault’s Pendulum* captured the imagination of Assistant Professor of Old Testament Joel LeMon. Featuring Knights Templar, Kabbalists, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and other “Hermetic conspirators,” Eco’s thriller explores a group of bored intellectuals who find the occult greatly entertaining until they become entangled in it. The story raises enigmatic questions: Does the world make sense or not? Is there an order? Is there a special wisdom shared across the ages and throughout the world? LeMon discovered that like the intellectual protagonists, the more time you dedicate to these questions, the more tempting it is to see connections between things that may or may not be related. “Eco toys with the idea of this temptation—and with us—along the way.”

Rex Matthews, associate professor in the practice of historical theology, recommends Hilary Mantel’s *Bring Up the Bodies*, a sequel to her 2009 Man Booker Prize winner and New York Times bestseller, *Wolf Hall*. Both historical novels—which Matthews says he’s reading for fun—delve into the life of Henry VIII through the eyes of his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell.

Assistant Professor of Preaching and Ethics Ted A. Smith reports that he “inhaled” Pulphead, a collection of essays by John Jeremiah Sullivan, adding that Sullivan’s essays on reality TV and Christian rock are the best he’s read on these subjects. “The essays read like short stories, and Sullivan himself flickers in and out of them,” Smith writes. “He’s a great companion. He notices every detail. He sympathizes without condescending. And if he’s long past what he calls his ‘Jesus phase,’ he can’t quite not believe.”

Steve Tipton, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Sociology of Religion, recommends Michael Sandel’s 2012 bestseller, *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. In a society where everything is for sale, Sandel posits, money regulates access to such basic goods as healthcare, education, safe neighborhoods, and political influence, thereby eroding the idea of public goods and a cohesive social fabric. Sandel forces the reader to consider what matters most, which Tipton says comes down to “true love, the priesthood of all believers, and the self-government of all citizens.”

Professor of Theology and Ethics Noel Erskine journeyed through the pages of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s *Black In Latin America*, which spans the 16th through 20th centuries and examines the nearly 12 million Africans whose forced sojourn across the sea took them not to the United States but to countries south of the border. Erskine recommends the informative read as a historical discovery of the true beginnings of the “African American Experience.”
Need something to clear your head before sleep? ANTHONY BRIGGMANN, assistant professor of the history of early Christianity, reads C.S. Forester’s classic Horatio Hornblower series in order to “lose himself” and wind down from serious thinking. What would otherwise keep him awake? His other recent reads, The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West by Mark Lilla, Rethinking the Trinity & Religious Pluralism by Keith Johnson, and The One, the Three, and the Many by Colin Gunton.

Maryse Conde’s 1984 novel, Segu, was “profoundly moving” to EMMANUEL LARTEY, the L. Bevel Jones III Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care, and Counseling. Set in late 18th century city-state Segu (modern-day Mali) and following the story of a local tribe family, this work of historical fiction “transports the reader to a tremendously fascinating time in the history of Africa…and deepens one’s understanding of current conflicts in the region as well as the nature of the inter-religious, political, and cultural struggles played out continually among peoples in many other parts of the world,” Lartey says. He plans to continue on with Conde’s sequel, The Children of Segu, and then dive into Sundiata: An Epic Of Old Mali, which is retold in the oral tradition by famed national storytellers of African culture and history.

Each January, Candler’s pastor/theologian-in-residence, DON HARp, reads Leslie Weatherhead’s The Will of God, and he urges all pastors to do the same. Calling the book “a classic,” Harp says it offers “the best help I know in dealing with difficult matters that occur among the church membership.” Also due for a repeat performance: Reach for the Summit by the legendary former coach of the Tennessee Lady Vols, Pat Summitt, whom he says has long been a hero of his. Memorable quote: “There is more in you than you know.”

Thomas Merton, A Book of Hours
I have been reading Merton for so long that I do not know how I missed this volume—a breviary of prayers for Dawn, Day, Dusk, and Dark drawn from Merton’s writings in more than thirty of his other books. It is edited by Kathleen Deignan, whose introduction is as lovely as what follows it.

Mona Siddiqui, Christians, Muslims, and Jesus
This book is for the class I taught at Candler fall semester, “The Other Jesus: Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the World’s [Other] Great Faiths.” Siddiqui is professor of Islamic and interreligious studies at the University of Edinburgh, with longtime interest in Christian-Muslim engagement. Her book is the best introduction I know to the central figure of Jesus in Christianity and Islam.

Alice Munro, Runaway
After a lifetime of writing luminous short stories, Munro had just announced her retirement from publishing. Then she won the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature, which she said might cause her to “reconsider.” Runaway is one of fourteen collections of her stories, each more revelatory than the last.

—BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR
A Time to Sow

A bumper crop of church-planting alumni is sowing the seeds of faith

By Valerie Loner 10T
There’s a reason we call it “church planting.” Starting a new congregation and cultivating seeds have a lot in common. Tilling the soil, watering and fertilizing, and providing just the right light have their counterparts in learning the community, meeting needs, and providing just the right atmosphere. And just as growing a lush garden takes a special touch, so does planting a new church.

Timothy Lloyd never knew he had a green thumb.

His latent talent became apparent only the last three years, as he’s tilled, watered, and fertilized Eastside Church, the United Methodist church plant he pastors in east Atlanta. Now averaging 145 in worship each Sunday, Eastside is a thriving, growing congregation—and Lloyd is becoming a seasoned gardener.

Even before Candler, Lloyd and his wife, Elisabeth, felt a call to start a church. The couple moved to Atlanta from Indiana so that Tim could attend seminary. While at Candler, he did his second year of contextual education at Clairmont Presbyterian Church, where his role was to start a contemporary service for young adults—an assignment that made his call to be a church planter even clearer.

In January 2011, he was appointed to start a new United Methodist church in Atlanta. The church initially took the name “Oakhurst” from the surrounding neighborhood, but leaders soon discovered the name didn’t fully reflect the congregation. “We realized that we were drawing people from a much broader spectrum,” Lloyd explains, so the congregation changed its name to Eastside in January 2013.

The Eastside vibe is lively, and the worship atmosphere eclectic. You might hear Charles Wesley hymns played on the banjo, drink fair trade coffee, or watch one of several artists in the church paint during the service. Members help lead worship, and there are a few songwriters in the congregation. You’ll also find traditional elements: The church says the Apostles’ Creed after every baptism and celebrates Communion every Sunday.

The casual and energetic mood is intentional, says Lloyd, who saw the need for an in-town congregation that reached the unchurched. “The goal was to express the Methodist faith in a way that was indigenous to metro Atlanta,” he says. “It’s an interesting juxtaposition between holiness and down-to-earth.”

Lloyd is in good company among a growing number of Candler alums who have heard the call to launch new communities of faith.

For Susannah Davis, that call came over cups of coffee—thousands of them. When she bought a coffee shop in the Kirkwood community of Atlanta in 2006, Davis wasn’t sure what was going to grow out of the shop, but soon it was the epicenter of a developing faith community formed by those who came in seeking more than just a good cup of joe. The first worship service was held on Christmas Eve of 2006, with monthly services beginning in 2007 and weekly services in 2008.
New things keep brewing at Kirkwood United Church of Christ, which has moved several times to accommodate the growing congregation. Whether they’ve met in the coffee shop, a community center, or their present location in a rented storefront, Davis has learned that new churches are in a constant state of change.

“With a new church start, God is always doing a new thing, and so are we,” she says, adding that the church is still forming its identity. “We are, and we are becoming. The community is becoming.”

Right now, the congregation is becoming too large for its current worship space, and success is leading to some tough decisions. They are considering adding another worship service, but there is a fear that a second service will tear them apart. While Davis isn’t clear on what the congregation will do, she is certain that God has a plan for them. “Whatever it is, we’ll figure it out together. We’re trusting that.”

Trusting God’s plan—particularly when it’s still a mystery—is an integral but nerve-wracking part of the church-planting process. Just ask Wade Langer 09T. Two weeks after the United Methodist pastor received a call saying he was being appointed to start a new church in Tuscaloosa, Ala., tornadoes devastated the city and surrounding area, leaving an 80-mile path of destruction and killing more than 60 people. He spent nine months trying to figure out what Tuscaloosa was pre- and post-tornado.

“I didn’t know either one,” he says. “It wasn’t a time to start a church. It was a time to rebuild. It was a time to learn.”

His education came through an exhausting period of relentless investigation and study. He remembers going to Starbucks at 6:30 a.m. to talk with residents before visiting the chamber of commerce and area businesses to get to know as many people as possible.

“Those nine months were the hardest I ever had in ministry, maybe the hardest in my life,” he recalls. He went to school principals, fire stations, and other places and offered to be their chaplain.

“It was a frustrating time. I kept thinking, ‘I’m doing a lot of things, but I’m not doing the one thing I was sent here to do,’” he adds.

Toward the end of those nine months, Langer saw a Facebook post about an upcoming trip to Israel led by The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, a 20,000-member congregation that began as a church plant in 1990. Langer went on the trip with more than 80 people from Church of the Resurrection, including some who were original members.

While on the trip, Langer was in a literal and metaphorical desert and found himself praying, “God, I have no idea what you’re doing in my life.” On Ash Wednesday he went to bed in a hotel by the Sea of Galilee, and woke up at 3:00 a.m. knowing that he had to start a church on the Sunday following the first anniversary of the tornadoes.

That’s when things became clearer: “Maybe God wants to start this church as a path to resurrection and revival after the biggest devastation this city has ever seen.”
On the first Sunday, 120 people came to what became known as The Capstone United Methodist Church. Langer led monthly services that summer and began weekly worship in September 2012. He’s since created a partnership with the nearby Wesley Fellowship at the University of Alabama that allows the church to use Wesley’s sound equipment and also helps them reach students.

Telling college students about Christ is part of Carlos Jones’s story as well, but he didn’t plan to make the church his career. As a strong safety at Tennessee State University, Jones had the potential to play in the National Football League (NFL), but while serving as the president of the school’s Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he heard a lecture by a visiting Candler professor and decided to apply to the school and see what happened. He got his Candler acceptance letter two days before an NFL scouting event, and he opted for Candler.

Now Jones leads The Way Interdenominational Church in Sugar Land, Tex., which is surprising to him since he didn’t intend to be a church planter. After graduating from Candler, Jones returned home to Texas and started having a Bible study with some of his friends on the Gospel of Luke. Each week, the group gathered at Jones’s parents’ house.

The group that began with 10 or 11 participants swelled to between 35 and 40. So in September of 2010, Jones began leading a worship service, also at his parents’ home.

The church, which now meets in commercial space, averages 70 in worship each week. But Jones doesn’t focus on weekly attendance. “My main mission and my goal is to help as many people as I can spiritually and physically,” he says. “I’m not really concerned about how many members we bring in. Our main focus is helping people.”

The challenges of starting a new congregation are as varied as those who start them, but some seem universal.

One is loneliness. “Early on, it’s you and your family,” Lloyd shares. “There’s nobody. Trying to explain your vision for a church, sometimes people roll their eyes.”

Davis agrees. “Those first three years, I would get there and think, ‘I’m going to be the only one here today.’”

Another challenge is discipling people. “The majority of our folks hadn’t been involved in a church before Eastside,” says Lloyd, who is excited about the eight small groups that have formed. “They don’t know how to be church. You have to teach them.”

Then there’s the fatigue that comes from trying to do it all and do it right the first time. Everything is new, says Davis, and it can be exhausting when everything is being done for the first time. There are no routines, except perhaps setting up and taking down the worship space each week.

“You don’t have a staff in the beginning,” Lloyd points out. “You wear every hat.”

And, of course, finances are notoriously tight. Church planters often have to teach people about the theology of giving.

The challenges in church planting seem so daunting that one almost wonders why anyone would undertake it. But those who have thrived in the experience say the rewards are found in seeing lives transformed. Some of these transformations are dramatic and some are subtle, but the impact on lives is still very deep, Lloyd notes.

And some of the deepest transformations happen in the church planter’s own life.

“My faith in God has grown tremendously,” says Davis. “My trust in God has grown tremendously. My love for God has grown tremendously. It’s nothing that we can accomplish on our own. It’s the power and presence of God in this place.”

Valerie Loner is senior pastor of Rush Chapel UMC, which recently celebrated the 175th anniversary of its founding, complete with dinner on the grounds and an article in the local paper.
New Books by Candler Faculty

Jennifer R. Ayres
Good Food: Grounded Practical Theology
[Baylor University Press, 2013]

Gregory C. Ellison II
Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men
[Abingdon Press, 2013]

L. Edward Phillips
with Sarah Webb Phillips, edited by Taylor Burton-Edwards and Melanie Gordon
Baptism: Understanding God’s Gift
[Discipleship Resources, 2012]

Thomas G. Long and Thomas Lynch
The Good Funeral: Death, Grief, and the Community of Care

Bernard LaFayette Jr. and Kathryn Lee Johnson
In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma
[University Press of Kentucky, 2013]

Carl R. Holladay, editor with John T. Fitzgerald, Gregory E. Sterling, and James W. Thompson.
[Brill, 2014]

Luke Timothy Johnson
[Brill, 2013]

Brent A. Strawn, editor with Patrick D. Miller, by John Barton
The Theology of the Book of Amos (Old Testament Theology)
[Cambridge University Press, 2012]
NEW BOOKS BY CANDLER FACULTY

JACOB L. WRIGHT, editor with Brad E. Kelle and Frank R. Ames
Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts
[Society of Biblical Literature, 2011; Leiden: Brill, 2012]

JACOB L. WRIGHT, editor with David J.A. Clines and Kent Harold Richards
Making a Difference: Essays on the Bible and Judaism in Honor of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi
[Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012]

NEW BOOKS BY CANDLER FACULTY

A NEW CREATION:
WRIGHT’S KING DAVID IS FIRST OF ITS KIND

Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible Jacob L. Wright has ushered us further into the internet age with the publication of *King David and His Reign Revisited* (2013), an enhanced e-book on Apple iBooks that includes hundreds of full-color images, multimedia links, a new system for footnotes, texts that are cited at length in scrollable windows, and a host of other special features to engage your senses and your intellect.

Billed as the first publication of its kind in the humanities, *King David* was a “labor of love” for Wright, who was inspired by his own frustrating experiences with academic e-books, and a conviction that scholars must rethink the ways they make their research available to the public.

“Most of us learn and recall information in relation to space and place. When it comes to books, if we know where to find a passage after many years, it’s because we remember its approximate place in the volume and its position on the page,” he explains. “Because our activities of learning are so spatially determined, the shifting pagination and reflowing text of conventional e-books can be very frustrating. We used a fixed-page format in *King David* to solve that problem.”

But that’s only the beginning of the innovation. Each page has been designed as a unique folio, a visual format suited to our innate need for orientation. Wright likens it to the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, with rich visuals that pique the reader’s interest, making it easier to recall the book’s contents.

Other “enhanced” features? You can scroll through sources and pull up lengthy footnotes right next to the body of the text; follow links directly to articles, books, websites, and videos; highlight lines with a palette of colors, and share them via email and social media.

“These features make for a richer and more dynamic reading experience, which should promote more engaged learning,” says Wright. “That’s the goal.”

And if you prefer to do your reading the old-fashioned way, *King David and His Reign Revisited* will be published in a traditional print format by Cambridge University Press this spring.
Cut Dead But Still Alive

Seeing the invisible with new eyes

By Laurel Hanna

With additional reporting by Elaine Justice of Emory Communications and Fran Davis-Harris of The Fund for Theological Education
Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling Gregory C. Ellison II is a humble, gentle man, yet that doesn’t stop him from asking tough questions that challenge the way we see, hear, and act.

His debut book, *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Men* (Abingdon Press, 2013) spotlights the ways society stigmatizes African American young men by rendering them mute and invisible. *Cut Dead* doesn’t just point out the damage; it shows caregivers real-world approaches that can lead to healing. In the words of one reviewer, the book is “a call to action and a blueprint for change.”

Evidently, it’s a message people are ready to hear: The first printing of *Cut Dead* sold out less than two months after its release in June of 2013.

Ellison borrowed part of the book’s compelling title from nineteenth century philosopher and psychologist William James, who writes in his book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890): “If no one turned around when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met ‘cut us dead,’ and acted as if we were non-existent things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would before long well up in us, from which the cruelest bodily torture would be a relief.”

“James asserts that human beings are social creatures, and remaining unnoticed or unseen is a cruel and fiendish punishment,” Ellison explains. “He recognized that people would rather be tortured than be ‘cut dead’—deliberately ignored or snubbed completely.”

So what does it mean when a whole population is “cut dead,” silenced and dismissed by the prevailing society?

While researching his doctorate in pastoral theology, Ellison saw firsthand the havoc wrought by being “cut dead” as he counseled young men in church and school settings, and at programs for youths transitioning from prison. In his book he chronicles the lives of five such young African American men who journey from despairing places of invisibility and muteness to more hopeful realities of visibility and voice.

“In following the lives of these five individuals, I realized that many of them feel invisible and cut dead. They are living but cut dead at the same time; like walking phantoms, desperately seeking to be seen and heard,” he shares.

And while the individuals in the book are real, Ellison points out that they represent many more youth who have limited access to education, have been in prison, or have been pushed to the margins of society. In fact, they could even represent him.

Though he excelled in school at Emory and at Princeton Theological Seminary, and was mentored from an early age by such luminaries as distinguished educator Johnnetta Cole, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II, Ellison wasn’t spared from being “cut dead.”

“I know what it feels like to be in a classroom and to have your hand up in the air and people ignore you, or to have someone change the conversation as if you never uttered a word. I know what it means to get on an elevator and have someone clutch their purse,” says Ellison. “Those are demeaning and dehumanizing feelings that over time take a toll on one’s self and how you see your future.”

Ellison’s own experiences of being stereotyped, plus encounters with numerous “cut dead” youth, led
Fearless Dialogues

The next chapter of Ellison’s work is Fearless Dialogues, a grassroots initiative that takes to the streets the message of “seeing with new eyes.” The project brings together thought leaders from the church, healthcare, politics, education, community organizing, and the arts to educate and mobilize communities invested in changing the outlook for African American men and others who go unseen and unheard.

Ellison developed Fearless Dialogues to create spaces for hard, heartfelt conversations between these sometimes disparate community thought leaders—including pastors, elected officials, teachers, students, factory workers, and even gang leaders—to help them see gifts in each other, hear value in each other’s stories, and work toward transformation and change in themselves and others.

“The aim is to have candid conversations about how we can see, hear, and change the way we interact with those who are cut dead in our communities,” he says. “Through this work, we can transcend stereotypes and open up greater possibilities for young black males and others who are marginalized in our society.”

**Fearless Dialogues is composed of two distinct programs:**

**Fearless Dialogues Community Conversations** assemble a diverse group of community stakeholders to engage in guided discussion on the untapped gifts and primary concerns facing African American young men. They feature live music, visual arts, spoken word, context-sensitive workshops, and informational exhibits. These are half-day events accommodating up to 400 people. In the second half of 2013, nearly two thousand people in five different cities participated in the Fearless Dialogues Community Conversations.

**Fearless Dialogues Community Empowerment Initiative** is a strategic approach to long-term change. Local leaders and consultants highlight overlooked and underutilized resources, strengthen existing community partnerships, and develop a strategic plan that addresses three of the most pertinent issues affecting African American young men in that community. The Fearless Dialogues team then commits to the community for eighteen months to assist in implementing specific goals.

For more information, visit www.fearlessdialogues.com.
Shelvis 06T and Nancy 06T Smith-Mather are no strangers to challenging beginnings. In the last two years, the couple has experienced a trio of tender firsts, from joining a young ministry in a new nation to the premature birth of their son. But in the end, this story is less about rocky starts and more about God’s intricately interconnected work in the world.
The birth of a child
A thousand things raced through Shelvis Smith-Mather’s mind on October 20, 2012, as he sat in the tiny hospital just outside the village of Yei, South Sudan. Despite plans to board a plane three days later in order to deliver their first child in the United States, his wife, Nancy, just over 7 months pregnant, was instead lying on a bed gripped in the unmistakable throes of labor.

“On top of my concern for Nancy, I couldn’t stop thinking about the statistics and figures I knew to be true about South Sudan,” says Shelvis—statistics such as women in South Sudan are more likely to die in labor than to graduate from high school.

Shelvis also knew that the rural hospital was ill-equipped to handle a baby so premature. And he realized they would need access to more advanced transportation than they had in order to get to a hospital with the level of care they needed.

But despite a dearth of technology and transportation, the baby’s time had come: Jordan Eman Smith-Mather was born seven weeks early in a country recently labeled “the worst place in the world to give birth.” Within minutes, he was in distress, and the Smith-Mathers began praying in earnest.

“For me, that was the most challenging point, because the medical staff was very honest and told us they may not have the equipment they would need based on his condition,” recalls Nancy. Miraculously, through the use of a “homemade” CPAP machine and the town’s only incubator, Jordan was stabilized and successfully transferred via plane to a hospital in Kenya, where he was admitted to a neo-natal ICU.

As Jordan improved over the next weeks, many people wondered: Would they stay in Africa? Jordan’s dramatic arrival cast new light on life in an impoverished region with few resources. Says Nancy, “I knew the daily difficulties of living in South Sudan. I was keenly aware, however, that I did not know life as a parent to a young child in South Sudan.”

But the couple agreed that the decision to stay was clear. “Between the deep desire for loving, human relationships and the reality of the great inequity in our world, we felt God’s Spirit pushing us forward, allowing us to follow the hope of making a difference,” Nancy shares.

The birth of a nation
The seed of the Smith-Mathers’ call to the Sudan had been planted in 2008 during their service year in Kenya as Young Adult Volunteers with the Presbyterian Church (USA). After their initial term was over, they signed up for an additional year, during which Nancy worked for an interdenominational community development organization in South Sudan. The decades-long civil war that preceded the Republic of South Sudan’s split from Sudan had created deep schisms between ethnic groups in the poverty-stricken region, yet the Smith-Mathers saw glimmers of hope and felt a pull toward a deeper engagement with the people in this new nation, formed in July of 2011.

“In the areas where I worked in South Sudan, churches are some of the strongest local institutions present,” Nancy says. “The leadership and membership of congregations possess a great ability to organize and bring about peace and holistic development in their communities.”

Personal encounters with survivors of Rwandan genocide who taught forgiveness despite their experience with atrocities inspired the Smith-Mathers to help bring an end to the suffering in a lasting and sustainable way.

The birth of a mission
Their interest in peacebuilding led the Smith-Mathers to the Resource Centre for Civil Leadership (RECONCILE), an indigenous ecumenical Christian organization founded in 2003 to promote peace by providing training in trauma recovery, conflict transformation, and civic education. In 2011, South Sudan’s National Council of Churches invited the Smith-Mathers to serve as peace educators in collaboration with RECONCILE.
The Smith-Mathers began their ministry in December 2011, moving to Yei, South Sudan, where they participate in RECONCILE training events addressing inter-ethnic conflict, and where Shelvis is the principal of the Peace Institute, which offers three-month courses in community-based trauma healing, peace studies, and conflict transformation.

As they began their work in the war-torn area, a side effect of years of conflict quickly became apparent, foreshadowing Jordan’s birth story. “In the presence of conflict and violent clashes, there is an inability for development to happen,” Shelvis notes. “That means there is an inability to gain access to medical care—which means there’s not just a death that comes by guns, but there is a death that comes by a community’s lack of resources.”

Compounding that was a lack of trust between foreign aid workers and the southern Sudanese. “There is a history of well-intentioned Americans coming in with an agenda and ignoring the voice and concerns of the people who are indigenous to that land,” explains Shelvis. The Smith-Mathers wanted to remove this “lens of suspicion” and build trust.

So they began with a two-pronged approach: First, they sought to enter into authentic community engagement with the Sudanese in a way that would allow real dialogue; and second, to relay their community’s problems to those with the resources to help.

**The Birth of a Family**

With the arrival of Jordan came an opportunity they had not foreseen. “Jordan’s birth was this tremendous bringing together,” explains Nancy. “The excitement and energy around him and the fact that he was born in South Sudan meant that—at least to our colleagues at RECONCILE—Jordan was South Sudanese.”

In fact, an elder of Yei gave Jordan his own Sudanese name: Yopay, which means “one who comes before his time.” Jordan has become “their” baby—everyone considers themselves an uncle, an aunt, a grandfather. “There’s this connection that Jordan has with the people here and this place that is different than what Shelvis and I can have,” says Nancy.

Jordan, whose first name is a reference to the crossing of the Jordan River, and whose middle name, Eman, is Arabic for “faith” and “hope,” keeps them grounded in the larger message of hoping for and believing in something better, that with God all things are possible.

“Through his birth we were able to cross through that ‘Jordan river moment’ and then place the stones together to be a reminder that the living God was with us in the midst of that struggle,” says Shelvis. “We feel like Jordan will always be that reminder to us that God was indeed with us.”

But the story doesn’t end there. As their work continues in South Sudan, the Smith-Mathers maintain hope that their experience will serve as a call to action for the Christian community and beyond.

“Ultimately, this isn’t a story about us. This is a story about how God is at work and how God is calling us to be at work in the world,” Shelvis says. “When we tell the story, we’re also offering an invitation for others to be involved in it.”

“This story allows us to share the miracle of our son and at the same time talk about how there are thousands upon thousands of women who have babies in impoverished areas who don’t have this happy ending, who don’t have this opportunity,” he adds.

“This story is beyond us. We have a responsibility to share it in a way that says, ‘Now what?’ It happened. Praise the Lord. Now what?”

Rachel Reiff Ellis was born when both her parents were students at Candler. She took some of her very first steps on the Emory campus.
REAL Possibilities:
Five Degrees of Integration

by Eric Rangus
Is this a problem? Many would say yes. But is this also an opportunity? Candler School of Theology says definitely.

Already blessed with strong degree programs, Candler is seeking ways to address the varied issues facing modern theological education. For more than a year, Candler’s leadership has been building new programs designed to expand the possibilities of reaching more people who want to make a real difference in the real world. The results are five new degree programs that are rolling out over the next two semesters: two new master’s degrees, two new dual degrees, and a new iteration of a doctoral degree whose name may be familiar to some, but whose implementation will be the definition of innovation.

**Doctor of Ministry: Fall 2014**

“I’m thrilled to see the DMin back,” says Alice Rogers 98T, senior pastor at Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church and associate professor in the practice of practical theology at Candler. She earned her Doctor of Ministry from Candler during the program’s first go-round some 15 years ago, served on the design committee for the retooled version, and will serve on the program’s core teaching faculty.

“It’s going to play a significant role in the education of effective pastors.”

Parish leadership is ever more challenging in an increasingly global—and an increasingly secularized—society, and Candler’s DMin is designed to help pastors find practical ways to meet those challenges. The degree is a valuable addition to the repertoire of an experienced minister, says Brent A. Strawn, professor of Old Testament and director of the DMin program.

“The DMin is designed for ministers who graduated with a Master of Divinity, got out in the real world, and began to know what they didn’t know,” he says. “It has real-world, practical applications.”

Many theology schools offer DMins (including three in the metro Atlanta area), but Candler’s program, by design, is distinctive from any other in the nation.

“A lot of our thinking was forward, not backward,” says Strawn. “We designed a new DMin from the ground up, one that’s ideal for the 21st century.”

Four elements set Candler’s new DMin apart. One decidedly 21st century aspect is that 90 percent of the three-year program takes place entirely online. Apart from four key on-campus experiences, DMin students will complete their courses from the comfort of their churches and homes. Candler offers the only DMin program of its kind where distance learning plays this significant of a role.

“An online approach means that ministers can stay deeply rooted in their congregations while pursuing the degree, applying what they’ve learned right away, every day,” says Strawn. Plus, there is an inherent added value of the online format in that students will acquire enhanced digital communication skills,

The early 21st century hasn’t been kind to theology schools. Nationwide, seminary enrollment is declining. Fewer people attend church, and the number of “nones” —those unaffiliated with any religious institution—is rising.

“The early 21st century hasn’t been kind to theology schools. Nationwide, seminary enrollment is declining. Fewer people attend church, and the number of “nones” —those unaffiliated with any religious institution—is rising.
giving them new, more effective ways of connecting with their parishioners in this age of the smart phone.

The second distinctive element is that Candler’s full-time faculty—not adjuncts—are teaching the DMin, and they are doing it as part of their regular semester course load, not as an add-on program during off-periods.

“That faculty access is important to participants—getting a Candler DMin means spending quality time and exchanging ideas with some of the nation’s most esteemed theologians,” says Strawn.

The third difference is the DMin’s two-track system, which Strawn describes as “hyper-focused” on the strengths of Candler’s faculty. Track one, Church Leadership and Community Witness, is geared toward students interested in models of ministerial leadership inside the church and out. Track two, Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation, focuses on the theology of Christian Scripture. In addition to allowing students to focus on what interests them most, the tracks also enable them to form a cohort and collaborate throughout their three years together.

The fourth unique aspect is the approach to the final project. Rather than requiring its completion at some point after the three years of course work—potentially delaying graduation—Candler’s final project is “scaffolded” into the curriculum so that it is completed at the end of year three. But even more importantly, Strawn notes, the final project is germane to each student’s particular ministry setting.

“The final project emerges from and engages with students’ ministerial contexts—the exact place they most want and need help, and the reason they pursued the DMin in the first place,” he says. “It’s designed to make a difference.”

**Master’s and Dual Degrees**

It’s a given that landing a “dream job” in this day and age may require landing a master’s degree first. But what makes job-seekers even more desirable is the ability to navigate the issues created by today’s multicultural, multi-religious global workplace. Candler has seized the opportunity to prepare students for this real world experience by offering four new master’s degrees.

**Master of Religious Leadership: Spring 2014**

The Master of Religious Leadership (MRL) is a two-year degree designed for people who want to enhance their leadership potential for Christian service. It offers five concentrations: Mission, Evangelism and World Christianity; Justice, Peace-building and Conflict Transformation; Pastoral Care; Ministries with Youth; and Worship and Music.

“We designed the MRL program for people who aspire to hold a leadership role in a church but aren’t necessarily interested in being ordained,” says Ian
McFarland, Candler’s associate dean of faculty and academic affairs and the Bishop Mack B. and Rose Stokes Professor of Theology.

The MRL includes participation in Candler’s Contextual Education Program, a national model for blending service with learning. Con Ed provides practical experience in social ministry or ecclesial settings aligned with the MRL concentrations.

Students can complete the MRL on a full- or part-time basis, and they have access to Candler’s online and hybrid courses.

Master of Religion and Public Life: Fall 2014
The Master of Religion and Public Life (MRPL) is Candler’s own creation—no other seminary offers it. A one-year degree for professionals in nonreligious fields—lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers, and even accountants—the MRPL is geared toward those who serve a socially engaged clientele and could benefit from a greater appreciation of the role of religion in people’s lives.

The MRPL’s genesis sprung in part from the results of a survey given to alumni of the Emory College of Arts and Sciences. Respondents did not work in religious professions, yet many were interested in understanding more about the intersection of religion and their vocation. Outreach efforts for MRPL students will focus on professional associations—an audience brand new to seminary education.

“This is the kind of degree that can be a great service to the Atlanta area,” says McFarland, adding that students can mix it in with their career responsibilities. “It can also tremendously enrich the experience of our divinity students, giving them further opportunities to engage with professionals from other disciplines.”

Dual Degrees: Fall 2014
For Candler’s new dual degrees, the school is tapping into a strong existing partnership with Emory’s Laney Graduate School for the Master of Divinity/Master of Development Practice (MDiv/MDP), and forging a new bond with The University of Georgia (UGA) for the Master of Divinity/Master of Science in Social Work (MDiv/MSW).

The MDiv/MDP is designed for those in sustainable development work who want to learn how to apply their theological convictions or engage religious communities with greater openness, and for religious leaders from developing countries who want to address social and economic issues as part of a holistic approach to ministry. It includes four years of residential instruction and two summer international field practicums.

The MDiv/MSW is available for those interested in considering the role of faith and religious institutions in community health and development, the care of individuals in poverty and crisis, responses to systemic and institutional injustice, and issues of social transformation. It is a four-year residential program divided between Candler and UGA’s campus in Athens and/or satellite location in Gwinnett County, and includes Contextual Education, which can be completed in Atlanta.

Integration and Innovation
To Candler’s Dean Jan Love, these five new degrees are all about helping more real people make a real difference in the real world. The latest proof points underscoring Candler’s commitment to the church, they demonstrate that the school can innovate to ensure it stays relevant for years to come.

“These new degrees are wonderful examples of how we can creatively respond to the changing needs of the world around us in a way that’s unique to Candler.”
—Dean Jan Love

Lifelong baseball fan and Braves season ticket holder Eric Rangus eagerly anticipates the first pitch of opening day each spring. Play ball!
Teresa L. Fry Brown, professor of homiletics and director of Black Church Studies, has been on Candler’s faculty for 19 years. Ted A. Smith, assistant professor of preaching and ethics, joined the faculty in 2012. They recently sat down with Candler’s Alumni Board to talk about teaching, preaching, and the future of homiletics.

Ted Smith: I’d like to start out by recognizing that you are the first African American woman to obtain the rank of full professor at Candler School of Theology. [Applause.] I’d love to invite you to reflect on that milestone. It’s a personal achievement, but it’s also a milestone in the life of the school. What advice would you give African American women who are entering academic careers or the church and to all of us who are at earlier stages of our careers?

Teresa Fry Brown: Being here is a milestone, particularly as we’re looking toward the 100-year anniversary of the school. It speaks a lot about the history of Candler. But it also speaks about how one’s academic rigor can trump race and racism. My mother always taught me to make sure when you achieve something, you leave the door open for someone else. I would love for whatever I do here—whether it’s being tenured or becoming full professor—to help other women and people in other racial or ethnic groups understand that their academic rigor can take them places societal norms say they cannot go. What I say to all of my advisees is: You understand what your call is about. No one else can answer the call but you. Try not to let anyone put you in a box to say, “This is who you’re supposed to be.” Regardless of your ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, being in the academy is hard work. It’s a ministry, and it means you don’t turn off when you go home. One of my sister colleagues in ministry says that when she’s not writing, she’s thinking about writing. When we’re not teaching, we’re thinking about teaching. This is a life calling. When people ask me about my call, I say, “My call is to teach, preach, and write—in that order.” The church didn’t always understand that. Neither does the academy at times, but I know that’s my call, and one has to live into one’s call. I cannot imagine my life not teaching. I cannot imagine my life not writing or preaching. And so that’s why I’m here.

TS: Your vocation seems to be playing out right now through multiple roles—professor of homiletics,
director of Black Church Studies, and elected historiographer for the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination. How do those roles come together for you? Or do they not?

TFB: I love learning. My grandparents taught me that the way to get anywhere in the world is to learn as much as you can, and then to share that. So in my head, everything I do feeds the same place. It emanates from the same source, and then it intertwines. In order to be a professor of homiletics, I have to know what’s going on in the church. I don’t think that the academy and the church are isolated entities. What I learn, what I teach in the classroom, I also live that out as a preacher. I’m involved in Black Church Studies because my denomination is a historically black denomination in the African American church. I think it’s critically important for all students to know the origins, theology, and ethics of their denomination because that feeds into their preaching. Being the AME’s historiographer and executive director of research and scholarship brings me back to teaching, researching, and writing, but also back to encouraging people on the ground and in the church—outside of the academy—to continue to study and to produce. When I die, I want something left behind other than my clothing. I think it’s critically important for people to know what came before them—and to work in the present, but also leave something for the people coming next. Sometimes students think they’re the first ones who have ever pastored a church, or written a sermon, but there’s a wonderful homiletical history to look at. Be aware of the trends. A lot of the trends are recycled historical models. That’s how I think all of my roles come together.

What about your work, Ted? Your bio says that you work “at the intersection of practical and political theologies.” What do you mean by that?

TS: Policies matter for politics. But that’s not the kind of “politics” I mean. The dimension of politics I’m most interested in is what Charles Taylor calls a “social imaginary”—that sense of what we think is possible; the ways things make sense or don’t make sense; the ways ideas and practices connect us to one another. That level of politics happens especially through repeated activities—ritual and liturgical acts of various kinds. And in America, that level of politics has happened especially through preaching. So it’s really interesting to bore into those rhetorical forms and the tropes that have defined American preaching and ask what they tell us about our social imaginaries. For example, when every sermon ends with something for you to do, it constructs people as agents who can make their own worlds. To take another example: What does it mean if, in your vision of the moral, there is some kind of standard—God’s law—that stands above the earthly laws we know? Looking at sermons with those kinds of questions in mind opens them up to conversation with the most basic issues in politics.

TFB: Interesting. My doctoral work is in social transformation, so I’m intrigued by how we as preachers are aware of the imperatives in the biblical text that talk about not bothering anyone, those that talk about liberative practices of God. I’m interested in how we are able to listen to the voice that no one else wants to hear, and how we are responsible for what we preach—not just what the biblical text is, but what is surrounding the biblical text that is killing people on Sunday morning. And conversely, what is it that surrounds a biblical text
that’s life-giving? When do we move from performing a sermon to living a sermon while we’re preaching it? How do we embody faith? That’s what’s exciting to me about approaching the political from a different standpoint, because I’m very clear that whether it’s Candler’s campus or a pulpit, I’m political when I show up because I don’t meet the standard.

There’s a “death of preaching” movement going on that believes there’s no reason to have a sermon, and we don’t need to have face-to-face communication. What are your thoughts on that?

**TS:** There are a couple of deep impulses in American religion. One of them is egalitarian: Why doesn’t anybody else get to stand up there and preach? Why should any of us listen to this person? Another related impulse stresses that we have direct access to God. And if we have direct access to God, why do we need somebody else to talk to us about God? Thus when cynicism kicks in, it’s often about leadership and the faces of an institution. It’s easy to focus our cynicism on preachers and the preaching act. I think there have been these impulses in U.S. religion for a long time. They would point towards ending preaching—and yet, preaching is one of the great cultural forms of this country, so I can’t really see it going away. I think there’s always going to be a place for this old kind of witness, this focused witness. There has to be a separate voice for at least a little bit of the time. It could be in community, it could be in dialogue, but there’s going to have to be that kind of voice that can only happen in preaching. It’s a different kind of speech.

**TFB:** I don’t think it’s the content that they see as the death of preaching so much as it is the distribution of the Word. I come from a dialogical tradition, and what I’m talking about is monologue preaching. I think when one person has all the power, it’s like they’re standing on Mount Sinai and preaching down. I think it’s important to understand that we’re in a community conversation, and not only one person knows everything and can dictate everyone’s behavior. I also think that preaching can be enhanced by technology. I preach a Good Friday service at Trinity United Church of Christ every year, and last year a young lady who was with me said, “Where is your phone? You need it for tweeting,” and I said, “But I’m paying attention to the service,” and she said, “But you’ll see everyone else talking about the service on Twitter.” They’re tweeting the whole time the service is going on, and they’re getting responses. That works there. I’m not good at that, but it doesn’t mean it’s wrong. There’s always been some other way of enhancing sermons, and if people process an entire sermon in 140 characters, I’m okay with that. I think we have to be open and flexible to a variety of ways of preaching.

**TS:** There’s a way in which preaching is always dying and being reborn. I think it always needs new cultural forms, it needs to adapt. But I may be a little more ambivalent about technology. I’m thinking especially of social media, which is what people tend to mean right now when they are thinking about preaching and technology. Absolutely, I think there’s a place for critical and thoughtful use of it. I worry, though, about the kind of consciousness that can be sustained in 140 characters. And I worry about the kind of consciousness that can manage that stream. It’s an old-fashioned worry, maybe, but I worry about the possibility for rumination, the possibility for the kinds of depth of consciousness that get closed off.

“I think the task for homiletics right now is to help preachers break open a fully, robustly theological imagination.”
“I have to know what’s going on in the church. I don’t think that the academy and the church are isolated entities.”

**TFB:** At the end of my intro to preaching class, I ask students to tell me their projections for preaching in the 21st century—what’s good about it, what’s horrible about it, and how they would re-imagine preaching from their standpoint. So what would you say is good about homiletics? And how would you modify it? What do you see as a trend at that would work for you going forward?

**TS:** One of the things that’s really good about it is that increasingly diverse students are coming to seminary. They’re coming here, to Candler. I find that more of our students have experience across cultural boundaries, inhabit multiple cultural worlds. And I find they are ready—more ready, I think, than even maybe 10 or 15 years ago—to put pieces together for a deep collage of hybrid preaching. That’s my great hope—that this will be a renewing force. This is not to say that the kind of deep, institutionalized inequalities and injustices that mark our society have been overcome. But there is an easier transfer across cultural lines than there has been in the past, and I think that can be mutually enriching.

To me, the biggest challenge for preaching right now is the way in which it too often gets locked in to what Charles Taylor calls the “immanent frame” in which we are the authors of whatever things are going to happen in this universe. Whether that happens in a prosperity gospel, or in saying a “here’s how you can be a good person and have a great relationship with your kids” kind of thing, or even in the key of social justice, that’s shrinking the theological imagination of preachers. That’s what I really worry about, and I think the task for homiletics right now is to help preachers break open a fully, robustly theological imagination.

**TFB:** Cheryl Thompson Gilkes says that an unforgivable sin in African American culture is bad preaching, and I think that’s true. I think since we’re all imagining what the biblical text is really about, we are all imagining ourselves as part of a people’s history. It’s essential that we continue to understand this is a people’s history. There’s not one way everybody has to preach in order to be accepted as a preacher. There’s no separation of sacred and secular. Everything is preaching if we are people of faith. Preaching doesn’t take place only on Sunday morning during the hours of your service. Our engagement with humanity is a proclamation of the Lord, and so when I think about preaching going forward, I would love to talk about being genuine. We are not preaching because the light is on and it’s star time, we’re preaching because we want to recover souls. Many of our students come already stamped with an idea what preaching is, and you can’t tell them anything different, and so the struggle is to broaden their ideas about what preaching is, where preaching takes place, and which voices are preaching. In reality, we’re still in a culture that doesn’t allow some people to preach. What does that say about the persons who are managing pulpits? What does that say about the possibilities of expression, of your belief and faith? Whether this is the first century or the twenty-first century, it’s recovering the vitality of proclamations, recovering the totality of the story and not the ten stories that people always want to tell. How do we prepare preacher and congregation and world for a variety of voices and variety of styles? That would be my hope going forward: that we move out of the 1950s and 1960s lockstep “this is preaching” and look at how marvelous and broad this endeavor can be. This is my prayer going forward. This is my social justice thing—that nobody would be barred from ever proclaiming the Word of God.
Thanks to a gift in honor of Day Miller, the Candler Singers’ tours will be underwritten for the next five years, giving more people the chance to experience the ensemble’s special brand of worship in song. Look for them at a church near you!

Paying it Forward
Candler is committed to making theological education affordable. At a time when other schools may be trimming their aid budgets, we offer one of the most robust financial aid programs in seminary education, providing more than 80 percent of eligible students with scholarship support each year.

Donors who establish endowments that fund scholarships and stipends make this possible.

That’s where Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor 75T and the Rev. Rusty Taylor 75T, of Knoxville, Tenn., come in. No strangers to supporting their alma mater, the couple has most recently established The Bishop

Hitting a Candler High Note
Those who have had the pleasure of hearing the Candler Singers know that they are some of the best ambassadors our school has. The choir leads worship at Candler and has performed at a wide range of churches, regional events, and denominational gatherings, including the last three General Conferences of The United Methodist Church. The Singers, all students at Candler, are led by the Rev. Barbara Day Miller, associate dean of worship and music and a nationally recognized teacher and consultant in worship practices.

A careful worship planner, Day Miller says that when The Singers perform in concert she often hears from audience members that the performance was a spiritual experience. “I think one of the reasons the choir is so compelling is because it’s obvious they believe what they’re singing—and that comes across to the audience,” she says. “It’s a time of deep and meaningful worship.”
Mary Virginia Taylor and Reverend Rusty Taylor Endowment for Pastoral Ministry, which helps support Candler students who are preparing for parish ministry.

“We made this gift to Candler because we know that the future of The United Methodist Church will depend upon young clergy who will lead the church into the 21st century and beyond,” Bishop Taylor says. “We are committed to the mission of Candler in preparing these leaders.”

Honoring a Legacy

Candler School of Theology has established the Erskine-Smith-Moseley Scholarship Endowment in honor of three of the school’s first African American faculty. The endowment will provide students of the school’s Black Church Studies Program with scholarships and stipends to support their theological education.

Named for Noel Erskine, Luther Smith, and Romney Moseley, three pioneer black scholars at Candler, the endowment reached the $100,000 mark this summer, and its income will begin underwriting scholarships in fall 2014.

Key to the endowment’s development was the director of Candler’s Black Church Studies Program, Teresa L. Fry Brown, who considers the fund an important nod to those who prepared the way for future black scholars. “The first purpose in establishing the endowment was to honor the presence, work, and scholarship of those who paved the way for both black faculty and students,” she says.

Dean Jan Love notes how fitting it is that the school has established an endowment that simultaneously honors the past and looks toward the future. “Candler has a rich tradition of raising a prophetic voice in issues of race relations, and this scholarship fund provides another avenue for the development of that legacy,” she says.

Learning from a Legend

Born in 1882, Clovis Gillham Chappell had a ministerial career that spanned sixty-two years, beginning during the presidency of William H. Taft and concluding during the presidency of Richard M. Nixon. Officially, he served the Methodist Church for 41 years, pastoring fourteen churches and circuits. After retiring in 1949 at the age of 67, he continued to preach as a guest lecturer, speaking approximately 5,000 times during his retirement years.

Educated at Trinity College (Duke University) and at Harvard, Chappell went on to become one of the most notable preachers in America, particularly gifted in selecting sermon topics that were both timely and timeless. In addition to being a master preacher, he was a prolific writer, penning 35 books of sermons and one book on homiletical theory.

Davis Chappell ’85T, great-nephew of Clovis Chappell, has donated his renowned great-uncle’s papers to Pitts Theology Library. The collection includes the typed sermons and book manuscripts of Clovis Chappell—some with handwritten notes on them—dating from the early to mid-twentieth century. Fully digitized, the collection is accessible via the Pitts Theology Library website, pitts.emory.edu, opening these significant works to a wider audience.

These and other recent gifts sustain us and guide us on to new endeavors that strengthen our ability to educate faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries in the world. Together, we are making a real difference in the real world.

—Mathew A. Pinson, Assistant Dean of Development and Alumni Relations

The recent birth of his daughter is one of the most meaningful and joyous beginnings Mathew Pinson has experienced.
Roy Howard 54T received the Ministry of Memory Award from the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church at their annual meeting in May 2012. He is the Holston Conference historian and the first person from the Southeast to receive this award.

Roy Ryan 54T coauthored a book with Joe Edd Morris 68T titled Old Testament Stories: What Do They Say Today? Ryan also recently authored Older Americans and the Economic Pie. Paul Sims 54T celebrated in October 70 years of active ministry, including 51 years with The United Methodist Church as pastor, district superintendent, and administrative assistant to the bishop. J. Benton White 56T and his wife of 55 years, Mary Lou, are retired and living in San Jose, Calif. His career spanned ministry as an Air Force Chaplain, campus minister, professor, and author.


James E. Dukes 65T retired from his positions as a Lutheran pastor and a professor of philosophy at the University of South Carolina. He is now enjoying salt water fishing for sea trout, and traveling far and often. K. Edward Tomlinson 69T retired from the Florida Conference—23 years as pastor, six years as district superintendent, and 12 years as executive director of new church development. George Odle 72T of Johnson City, Tenn., retired in June 2011 after 44 years as a United Methodist pastor, GBGM field representative, and stewardship consultant. On December 25, 2012, he was married to Janice Raymer. Perry R. Newbury 74T retired from United Church of Canada ministry in September 2013 and now lives in Chicago, near his children and grandchildren. George H. Donigian, Sr. 77T published a book through Upper Room Books titled A World Worth Saving: Lenten Spiritual Practices for Action. Robert Garry Pryor 77T spent fall 2013 on sabbatical in Israel. Fairy L. Caroland 78T is working as an addictions consultant for Renewal House, a residential alcohol and drug treatment center for mothers with young children. Charles W. Anderson 80T was named the 2012 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church by the Foundation for Evangelism. Timothy L. Bias 80T has been named General Secretary for the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. He was formerly senior pastor of Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Joe Kimbell Dunagan 80T and Kathy Kelly Dunagan have moved to Roanoke, Virginia, where they serve on the staff of St. John’s Episcopal Church.

Sheila L. Hunter 85T is the interim minister at First Christian (Disciples of Christ) in Sandersville, Ga. Carroll K. Miller 85T is a part-time pastor at Concord UMC. Lee McKinzie 85T retired in July 2013 from the Louisiana Annual Conference. Dennis Stalvey 84T earned his Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary. His dissertation focused on spirituality and aging. George Grant 85T was recently named the Executive Director for Pastoral Services for Emory Healthcare. Since 2007, he has served as the Director of Research and Innovation at the Emory Center for Pastoral Services, conducting spiritual health research across Emory Healthcare and all health science academic divisions.

Robert E. May 70T published a book titled How to Fix a Broken Church. William L. Self 71T retired from John’s Creek Baptist Church in Alpharetta, Ga. [01] Jim Baskett 72T was elected in 2013 as mayor of the City of Decatur, Ga. Gene Cochran 72T retired from active ministry in June 2013 after 43 years as a member of the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. Mont Duncan 72T retired July 1, 2013 after 41 years of service in the Florida Conference—23 years as pastor, six years as district superintendent, and 12 years as executive director of new church development. George Odle 72T of Johnson City, Tenn., retired in June 2011 after 44 years as a United Methodist pastor, GBGM field representative, and stewardship consultant. On December 25, 2012, he was married to Janice Raymer. Perry R. Newbury 74T retired from United Church of Canada ministry in September 2013 and now lives in Chicago, near his children and grandchildren. George H. Donigian, Sr. 77T published a book through Upper Room Books titled A World Worth Saving: Lenten Spiritual Practices for Action. Robert Garry Pryor 77T spent fall 2013 on sabbatical in Israel. Fairy L. Caroland 78T is working as an addictions consultant for Renewal House, a residential alcohol and drug treatment center for mothers with young children. Charles W. Anderson 80T was named the 2012 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church by the Foundation for Evangelism. Timothy L. Bias 80T has been named General Secretary for the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. He was formerly senior pastor of Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Joe Kimbell Dunagan 80T and Kathy Kelly Dunagan have moved to Roanoke, Virginia, where they serve on the staff of St. John’s Episcopal Church.

Gina Campbell 81T is the canon precentor at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Her responsibilities include providing leadership and direction for a number of worship groups, including communion ministers, nave chaplains, and lectors, and serving as chaplain to the various Cathedral choirs. Daniel Thompson 81T is the Pastor at Forest Grove United Methodist in Forest Grove, Ore. William R. Burch 82T has been appointed to First United Methodist Church of Lawrenceville, Ga. Thomas McRee II 82T is the new chaplain for Village on the Green, a continuing care retirement community in Longwood, Fla. After 18 years as a full-time hospice chaplain, he is looking forward to serving this active community and having more time for teaching and writing. Michael W. McNulty 82T has published his first novel, Forgotten Memories: A Story of Love and Forgiveness. More information at www.thenutlypress.com. Richard Hunter 83T (North Georgia), Jeremy Mount 99T (Alabama West-Florida), and David Graves 03T (Holston) are recipients of the 2013 Harry Denman Evangelism Award, presented each year at UMC annual conferences. The award, sponsored by The Foundation for Evangelism, honors United Methodist clergy, lay persons, and youth in each annual conference who exhibit unusual and outstanding efforts in Christian evangelism. Jackie Jenkins 83T retired in June 2011. Lee McKinzie 85T retired in July 2013 from the Louisiana Annual Conference. Dennis Stalvey 84T earned his Doctor of Ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary. His dissertation focused on spirituality and aging. George Grant 85T was recently named the Executive Director for Pastoral Services for Emory Healthcare. Since 2007, he has served as the Director of Research and Innovation at the Emory Center for Pastoral Services, conducting spiritual health research across Emory Healthcare and all health science academic divisions. Sheila L. Hunter 85T is the interim minister at First Christian (Disciples of Christ) in Sandersville, Ga. Carroll K. Miller 85T is a part-time pastor at Concord UMC. James Higgins, Sr. 86T is now pastoring Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Augusta, Ga. Lee FerDon 87T retired from the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, and has discovered a second calling as an adjunct instructor at Saint Leo University. He teaches Christian ethics and morality at campuses in Madison, Trenton, and Lake City, Fla. Leslie Jones 87T is pastor at St. Lewis Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Lance W. Moore 87T 95T just released his sixth nationally published book: Killing JFK: 50 Years, 50 Lies—From the Warren Commission to Bill O’Reilly, A History of Deceit in the Kennedy Assassination, from Sky-Fy Publishing. Martha Porter 87T of Highlands, N.C., retired pastoral counselor, is the author of The Nicene Creed: Ancient Words In The Light Of...
Modern Faith, from St. Johann’s Press. Beth A. Estock 88T works as a coach and consultant at Epicenter Group, focusing on new start pastors, as well as churches in the process of revitalization. She is also starting a network of house churches in Portland, Oregon, called Zacc’s House. She blogs at www.sacreddirt.com. Martha P.Sterne 88T is Writer-in-Residence at Holy Innocents’ Episcopal Church in Atlanta. Glenda Whitehead 88T and her congregation, Journey of Faith UMC, won the Voices in the Wilderness Award for being the first and only Reconciling Congregation in the Central Texas Conference at the Reconciling Ministries Network Convocation last September in Chevy Chase, Md.

90s

Doreen Duley 90T retired as director of pastoral care at Children’s Hospital of Alabama, where she had served for 15 years. John S. Eley 90T is the executive director of Asbury Towers Retirement Community in Greensville, Ind. David Newton 90T is pastor at Dantzler First United Methodist Church in Moss Point, Miss. Steven Wolff 90T is lead pastor at North East Oregon Cooperative Circuit of The United Methodist Church. Ronald VanLente 92T transferred from the Western North Carolina Conference to the West Michigan Conference in June 2013. Ron has been serving Coloma United Methodist Church in Coloma, Mich., since July 2011. Kerry Purselle 92T retired from Brevard First United Methodist Church in Brevard, N.C. Sheldon J. Harr 93T retired after 40 years in the Rabbinate. He founded the Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El in Plantation, Fla., where he served for the past 37 years. Rabbi Harr was named “Founding Senior Rabbi Emeritus” of Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El on June 1, 2013. Kevin H. Orr 94T has begun the pursuit of a MTS degree at Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO). Jack Stanley 94T is a chaplain in the USAF in Oxford, UK. He has also published a book on spiritual resiliency entitled Stand Strong. Scott Hohn 95T completed his Doctor of Ministry degree at Beeson Divinity School in December 2012 and is now serving as pastor of First United Methodist Church in Eufaula, Ala. Harry E. Mann 95T published two new e-books, Molly and Brothers, on Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing. The third and last book in the series, Generations, is scheduled for publication in 2014. Myron McGhee 95T and Juanita Clem McGhee 95T collaborated to produce “The Mind’s Eye” photographic exhibit, on display in Brooks Commons in Cannon Chapel from September–November of 2013. Juanita curated the exhibit from Myron’s vast collection of photos of Tibetan monks painting sand mandalas, taken over a period spanning more than 10 years. William Bentley Brunson 96T is senior pastor at Vestavia Hills UMC, in Birmingham, Ala. Charles Patrick Gray 97T 02G received the Dean’s Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity from Rhodes College. He published Opening Paul’s Letters: A Reader’s Guide to Genre and Interpretation in 2012. Thomas Houston Ward 97T was recently appointed to the Extended Cabinet of the Tennessee Conference of The United Methodist Church as director of the Office of Ministerial Services. David Lay 98T is senior pastor at First Church in Lawrenceburg, Tenn. F. Douglas Powe, Jr. 98T 04G is professor of evangelism and urban ministries and associate director of the Center for the Missional Church at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Shelley Young 98T is learning manager at Carlisle & Gallagher Consulting Group. Lilliet Council 99T achieved tenure as a school library media specialist in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. She is the proud mother of 7-year-old twins. Shannon Davis 99T is senior pastor at First UMC in Woodward, Okla. Young Joe Harrington III 99T received his Doctor of Ministry in spiritual formation and direction from Asbury Theological Seminary in May. He has been the senior pastor of North Fayette United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Ga., since 2010. Mary Beth Packard 99T retired from the Florida Annual Conference. Jeremy Squires 99T is senior pastor at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in Hendersonville, Tenn.

00s

Matthew Berryman 01T is the new executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network. Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is a growing movement of United Methodist individuals, congregations, campus ministries, and other groups working for the full participation of all people in The United Methodist Church. Susan Allen Grady 98C 01T is now associate pastor at Oak Grove United Methodist Church in Decatur, Ga. Robert Harrell 01T completed a Doctor of Ministry in Christian Spirituality from Columbia Theological Seminary in May 2013. His final project focused on how Myers-Briggs Type influenced prayer practices. He is pastor at St. Luke Lutheran Church in McDonough, Ga. Melinda Holloway 01T is manager of CPE at Providence St. Peter Hospital in Olympia, Wash. Patricia McKee 02T is a third-year Ph.D. student in art and religion at Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Jim. She is interested in connecting with other Candler folks in LA. Phillip Pace 02T and his wife welcomed a son, Samuel Isaac Pace, on November 28, 2012. Leslee Samuelson 02T is pastor at Manchester First United Methodist Church in Manchester, Ga. William E. Flippin, Jr. 03T was installed as pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in southwest Atlanta on April 27. Karen M. Lyons 03T 06T was appointed to St. James
UMC in Alpharetta in June 2013. Lee May 03T was appointed interim CEO of DeKalb County in July 2013. Holley H. Ulbrich 03T has recently published Economics Takes a Holiday: Celebrations from the Dismal Science with Abbott Press. Gregory Pimlott 04T is pastor at Greensburg United Methodist Church in Greensburg, Ind. William Pearce 04T 07T is an associate at Goodwin Procter in San Francisco, Calif. Walter Marcus Snipes 00C 04T welcomed a son, Wylie Ethan Snipes, born July 31, 2013. Mike Brinkman 05T is pastor at Weaver First UMC in Weaver, Ala. Charles E. Good- man, Jr. 05T is the senior pastor and teacher of the Historic Tabernacle Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga. He can be seen weekly on the Kingdom Living television broadcast and heard daily via WTHB Praise 96.9 FM, providing encouragement via the “Spiritual Vitamin.” He also released a book titled Road to Recovery, in June 2013. John Hill 05T, Nancy Speas Hill 06T, and their daughter, Becca (5), welcomed baby James Douglas Hill on August 27, 2013. John is the associate pastor and Nancy is the children’s minister at Christ UMC in Franklin, Tenn. [03] Carlton Mackey 05T was one of 12 recipients of Emory’s 2013 Award of Distinction, which recognizes members of the Emory community who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to their jobs. Mackey is the assistant director of the Ethics and Servant Leadership program at Emory’s Center for Ethics, where he also serves as the director for the Ethics and the Arts program, the only program of its kind in the country. In 2013, he published “50 Shades of Black,” a multi-disciplinary art project that investigates the intersection of skin tone and sexuality in shaping identity through a book, a website and traveling art exhibit. More information at www.50shadesofblack.com. Narcie McClendon Jeter 05T is director of the Gator Wesley Foundation in Gainesville, Fla. Carolyn Miller 05T has moved to Indianapolis, Ind., where she works at the Ministry Service Center at Ascension Health. Katharine Meacham Nintcheu 05T married Sylvain Nintcheu on September 29, 2012 in Loudon, Tenn. Robert L. Roberts 05T was appointed to Felicity United Methodist Church in Felicity, Ohio, in July 2013. Jane G. Vaughan 05T recently finished her first year as Clovis District Superintendent in the New Mexico Conference of The United Methodist Church. Erin Cash 06T is the director of admissions at Lexington Theological Seminary. Kirkland Reynolds 06T began a new appointment this summer as senior pastor at Chevy Chase United Methodist Church in Chevy Chase, Md. James R. Aycock 07T recently joined the Memphis Grizzlies Prepara- tory Charter School as director of student support. Nate Berneking 07T was elected and appointed to serve as the treasurer and director of finance and administrative ministries of The Missouri Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. He now serves the annual conference and local churches in Missouri as a legal, financial, stewardship, and administrative consultant. [04] Lane Cotton Winn 07T and Ben Hart- man celebrated the birth of their daughter, Julian Grace Hartman, on January 23, 2013. Julian is named after Julian of Norwich. Michelle Hall 08T is managing partner of the software consulting firm Hallway Technolo- gies. Jill Moffett Howard 08T is the pastor at Morgantown United Methodist Church in Morgantown, Ind. Stacey Rushing 08T is a pastor at University Heights United Methodist Church in Decatur, Ga. Dalton Rushing 08T is a pastor at North Decatur United Methodist Church in Decatur, Ga. Wanda Scott 08T is the assistant director of community relationships and adjunct faculty at John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio. Avis E. Williams 78OX 98C 08T was presented the Gresham Geter Award for Outstanding Community Service in Greene County by the Greene County NAACP. Paul Appleby 09T is the senior minister at Central Christian Church in Columbus, Ga. [05] Elizabeth Lobello Edwards 09T, daughter of Kevin Lobello 84T, married Adam Edwards at Griffin First UMC on December 1, 2012. All officiants were Candler alums: Drew Dancey 09T, Lauren Dunkle Dancey 08T, and Jordan Thrasher 08T. Amanda Mountain 09T is a missionary relations manager within the development and communications office of the General Board of Global Ministries. Bennie K. Napier 09T is pastor of The United Methodist Lake Charge in Mississippi. George Payne 09T presented a talk titled “Principled Nonviolence and the Interfaith Movement” at the 2013 Peace and Justice Studies Association Conference in Waterloo, Ontario. He works full-time as a peace and justice educator with the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Rochester, NY., and teaches philosophy of religion at Finger Lakes Community College. 10s

Alison Amyx 10T is senior editor at Believe Out Loud in Washington, D.C. Believe Out Loud is an online network that empowers Christians to work for LGBT equality. Laura Arnold 10T has been ordained in the United Church of Christ. W. Jeffrey Cook 10T, pastor of Tennille United Methodist Church, is featured in an article that describes the work of Tennille UMC serving their commu- nity. The full article can be found at: http://www.sgaumc.org/news/detail/6602. Amos P. Davis 10L 10T is working as food law counsel for The Coca-Cola Company. Karl Kroger 10T of Grace United Methodist Church in Piedmont, S.D., traveled to Mafrak, Jordan, to partner with a church facilitating humanitarian efforts toward Syrian refugees. Jasmine Martin 10T is a plannogrammer at Pivotel Retail Group. Sarah Beth-Ann Miller 10T is pastor at Reeves United Methodist Church in Orlando, Fla. Melissa Self Patrick 10T was ordained an elder in the The United Methodist Church at the June 2013 meeting of the North Alabama Annual Conference. She is in her third year as executive director of Urban Ministry, Inc. and pastors one of the house churches of Community Church Without Walls, a United Methodist mission congregation in Birmingham’s West End Community. Barbara Pendergrast 10T is a commissioned lay chaplain in the Episcopal Church and is a board certified member of the Association of Professional Chaplains. She offers spiritual direction and also teaches pastoral care classes to the laity in various churches and denominations in the Atlanta area. Caitlin Foley Phillips 10T and her husband, Jeff, welcomed a son, Asher Gray Phillips, on December 18, 2012. Ingrid Rasmussen 10T is now associate pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Silas Allard 11L 11T has been named associate director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion (CSLR) at Emory University. Rachel DeLaune 11T
and Ryan DeLaune 11T enjoyed their first year in ministry together at Grace at Fort Clarke United Methodist Church in Gainesville, Fla., where they are both associate pastors. Cassandra Rapko 11T and Christopher Rapko 11T were married on October 6, 2012. Jenna Faith Strizak 11T works at Holy Trinity Parish in pastoral care and children’s formation. Mary Sweet 11T served as co-grand marshal of the Little Traverse Bay Area CROP Walk for Hunger on June 29, 2013. Brandon White 11T is a professional tutor at Constructive Learning Tutors. Randall Wright 11T was ordained as a UMC elder during the 2013 Holston Annual Conference on June 12. Whitney Bexley 12T is the community relations assistant at Street Grace, an alliance of Christian church partners, community organizations, and individual volunteers who are working together to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Metro Atlanta. Aaron Garner 12T is director of youth and children at Seminole Heights United Methodist Church in Tampa, Fla. Maryann Piccioni 12T is a family engagement specialist at United Methodist Cooperative Ministries, a social services agency of the Gulf Central District of the United Methodist Church in Florida. Chris Terrell 12T is a provisional elder serving a small, rural United Methodist congregation in the panhandle of Florida. He sends blessings and well-wishes to other alumni. Alyce M. Yorde 12T accepted a teaching position within the religion department of the Upper School at Holy Innocents’ Episcopal School in Atlanta. Kathy Brockman 13T is the assistant to the pastor at Oak Grove United Methodist Church in Decatur, Ga. Jody Greenwood 13T was ordained as an Episcopal priest in June 2013 and began serving as the associate rector of youth and children’s ministry at Christ Church Episcopal Church in Norcross, Ga., in July. Jonathan D. Harris 13T is associate pastor at First UMC in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Mica Koli 13T is an endorsed candidate for ordination in the ELCA. Currently he is completing CPE and began a yearlong internship in August at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Suwannee, Ga. Duse Lee 13T has moved to Canton, Mass. Kyle Nolan 13T is studying theology and ethics at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany, from September 2013 to July 2014. Kristie Roberts 13T is a professor at Troy University. Jaeyong Song 13T and Phillip Kuntz 14T were featured in the Georgia United Methodist Foundation video at the North Georgia Annual Conference. You can view the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6oaaz8IPgs. Darryl Tookes 13T is now a physician at Kaiser Permanente. Ralph Thompson 13T is senior pastor at Keeney Memorial United Methodist Church in West Point, Ga. James Vertrees 13T is serving as the pastor of a two-point charge in Muhlenberg County, Ky. Tyreke L. Wesley 13T joined the staff at The Atlanta Area Council as the district executive, serving youth and volunteers in the Southwest Atlanta District. Jalena Wilson 13T is a youth minister at Breakthrough Fellowship in Smyrna, Ga.

In Memoriam

W. Aubrey Alsobrook 38C 40T
Benson C. Barrett 35OX 38C 40T
William T. Holroyd 50T
Hubert E. Floyd 51T
E.S. Furr 51T
William F. Appleby, Sr. 52T
Robert E. Hughes 52T
James H. Klink 52T
William R. Garrard, Sr. 42C 53T
Wade H. Watson, Jr. 54T
Charles A. Graves 55T
Dan R. Robinson 55T
William Jarvis Ellis, Jr. 56T
Hubert L Flanagan, Jr. 56T
L. Gleason Lagow 56T
Edward Mainous 56T
Riley Shirley, Jr. 56T
Roger Solomon 56T
Wesley B. Clifford 57T
Donald Comer 57T
Earl Black 58T
C. Richard Blount 58T
Sam McRaney, Jr. 58T
Michael M. Pszyk, Jr. 58T
Carol Hunt Pierce 59T
Adele Townsend 59T
Frank Thomas Hyles, Jr. 60T 81T
Donald Van Dreser 61T
M. Wayne Langford, Jr. 62T
Clarence Albert Hollingsworth Sr. 62T
William O. Powell 56OX 62T
William Slife 66T 80T
Gerald Smith 66T
James T. Walker, Jr. 66T
Marcelino Casuco 67T
Thomas E. Betts 71T
Clifford J. Furness 71T
Jack P. Atkinson, Jr. 65OX 67C 72T
Gene E. Cole 72T
Thomas Watson 72T
Lonnie E. Dunbar, Jr. 74T
William Eslick 77T
William R. McLaughlin 77T
Scott R. Neil 87T
Jerry C. Johnson 89T
John H. Capers, Jr. 91T
Jicelyn Thomas 91T
Holly Rhodes 98T
Gary L. Naylor 05T 07T
Former Faculty:
Bishop Mack B. Stokes
John H. Hayes
Robert Kysar
I remember my first reading of the lines from “Little Gidding” in T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from...

At the time this didn’t make much sense to a high-school junior. But it doesn’t take too many years of human experience to reveal the depth of these lines. Later still in life we may come to know more of the lines that follow them: “We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started,/And know the place for the first time.”

I’m thinking now of our distracted lives as we go through changes, whether personal, institutional, or cultural. Most of the time we are unaware of the connection between endings and beginnings. Perhaps we don’t want to know. Endings can so easily bring sadness or nostalgia or the stab of grief for what is over. New beginnings seem to bring excitement and hope until we lose that first enthusiasm when the task or the journey proves more complicated than we first thought. Pastors and chaplains face endings and beginnings in the flow of ministry. Pastoral care is often focused on alleviating grief or coping with negative reactions to life changes. Every time a new appointment or change of job interrupts a settled pattern—sometimes unexpectedly—we have to face an ending. Often our biggest challenge is regret over things unfinished and left undone.

It is not simply that things change and good things (or bad) come to an end. That is obvious enough. The issue is how to live wisely in the midst of our negotiations with time and change. This is more than “letting things happen.” This wisdom comes with the sense of not having done or become what we had hoped for in our various beginnings. How do we gain wisdom instead of regret? How do we gracefully acknowledge endings? The “what might have been” can haunt us. This is where we need a sense of benediction, of “blessing,” of being able to receive all that has been given when we reach the end. I remember it being said of someone’s life that he always sought a blessing from his parents that never came. This is a form of suffering, a disconnection.

A true benediction is more than a closing rite, a final word. It can contain the mystery of having been sustained through time. If someone says, “well done, good and faithful servant” it opens the possibility of seeing what was there all the while, through thick and thin. The beauty was there, but the beholder wanting, to paraphrase Gerard Manley Hopkins. So we need benedictions that reconnect our origins and our endings.

In the concluding scenes of the film Babette’s Feast the old general, now wise from battle and lost love, stands at the great unexpected banquet prepared by the mysterious Babette, and says to those gathered, “All that was lost has been restored to us in this feast.” He speaks what the feast makes manifest... that the true grace of that occasion was to receive all that has transpired—the good and the unpleasant, the tarnished hopes and the lifetimes at the table—as the whole feast of life, now reconciled and made clear.

True benediction is like that, for it is an ending that is a new beginning. It is a gathering in of all the mystery of what God has given and not fully recognized—the quality of Eternity that pervades every finite moment. This is the power that makes all things new.

On feast days, Don Saliers loves the preparation and anticipation, the first taste and final dessert, with lingering conversation and long goodbyes that seal the sharing with love.
“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.”
This year Candler School of Theology introduces five new degrees to help more real people make a real difference in the real world: Master of Religious Leadership, Master of Religion and Public Life, Doctor of Ministry, and dual degrees with social work and development practice. With these additions to our already stellar offerings, Candler graduates are truly ready to serve wherever God leads.