



CandlerNEWS



OCTOBER 2025

Remembering James Abbington

The Candler community grieves the death of **James Abbington**, who died on September 27. Abbington served on the Candler faculty as Associate Professor of Church Music and Worship from 2005 to 2025. A world-renowned musician and scholar, his influence reached far beyond Candler, and we know his legacy will continue to do the same. We lift up prayers for his family and all who loved and learned from him through the years. Look for a tribute from one of his Candler colleagues in the coming days [on our website](#)—but in the meantime, we offer [this glimpse of how richly he blessed us](#).

Abbington's funeral service will be held on Saturday, October 4 at 2:00 p.m. at Friendship Baptist Church, 80 Walnut Street SW, Atlanta. The service will also be livestreamed through [the church website](#).

Lecture to Explore Marian Devotion as 'An American Pentecost'

Candler's Aquinas Center of Theology and Women, Theology, and Ministry program will welcome **Nancy Pineda-Madrid**, T. Marie Chilton Chair of Catholic Theology at Loyola Marymount University, to present the lecture "Guadalupe: An American Pentecost" on October 9. Pineda-Madrid will explore how devotion to Guadalupe mediates for many an experience of the Holy Spirit akin to Pentecost. [Read more and register for the Oct. 9 lecture, or the Oct. 10 lecture in Spanish.](#)

Sarah Coakley to Probe Mysticism in October McDonald Lectures

Sarah Coakley, Anglican priest and Norris-Hulse Professor Emerita at Cambridge University, is Candler's 2025-2026 Alonzo L. McDonald Family Chair on The Life and Teachings of Jesus and Their Impact on Culture. In this role, Coakley will present two public lectures on October 15 and 21. The lectures take as their collective theme "Re-thinking 'Mysticism' and 'Mystical Theology' in Turbulent Times." [Learn more and register to attend the McDonald Lectures in person or online.](#)

Columbia University's Josef Sorett to Present 2025 Thurman Lecture

Candler's Black Church Studies program will host **Josef Sorett**, dean of Columbia College and Henry L. and Lucy G. Moses Professor and Vice President for Undergraduate Education at Columbia University, as the speaker for this year's Howard Thurman Lecture. Sorett will present "The Art and Politics (and Afterlives) of Afro-Protestantism" on Oct. 16. [Learn more and register to attend the Thurman Lecture in person or online.](#)

Reformation Day Events to Explore Innovation, Past and Present

Candler's Pitts Theology Library will host Reformation Day at Emory on Thursday, Oct. 30, an annual event focused on the Protestant Reformation and the library's renowned Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection. This year's events take the theme "Reforming Intelligence: New Technology and the Legacy of the Reformation." [Learn more and register to attend the 2025](#)

[Reformation Day at Emory in person or online.](#)

#KellyOnMyMind, 10 Years Later

On November 8, members of the Candler community past and present will gather in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of Kelly Gissendaner's execution on September 30, 2015. Kelly was a graduate of the Certificate Program in Theological Studies at Lee Arrendale State Prison, where many Candler students interacted with her as chaplain interns or as teachers in the certificate program. When her execution was scheduled, an extraordinary coalition—made up primarily of Candler alumni and current students—launched the nationwide campaign #KellyOnMyMind to present a fuller portrait of who Kelly had become: someone taking responsibility for her actions as part of her new understanding of redemption and compassionate love. Though the campaign did not achieve its primary goal of getting Kelly's sentence commuted, it brought the country's attention to the issue of the death penalty and its refusal of redemption. The event will include panels focused on Christian advocacy against the death penalty and reflecting on Kelly's legacy. [Learn more and register to attend #KellyOnMyMind in person or online.](#)

Faculty Release Updated Book on UM Polity

A second edition of *The Quick and Easy Guide to United Methodist Polity*, co-authored by Professor in the Practice of Practical Theology and Methodist Studies **Thomas W. Elliott, Jr.** and **Anne Burkholder**, associate dean emerita of Methodist studies and professor emerita in the practice of ecclesiology and church leadership, has recently been published by Abingdon Press. The new edition reflects changes made to the United Methodist Book of Discipline during the denomination's 2020/2024 General Conference. [Learn more about the updated volume.](#)

Visit Days Highlight Calling and the Candler Experience

Do you know someone who might be interested in a Candler degree? Candler's Office of Admissions and Financial Aid is hosting **two special visit days** for prospective students this month—a beautiful time of year to be on campus! First up on **October 9** is [Black Seminarians Day](#), followed by [Fall Visit Day](#) on **October 23**. Both events are open to all and will

feature opportunities for prospective students to explore their calling, worship with us in Cannon Chapel, sit in on a class, and experience what it's like to be part of Candler. Visit the links above for details and help us spread the word!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please note that events are subject to change. Click on the event title to see more details and registration information. [See a full listing of upcoming Candler events here.](#)

Oct. 7, 7:30 p.m.: [Catholic-Orthodox Lecture: "Faith in History: Nicaea at 1,700."](#) In person and online.

Oct. 8, 15, 22, 29, 12:00 p.m.: [Candler Foundry Course: "The Preacher and the Word"](#) with Bandy Professor of Preaching **Teresa Fry Brown**. Online.

Oct. 9, 8:30 a.m.: [Black Seminarians Day: "Planted, Rooted, Anchored."](#) In person.

Oct. 9, 4:30 p.m.: [Lecture: "Guadalupe: An American Pentecost."](#) In person.

Oct. 10, 12:00 p.m.: [PUBLICATIONS Book Panel: "When the Spirit Is Your Inheritance"](#) with Associate Professor of Latinx Communities **Jonathan Calvillo**. Online.

Oct. 15, 11:00 a.m.: [McDonald Lecture I: "Revisiting Modern Christian 'Mysticism': What Did the 20th Century Mean by It, and Why Does It Still Matter?"](#) with McDonald Chair **Sarah Coakley**. In person and online.

Oct. 16, 5:00 p.m.: [Howard Thurman Lecture: "The Art and Politics \(and Afterlives\) of Afro-Protestantism"](#) with Columbia University's **Josef Sorett**. In person and online.

Oct. 21, 4:00 p.m.: [McDonald Lecture II: "Returning to Classic 'Mystical Theology': Why Contemplation and Apophysis Are Important for Contemporary Political Theology"](#) with McDonald Chair **Sarah Coakley**. In person and online.

Oct. 23, 11:05 a.m.: [Alumni Chapel Service](#) with distinguished guest

preacher **Chris Rapko 11T**, Candler Alumni Board chair and associate pastor of Atlanta First UMC. In person and online.

Oct. 23, 8:30 a.m.: [Prospective Student Fall Visit Day](#). In person.

Oct. 30, 11:05 a.m.: [Reformation Day at Emory: "Reforming Intelligence: New Technology and the Legacy of the Reformation."](#) In person and online.

Nov. 5, 12:00 p.m.: [PUBLICATIONS Book Panel: "The Hope of Glory"](#) with Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Theology **Ian McFarland**. Online.

Nov. 8, 1:00 p.m.: [#KellyOnMyMind 10th anniversary commemoration](#). In person and online.



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