



A new translation

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Convocation Service
Chapel of the Holy Grail
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Rebecca Anderson talks to the graduates about learning how to speak other languages. For the sake of love.

August, 2007. I had just moved halfway across the country with everything I owned, having declined the offer to live in DDH at age thirty-one, into grad student housing with no air conditioning, of course, and with giant waterbugs. It was a thousand degrees every day and yes, I immediately cried in Cynthia's office about the roaches—let's call 'em what they are—and I was taking intensive Greek.

When I had visited the previous spring, looking for reasons not to move to Chicago, I wandered around Hyde Park, meeting with everyone from Dean Culp to then Dean Rosen-garten. I kept thinking to myself, "These people are so smart." I had a good vocabulary, but I was lost. Sitting in on a class, I leaned over to Adam Frieberg to whisper, "What does *telos* mean?," and he scrawled back a very adequate response in, like, less than a sentence.

The whole thing was bracing. The uprooting from a life I loved, being welcomed, even sought after, by this community and these people. It changed my sense of myself. I have, since that time, felt enormous gratitude to the House and the Divinity School, for that

invitation, not just to be here, but to understand myself in new ways.

When I got here, I was still at a loss for words to describe what I experienced at Hope Church Boston, then a six-year-old church started by Liz and Matt Myer Boulton. I could describe the music—voice forward and participatory—and the preaching—intelligent and creative—and my return to the table because of the church's wide, real, honest welcome. But I couldn't say what they were doing. "Traditional theology" I think I said, "but done in... freshly considered ways." I'm not sure I knew, in any meaningful way, the word "liturgy."

The first thing I learned at the Divinity School that blew the top of my head off was: "Every translation is an interpretation." And, per my Greek instructor Trevor Thompson, who was quoting Professor Mitchell, the invitation to understand scripture, and my tradition, and any text, and all traditions, in new ways. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 15](#)



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To the little things

What draws attention? Jack Veatch invites our observation.

As students gathered around photographs at the University’s Smart Museum of Art, Aneesah Ettress Veatch challenged them to find their own “punctum”: a small, seemingly incidental part of a photograph that holds piercing significance, transfixing the viewer. On view was a collection of photography from 1960s Ghana, Mali, and South Africa. With this prompting, students began to note and name incredible details—the mysterious yet energized contours of a faceless, dancing couple in the background; the improvised slingshot and antics of a schoolyard bully—each powerfully reframed the visual and emotional experience of their photographs.

There were no right or wrong answers. What was profound about the idea of puncta is that different aspects and details of each photograph drew and held each gaze. In paying attention to these things, no matter how small, each person discovered new things.

Such wisdom has been echoed in the work and presence of other diverse and passionate alums this spring. Larry Bouchard returned to explore how subtle textual changes, together with a breathtaking gospel soundtrack, brought new valences to Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* in its adaptation as *The Gospel at Colonus*, which we attended at the Court Theatre. Cynthia

Lindner, who will be honored as Distinguished Alumna, reminds us through her work on multiplicity that nurturing, teaching, tasking, developing, collaborating with, and educating public religious leaders depends precisely on taking ownership of the seemingly trivial and incidental parts of our identity and being. These innocuous things, in their fractured, disparate, varied ways, form the whole of who we are. The little things matter, as do the ways in which we observe them.

This year during Dean Culp’s sabbatical and under the direction of Administrator Daette Lambert, Lijia Xie and I have been learning the things that make up the Disciples Divinity House, from the grand to the incidental. Similarly, I hope this *Bulletin* gives you focus points for new discoveries and the powerful reframing of experience. In these pages are the many and varied gifts of alums and friends, celebrations and introductions of outgoing and incoming students, and meditations on theological dimensions of our varied lives.

Where are your puncta, among these pages and in life? Which parts of these articles resonate with you across time, space, geography, and context? Whether we find it through careful study, artistic expression, casual reading, or playful interaction, there is something significant about all the insignificant things that call our attention.

For the staff, Jack Veatch
Director of Student and External Relations



Congratulations, graduates!

At its June 2 Convocation, DDH celebrated eleven graduates, including five Disciples Divinity House Scholars.

Speaking at the service was Rebecca Anderson, an alumna known for cultivating the art of storytelling and for co-founding Gilead Church Chicago. It was followed by dinner and toasts on the backyard patio. The Divinity School’s Diploma and Hooding ceremony was held earlier that day in Rockefeller Chapel; the University of Chicago’s Convocation was held the next morning in the main quadrangle.

Hiatt Allen (MDiv/MA in Public Policy) is under care for ordination in the Kentucky Region. His senior ministry thesis



focused on the role of summer camps as liminal spaces for cultivating faith and leaders among the Disciples of Christ. It drew on his experience with and commitment to youth and young adults.

Alexa Dava (MDiv) will work with an international ecumenical program on health and human dignity. Her secondment to the World Council of Churches is part of an initiative with young leaders and will be supported by Week of Compassion and housed in the OGMP. She will work from Lexington, Kentucky, where her spouse is joining the faculty of Transylvania University. Her ministry thesis was titled, *Collaborative Survival: A Filipino American Reading of Ruth*.

Kerrigan Greene (AMRS) drew on ministry studies, a background in Japanese language and culture, and an attention to the arts and poetry for their AMRS examination. They have moved to the Northwest to cultivate community work and artistic interests.

LEFT Hiatt Allen speaks at Convocation
RIGHT Danny Sanchez and Alexa Dava

CELEBRATING AND
SENDING FORTH

Landon Wilcox (MDiv) was ordained on May 13 at his home church, First Christian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. He has explored military chaplaincy, including training on the USS Nimitz and in his senior ministry thesis, but is now focused on congregational ministry. He was one of three graduates honored by the Divinity School for service to the school.

Daniel Sanchez (MDiv) thinks about cultural notions of religion, and religious responses to culture, in light of trends and environments created by digital media. He presented his thesis, *Digital Media: The Unpacking of Religion in America*, on April 17. He plans to continue work that integrates religion, spirituality, and digital media after graduation.

Participating in the DDH Convocation were former residents and MDiv graduates, **Shradha Jain** and **Emily King**. Current resident **Anna Stoneman** (AM) will continue in the Divinity School’s PhD program in Religious Ethics. Also receiving AM degrees were ecumenical residents **Nayeli Gonzalez** and **Melissa Robohn**; **Trey Grizzard**, an ecumenical resident who came to DDH through TCU connections, received the MA in Public Policy degree. ✚





In a feature for the April issue of *The Christian Century*, **Victoria Wick** (2017) wrote about “Five ways your church might already welcome autistic adults.”

Aneesah Ettress Veatch (2018) reviewed Ekow Eshun’s *In the Black Fantastic* for the May issue of *The Christian Century*. The book captures the celebrated exhibition of the same name, which “is made up of works by artists of the African diaspora that interrogate norms and subvert Western White dichotomies of real/unreal, scientific/unscientific, and natural/supernatural to uncover racial injustice.”



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Dean W.B. Blakemore confers with Clyde Curry Smith and Samuel C. Pearson.

A transformative gift

Alumnus Samuel C. Pearson is remembered with a major gift to the Disciples Divinity House directed to future generations.

In 1951 and at the age of nineteen, Samuel Campbell Pearson, Jr, matriculated to the Divinity School and the Disciples Divinity House. He was young for a graduate student and eager for an intellectual journey that would open new worlds for him and others.

Sam Pearson was “a scholar, teacher, administrator, and colleague of uncommon insight, effectiveness, and humanity,” as his 2001 Distinguished Alumnus Award said. When he died in St. Louis on June 10, 2022, he was Professor Emeritus of Historical Studies at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. He served as Dean of SIUE’s School of Social Sciences from 1983–95. He was an essential figure in the life of the Disciples Divinity House and in Disciples higher education.

“The Disciples Divinity House transformed his life,” explained Mary Clay Pearson, who survives her husband. After his death, Mary decided to provide resources for current students who have the same ambition and financial need that a nineteen-year-old Sam

Pearson was a scholar, teacher, administrator, and colleague of uncommon insight, effectiveness, and humanity.



Pearson had when he arrived at DDH decades before. Her remarkable vision and generosity made possible a gift of \$510,000 for unrestricted endowment funds, one of the most generous gifts ever received.

Sam Pearson had first arrived in Chicago from Texas: he was born in Dallas and earned his AB degree cum laude from Texas Christian University. In 1954, after earning his BD degree as a Disciples Divinity House Scholar, he accepted a commission as Navy chaplain and served on active duty in North Africa and at the Great Lakes Training Station. In 1956, he returned to DDH and to the Divinity School,



and earned AM and PhD degrees in 1960 and 1964. From 1956–60, he served as Assistant to the Dean under Dean W.B. Blakemore. It was the first of many leadership roles in higher education.

Pearson studied American history and the history of Christianity. He was the recipient of two senior Fulbright Awards to lecture on American history in Chinese universities. After retiring from SIUE in 1998, he taught in China under the auspices of Global Ministries and edited a history of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (2010). Over the years, Sam and Mary connected with many Chinese students and families in St. Louis.

Board of Trustees news

Tony Rodriguez joins board; Julian DeShazier concludes term.



Antonio (Tony) Rodriguez is the newest member of DDH’s twenty-one member Board of Trustees. He has been elected to a three-year term. He brings over thirty-five years of experience in insurance

and investments and extensive leadership throughout the church. Currently he serves as a compliance principal for a broker-dealer. Born and raised in Cali, Colombia, he moved to New Jersey to study at Kean University, where he earned a BS in Applied Mathematics. He and his spouse raised their family in Florida, where they still reside. He has been a board member, elder, and teacher at Central Christian Church in Coral Gables and served as the moderator of the Florida region. He is also the former Moderator and Second Vice

“The Disciples Divinity House transformed his life.”

He served on DDH’s Alumni/ae Council and its Centennial Planning Committee. He was a life member of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, a board member of the Division of Higher Education, and a mainstay of the Association of Disciples for Theological Discussion. Union Avenue Christian Church minister and friend Thomas V. Stockdale once honored him as “a constant, sometimes frustrated, but relentless voice for every compassionate and enlarging project we undertook.”

Mary Clay Pearson remembered the educational experience that had transformed Sam’s life. Their sons, William Clay “Bill” Pearson and John Andrew Pearson, participated in the decision and John helped to facilitate the gift. This magnificent gift has already made possible an increase of student stipends for the 2023–24 academic year, and it will help to ensure transformative education into the future. ✦

Moderator for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada, and has served on the Board of Directors of the Pension Fund, Disciples Overseas Ministries, and Church Extension.



Julian DeShazier, Senior Minister of University Church Chicago, concludes his term of service on the Board. DDH and University Church share a rich partnership and history. We are grateful for his

contributions, not only as a trustee, but as a significant community leader and conversation partner. DDH looks forward to ongoing collaboration as neighbors and in many shared concerns. ✦



PhD student **Luke Soderstrom** and his wife, Stephanie, welcomed Asa Michael Soderstrom into the world on December 7, 2022. Baby Asa arrived at a healthy 8.7 lbs and 22 inches long.

Lee Hull Moses (2001) now serves as Director of the Proclamation Project, which was launched in January and is housed in the OGMP. It is funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., as part of the Compelling Preaching Initiative.

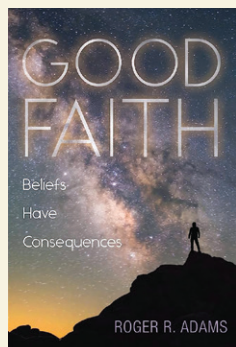


David Cobb (1987) has been appointed the Minnesota State Representative for the Association of Professional Chaplains. He is a Board Certified Chaplain who serves on the Spiritual Care staff at Children’s Minnesota Hospital, Saint Paul.

Alexis Vaughan (2009) reviewed Simran Jeet Singh's book, *The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life*, in the July 2023 issue of *The Christian Century*.



Roger Adams (1969) published a new book, *Good Faith: Beliefs Have Consequences*. Adams, a clinical psychologist who is also trained in ministry, charts how religious meaning and moral integrity can and must be compatible with science—and how human lives and community can be enriched when they are.



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On *The Gospel at Colonus*

In May, students saw the play, *The Gospel at Colonus*, at Court Theatre. They were joined by alumnus and trustee Larry Bouchard, Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus at the University of Virginia. | *By Larry Bouchard*

In preparation for his visit, Larry shared the following remarks on his own first encounters with the work, which also helped introduce participants to the precision and expansiveness of Larry's own interpretative gaze:

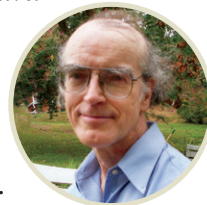
BEFORE THE SHOW

I first saw dramatist Lee Breuer's and composer Bob Telson's musical *The Gospel at Colonus* in 1985, on PBS's series, *Great Performances*. You can still watch it on YouTube. Morgan Freeman played the Preacher, in an all-Black ensemble who adapted Sophocles' play about Oedipus, the self-blinded exiled king of Thebes, and his mysterious disappearance in a secret grove at Colonus, near Athens.

I was impressed. Sophocles' story was performed in the styles of Black call-and-response preaching and Pentecostal-gospel music. But when I mentioned my enthusiasm to a colleague specializing in tragedy, his countenance clouded; the show's very title seemed dubious. I bought the Breuer and Telson script but gave it little thought—until last year, when Court Theatre put it on their schedule. I was excited. Court has a long

history of staging great adaptations of Greek tragedy.

During Sophocles' incredibly long career, he visited the Oedipus story three times. In his fifties (442 BCE?), he staged the last play of the cycle first. Antigone is about the civil disobedience of the late king's daughter, when a new king, Creon, refused to bury one of her two brothers—they had killed each other in a civil war. Antigone shaped Hegel's view of tragedy as a clash between universal yet irreconcilable ideals (Antigone's obligation to bury the



RIGHT Chorus members sing rebukes to Oedipus after learning of Antigone's parentage in The Court Theatre's production of *The Gospel at Colonus*.

kindred dead versus Creon's obligation to bring order to a divided state). Later, in his seventies, Sophocles staged the story that started the mess, *Oedipus the King*, which defined tragedy for Aristotle (a disastrous error that arouses pity and fear) and gave a name to Freud's infamous complex.

Then, nearly ninety, Sophocles interpreted the legend again, in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Oedipus is old, blind, homeless; Antigone guides him in his wanderings; his two sons fight over Thebes and deviously vie for the exiled king's support. Now, approaching Colonus and Athens, Oedipus and Antigone trespass on sacred ground, which might have triggered another tragedy. However, King Theseus of Athens recognizes that this reviled outcast is not a curse but

Sophocles. Breuer and Telson, and Court directors Charles Newell and Mark J.P. Hood, wager these Pentecostal and Greek forms can infuse into one another new life.

AFTER THE SHOW

Consider: Is *The Gospel at Colonus* tragedy? Is *The Gospel at Colonus* gospel? More specifically, where do its references to "love" and "grace" come from? Are they in Sophocles?

To my continued amazement they are, and in translations by Robert Fitzgerald and Dudley Fitts, which Breuer used. The only biblical word added is "Hallelujah!" So how close do Sophocles and the "good news" come?

What interested Breuer in Sophocles' play was how it seemed a sermon on the



a grace; and upon his passing, Oedipus's grave will become a blessing, securing the safety of Athens.

What's hardest to grasp today about Greek tragedy is not its perilous worldview but how it blended music, poetry, dance, and deep questions into overwhelming, ecstatic emotion. It's the blending that's hard to recapture. Following a hint from Zora Neale Hurston, Breuer intuited that Pentecostal-gospel music and proclamation styles might jibe with emotions and meanings in

happy death of a person cursed in life, who becomes a blessing to others. Breuer also hoped to revitalize the idea of catharsis in cerebral, avant-garde American theater. Perhaps the rhythms of Pentecostal singing and preaching might approximate Greek catharsis. Aristotle thought a tragic story should arouse fear and pity, or terror and compassion, and then purge, release, purify, or allow us to learn from those emotions.

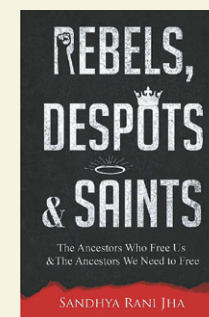
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Teresa Dulyea-Parker (*ex-officio trustee*) is retiring as Regional Minister and President of the Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin and, since 2022, also as Regional Minister for Michigan Disciples. DDH thanks her for particular care for the well-being of ministers and ministry students during her thirteen years of leadership.

Benny VanDerburgh (2019) reviewed, *In the Margins: A Transgender Man's Journey with Scripture* for the April 2023 issue of *The Christian Century*.

Sandhya Jha (2001; trustee) will begin a PhD program in Social Welfare at the University of Pennsylvania this fall. Her new book, *Rebels, Despots, and Saints: The Ancestors Who Free Us and The Ancestors We Need to Free*, has been published by Chalice Press.





Joel Brown (2014) and Erin James-Brown welcomed Evelyn James Brown into the world in January! Joel will be installed formally as President of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society on September 1.

Ross Allen (2019) was ordained into the ministry on February 18, 2023, at First Christian Church in Manhattan, Kansas. Christian Watkins preached. He serves as Designated Term Minister of South Acton Church in Acton, Massachusetts.



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Kris Culp, Terri Hord Owens, Divinity School Dean Jim Robinson

Hord Owens honored

Teresa Hord Owens was recognized as Divinity School Alumna of the Year for 2023.

She delivered the Alumna of the Year address, “A New Church for a New World,” at Swift Hall on May 4, highlighting the possibilities and challenges that the Disciples of Christ and other religious communions face in these times.

Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens was elected General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada in July 2017. A descendant of one of the oldest African American free

settlements in Indiana and a Disciple since young adulthood, she is the first person of color and second woman to lead the denomination—and the first African American woman to lead a mainline Christian denomination. Hord Owens has been reelected for a second six-year term. She has given a clarion call to pressing matters of faith and public life. She serves on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

She earned the MDiv degree at the Divinity School as a Disciples Divinity House Scholar, after a career in the corporate world. Prior to her election as GMP, she served as Dean of Students at the Divinity School and as Senior Minister of First Christian Church of Downers Grove. ✚

Colonus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Breuer hoped to redefine catharsis, transforming pity and fear into the ecstasy of “blessing,” of being “lifted up”—words Sophocles also used.

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus—now fought over by those who exiled him—is indeed fearful and should arouse compassion toward him and his daughters. We see Creon kidnap Antigone and Ismene. To me, the arousal of pity and fear is more basic to Aristotle than catharsis. Wherever a story of fearful suffering inspires compassion, there is the possibility of tragedy. Besides, not all Greek tragedies ended unhappily. Most did, but several didn’t, including *Oedipus at Colonus*. Their questions were more important than the outcomes. To the modern creators of *Gospel at Colonus*, Oedipus’s

outcast status indirectly asked about the tyranny of slavery and legacy of racism—America’s “original sin.”

So, is the catharsis of *Gospel at Colonus* truly gospel? The earlier Oedipus the King referred to Oedipus as having “saved” Thebes from a cruel monster, the Sphinx. That was why Thebes made the young stranger king. He was their savior—before destiny unraveled him. But at Colonus, the outcast becomes savior again. And to the credit of Athens and Colonus, they welcome the homeless outcast, the taboo. All this is in *Gospel at Colonus* as well.

In Sophocles, after blind Oedipus exits with Theseus to die out of sight, he never reappears. Instead, a Messenger enters to narrate Oedipus’s last, mysterious moments;

A new chapter for the Lamberts

Mark Lambert will teach in religion and health sciences at DMU, while Daette Lambert transitions to remote work as DDH’s Administrator

Mark Lambert, who has been DDH’s Faculty Fellow this past year, has accepted an offer as an assistant professor at Des Moines University (DMU). He will be in charge of the bioethics curriculum with half of his time for research. DMU is an osteopathic school

of medicine and health sciences, a thriving institution that is building an entirely new campus. To teach in a medical school is a nearly unparalleled opportunity for an alumnus of DDH and the Divinity School. An AM and PhD alumnus of the Divinity School, he has served as a Divinity School Teaching Fellow in the College of the University of Chicago for the past two years.

Administrator Daette Lambert will transition to remote work when she and Mark and their family move to the Des Moines area in mid-August. Dean Kris Culp commented, “DDH is fortunate that her superb leadership will continue. The Board of Trustees and I are grateful for Daette’s commitment and excellent work, and for the pleasure and gift of being able to work with her in the past and into the foreseeable future.”

Daette Lambert has been the acting chief of staff during the dean’s sabbatical; Mark has led the PhD dissertation seminar and advised the theological education leadership fellows. Their contributions have helped DDH life and thought to flourish. ✚



Sophocles’ story was performed in the styles of Black call-and-response preaching and Pentecostal-Gospel music celebration.

then Theseus returns, promising the grave will remain secret. There is no hint of bodily resurrection. But in *Gospel at Colonus* there are such hints. In Court’s production, the actor playing Oedipus also played the Messenger, giving to some the impression of resurrection. How then do we respond to this uncertain ending?

The *Gospel at Colonus* script comes close to “the gospel,” musically and thematically,

but does not cross over. Oedipus, Antigone, and Ismene remain flawed mortals received graciously by Athens, Colonus, and the gods. It’s been argued that a better biblical parallel is not Christ but the hidden grave of Moses at Mt. Nebo. And I’ve read interpretations where, in *Gospel at Colonus*, Oedipus and the community—singers, players, and audience—become indistinguishable, all are “lifted up.” Oedipus is lifted up by the community into the community; we become one with Oedipus and receive a foretaste or proleptic realization of future liberation. If not exactly gospel, it can sure sound like Bultmann or liberation theology! I can live well with all these voices. ✚

Laura Jennison Reed (2009) celebrated her last Sunday as pastor of Christian Church of Villa Park on June 11. She will begin an intensive fifteen-month nursing program at Loyola University in the fall.



Garry Sparks (2001) has joined the faculty of Princeton University as Associate Professor in the Department of Religion. He studies critical histories of Christian thought, religions of Indigenous peoples of the Americas, religion in Latin America, and theories of religion and culture.





Timothy S. Lee (1986) has succeeded **Mark Toulouse** as Editor of the *Journal of Discipliana*, published by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

Joy Omslaer (1997), a social worker for brain injury survivors at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, is collaborating with David Hibler to lead a national study on mild traumatic brain injury in the veterans' community. Their project, *Mind Over Matter* (M.O.M.), was featured on Ohio State's homepage for research.



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Unbounded bounties

Can numbers and math reveal new theological perspectives? Lijia Xie shares insights from his time in the tech industry.

Before I came to the Divinity School, I lived a very different life as a software engineer at eBay, where I was responsible for some of the mysterious algorithms which seem to govern much of our lives these days. My team at the time was called Discovery—"Disco," for style and for short!—and our mission was to recommend items, based on your browsing and purchasing history, that might be novel and delightfully unexpected. One of my favorite and proudest examples—we recommended protein powder and other nutritional supplements to someone who had recently purchased gym and weightlifting equipment.

How did we teach computers to understand such intricacies of human behavior—in this case, that a newfound interest in exercise might correspond to a similar interest in improving one's diet? In fact, it was a process of translation, or what a computer scientist might call "abstraction": using fancy statistical tools, we turned every word in our datasets into a special series of numbers which represented points in multi-dimensional space. If those points ended up close together in this new space, that meant their corresponding words were somehow related.

This idea might seem strange at first, but similar techniques are used all the time, like when we play a game to help solve indecisiveness: let's roll a die, and if it's even, we'll go here and do this; if it's odd, we'll go there and do that. What emerges from this kind of game, just like in our algorithms, is a new understanding of what certain numbers mean. 1, 3, and 5 on the die do not represent each of those quantities, or even the mathematical property of being odd, but whatever we've chosen to assign to it; and the same is true for the even numbers 2, 4, and 6—the possibilities are infinite.

The biggest advantage of computers and all the structures they support is that their native language is a mathematical, numerical one in which such infinities abound. There are infinitely many numbers, not only from 1 to infinity and beyond, but also within *all* the gaps: between 0 and 1, but also 1 and 1.1, even 1.1



and 1.11, and so on. This endlessly expansive world of numbers allows computers to hold together seemingly infinite amounts of information and thereby detect minute patterns that can express the relationship, as we saw earlier, between exercise equipment and protein powder, or perhaps even discover new and unforeseen ones.

Yet infinitude is not only a feature of mathematics. Our languages and lives contain the same abundance if we know where and how to look. For example, when we use the word "blue" to describe the pale crystal of a February sky, it is not the same "blue" which tinges our tongues and our teeth after eating freshly foraged berries on a sunny afternoon; nor is it the same "blue" in which we linger after saying goodbye, for a time, to a treasured friend. Therefore, while numbers and math help reveal to us the possibility of infinity, it still remains our task, our privilege, and also our pleasure, to seek that endless grandeur which God reveals throughout our lives, in the nooks and crannies, the fields and expanses of all of our worlds.

What other meanings can, and already do, our words hold? What infinity of ways can we imagine, for example, what it means to be a *student*, a *parent*, a *friend*—a *human being*? Perhaps when we begin to see that such boundless possibility exists in our own lives, already there in the world into which we have been thrown, then we might also quell the fear that comes in the face of the new, and learn to embrace the unknown. ✦

DDH is grateful for Lijia Xie, who concludes his year as DDH's Theological Education Leadership Fellow in August.

2023–24 Entering Scholars announced

Five individuals have been named as new scholarship award recipients, beginning this September. These first-time award recipients join returning Disciples Scholars.



Delaney Beh (MDiv) has been named the *M. Ray and Phyllis Schultz Scholar* in recognition of outstanding promise for ministry. Delaney is a 2023 graduate of Butler University,

where they majored in religion and philosophy. They recently completed an internship in a UCC church. They value the partnership between the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ, and especially value shared commitments to ecumenism and interfaith work and shared values of justice and community.



Kevin Poe (AM) is a 2023 graduate of the College of Wooster in Ohio, where he studied philosophy, religion, and South Asian studies. His research is on narrative and how

we come to know others by knowing their story. This took him to Thailand to interview Buddhist monks about the stories they hold dear. His home church is Harmony Springs Christian Church, where he worked with youth. He has been named the *Weaver Entering Scholar*.



Tristan Spangler-Dunning (AM) is the recipient of the *Oreon E. Scott Entering Scholarship*. He studies the social and intellectual history of the Disciples of Christ. He is a 2023

MA graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and a 2022 AB graduate of



Chapman University. He is the son of two Disciples ministers.



Nathan Travis (MDiv) is particularly interested in American pragmatism and theological traditions. A resident since fall 2022, he has explored connections

between those forms of thought and congregational practice, including through the Disciples History and Thought seminar. This summer, he has a fellowship to learn about British Methodism. He will receive a partial scholarship in recognition of his commitment to pragmatic, ecumenical thought: the *W. Barnett Blakemore Scholarship* recognizes excellence in scholarship and breadth of ecumenical vision.



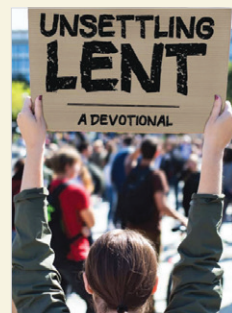
Kylie Winger (MDiv) has been named the *M. Elizabeth Dey Scholar* in recognition of outstanding promise for pastoral or educational ministries. She was a renting resident

during her first year, having made initial connections with DDH through the Christian Church of Downers Grove. After participating in DDH programs during her first year, she subsequently discovered more extensive family roots in the Disciples of Christ. She graduated from Middlebury College in 2019 and taught English in Japan for three years. Kylie recently became DDH's Head Resident. ✦



We mourn the loss of **Bhikkhu Cetovimutti "Ceto" Cong**, a 2021–22 DDH resident and a 2022 AM graduate of the Divinity School, who had just begun PhD work in Buddhist Studies at UC Berkeley. He died on June 20 after an extended coma that resulted from a tragic bicycle accident in November 2022 in Berkeley. He was 34 years old. Ceto was born and raised in China and was ordained as a Theravada Buddhist monastic in Sri Lanka in 2014. Known for his enthusiasm in exploring historical and contemporary religious traditions, he leaves behind a legacy of curiosity and spiritual dedication. He is survived by his mother, Lina Cong.

Beau Underwood (2006) was installed as the senior pastor of Allisonville Christian Church on February 12. He has also co-authored with Brian Kaylor and Angela Parker, a Lenten devotional titled, *Unsettling Lent*.



Sarah Zuniga (2018) has joined the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Also, they have collaborated with writers and artists to create, *sacred incantations: rituals of trans wisdom for every season*, a deck of cards with artwork and rituals for trans and gender non-conforming folks.



Robert Wilson-Black (1991) became President and CEO of the Faith & Politics Institute at the end of November 2022. In June, Rob and Juli celebrated their daughter Hannah's graduation from the College of the University of Chicago.



MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu



“One Great Thing” about Cynthia Gano Lindner...

The Alumni/ae Council will present its Distinguished Alumna Award to Cynthia Lindner at DDH's luncheon at the Louisville General Assembly on August 1. Friends and colleagues were invited to share “one great thing” about her.

For the past twenty-one years as the Director of Ministry Studies and Clinical Faculty for Preaching and Pastoral Care in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, Cynthia Gano Lindner has nurtured, trained, and inspired generations of emerging religious leaders, including many DDH graduates and current students. Under her direction, the ministry program has been transformed into a flourishing multi-religious program, including a new track in chaplaincy.

An ordained Disciples minister, she previously served three congregations, including a creative long-term pastorate and co-pastorate at First Christian Church in Albany, Oregon. She is the author of *Varieties of Gifts: Multiplicity and the Well-Lived Pastoral Life* (2016), a pastoral psychotherapist, a highly sought speaker, and the director of the Chicago Commons Project. She entered the Divinity School as a Disciples Divinity House Scholar in 1978, after earning her BA from St. Olaf College. She earned AM and DMin degrees from the University of Chicago. In addition, she holds a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has served as a DDH trustee since 2001, and previously served as a member of the Alumni/ae Council, including as its president.

The following excerpts convey a chorus of appreciation for Cynthia as minister, mentor, friend, colleague, and so much more.

IN A MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES

Beau Underwood

Cynthia always made herself available to students to talk through pressing challenges and complex situations. While I regularly took her up on the offer, I often did so mid-crisis rather than at the beginning of a conundrum, crying out for help when I started drowning. One day, towards the end of my time in the Divinity School, I sheepishly showed up to her office again. I no longer remember the particular issue vexing me, but I do remember her response. She very casually said, “It'd be nice if you'd try coming to talk to me before things got messy, rather than after.” I never learned that lesson *with* Cynthia, but I learned it *from* her.

“Her courage and honesty have inspired me to go and do likewise.”

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

I'm still teasing Cynthia (back then, Cindy) about her vivacious “*Goood Moorningggg*” to which I awoke regularly in our shared student days back in the 1980s. Women had only recently moved into the House as Scholars, a fact to which we didn't pay much attention, and we had a whole DDH bathroom to ourselves (whoopee for women's bathrooms, rights, and school admission). But STILL—amid preparation for intense courses and the pressure of first-year MA exams, we women didn't always appreciate these happy greetings as we brushed teeth and gazed groggily into the fogged-up middle floor bathroom mirrors. To this day, this memory remains emblematic.... We managed to laugh our way through many stressful situations, and we're both the better for our shared humor. Cynthia, congratulations on receiving this recognition of Distinguished Alumna. So well-deserved. You are, indeed, distinguished, and I celebrate with you. AND I wish you many more wonderful good mornings.

Mark Miller-McLemore

I've known Cynthia since she began at the House as a first-year student. I always admired her congregational ministry, but from a distance, since she headed to the Northwest and I stayed in the Midwest. A few years after I came to the Disciples House at Vanderbilt, however, I saw the influence and impact she had as a pastor. One of her congregants changed vocations and traveled with his spouse all the way across the country to begin as a student at DDH-Vanderbilt, in large measure because of Cynthia. Her ability to model healthy and fruitful ministry showed him a new path. He and I had a valued friend in common. Thanks, Cynthia!

Marshall Dunn

Back when Cynthia and I were both serving congregations, we would often share some of the joys of our work. Cynthia made us part of a “club” of sorts: she called us “happy pastors,” and she continued that nickname for ME after she came to the Divinity School. Sadly, we knew far too many colleagues whose experiences were not nearly as positive, and we

never took ours for granted. It gives me great joy that Cynthia has been a huge influence on the lives of many pastors in training through her years at Chicago, and I would confidently predict that a great many of them are now far happier pastors because of her.

Peter Annweiler

“I am your door opener. Just show up.” I couldn't believe it, when I contacted Cynthia for my upcoming pastoral sabbatical in the spring of 2022. In the midst of the COVID restrictions of 2021, I met a woman who was approachable, full of optimism and faith. A trustful relationship, a great academic biography and motivating encounters: Cynthia became the inspiring “cornerstone” of my spring sabbatical. There were many important insights I took back to my pastoral work with *TelefonSeelsorge Deutschland*.

Elsa Marty

Cynthia Lindner has been able to train so many ministers—from so many diverse traditions—because she is incredibly gifted in the art of paying attention. Paying attention is not simply observing; it is an active, passionate endeavor. Her support gave me the strength and courage I needed to embrace my calling to ministry and learn how to articulate my own faith.

Chuck Blaisdell

Lunch at the dubiously named “Lizard's Thicket.”

Larry D. Bouchard

One of my little secrets is that I joined the Board of Trustees primarily because—well, no, not primarily, but certainly as a high secondary consideration—I wanted to see more theater in Chicago. I have frequently persuaded Cynthia to attend plays with me.

The best parts of these outings, however, are not really seeing the plays but enjoying the conversations. I have learned about modern dancers, about the fruits and perils of being public defenders, about counseling and psychotherapy, about listening well to student

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Yvonne Gilmore (2001) became Vice President and Chief of Staff of the Office of the General Minister and President on May 1.

Mark Lambert (2013) presided over the presentation of a festschrift to Professor Emerita Susan E. Schreiner at the Divinity School on May 22. Mark is a contributor to the volume, *Reading Certainty: Exegesis and Epistemology on the Threshold of Modernity*.



Jennifer Jesse (1997) retired in June as Professor Emerita of Philosophy and Religion from Truman State University after twenty-three years of teaching. She is enjoying life in Kirksville, Missouri, with her husband, **John Dungan** (1991). He continues as a disaster program specialist with the American Red Cross.

Lindner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

sermons, about the shapes ministry is taking in a post-postsecular world where spirituality may be a blessing or may be a commodity and, as ever, about the intriguing life of the Divinity School. And no matter how fraught with complications and ambiguities, Cindy embraces each topic with joy. Great joy—that is the dominant tonality with Cynthia Lindner! And we have joyous talks about the plays too, driving back to Hyde Park. Thanks for countless conversations of joy. Peggy and I look forward to many more.

Nina Giviyan-Kermani

As I think so many of my fellow MDiv students will attest, Cynthia Lindner was the person who made the Divinity School feel like a home, which often involved her having us all gathered in her actual home.

“Cynthia’s joy is contagious...”

Daette Lambert

She has encouraged me in every encounter, and I am grateful for her presence at DDH. Cynthia embodies what it means to live in community. She pours into those around her in a way that reminds us all what it means to live, to share life with one another in a meaningful way.

Rebecca Anderson

Cynthia and I have rarely seen a play together in which nothing horrible happens. The first show we saw together was Conor McPherson’s *Shining City*. Cynthia’s recommendation: it speaks to themes of trauma, both other people’s and our own. I was running late to meet her and in a rush, I piled into her car, we roared off to the theater, and hurried in. Along the way, she asked if I’d read the script she’d loaned me. “No! I never want to know anything about a show beforehand!” She seemed worried. “It’s not a... light-hearted play,” she said. That was an understatement. The end of the play is one of the most shocking things I’ve ever

experienced. For days afterward, I carried it around in my body. We’ve seen many plays since then, often stumbling out in the street in some state of shock after the curtain call. She’s a perfect person with whom to digest and debrief something thick with meaning.

Dan Arnold

I’ve occupied the office adjacent to the “ministry suite” on the 4th floor of Swift Hall since (can it really be...?) 2004, and it has always delighted me when Cynthia walks by when my door is open for office hours. If, as is likely, I’m in conversation with a student when Cynthia passes, she invariably greets the scene with a radiant smile of approval at the modest moment of community to which she is thus witness. I’ve always experienced these momentary interactions as among the many ways in which Cynthia makes evident her great appreciation for the work of teaching, and they never fail to make me feel good about doing that work.

Bruce D. Ervin

Cindy tells a great story of biblical honesty that has been an inspiration for my own pastoral work over the years. As I remember it, she was serving at First Christian Church in Albany, Oregon, where she was leading a Bible study on Revelation. Doing her best to convey the kind of critical scholarship that is encouraged at the Disciples Divinity House, she explained that one must understand the books of the Bible in their historical context, that Revelation tells us far more about the relationship between the Church and the Roman Empire at the end of the first century than it tells us about anything related to the eschaton, and that we have to read it through that lens. At which point a much respected member of the congregation, a woman in her 80s, said, “What the hell are you talking about?!” Cindy tried to say the same thing in a different way, but the woman interrupted her. “How come nobody has ever told me this before?!” The woman found this historical-critical approach to the Bible very helpful and



refreshing. But this was the first time that she (and probably others in the room) had ever heard of it. In the 1980s! So few of us liberal pastors have had the courage and the honesty to come clean with our parishioners about this approach to biblical scholarship that it remains unknown in so many of our churches. Cindy’s courage and honesty have inspired me for many years to go and do likewise! I could go on about what a great pastor Cindy was to my parents, Don and Jean Ervin, and how much I’ve appreciated her friendship and collegiality over the years. Cynthia Gano Lindner, you are a saint! Congratulations on being named the DDH Distinguished Alumna.

William Schweiker

It is a rare thing indeed to meet someone who seems so effortlessly to make life better for those lucky enough to be around her. In a world filled with endless chatter, endless animosity, and endless division, Cynthia is dedicated to joy in the labor of life.

Anonymous

Cynthia always wears very good scarves.

Also, Cynthia once came over to a table where I was sitting with other DDHers and asked what we were talking about. When she heard the response—“the ethics of eating lab grown human meat”—and chose to sit down and join the discussion rather than walk away, I knew she was one cool lady.

Cynthia’s joy is contagious, and it’s always so nice when a professor is willing to laugh about outlandish, slightly sacrilegious things with you. ✨

Anderson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

When I was growing up, my evangelical pastor dad translated the scripture he preached on every week, from the Greek, from the Hebrew. His take? “The thing is, Bec, the thing about translation, is that it just says the same thing.” *En archē en ho Logos* is “In the beginning was the word” is *En archē*.... It means what it says, says what it means.

By the time I got here, I already had done a lot of deconstructing. I was ready for what was next.

Peggy Shaw, when I knew her, was in her 50s. A tall, slender woman with a shock of red curls that flopped over on her forehead. She wore slim suits that made her look like a 1950s matinee idol. She produced plays like *You’re Just Like My Father* and *Menopausal Gentleman*. I met Peggy several times while I was an undergrad at Hampshire College, where she was an artist in residence.

In my last year of college, I was writing my thesis, a play called *WE COME HOME*, about growing up evangelical. I was putting it on for about the most secular, left-wing, self-stylized intellectual university community you can imagine. They weren’t Communists; they were atheist contrarians. These were the people for whom I was writing a play, a love song to my evangelical childhood. I was stuck. I didn’t know how to tell my story.

Then Peggy came back into town.

I thought I understood who Peggy was. She was this radical performer who had been part of queer women’s theater collectives that changed the face of theater in Philadelphia and New York City in the 70s. I knew Peggy could make things manifest, but I thought she’d left all that faith baggage behind. I didn’t think we were going to connect on this matter of Bible stories.

But I met with her. I told her what the problem was, wanting to get these Bible stories into the play. I told her that my committee chair, an otherwise very wise and intuitive woman, had suggested the Bible characters could be comic relief.

“No. No,” Peggy said. She could feel my love for the material. “If I say to you, ‘Mary in the garden,’ do you have an image for that?”

“Yes,” I said. “That one especially, more than anything else. That’s the center of my faith.”

She’s always there, and I can always wax poetic, and I did, at that small conference table with Peggy. Mary on Easter morning, looking for Jesus’ body, crying, stuck in that place, until she says to a stranger, “Just do me the one favor of telling me what you did with the body.”

And he says her name.

And she sees it’s him.

So yes, I have an image for that story.

But what I said was, “These people don’t share my frame of reference, they don’t share that image.”

And Peggy said, “That’s your play then. You gotta share your vocabulary with these people.”

Now I have language for it: A day of Pentecost. One of many, many Pentecosts. Peggy’s advice, like God’s own breath, filling up my lungs. Allowing me to tell the story of the faith, and giving me language to do it.

Now I have language for that day when I walked into Hope Church Boston. My experience there was another Pentecost, not because I received language to use but because I could understand them. Not a new Gospel, a new translation.

It turns out that part of what makes people “smart” here is learning a couple of specific languages. And I’m not talking just Hebrew, or Sanskrit, or Arabic, but the language of the academy, in which I never got totally fluent. (I speak conversational academy.) And specific theological language, which I did take to. Eschatology, hermeneutics, and, yes, *telos*, which I never use without thinking of Adam Frieberg. Who in fact said something shrugging and generous like, “It’s just a way people here talk.”

Each of you have learned, are learning, these languages. Some of it, I assure you, you’ll forget right away or never use again. Some of it, you’ll use on a first date and immediately regret it. But these are not the last languages you’ll learn. They are not the last you’ll need. This is not the only vocabulary you’ll want.

After graduating, I was for five years on Chicago’s North Shore, in a church full of

one-percenters, many of whom I still love deeply. But we did not speak the same languages. I’d preach, and one person would confront me saying I sounded like an evangelical, another, about the same sermon, that I sounded like a socialist. There were people who thought John 1—*en archē en ho Logos*—was creepy. There were people who looked at our differences and trying to make sense of them said, “Now, you’re a... vegetarian, right?” Trying to make sense of things they didn’t have the words for. As difficult a fit as that place was for me, it was an immersion course in learning how to speak other languages. For the sake of love.

Whether pastors or social workers or professors or activists, you will end up in places where you do not speak the native language. Where they do not speak yours. You will be in places where people find it very hard to understand you, where you find it very hard to understand them.

I see it at Gilead. People who show up and say, after the service, “What is this?”—and they are delighted. Because they’ve heard, maybe for the first time, something they understand. And other people, often clergy, show up and say, “Is this what you’re doing?” And I think, “That’s okay. I can see by your face we’re not speaking your language.”

It was still the height of summer when we took the final for the Greek intensive. Three weeks in, I’d already met people who all these years later are my family. But it was still all so brand new. I sat at my little desk, the tall windows cranked all the way open, and began to translate the passage. A few words into the final, my eyes filled up with tears. Because there she was. We were in John 20. I recognized her. In a language I could understand—at least a little bit of. And I was so glad for all that had happened. But that, like today, was just the beginning.

You will find your people, wherever you go. And they will find you. You will end up with your own litany of saints, in and of and through this place. That’s my belief, but it’s also my blessing, my hope, for you today. ✨

4

Sam Pearson
remembered with
major gift

PAGE 4



6

Bouchard on
*The Gospel
at Colonus*

PAGE 6

12

"One Great
Thing" about
Cynthia Lindner...

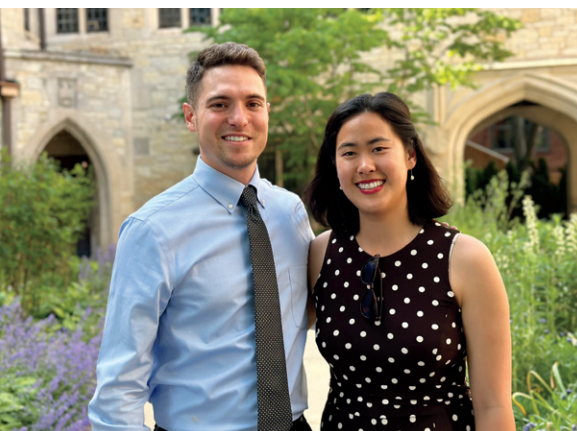
PAGE 12

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SCENES FROM CONVOCATION

DDH honored graduates during the Convocation service in the Chapel of the Holy Grail, followed by celebratory toasts.

