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.
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, transcending 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 refigured the visual and emotional experience of their photographs.

There were no right or wrong answers. What was profound about the idea of punctus 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 public religious leaders, each person discovered new things.

This year during Dean Culp’s sabbatical and under the direction of Administrator Daette Lambert, Liija Xie and I have been learning the things that make up the Disciples Divinity House, from the grand to the incidental. Simi-
larly, I hope this Bulletin gives you focus points for new discoveries and the powerful reaffirming 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

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.

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 Hood-
ing ceremony was held earlier that day in Rockefeller Chapel; the University of Chi-
cago’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.
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 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 (2000). Over the years, Sam and Mary connected with many Chinese students and families in St. Louis.

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Board of Trustees news

Tony Rodriguez joins board; Julian DeShazer 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 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 DeShazer, 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.

“"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.
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 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 disasterous 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 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 Sophocles. Breuer and Telson, and Court directors Charles Newell and Mark I. P. Hood, wagered these Pentecostal and Greek forms can infuse into one another a new life.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
Hord Owens honored

Teresa Hord Owens was recognized as Divinity School Alumna of the Year for 2023, and Erin James-Brown was honored as a Distinguished Divinity House Alumna.

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 “Terni” 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.

Colonus

Breuer hoped to redefine catharsis, transforming pity and fear into the ecstasy of “blessings,” 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 kidnapp Antigone and Ismene. To me, the arousals of pity and fear is more basic to Aristotelian 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 unvaulted 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; 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.

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,
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 games like Dungeons and Dragons where we turn a fantasy world into a multi-dimensional space. If characters end up close together in this new space, we know their characters are somehow related.

Therefore, while numbers and math help reveal the possibilities are infinite.

and 1.1, 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 relationships, as we saw earlier, between exercise equipment and protein powder, or perhaps even discover new and unforeseen ones.

Yet infinity 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 tinged 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.

While, therefore, numbers and math help reveal to us the possibility of infinity, it still remains our task, our privilege, and also our pleasure, to 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.

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.

Tristan Spangler-Dunning (AM) is the recipient of the Oregon E. Scott Enterprising Scholar Award. 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.

Delaney Beh (MDiv) has been named the M. Ray and Phyllis Schultz Scholarship 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.

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 I. Barnett Blakemore Scholarship.

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

2023–24 Entering Scholars announced

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 monk 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.
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.

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I’m still teasing Cynthia (back then, Cindy) about her vivacious “Good Morning!” 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 (whooppee for women’s bathrooms, rights, and school admission). But still—ample 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 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.

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, “I’ll be nice if you’d try coming to talk to me before things get messy, rather than after.” I never learned that lesson with Cynthia, but I learned it from her.

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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, “I’ll be nice if you’d try coming to talk to me before things get messy, rather than after.” I never learned that lesson with Cynthia, but I learned it from her.
Lindner  continued from page 11

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 intrigu ing 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 domi nant tenacity 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 Glivian-Kerman  

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 reaction to the play was exhilarating. Watching her best to convey the kind of critical scholarship is that 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 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 Alumna.

Bruce D. Ervin  

Cindy tells a great story of biblical honesty that has been an inspiration to my 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. Among her best was 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 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 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 challenges, she exudes serenity and endures by smiling at 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 evi
dence her great appreciation for the work of teaching, and they never fail to make me feel good about doing that work.

Anonymous  

Cynthia always wears very good scarves. Also, Cynthia once came over to a table where I was sitting with other DDHers and asked us 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.

Andersson  continued from page 1

When I was growing up, my evangelical pastor dad translated the scripture he preached out of Hebrew, from the Greek. He said, “The thing is, you thing about translation, is that it just says the same thing.” En arche Routes is "in the beginning" and the word is “En arch...” it means what it says, says what it means. By the time I got there, 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 flipped over her forehead. She wore slim suits that made her look very put together. Sometimes she had the looks of the people who made the Divinity School feel like a home, which often involved her having us all gathered in her actual home. In a world filled with endless challenges, she exudes serenity and endures by smiling at 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 evidence her great appreciation for the work of teaching, and they never fail to make me feel good about doing that work.

My last year of college, I was writing my senior thesis, a plan I had been talking about growing up evangelical. I was putting it on for about the most secular, left wing, self-styled intellectual university community you can imagine. They weren’t Communists; they were atheist contrarians. These were the people for whom I was writing 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 theater’s collective that changed the face of the 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 project was about. I brought her the bits of Bible stories into the play. I told her that my committee chair, an otherwise very wise and intuitive woman, had suggested the Bible chapters of which I was thinking. “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 project.”

She’s always there, and I can always wax poetic, and I did, at that small confer ence 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 that you did with the body.”

And she 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 get to share your vocabulary with these people.”

Now I have language for it: A Day of Pente cost. 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. 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 academic.) And specific theological language, which I did take to. Eschatology, hermeneutics, and, yes, telos, which I never use without thinking of Adam Freiberg. Who in fact said something like, “Something is going to happen, and 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 language. 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 arche en el 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 as fit as that place was for me, it was an immersion course in learning how to speak other languages. For the sake of the joke. When you’re a social worker 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 lan guage 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 through this place. That’s my belief, but also my blessing, my hope, for you today.
SCENES FROM CONVOCATION
DDH honored graduates during the Convocation service in the Chapel of the Holy Grail, followed by celebratory toasts.