

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# HERALD

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THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# HERALD

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# Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

At the center of Asbury Seminary's work is a conviction that theological education is never merely intellectual; it is formational. We do not exist only to confer degrees, fill classrooms, or keep an institution's legacy. We are a community that exists to serve the Church by preparing women and men who know the Scriptures, love Jesus Christ, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are ready to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

That kind of formation is not quick work. It is not a product we can manufacture. It is the slow, demanding, beautiful work of God among his people. God calls, reveals, and sends. We see it again and again in the history of the Church when the Spirit renews his people and then sends them into the world in holiness and mission.

This spring's Tent Meeting was a reminder that renewal is not nostalgia. We were not trying to recreate a bygone era. We were seeking God's presence. Alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends gathered to worship, pray, and ask the Lord to do among us what only he can do. And the Lord was gracious.

There are also seasons in the life of an institution when faithfulness requires clarity and boldness. In such moments, we must remember who we are, why we were founded, and what has been entrusted to us. Asbury Seminary's calling has not changed. Our mission has not changed. Our commitment to Scripture, orthodox Christianity, Wesleyan theology, holiness of heart and life, and the evangelization of the world remains the same. We are not guardians of a brand. We are stewards of a sacred trust.

That is why our confessional commitments matter. In a confused age, the Church needs leaders who can read the Word, preach the gospel, love the people of God, and stand within the great stream of orthodox, Protestant, Wesleyan faith. We need depth. We need holiness. We need courage.

This issue invites us to give thanks for faithful stewards. We honor retiring faculty whose classrooms, writings, counsel, prayers, and lives have shaped generations of students. The kingdom of God is built by saints who guard the good treasure and hand it on.

In this issue, you will also read about our move toward a debt-reducing model for ministry formation. This is not simply a financial decision. It is a missional one. We want students to say yes to God's call with confidence and freedom, and we want alumni and friends to join us in removing barriers for the next generation.

Thank you for praying for Asbury Seminary, supporting our students, and remaining a part of this community. May God form us all for faithfulness, for the sake of the Church and the glory of Jesus Christ.



**David F. Watson, Ph.D.**  
*President*





# Tent Meeting

## RENEWAL FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The first annual Tent Meeting at Asbury Theological Seminary was more than an event. It was a joyful reminder of who we are, where we come from, and what we believe God still desires to do among His people today.

From April 16–18, students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends of the Seminary, and believers from across Central Kentucky gathered under a large tent on our campus with a simple hope: to lift high the name of Jesus and remain open to the work of the Holy Spirit among us. Over those three evenings, God met us in meaningful and memorable ways.

The Tent Meeting was intentionally rooted in the Seminary's history and heritage. Our founder, Dr. Henry Clay Morrison, was himself a tent meeting preacher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dr. Morrison passionately called people to holiness of heart and life and emphasized the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in believers. In many ways, this gathering felt like both a remembrance and a renewal: a looking back with gratitude and a looking forward with expectancy.

Each evening carried a distinct emphasis centered on renewal.

On the opening night, Dr. Matt Reynolds from Spirit & Truth encouraged us to seek renewal in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. His message called attendees beyond mere activity or familiarity with ministry and invited us again into deep communion with Christ himself.

The second evening featured Dr. Kim Maas, who challenged us to seek renewal in our experience of the gifts of the Spirit, reminding us that spiritual gifts are always given for the good of others and the building up of the Church. Her teaching combined theological depth with pastoral warmth and encouraged the gathered community to remain both Spirit-filled and Christ-centered.

That same evening also reflected the partnership and friendship between Asbury Theological Seminary and Asbury University. A group of Asbury University students led worship, helping guide the congregation into heartfelt praise and prayer. We were also honored to receive greetings from Dr. Kevin Brown, president of Asbury University. Additionally, Seminary student Katherine Reilley offered a moving testimony of God's faithfulness and work in her life.

The final evening brought an unexpected change in





## April 16-18, 2026 • Wilmore, Kentucky

location. Due to forecasted rain, the gathering moved indoors to Estes Chapel. Yet the shift in venue did nothing to diminish the spirit of the evening. Our own Dr. Luther Oconer led us in seeking renewal for our callings and mission, reminding us that God renews His people not only personally, but also for participation in His mission to the world.

Throughout all three evenings, worship was led beautifully by Dr. Greg McElyea and a team drawn from the Seminary community. Their leadership helped create an atmosphere marked by reverence, joy, expectancy, and attentiveness to the Spirit's leading.

Prayer also became a central part of the gathering. Dr. Bud Simon helped train and lead prayer teams who were available each evening to pray with attendees. Night after night, dozens of people came forward seeking prayer for renewal, healing, guidance, empowerment, and deeper intimacy with Christ. Many testified to encountering the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in the here and now through these moments of prayer and ministry.

Beyond the services themselves, the Tent Meeting fostered new friendships and strengthened relationships

among Christians throughout Central Kentucky. Alumni reconnected. Students met pastors and ministry leaders. Community members who had never visited the Seminary before experienced the warmth and hospitality of the Asbury community. Offerings received during the event also helped support student scholarships, allowing this gathering to invest in the next generation of ministry leaders.

Most importantly, however, the Tent Meeting continually pointed beyond itself. The goal was never simply to host a successful event or recreate a nostalgic tradition. Our desire was to exalt Jesus Christ and seek the presence and power of the Holy Spirit together. By God's grace, that is exactly what happened.

As plans are already beginning for next year's Tent Meeting, we look forward with gratitude and anticipation, praying that this gathering will continue to serve as a meaningful expression of renewal, holiness, mission, and Spirit-filled worship for years to come.

**Rev. Dr. Matt Barnes**

*Vice President of Student Life and Formation*







# Calling, Revelation, Mission: The Burning Bush as Paradigm for Theological Formation

I am a Pentecostal. More than just a label, Pentecostalism is a way of life and a way of believing. In other words, the Spirit-filled life shapes my being, faith, and sense of belonging. Early in my life, my family and church community introduced me not only to the idea of the fire of the Spirit but also to the formation that emerges from encountering it. Fire often served as the doorway to further spiritual formation. This does not mean that faith was absent or secondary. On the contrary, to encounter God in the fire is to be shaped for faithful living.

This interplay between encountering the fire of the Spirit and formation in my life echoes Moses's encounter with the burning bush. I know you know the story. But can we revisit it once again and picture the scene? Though the reader knows that “the angel of the Lord appeared to him as blazing fire,” Moses does not know this yet. It was not his faith or knowledge of God that called his attention. Though he knew about Yahweh, it was the experience that drew him in—a burning fire that did not consume the bush. The narrative says, “So Moses said, ‘I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.’” The fiery presence of God made Moses “turn” his attention, and, curious about what he saw, he began to walk toward the burning bush.

The burning bush drew Moses closer, but when God saw that he had turned toward the bush, He spoke to Moses—not to quench his curiosity, but to fan it. God said, “Do not come near me; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing is holy ground.” While the burning bush piqued Moses' curiosity, that curiosity must be accompanied by revelation, the kind of revelation that would help him understand what he just saw and give him the confidence to stand in the presence of the living God.

This divine encounter was not a mere spectacle; it carried purpose. From this moment sprung three transformative outcomes:

- God calls Moses.
- God reveals Himself to Moses.
- God gives an assignment to Moses.

The pattern of encounter, revelation, and mission evident in Moses' experience mirrors my Pentecostal journey and resonates with Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. Asbury articulates its mission in the following way:

*Asbury Theological Seminary is a community called to prepare theologically educated, sanctified, Spirit-filled men and women to evangelize and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world through the love of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father.*

This statement reflects the same rhythm we observe in Exodus. First, there is a calling—a community called. Second, there is revelation—the Seminary's commitment to the theological education of sanctified men and women. Finally, there is a mission—to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

These parallels remind us that the fire of God is never for spectacle; it is for transformation and sending. The Spirit's fire ignites faith, deepens holiness, and empowers believers to love the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Like Moses, we are invited to turn toward the fire—not as passive observers but as willing participants in God's mission.

When we turn toward the fire of God, we are not merely transformed—we are commissioned. The burning bush teaches us that divine fire is purposeful: it calls, reveals, and sends. In the same way, Asbury's mission and the fire of God converge, inviting us to live Spirit-filled lives that proclaim Christ's love and holiness to the ends of the earth. May we, like Moses, turn aside, listen, and then go—carrying the fire that forms us into God's likeness to fulfill his mission.

I am excited that we at Asbury Seminary are invited in every season to this same kind of encounter. Let us take off our sandals and be just like Moses: curious about what we see but sensitive to God's call, open to his revelation, and ready for his mission.

**Dr. Wilmer Estrada Carrasquillo**  
*E. Stanley Jones, Associate Professor of Evangelism,  
School of Mission and Ministry*

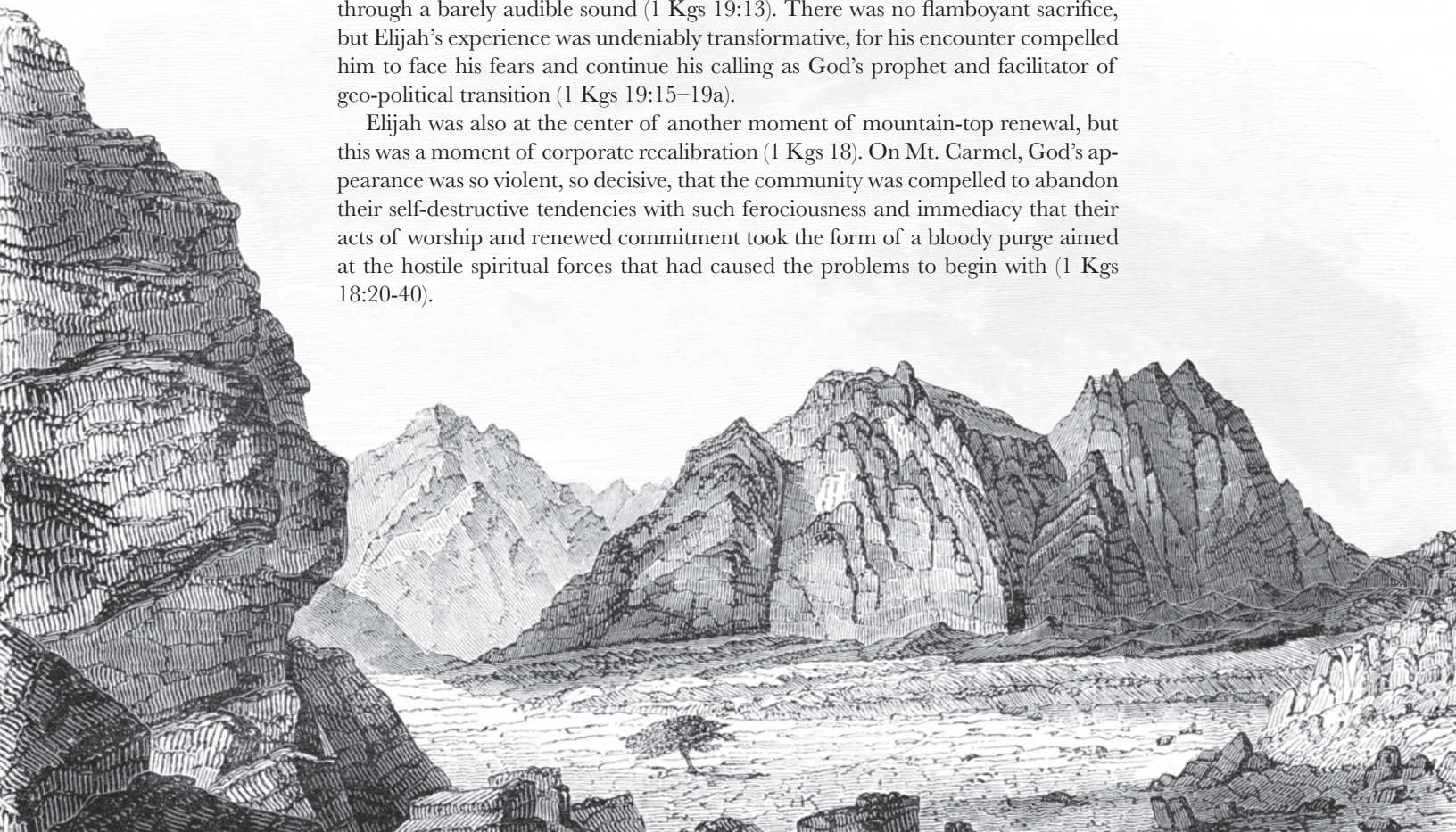


# Asbury Seminary and its Raison d'Être

This past April, Asbury Seminary sponsored “A Renewal for God’s People,” a three-night tent meeting held on the green where the old Betty Morrison building used to stand. And President Watson was forthright. This event sought to provide sacred space and time wherein one could “seek spiritual renewal.” Perhaps this would even facilitate a palpable encounter with the Lord’s presence. Put another way, Asbury sought to channel a sacred tradition within its Wesleyan/Holiness heritage that offered people the opportunity to experience God in a fresh way. However, let’s be clear. The scope is broader than just Asbury Seminary’s theological heritage. These plans connected the school to the Kingdom writ large by aligning with a Scriptural phenomenon: sacred spaces that facilitate some type of significant worship that is highlighted by not only an encounter with the Lord’s presence but also a renewed commitment to the Lord’s agenda.

Sinai is one of the more obvious locations where the convergence of worship and God’s tangible presence produces moments of renewed commitment. For example, Exodus 19–24 describes how the newly freed Israel worshipped their *suzerain* (a person or state with authority over another) through sacrifices and other rituals while being completely overwhelmed by the tangible presence of God Almighty (Exod 19:16–25). The result? An acceptance of their role as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and a treasured possession who were to manifest an *ethos* that testified to the holy creator of the world (Exod 19:1–8). Sinai was also the place where Elijah, in a moment of personal crisis and depression, experienced the presence of God through a barely audible sound (1 Kgs 19:13). There was no flamboyant sacrifice, but Elijah’s experience was undeniably transformative, for his encounter compelled him to face his fears and continue his calling as God’s prophet and facilitator of geo-political transition (1 Kgs 19:15–19a).

Elijah was also at the center of another moment of mountain-top renewal, but this was a moment of corporate recalibration (1 Kgs 18). On Mt. Carmel, God’s appearance was so violent, so decisive, that the community was compelled to abandon their self-destructive tendencies with such ferociousness and immediacy that their acts of worship and renewed commitment took the form of a bloody purge aimed at the hostile spiritual forces that had caused the problems to begin with (1 Kgs 18:20–40).





There are other moments of corporate renewal in the Old Testament. At Gilgal, the new nation worshipped the Lord by celebrating Passover and the rite of circumcision on the doorstep of the Promised Land to demonstrate their commitment to the initiative (Josh 5:1–12). Here, the presence of God took the form of a mysterious visitor whom Joshua interrogated (Josh 5:12–15). Yet because Israel’s obedience wavered during the Jericho/Ai engagements (Josh 6–7), the nation was compelled, very shortly after these engagements, to revisit their commitment. At Ebal therefore, in accordance with the spirit of Deuteronomy 27, the community renewed their role in the Lord’s agenda by a covenantal renewal ceremony (Josh 8:30–35). Moreover, it appears that this history of erratic behavior informed the final moment of renewal in Joshua. At Shechem, Joshua assembled the entire community and pushed them to confront their unfaithful tendencies and uncertainty to recommit – once again – to the covenantal ideal (Josh 24).

But, without a doubt, Jerusalem, particularly the temple complex, becomes the sacred space *par excellence*, where moments of renewal are not only anticipated but experienced. According to 1 Kings 8, the consecration of the newly constructed temple complex culminated in the processional of the Ark of the Covenant and an incapacitating appearance of God’s glory. Solomon then proceeded to confess that this complex would not be only the place where one could experience the Lord’s presence but that it would also symbolize the mutual commitment between the Lord, the dynasty, and the nation (1 Kgs 8:12–61). What’s more, the prophets would anticipate Jerusalem as something more than a place of Israelite renewal. It would eventually be the place where

the world would gather to experience the presence of the Lord and be transformed (e.g. Isa 60; Zech 8:1–23).

Nevertheless, something peculiar happens in the New Testament. The places where worship welcomes the presence of God and a renewed commitment to his agenda are sometimes rather mundane. Indeed, Sinai, Shechem, Gilgal, Mt. Carmel, and Jerusalem are all places with a certain degree of *gravitas*; people expected to meet God there, for a variety of reasons. However, Pentecost is experienced in an ordinary room in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–3). And it was in Caesarea, a city that testified to the glories of the Roman imperial system, that perhaps the greatest realization about the place of the Gentiles in God’s economy began to be fleshed out. In both places, God breaks in through a miraculous experience to clarify aspects of his divine plan. In both places, worship features.

Consequently, Asbury Seminary’s tent meeting places the institution firmly on the continuum of God’s *modus operandi*. Scripture describes how God encounters his people through various forms of worship, and those encounters can culminate in a renewed commitment to his agenda and the roles God would have for his people. And ultimately, this awareness is one of the things that makes the culture at Asbury Seminary so appealing. Asbury Seminary does not try to hang on to archaic trends of the past or manufacture experiences for self-aggrandizing purposes. Rather, the institution recognizes its *raison d’être* (reason for being) as a place of formation and renewal.

**Rev. Dr. David Schreiner**

*Associate Professor of Old Testament  
and Inductive Biblical Studies*







## Dr. Joseph Dongell

Dr. Joseph R. Dongell joined Asbury Theological Seminary's faculty in 1989 and has served for over three decades as a professor of Biblical Studies in the Inductive Bible Studies Department. He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, an M.A. in Classical Greek and Latin from the University of Kentucky, and an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary.

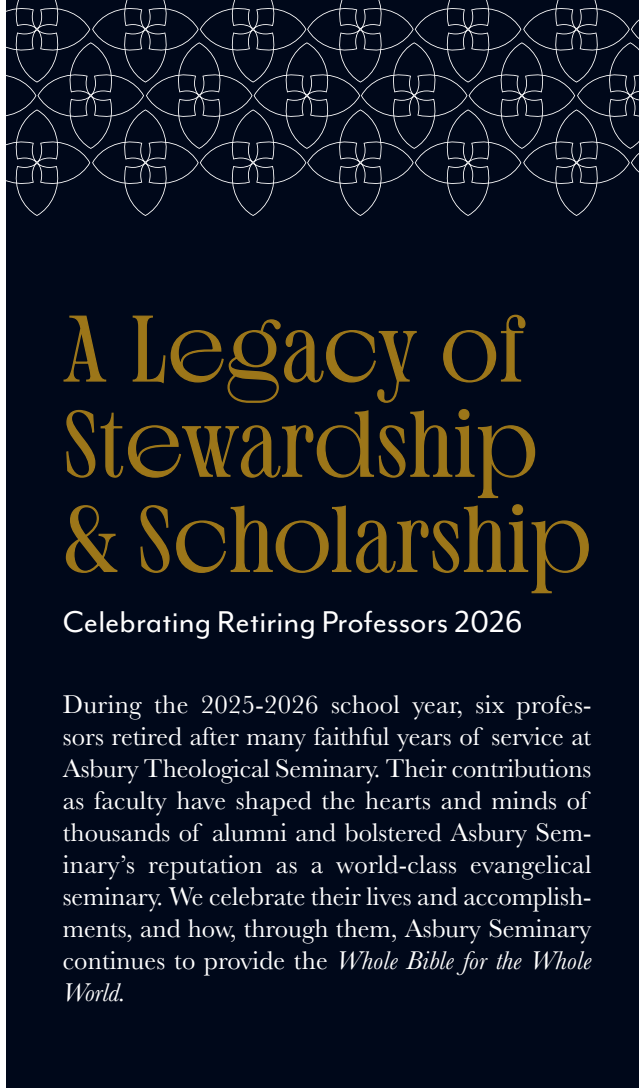
His scholarly specialty spans the Synoptic Gospels, Johannine literature, and the biblical languages. He is the author of *John: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Wesley Press) and co-author of *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (InterVarsity Press). An ordained elder in the Wesleyan Church, Dr. Dongell has maintained an active preaching and teaching ministry across multiple denominations and internationally. He received Asbury's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2016–17 and was named Southern Wesleyan University's Alumnus of the Year in 2006.

"I have had the privilege of taking several classes with Dr. Joseph Dongell during my time at Asbury Theological Seminary, and he remains one of the most influential professors from whom I have learned. Whether it was learning the complex grammar of New Testament Greek or learning how to use the method of Inductive Bible Study in the Gospel according to John, Dr. Dongell has truly exemplified the spirit of Wesleyan Biblical scholarship. He has demonstrated tremendous grace, hope and perseverance in times of great personal difficulty. I am tremendously grateful for both his scholarship and his Christian witness."

- Jake Boyd, former student

"Dr. Joe Dongell has been a most beloved professor at Asbury Seminary. Students have flocked to his classes and raved about his stimulating and insightful teaching and his pastoral orientation towards students. I have frequently seen student comments on evaluations saying that they wished that they could take every class at Asbury under Dr. Dongell. He will be tremendously missed."

- Dr. David Bauer



# A Legacy of Stewardship & Scholarship

## Celebrating Retiring Professors 2026

During the 2025-2026 school year, six professors retired after many faithful years of service at Asbury Theological Seminary. Their contributions as faculty have shaped the hearts and minds of thousands of alumni and bolstered Asbury Seminary's reputation as a world-class evangelical seminary. We celebrate their lives and accomplishments, and how, through them, Asbury Seminary continues to provide the *Whole Bible for the Whole World*.



## Dr. Stephen Martyn

Dr. Stephen L. Martyn joined Asbury Theological Seminary in 2004 as a professor of Christian Spirituality and Theology. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Formative Spirituality from Duquesne University and an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, and was named a John Wesley Fellow by A Foundation for Theological Education.





## Dr. J. Steven O'Malley

Dr. J. Steven O'Malley has served as the John T. Seamands Professor of Methodist Holiness History at Asbury Theological Seminary since 1993, making him one of the foremost scholars of Wesleyan, Pietist, and evangelical church history in the world. He holds a Ph.D. from Drew University and a B.D. from Yale University Divinity School.

His extensive publications include *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins* (Scarecrow Press), *On the Journey Home: The History of Mission in the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, and *For the Whole World: Gratitude in Mission at the Centenary of Asbury Theological Seminary* (Seedbed, 2023), the Seminary's official centennial history. He directed Asbury Seminary's Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements

and received a major research grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from United Theological Seminary (2007) and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Wesleyan Theological Society (2017).

"I first encountered Dr. O'Malley in 2019, not knowing how he had already spent longer than my lifetime serving the students of Asbury Theological Seminary. From that experience, I elected to take CH502 with him in 2023 as well, and found him to be just as exuberant and enthusiastic about the development of historic faithfulness to Christ Jesus. He has been an exemplar of adoration to our Lord and Savior, demonstrating what it means to love the Lord our God since he began here in 1985, bringing countless students into an experience of the beauty of the history of the Body of Christ." - Matthew Maresco, former student

"Steve O'Malley has been the singular leader of Pietist and German Methodist studies for decades. While a brilliant and meticulous scholar, it has been his continuing efforts to help the Church recognize the spiritual importance of these traditions to Wesley and to a solid understanding of revival and holiness that have been his most significant contributions. His service has helped Asbury Seminary maintain its continuity as various theological movements have come and gone." - Dr. James Thobaben

Before coming to Asbury, Dr. Martyn served nearly three decades as a United Methodist pastor across four annual conferences. His scholarly and pastoral passion has been the renewal of Wesleyan discipleship and lay ministry formation, centered on the Class Meeting model. He is the author of *Foundations: Understanding Spiritual Growth* (Biblical Training, 2020) and co-author of *Inside the Leader's Head* (Abingdon Press, 2008). Honored with Asbury's Faculty Award for Mentoring Excellence in 2021, Dr. Martyn has shaped the spiritual formation of students, clergy, and laypeople across the United States and abroad.

"It was a true gift to learn from Dr. Martyn. He taught my classmates and me valuable content that will stick with me forever. Yet, one of the greatest blessings of being in his class was the way in which he taught. He wasn't concerned simply with perfect work (though he wanted us at our best). Dr. Martyn was concerned with each of our hearts. Through his personal experience as a pastor, his love for academia, and his own relationship with God, he taught his students to love God deeply, to live with integrity, and to love the Church.

I am incredibly grateful for the time I got to learn from Dr. Martyn. I pray for more leaders like him in our world—leaders who commit to learn, love, and encourage all for the sake and love of God." - Kalia Mast, former student

"At first, I knew Steve as my Doctor of Ministry professor, then as my pastor, and finally as a faculty colleague; but Steve has always been a friend and mentor. In Colossians 2, Paul hopes the believers in Colossae will have both knowledge and wisdom that come from Christ. This is where Steve excels. He has deep knowledge in his academic discipline, yet he knows how to translate theological concepts into practical wisdom our students need to be faithful in life and in ministry. Why is it that so many students, staff, faculty, trustees, and friends of the seminary have chosen to seek out Steve for counsel? My hunch is that it's due to Steve's spiritual discernment, which comes from living intimately with the Lord every moment of every day." - Dr. Mike Voigts





## Dr. Jim Miller

Dr. James C. Miller joined Asbury Theological Seminary's faculty in 2008 following a distinguished international career in theological education. He holds a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from Union Theological Seminary/Presbyterian School of Christian Education and an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary.

Prior to Asbury, Dr. Miller taught for thirteen years at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya, and served as Dean of Doctoral Programs at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, receiving a Faculty Achievement Award there in 2006. His research focuses on the missional interpretation of the New Testament, early Christian identity, and the letters of Paul. He is the author of *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* (Society of Biblical Literature) and a Gospel of Luke commentary (SeedBed). From 2012–2016, he directed Asbury's Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements, overseeing a Luce Foundation-funded global research project.

"I call Dr. Miller my hero of hermeneutics! He first introduced me to the world of inductive Bible study, and it has transformed how I engage scripture and teach scripture. I may be one of a few students who has asked more questions after I graduated than when I was a student. Don't tell him, but he could charge me for extra tuition. He has become a dear friend and mentor, and I'm thankful for all he has imparted over the years."

- Dr. Brian Taylor, former student

"I've had the pleasure of working with Jim Miller on the faculty for the last 20 years. We had first met in the late 1990s during our doctoral studies at Union Seminary in Richmond, VA. I was thus pleased that we hired him to teach on the Orlando campus. I am grateful for his friendship, his great sense of humor, and his commitment to outstanding teaching. I also admire his work behind the scenes in the formation of his students. Despite working primarily with non-residential students for his entire career, he always found time to eat with students, share coffee, and pray."

- Dr. Brian Russell



## Dr. Michael Peterson

Dr. Michael L. Peterson is an internationally recognized philosopher of religion and has served as a professor of Philosophy at Asbury Theological Seminary since 2011. He holds a Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by Trinity Western University in 2010.

His landmark textbook *Reason and Religious Belief* (Oxford University Press, 5th ed.) has been translated into multiple languages and shaped the teaching of philosophy of religion worldwide. His many other books with Oxford, Cambridge, Notre Dame, and Wiley-Blackwell address the problem of evil, C. S. Lewis, science and religion, and Christian theism. Since 1982, he has served as Managing Editor of *Faith and Philosophy*, widely regarded as the premier journal in its field, and serves as General Editor of Cambridge University Press's "Problems of God" monograph series. He has received major grants from the Lilly Endowment, Pew Charitable Trust, and the John Templeton Foundation.

"Dr. Peterson has the rare virtue of being not only an astute philosopher but a talented educator as well: he has an impressive capacity to make intelligible the abstruse and intriguing the banal. His courses were always a joy, and his willingness to pursue student questions and invite the class into participation with his present research concerns gave his classes the impression of being truly catered towards the intellectual delights of the pupils."

- Ryan Bianchet, former student

"Mike Peterson is a wonderful and inspiring teacher and is a very loyal mentor. He taught generations of students, encouraging untold scores to go into ministry and dozens into further graduate studies. He is a scholar known through his many publications and contributions, and I don't know that we all begin to appreciate the depths and breadth of that scholarship. But I hope we also know him as a Christian brother and faithful witness. He has borne witness to the goodness of our Lord and the power of the gospel through his unfailing courage, steady friendships, commitment to excellence, and his unflagging pursuit of holiness."

- Dr. Thomas McCall





## Dr. Stephen Stratton

Dr. Stephen P. Stratton has served as a tenured professor of Counseling and Pastoral Care at Asbury Theological Seminary since 2010. He holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Auburn University and has been a licensed psychologist in Kentucky since 1991. He is also an Approved Supervisor for the Kentucky Board of Psychology and a Fellow with the Sexual and Gender Identity Institute.

His scholarly work integrates psychology and Christian faith, with particular expertise in human attachment, sexual and gender identity, and contemplative practice. He is a lead author of *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses* (InterVarsity Press, 2018). Dr. Stratton was named "Psychologist of the Year" by the Kentucky Psychological Association in 2010, received the "Distinguished Member Award" from the Christian Association for Psychological Studies in 2017, and earned Asbury's Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award in both 2012 and 2020.

"Dr. Stratton truly embodied for us what it means to be a faith-integrated professional. He always treated his students with respect and dignity and as equals, despite the fact that he is incredibly accomplished, accoladed, and recognized. His retirement, though well deserved and to be greatly celebrated, is a loss for not just the School of Counseling at Asbury but for the field of counseling and psychology as a whole. We wish you a happy retirement, Dr. Stratton, and hope you know how much you will be missed. You have brought to Asbury Seminary an exemplary standard for excellence, humility, and a quiet joy that will not be easily met, but we will do our best to try and make you proud."  
- Nalinee, former student

"Seven years before Steve hired me as the Manager at the Van Tatenhove Center for Counseling, he encouraged me to pursue counselor education as my vocation. At that point, I was a master's degree student who came from a family without college education and with nominal Christianity. However, Steve's encouragement proved to be the Lord's calling. Gratefully, I have gotten to work closely with him over the years. He has been my professor, mentor, colleague, and friend who has taught me how to temper life with conviction, humor, and Christ-like compassion for myself and others."  
- Christina Dillon



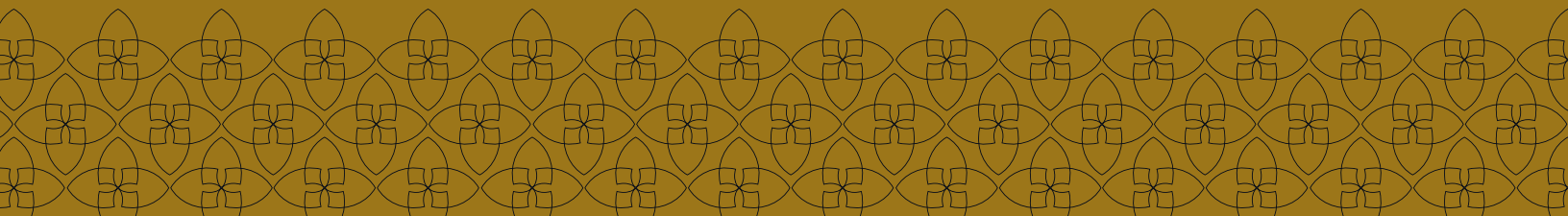
*Back Row from Left to Right: Dr. John Ragsdale and Dr. David F. Watson. Front Row from Left to Right: Dr. Joseph Dongell, Dr. Stephen Marlyn, Dr. J. Steven O'Malley, Dr. Michael Peterson, and Dr. Stephen Stratton.*

## Honor Their Legacy

These six retiring faculty members have shaped generations of faithful leaders. You can help carry that legacy forward by making a gift to the Scholarship Fund in their honor.



Give today at  
[asbury.to/tributegift](https://asbury.to/tributegift)





# Wesleyan Confessionalism & Theological Education

**“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”**

**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

How Wesleyans relate to doctrinal statements is a matter of ongoing debate. According to one stream of interpretation, Methodists are “non-confessional.” Paul Chilcote’s recent entry in the St Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology is a good example of this view. “Methodists do not view these standards and landmark documents [25 Articles, EUB Confession of Faith, et al.] as a system of formal theology to be imposed on the church in dogmatic fashion. They do not understand themselves to be a ‘confessional’ tradition despite their adherence to the Apostles’ Creed.” For those familiar with recent Methodist history, it is not difficult to hear echoes of *Our Theological Task*: “our present existing and established standards of doctrine. . . are not to be construed literally and juridically.”

However, there is an older stream of the Wesleyan tradition that strikes a very different note. In his essay, “Methodist Doctrine,” the great British Methodist theologian William Burt Pope drew a sharp contrast between “the mystical Pietists of Germany” who, “threw off, to a great extent, the fetters of dogmatic creed” and the Methodist revival. While just as concerned with the perfection of the inner life, Methodism nevertheless “holds the Articles of the Church from which it sprang; holds them, that is, in their purely

doctrinal statements.” When combined with its own theological emphases and distinctives, the result was “what may now be called a set type of confessional theology.” Nor was Pope alone in so understanding Methodism. The same posture toward doctrinal standards can be found across the Methodist theologians of the 19th century—Watson, Raymond, Miley, and others.

Asbury Theological Seminary stands in this older tradition, a tradition we could call “Wesleyan Confessionalism.” Asbury’s historic position is clearly articulated in Frank Bateman Stanger’s inaugural presidential address: “This is a seminary with a confessional theology. We have a formalized statement of beliefs which we believe consistent with historic Christianity. We make these beliefs the springboard of all our theological thinking and activity in all our conscientious efforts to be relevant. We find our statement of faith the norm for our examination of all else.” He’d return to the same theme two decades later in a final interview with the Herald upon his retirement. Asked how Asbury was able to maintain its Wesleyan identity across the turbulent years of the 1960s and 70s, Stanger responded by pointing to the Seminary’s confessional theological commitments.

What does it mean to be a confessional seminary? In short, it is a form of theological education that is grounded in and nourished by a living ecclesial tradition and carried out within the theological parameters of a statement of faith. When done well, confessional theological education provides a coherent theological vision to its students. Notice that “coherent” does not necessarily mean uniform! A significant diversity of perspectives can operate within the same parameters of a statement of faith. However, the confession ensures that—on the fundamental doctrines—students do not receive a muddle of contradictory theologies. More importantly, it is a coherent theological vision that is grounded in



and ordered toward a living ecclesial tradition. Confessional theological education is carried out in service to the Church.

Confessional theological education cultivates a disposition of stewardship. And this points to something true of orthodox theology and the work of the ministry more generally: it is a custodial task. Ministers of the gospel are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” They are charged with guarding, preserving, and passing on what has been entrusted to them. The description found in the first Bulletin of Asbury Theological Seminary (1923-1924) underscores this facet with particular clarity: “Asbury Theological Seminary regards it fundamental to maintain in all its teachings the doctrines of the faith which have come down to us from the Apostles and the Fathers, the faith that has been tested through the ages, the faith that gave birth to the Reformation and that in the latter days brought on the great Evangelical Revival in the days of John Wesley.” The Bulletin goes on to fill out these three historic touchstones: it is “the faith held by Paul the Apostle, John the Divine, Augustine and Athanasius among the Fathers, Luther the Reformer, and Wesley the Methodist.” In other words, it is orthodox, Protestant, and Wesleyan. It is orthodox in that it affirms the classical Christian doctrines articulated in the

ecumenical creeds of the undivided church; it is Protestant in that it affirms the Reformation doctrines of justification by faith and the authority and sufficiency of Scripture; and it is Wesleyan, in that it is committed to the Wesleyan vision of the Christian life, especially the doctrines of entire sanctification and the witness of the Spirit.

And note especially the language of stewardship—“maintain” what has “come down to us.” Confessions are instruments aimed at faithful stewardship. This is not to say that subscription to a confession is a sufficient condition for fidelity—far from it! Wesley would be the first to warn of the danger of having a form of godliness but denying its power. Mere formalism is as much a threat to fidelity as heterodoxy. But neither would Wesley’s conjunctive theology throw off confessions (or “the fetters of dogmatic creed”) in favor of mere heart religion. We must have both. Indeed, it is arguably one of the strengths of Wesleyan Confessionalism that it is more attuned to the necessity of integrating orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy than other Protestant confessional traditions.

In his final interview, President Stanger stated, “I think the future of the concept of confessional theological education is guaranteed. Of course, you get in trouble the minute you use the word guarantee.” He was right; “guaranteed” is a precarious word to use when talking about the future. And much has changed in North American theological education since 1982. But now no less than then, Asbury Theological Seminary is committed to the historic Christian faith: to faithfully stewarding the mysteries of God, and to training faithful stewards committed to spreading scriptural holiness throughout the world.

#### **Dr. Joel Chopp**

*Assistant Professor of Historical  
and Systematic Theology*





## Finding Your Calling: A Conversation with Jeremy Fulda

**Jeremy Fulda serves as Director of the Career and Calling Center and Director of Strategy and Operations for the Beeson Center at Asbury Theological Seminary. He spoke with us about his winding road to Wilmore, what it's like to help students navigate their vocational calling, and the vision taking shape for the future of the Beeson Center.**

### **Tell us about your background and the early development of your faith.**

I was originally born in Fort Worth, Texas, but my dad was in the oil business, and our family moved to Tulsa when I was in first grade. My parents were both raised Catholic, and when I was in middle school, my brother got really involved in church, and my parents started attending regularly. We ended up at a Presbyterian church called Kirk of the Hills. My faith at that point was maybe not very deep, but by the time I hit high school, I had some amazing youth ministers who really poured into me. That transition from eighth grade into ninth grade was a big one. I started to take my faith a lot more seriously, got plugged in, and started reading my Bible regularly.

My mom started a program in the late-'90s for children with special needs in the church, at a time when, honestly, churches didn't do that very much. She got really involved and eventually went on to work at the church full-time. So faith became something that ran pretty deep in our family.

### **How did you end up at Asbury Seminary?**

I went to Oklahoma State for undergrad—political science—but I was

heavily involved in philanthropic organizations, putting on events and fundraisers. I really enjoyed it, so I got accepted into a graduate program at George Washington University for event coordinating. I thought I was going. But the day of graduation, I literally left for Europe to go backpacking for a month. When I came back, I knew I wasn't supposed to go to George Washington. I felt like the Lord was calling me into ministry.

So I took a year off and did camping ministry at a place called New Life Ranch, on the border between Oklahoma and Arkansas. I say that was my time of learning hospitality; it was serving nonstop. But during that year, God really spoke to me and said, "Hey, you enjoy serving, but you need something deeper. You need a theological education."

I started reaching out to people who were influential in my life. My head pastor, who was Presbyterian, wanted me to look at Fuller. Another pastor I knew well was an Asbury Seminary grad. When I came out and visited Wilmore, the only way I can describe it is that I stepped into Estes Chapel, sat midway through a chapel service, and I just knew this would be home. It surprised my parents a little. I was used to larger cities, and they thought, "That's kind of a small place for him."

But I moved up here in the fall of 2007 and started the Master of Divinity. After my first year, I added the Master of Mental Health Counseling.

### **What was the seminary experience like for you?**

My time at Asbury Seminary was as formational in the classroom as it was in the community. I was in a small group led by Dr. Seamands that was really, really impactful. Peg Hutchins was in my life as a great mentor. She helped me work through some things in order to make it on the other side of seminary. And I got to see, even overseas, the reach of what Asbury does. I was serving in Taiwan, and I walked into a Mennonite church and sat down. The entire service order was just... familiar. Afterward, I went up to talk to the pastor, and it turned out he was a Taiwanese pastor who had gotten his Doctor of Ministry from here. Even in a small town on the east coast of Taiwan, Asbury Seminary had a reach.

### **You spent several years as a missionary in Taiwan. What drew you there, and what brought you back?**

Meredith, my wife, and I met here at the Seminary in 2010. She had been church planting in Spain and came

back to oversee the OMS Student Center while she prepared to go to Taiwan to work in an orphanage. We overlapped for literally four months. We met in September, went on our first date in October, and by December, I'm thinking, I've got to introduce her to my family before she leaves for a year. We did long distance through 2011. I flew out to Taiwan in November, saw her ministry setting, and asked her to marry me. A week after graduation, we got married.

We left for Taiwan in October of 2014. Meredith was about seven, almost eight months pregnant with our first. Our oldest, Maddox, was born about four weeks after we arrived. Our second daughter, Emery, was born in 2016. We had committed to five years. I did sports outreach in Aboriginal villages—basketball, mostly. Even where my language was poor, they understood basketball. Meredith did a lot of ESL work. But we had some health challenges. I was hospitalized for about a month with a tropical illness they didn't really understand, then again for about a month when I had my gallbladder removed, with which there were complications. Meredith had some arrhythmia issues near the end. We came home in February of 2019.

Transitioning out of ministry is always challenging. You have to provide and care for your family, but you're also having to acknowledge and deal with the wounds, the hurt, the stress you endured. I went back to Tulsa and became Director of Global Outreach at First United Methodist Church. By September of 2019, about five months in, I was driving to work, and I just felt it: Oh, this is what it feels like to be normal again. When you're overseas, sometimes your new normal becomes one of perpetual stress. I finally felt like my body, my rhythms—this is what it was like before.

### **What led you to the Career and Calling Center?**

I started seeing a lot of young ministry leaders get into the church but not stay long. I felt like the pipeline was broken, like some of these younger leaders weren't really prepared, or their expecta-

tations didn't match the reality. At that time, I felt like the Lord was saying, "If you see there's a problem, go to the beginning of the pipeline."

When someone from Asbury reached out about a new position as Director of Career and Calling, it resonated. What does it look like to come alongside a historical, theological institution like Asbury, which prepares people biblically, theologically, and holistically for ministry, and help continue to support that work?

### **What does the Career and Calling Center actually do?**

We built the center around three areas: clarity, career development, and connection. We know that roughly 10 to 12 percent of students struggle with their calling at some point—with the big "C" calling, meaning whether they're called to ministry at all. And somewhere between 20 and 25 percent struggle with their secondary call. They know they're called to ministry, they just don't know if it's going to be pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, nonprofit work, or something else.

One of the things that's taken off more than I expected is what we call the Birkman Method. A donor made a donation to integrate it with the Seminary, so we got people certified, and we've been offering it to students, staff, faculty, and alumni for free. You take a questionnaire, and then we walk through it together for about an hour or an hour and a half. It helps people learn what interests and motivates them, how they behave, and what they need out of an environment to flourish. If they don't get what they need, it identifies what their stress behaviors are. I don't even advertise it much; it's mostly word of mouth, but we've now had probably over 200 students take it, and over 75 staff members as well.

### **And now you've taken on a new role with the Beeson Center. What does that look like?**

Dr. Jessica LaGrone transitioned into the role of Executive Director of the Beeson Center at the end of 2025, and at the beginning of this year, we

started discussing moving the Career and Calling Center under the Beeson Center and transitioning my role. I'm now Director of Strategy and Operations for the Beeson Center, while still overseeing the Career and Calling Center.

One of the major initiatives we're developing right now is a platform through the Beeson Center that will host both community and content. We envision it as a space where individuals, both before and after seminary, can connect with one another and engage with rich Wesleyan resources on preaching and leadership. Over time, we also aim to expand offerings to include coaching, webinars, and conferences, creating a hub for lifelong growth and connection.

Much of my time right now is spent collaborating with a cross-departmental team across the seminary to design and build this platform from the ground up. Our goal is to create a community-first experience where meaningful relationships are at the center, while also providing easy access to trusted Wesleyan resources on preaching and leadership.

I work with a lot of students, especially female students, who say that as they were exploring their calling, it was so hard to find Wesleyan resources that affirm the calling they have. My hope is that the Beeson Center can continue to grow these resources and provide a digital space where more people can access them. And for some of those people, that becomes an on-ramp to certificates, to graduate work, to something deeper with Asbury Seminary.

I live in a tension, though. I think that digital reach is important, but I also know firsthand how transformational and essential in-person community is for spiritual formation. I've seen it especially in what a blessing this community here in Wilmore is. My hope is that everybody would have the opportunity to come and experience it. I know that's not always going to be the case, but the more people that can hear about Asbury and get a taste of what we offer, the more opportunity there is for some of them to go deeper.



## VOICES

**JEANNINE BRABON**

*Former Missionary, OMS International.*

*Founder, Asociacion Confraternidad Carcelaria de Antioquia (Prison Fellowship).*

*Master of Arts in Religion and Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1981.*

At 11 years old, Jeannine Brabon had already spent her childhood as a missionary kid in Colombia. Her family traveled to the United States on furlough and attended a missionary conference at which Bill Gilliam, an Asbury Seminary graduate, spoke to the youth. He gave an invitation to receive Christ as Lord, but Jeannine, who had already received Christ, instead felt affirmation of a calling to mission work.

However, this calling was not exactly joyful. At that time in Colombia, the Protestant churches were greatly persecuted by local Roman Catholics who labeled them heretics. “I can remember going back home to my grandma’s that night and crying myself to sleep,” Jeannine says. “I grew up in the persecuted church in Colombia, and for me, I can remember students coming with their heads split open with machetes from being out in ministry.”

Jeannine knew that she would have to suffer for the sake of the Lord. Thankfully, she had great preparation from her parents. They challenged her to memorize scripture, including the entire book of Philippians, and they

discipled her well. While attending boarding school in Florida, she felt the Lord directing her to pray often. She began praying every hour of the day and then began collecting index cards with the names of people she was praying for regularly. The number of names eventually totaled over 2,000. “I realized the power of prayer. I saw it,” Jeannine says. “I mean, God would burden me. I’d be praying for a missionary... and then I’d get word from the field [of] a near accident that could have easily happened if I hadn’t been praying. And so God really encouraged me at an early age to the importance of prayer.”

That call to be faithful and fervent in prayer followed Jeannine to Asbury College (now University). She felt burdened to pray for the school and for issues facing the campus at the time. Then, during her junior year, the monumental 1970 revival took place at Asbury College. “Everybody was surprised. I wasn’t because I’d been praying for it for nearly three years,” Jeannine says.

She continues, “It was incredible... to see the people that I knew were real

troublemakers on campus go down at midnight to the altar and then stand up and give a testimony.” She specifically remembers one fellow student who had such an experience and went on to lead a ministry to former prisoners. That is just one story of radical transformation among many. “It’s just absolutely amazing what God did,” Jeannine says.

Jeannine gained an appreciation for biblical Greek and Hebrew, largely inspired by Dr. Dennis Kinlaw’s chapel teachings. Her time at Asbury Seminary also fostered her love for the biblical languages. Though she originally focused on Greek out of fear of Hebrew, she eventually fell in love with the dominant Old Testament language. “I’m in Hebrew every day,” Jeannine says. “I mean, I’ve been out of seminary 40 years, but I still read from the text every day and I carry it on my phone.”



Visit [asbury.to/brabon](https://asbury.to/brabon)  
to view the full interview.



## PAUL LAWLER

*Senior Pastor, Christ Methodist Church, Memphis, TN.  
M.Div., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1988.*

Though Paul Lawler sensed the pull of ministry as early as age eight in the halls of his childhood Methodist church, his teenage and young adult years consisted of skepticism. “I navigated into vague deism and then agnosticism,” Paul says. “I struggled to wrap my head around how a man going to a cross had anything to do with me.”

However, his beliefs began to change during his sophomore year at the University of Alabama. Alone in his bedroom, Paul had a life-altering conversion experience. “I knew it was Jesus,” he says. “That part was very clear.”

Within three months, Paul sensed an intense inner calling to ministry through discernment and prayer, which he describes as a “download” from the Holy Spirit. “I couldn’t stop talking about God,” Paul says. “My peers would even say to me, ‘Maybe you’re supposed to be a pastor.’”

Coming from a liberal church background where he had never been taught to read the Bible, Paul was green. “I couldn’t quote John 3:16 when I became a Christian,” he says.

“I was also just hungry.” His pastor, Rev. Clark Pope, encouraged him to pursue deeper formation and suggested transferring to Asbury College (now University).

Paul’s time at Asbury College changed his life. “I went from very little Christian community to community on steroids,” he says. “Between a local church and being in a vibrant Christian community, I began to experience some gracious reinforcement of what God was confirming inwardly.”

Though he struggled to keep up in introductory Bible classes, it was the community and spiritual intensity that transformed him. “People prayed for one another. There were moments when the Holy Spirit showed up. I learned to treasure the manifest presence of God,” he says.

Additionally, Paul immersed himself in Scripture. “I was drinking out of a fire hydrant,” he says. “I was in holy shock about how relevant and powerful the Bible was. I thought, why didn’t somebody tell me this?”

Paul also sensed a deeper calling—not just to be a pastor, but to be a catalyst for church renewal. “The

**Asbury Seminary Voices** is a collection of alumni, student and faculty stories designed to GLORIFY GOD and inspire YOU! See the full version of these stories and many more at [asbury.to/voices](https://asbury.to/voices)

tension theological pluralism presents I knew would not be tenable,” he says. “I had a sense that with my pastoral call, I would be a part of many people who would serve to help bring that to a head and birth a new expression of Methodism.”

When it came time for seminary, Paul chose Asbury Theological Seminary. His decision wasn’t only theological; it was sociological and missional. “The only movements that make an impact in history have a strong identity,” he says. “Asbury had an edge in the sword, it has that kind of DNA.”

While at Asbury Seminary, Paul took a church planting class and began sensing that God wanted him to plant a church. Immediately, he knew he had to act. “I felt like a caged lion. I had to get out and do this,” he says.

He planted a church in Huntsville, Alabama, and served there for 16 years. Later, he led a significant revitalization at Christ Church in Birmingham, where he served for another 15 years. That congregation committed to planting 100 churches globally and ended up planting over 700. “These are organic expressions of church... particularly among the persecuted.”

Paul also helped cultivate a discipleship culture based on Ephesians 4, equipping the saints to minister beyond the church. “They disciplined one another and began to disciple outside the church walls,” Paul says. “It was a very fruitful few years.”

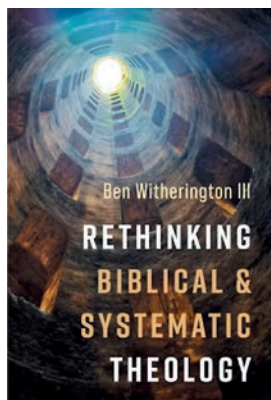


Visit [asbury.to/lawler](https://asbury.to/lawler)  
to view the full interview.





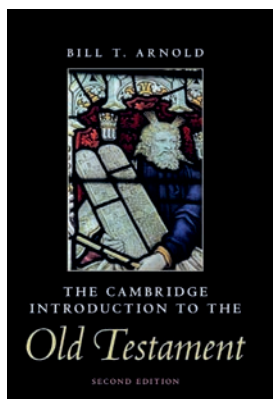
## Faculty Publications



### Rethinking Biblical and Systematic Theology

BEN WITHERINGTON III

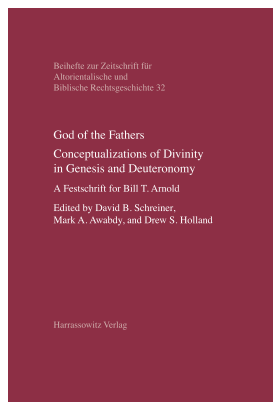
Biblical theology and systematic theology are distinct disciplines, and confusing the two has serious consequences for how we read Scripture. In this landmark work, Dr. Witherington examines the pitfalls that arise when abstract doctrines are lifted from the Bible's narrative framework, or when systematic theology fails to reckon with the full weight of Scripture's genres, progressive revelation, and historical contexts. Witherington does not simply identify the problems; he maps a more faithful path forward, showing how both disciplines can be practiced with rigor and insight.



### The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Testament (Second Edition)

BILL ARNOLD

Written for students with no prior background in biblical studies, this accessible and richly illustrated textbook opens the world of Israel's scriptures through literary, historical, and theological lenses. A distinctive feature of the volume is its tracing of monotheism as it first emerges in the Old Testament, exploring its enduring significance for Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and secular readers alike. This second edition features expanded discussions on the history of biblical scholarship, modern methods of interpretation, and wisdom literature, making it an ideal entry point into one of the most foundational texts of human civilization.



### God of the Fathers: Conceptualizations of Divinity in Genesis and Deuteronomy, A Festschrift for Bill T. Arnold

EDITED BY DAVID SCHREINER, MARK AWABDY, AND DREW HOLLAND

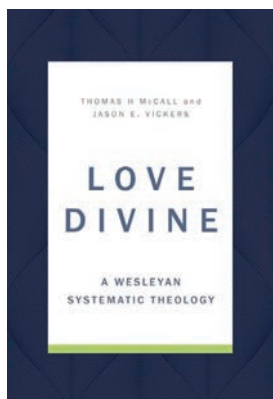
A Festschrift is a scholarly tribute—a collection of writings gathered to honor a life's work. This volume honors Dr. Bill T. Arnold, the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Seminary, whose decades of scholarship have illuminated the Pentateuch for students and scholars alike. Featuring contributions from 23 leading voices in biblical studies, including former students of Dr. Arnold, the collection explores how divinity is conceptualized in Genesis and Deuteronomy, engaging the questions and texts that have defined Dr. Arnold's career.



## Faith and Fire: Methodism as a Move of God

DAVID WATSON AND KEVIN WATSON

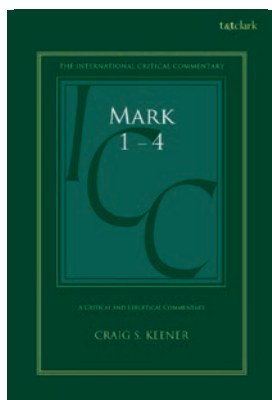
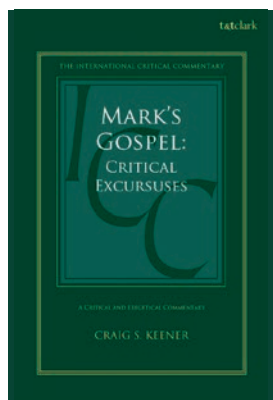
Methodism—the movement that reshaped Christianity in the eighteenth century—has waxed and waned across the centuries, but Watson and Watson argue its best days may still be ahead. Drawing on Scripture, the teachings of the Wesleys, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, this book makes the case for retrieving the convictions and practices that gave early Methodism its power while remaining attentive to what God is doing today. It is a call for renewal rooted in heritage: the embers, they write, must be fanned into flame.



## Love Divine: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology

THOMAS MCCALL AND JASON VICKERS

What does it mean to do theology from a distinctly Wesleyan perspective? This comprehensive volume introduces readers to the full range of Christian doctrine—creation, sin, Christology, pneumatology, salvation, ecclesiology, eschatology, and more—while engaging each topic through the lens of the Wesleyan tradition. Grounded in Scripture, committed to the classical creeds, and conversant with Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant voices, the book also addresses common objections to orthodox Christian teaching, making it both a reliable reference and an accessible entry point into the field. Written for students preparing for ministry and anyone seeking to understand what is most distinctive about Wesleyan theology, Love Divine is a landmark contribution to the tradition.



## Mark 1–4, Mark 5–9, and Mark's Gospel: Critical Excursuses (International Critical Commentary)

CRAIG KEENER

The International Critical Commentary series is among the most prestigious in biblical scholarship, and Dr. Keener's multi-volume contribution on the Gospel of Mark is a landmark in Markan studies. Bringing together linguistic, textual, archaeological, historical, literary, and theological analysis, these first two volumes offer an exhaustive and illuminating examination of Mark's opening nine chapters. Keener incorporates the latest evidence and methods while maintaining the series' commitment to scholarly rigor unbound by any single theological approach. The result is an invaluable resource for serious students of the New Testament.





# Strengthening the Call:

Asbury Seminary Moves  
Toward a Debt-Reducing  
Model for Ministry Formation

Asbury Theological Seminary has always existed to prepare women and men for faithful ministry in the Church and throughout the world. Since its founding in 1923, that mission has required courage, conviction, and a willingness to trust God for the resources needed to form leaders for the next generation.

In that same spirit, Asbury Seminary will transition away from processing federal student loans, commonly known as Title IV funding, effective May 2027. The decision reflects a proactive financial model the Seminary has been building toward for years—one designed to reduce student debt, expand access to theological education, and strengthen long-term ministry formation.

For students called to ministry, financial decisions carry significant weight. Many will serve in churches, mission fields, counseling settings, nonprofit organizations, schools, and communities where compensation may be modest. Some arrive at Asbury Seminary already carrying undergraduate debt. Asbury Seminary's goal is to ensure that answering God's call does not require students to take on additional federal borrowing that may limit their freedom to serve after graduation.

"Asbury Theological Seminary has remained steadfast in teaching the unchanging truth of orthodox Christianity," said President David F. Watson. "Our core commitments are the same today as they have been for more than a century. We continue our mission to train those called to ministry and to support them in doing so by increasing their financial sustainability. By strengthening scholarships and reducing reliance on loans, we are helping students say yes to ministry with confidence, courage, and hope."

Rather than relying on federal loans as a funding pathway for theological education, the Seminary is strengthening a model centered on scholarships, alumni

and friends' generosity, loan-repayment education, and other financial options better suited to the realities of students preparing for ministry today. This approach is intended not only to help students begin seminary but also to support them beyond commencement as they enter lives of service.

The transition comes at a time when federal education funding is undergoing significant change, and institutions across theological education are seeking sustainable models for the future. Asbury Seminary is choosing to lead from its mission, building a blueprint for affordability and access while remaining a fully accredited institution.

The Seminary's student body has already seen a steady decline in reliance on federal student loans. In recent years, the percentage of students using federal funding has dropped from approximately 30 percent to about 17 percent. This progress has been made possible by the faithful generosity of friends and alumni, careful institutional planning, a strong endowment, and an expanded commitment to helping students understand the long-term impact of educational debt.

For alumni, this moment reflects a familiar pattern in Asbury Seminary's story. H.C. Morrison founded the Seminary in 1923 with three students and a vision much larger than his resources. More than a century later, Asbury Seminary continues to trust God while making bold, practical decisions that serve the Church and strengthen those called to ministry.

Asbury Seminary remains committed to preparing and sending forth well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministers to spread scriptural holiness around the world. This financial transition is one more expression of that calling: removing barriers, supporting students, and helping future graduates go wherever God sends them with greater freedom to serve.

**Give Now  
to Student  
Scholarships.**



**Your gift to student scholarships helps make this debt-reducing model possible, opening the door for more students to receive theological formation and serve the Church wherever God leads.**

# Join us for worship, wherever you are in the world.

Watch Asbury Seminary Chapel LIVE online every week during the semester at [asbury.to/live](https://asbury.to/live)

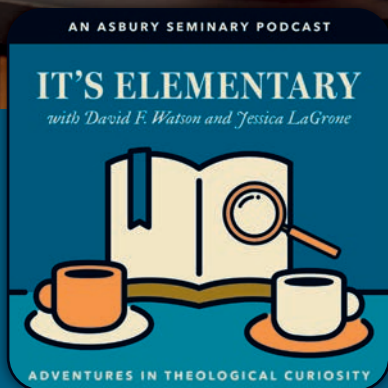


And the angels cry, Holy  
All creation cries, Holy  
You are lifted high, Holy  
Holy forever



Visit [asbury.to/chapel](https://asbury.to/chapel) for our  
chapel message archive.





## It's Elementary Podcast

A weekly podcast about exploring theological curiosity, where our hosts talk to interesting people and explore topics that come through Asbury Theological Seminary. Hosted by Dr. David Watson and Dr. Jessica LaGrone.



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# News & Events

## Asbury Theological Seminary Welcomes Two New Board of Trustees Members



Asbury Theological Seminary recently welcomed two new members to the Board of Trustees: Robert R. Duke and Ronald C. Walborn. The members of

the board are excited about the wealth of experience and expertise each new member brings to Asbury Theological Seminary's leadership. Duke serves as Chief Curatorial Officer and Director of the Scholars Initiative at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., and previously served in multiple senior academic leadership roles at Azusa Pacific University. Walborn currently serves as the School of Ministry Director at Church of the City in New York City, and previously served as Executive Director of Urban Initiatives at Asbury Theological Seminary and as Vice President and Dean of Alliance Theological Seminary.

## Asbury Theological Seminary Announces Dr. Kenneth J. Collins as Paul S. and Jean R. Amos Endowed Chair in Wesleyan Theology

Asbury Seminary announced the appointment of Dr. Kenneth J. Collins to the newly created Paul S. and Jean R. Amos Endowed Chair in Wesleyan Theology. The position was created alongside the upcoming Ph.D. in Theology with a focus on Wesley Studies, funded by a generous donation from The Paul S. and Jean R.



Amos Family Foundation. Dr. Collins, who joined the faculty in 1995 and has recently served as Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies, is internationally recognized as a leading authority on John Wesley and Wesleyan theology. The Seminary celebrates this well-deserved appointment and its positive implications for the future of the church and the academic world.

## Commencement 2026



Commencement 2026 took place on May 9, 2026, celebrating the graduation of 342 students from Asbury Theological Seminary. Two ceremonies recognized graduate and postgraduate

students, each featuring prayer, scripture readings, and contributions from faculty members. Rev. Andrew Forrest, the Senior Pastor of Asbury Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, addressed the graduates, encouraging them that true Christian love "goes first." In his presidential charge, Dr. David Watson reminded the graduating class that "We stand on the shoulders of giants, and we honor them when we honor Christ in faithful service." "They've handed on to us a precious inheritance, and it's our sacred duty now to do the same," Dr. Watson continued.



To watch Dr. Watson's charge go to [asbury.to/charge26](https://asbury.to/charge26)

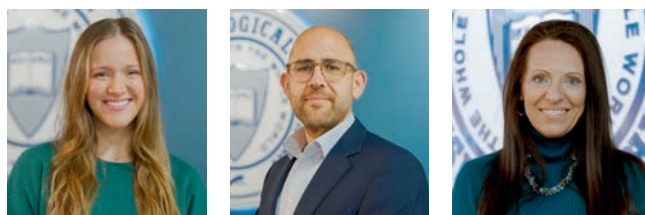
## Festschrift Released in Honor of Dr. Bill Arnold



On Wednesday, February 4, 2026, Dr. Bill Arnold, the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Seminary, was presented with a facsimile of the cover of a Festschrift (a volume of writings by different authors presented as a tribute to a scholar) to be published in his honor.

The facsimile was presented by Dr. David Schreiner, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Inductive Biblical Studies and a former student of Dr. Arnold, who co-edited the work. The work is titled "God of the Fathers: Conceptualizations of Divinity in Genesis and Deuteronomy" and was published in March 2026 as a volume of the Journal for Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal History by publisher Harrassowitz Verlag.

## Asbury Seminary Announces the Appointment of Three New Directors



Asbury Theological Seminary is pleased to have welcomed three new directors who play key roles in advancing the Seminary's mission through strategic communications, marketing, and enrollment leadership: Amy Bouvier, Director of Marketing (September 2025); Gianfranco Ramirez, Director of Communications (October 2025); and Jami Evans, Director of Admissions (January 2026). Asbury Seminary is grateful to welcome these leaders, each of whom brings a wealth of experience and a shared commitment to serve and strengthen the Seminary's mission.

## SACSCOC Reaffirms Asbury Theological Seminary Accreditation Through 2035



On January 13, 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary announced that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaffirmed the Seminary's accreditation through 2035. This milestone underscores Asbury Seminary's ongoing commitment

to academic excellence and institutional integrity. SACSCOC is recognized as a leader among the large accrediting bodies for its rigorous standards. Asbury Seminary is accredited by SACSCOC to award degrees at the master's and doctoral levels. In addition, the Seminary may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels, providing students with a range of academic pathways to prepare for ministry and leadership.

## Asbury Latino Center



In May 2026, the Asbury Latino Center celebrated a record 58 graduates from the Master's in Ministry program. The degree allowed students to take their coursework bilingually, expanding

access to theological education for leaders serving Spanish-speaking communities. For graduate Martin Joel Santos Cruz, the journey was challenging but deeply formative. Reflecting on the support he received, he shared, "Each class, each conversation, and each gesture of support left a deep mark on my spiritual, intellectual, and ministerial formation."

## Asbury Theological Seminary Addresses Recent United Methodist Church Decision



On June 25, 2026, Asbury Theological Seminary announced that the University Senate of The United Methodist Church removed the Seminary from its list of approved schools

for preparing candidates for ordination. The decision followed the Seminary's reaffirmation of its doctrinal and ethical standards, including its position on marriage and human sexuality, which differ from the UMC's recently amended Social Principles. President David F. Watson expressed gratitude for decades of partnership with United Methodist students, alumni, faculty, and churches, while emphasizing that Asbury Seminary's mission remains unchanged. This decision does not affect institutional accreditation.

Read the full official statement at [asbury.to/senatedecision](https://asbury.to/senatedecision)





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