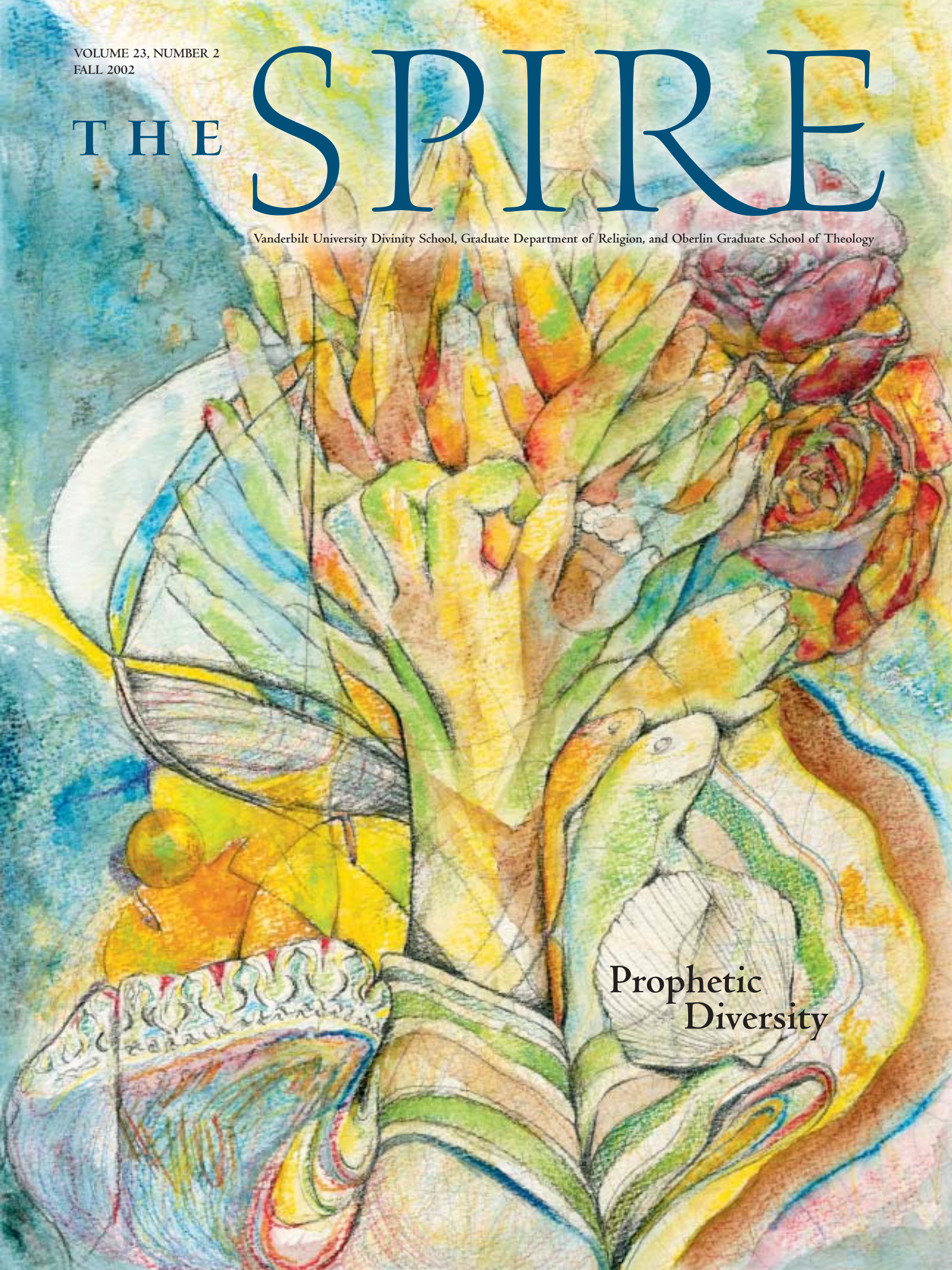


VOLUME 23, NUMBER 2
FALL 2002

THE SPIRE

Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Graduate Department of Religion, and Oberlin Graduate School of Theology



Prophetic
Diversity



The Tree of Life quilt was conceived and created by Meredith Maxwell Myers, MDiv'3, for her course project in Christian Religious Education, Imagination, and Creativity taught by Lloyd R. Lewis, assistant professor of the practice of ministry. A native of Raleigh, North Carolina, and member of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Myers began quilting when she was 16 years old.

"I designed *The Tree of Life* specifically for All Faith Chapel with the hope that generations of students representing a variety of faith traditions will find meaning in the imagery," explains the quilter, who employed such traditional iconographic elements as stars shining from a celestial background of lapis lazuli and the four rivers of Paradise flowing from the earth.

The artist was graduated in 1997 from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro where she earned a baccalaureate in fine arts and religious studies. Before enrolling at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, she worked in Heidelberg, Germany, as a graphic designer for the United States Army's Department of Defense. Myers was commissioned in 2001 as a second lieutenant in the Air Force Reserves and currently has the status of chaplain candidate. For her clinical pastoral education requirement at VDS, she served during the summer of 2002 as a chaplain intern at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Upon earning her master of divinity degree, Myers hopes to be called to ordination in the American Baptist Church. She currently resides in Clarksville, Tennessee.

The Tree of Life
2001
by Meredith Maxwell Myers
American quilter
(born 1974)
cotton and gold metallic thread
42" x 32"
All Faith Chapel
Vanderbilt University Divinity School
photographed by Peyton Hoge

The TREE of LIFE Quilt

"Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on God's law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season, and their leaves do not wither."

—THE PSALMS, 1:1-3

"Those who believe and act righteously will be admitted into gardens through which streams flow, wherein they will abide by the command of their Lord. Their greeting therein for each other will be, 'Peace be on you.' Dost thou not see how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word? It is like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches reach into heaven."

—THE QUR'AN, 14:24-25

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, producing fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

—THE REVELATION TO JOHN, 22:1-2

THE SPIRE

F E A T U R E S

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A Tribute to Liston Mills

Colleagues, alumni/ae, and benefactors from the University community celebrate the memory of a beloved teacher.

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Just Crumbs

On the farmland where his ancestors labored, VDS student and farmer Freddie Haddox raises crops for the tables of the hungry.



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Pursuing a Crown of Perfection

Alumna Shelli Renee Yoder presents a feminist critique on the inherent violence of beauty pageants.

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Negative Space

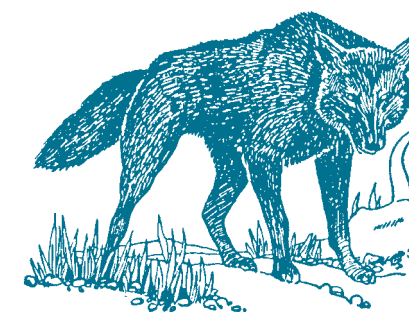
For artist and educator Rashida Marjani Browne, drawing is an act of worship.



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The Globalization of Christianity

VDS Professor Fernando Segovia examines the dramatic proportions in the deployment and constitution of Christianity and raises questions for theologians of the 21st century.



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Dances with Academic Wolves

Professor Emeritus Howard Harrod discusses the intricate choreography within interdisciplinary studies while colleagues and alumni/ae acknowledge Harrod's contributions to the Academy as ethicist, sociologist, anthropologist, and theologian.

Readers' Forum

From the Editor

In his commencement address to the members of the class of 2002, Vanderbilt University Chancellor Gordon Gee charged the graduates to embrace the Jewish conception of *tikkun olam*, "to repair the world," as they departed West End Avenue and began to practice their lives.

"Tikkun olam means to heal, to repair, to restore what has been shattered, to mend what has been torn, to work always toward perfecting a world that is imperfect," explained the Chancellor, but he also encouraged the graduates not to confuse *repair* as being synonymous with *patching*. "Tikkun means working toward what becomes almost an alteration of substance. This is a new world of change that we are all entering, a world of change to sculpt back out of a heap of ashes."

The people from the Divinity School of whom you will read in this issue of *The Spire* are instruments of tikkun—students, alumni/ae, and faculty whose ministries are dedicated to sculpting a better world.

♦ VDS student Freddie Haddox has designated a portion of his family's farmland for cultivating vegetables and fruit for the hungry in Nashville. While shopping for produce at a local farmers' market, Freddie realized that the ingredients which comprise the native diets of immigrant workers were unaffordable under their current wages. Refusing to accept the convenient adage that "The poor will always be among us," he has established the Just Crumbs initiative for raising crops that will be harvested for those in need. Freddie's selfless work as a farmer and as a volunteer reading tutor in the Metropolitan-Davidson public school system proves that one person can, indeed, help to mend the lives of others.

♦ Writing from the perspective of one with experiential wisdom, alumna Shelli Yoder examines the beauty pageant industry's role not only in the objectification of the female gender but of *all* creation. In her autobiographical essay, she offers a feminist

critique of the violent message pageants convey and explains how a theological education has contributed to her revised understanding of perfection.

♦ We also pay tribute in this issue to Professors Howard Harrod and Liston Mills, two influential professors whose lives have motivated Divinity School students to adopt the praxis of tikkun olam. When our alumnus, the Reverend Dr. Riggins R. Earl Jr., professor of ethics and theology at the Interdenominational Theology Center in Atlanta, Georgia, learned of Professor Harrod's retirement from teaching at VDS, he composed a letter, modestly signed "a former student." In the letter he describes his first encounter with the teacher he would later acknowledge as one whose life reflected a radical appreciation for the human worth of marginalized people and from whom he would learn the art of listening:

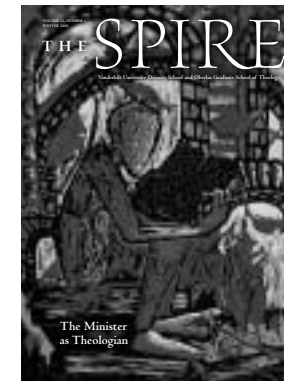
"It was the decade of the mid-1960s at Vanderbilt Divinity School, a time of national political and social upheaval, and I was one of a handful of the black students at VDS," wrote Professor Earl. "Howard Harrod, a cool, laid-back, young, soft-spoken professor, proved to be no stranger to the marginalized or to their questions. In the Divinity School's pipe smoking culture of that day, seminars took place in smoke-filled rooms. Howard often sat at the seminar table, patiently listening from a non-threatening posture; he listened with the posed grace of a shaman for our budding intellectual voices to take critical shape. Repeatedly he would respond from the veil of his pipe smoke with the question, 'What do you mean?' Interlacedly, he was known to punctuate his critical remarks with the query, 'Don't you see?' I often saw profound insights and heard deep voices within during the creative pauses that Howard's pedagogical method generated in the seminar context. He knew how to use the art of listening ritualistically to help us release our own immature voices into the discourse."

But in the last paragraph of the letter, the author's tribute to Professor Harrod is distilled into a simple, declarative sentence in

the historical-present tense—a statement that conveys the influence of those educators who help change our relationships to the world. "Great teachers never retire to the degree that they live on in their students," wrote Professor Earl, and when we consider the influences of the late Liston Mills, to whom we dedicate this issue of *The Spire*, we can revise this statement by writing, "Great teachers never retire, or die, to the degree that they live on in their students."

I met Professor Mills 24 years ago when I asked him to lecture on the subject of religion in the South for a high school seminar I was teaching in modern southern literature. He invited the class to meet with him in Tillet Lounge on a Thursday afternoon in January. As we were sitting around the conference table and listening to him speak in his distinct eastern North Carolina drawl, one of the students interrupted and inquired in a tone suggestive of intellectual snobbery, "Professor Mills, don't you think religion is just a crutch for unenlightened southerners?"

His response to the unsolicited question—I later would learn from a Roman Catholic priest and one of Professor Mills' graduate students—was indicative of the pastoral way he responded to any student who sat before him. He was not offended by the interruption nor by the reference to unenlightened southerners. With his signature smile, he answered calmly, confidently, but not patronizingly, "A person, regardless of one's region, who makes religion a mere crutch will remain unenlightened." And then Professor Mills, by employing the Socratic method, engaged the student in a series of questions that guided everyone at the table from a generalization on southerners and their religious sensibility to universal observations about fallible humans and mystery. For a novice high school teacher, that winter afternoon in Tillet Lounge provided a memorable lesson in theology as well as in Socratic pedagogy and in patience. —VJ



Correspondence from the VDS Founder's Medalist of '48

Congratulations on the 2002 winter issue of *The Spire*. The layout, design, articles, and photographs combine to make the issue tastefully done. The content of the articles is substantial, stimulating, and worthy of the level of a graduate school of religion. I am speaking out of decades of reading the publications of Vanderbilt Divinity School.

I entered Vanderbilt Divinity School in the fall term, 1944. It was located in the old Wesley Hall where the parking garage is now. In succession I earned the B.D., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. I was on campus during the Lawson Affair, and Langdon Gilkey was my major professor. I was never so proud to be a Vanderbilt graduate.

I am favorably impressed with the current dean, Dr. James Hudnut-Beumler. My sense is that the Divinity School is entering a new period of quality education and takes seriously its responsibility to the Judeo-Christian theological tradition.

Hubert William Morrow, BD'48, MA'59, PhD'65
Russellville, Arkansas
Professor of Theology and Academic Dean, emeritus
Memphis Theological Seminary

Revisiting the Lawson Affair

I read the captivating article on the Lawson Affair in the winter 2002 issue of *The Spire* and would like to read more. (Jim is a good friend out here in California.) Lou Silberman's part of the article is inspiring and moving, except that I guess I object to thinking of Vanderbilt as a "finishing school" when I was a student there. But never mind that; the Lawson affair was a major turning point for the Divinity School and for the University.

James A. Sanders, BA'48, Phi Beta Kappa; BD'51
Claremont, California

Recognition for an English Major

Thank you for sending the winter 2002 issue of *The Spire* which features the essay, "A Sanctuary Without Definitions: Alumnae Create a Place for the Spirit—Inside and Outside the Classroom" by Leigh Pittenger, who received her degree in English from Middle Tennessee State University. Leigh's success and dedication are tremendous virtues.

The Alumni Relations Office is always proud of the accomplishments of our alumni, and we appreciate hearing about their continued success.

Debbie Coppinger
Director of Alumni Relations
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Reflection on The Tentmaker

"The Tentmaker: A Portrait of the Minister as Theologian" (Volume 23, Number 1, Winter 2002) is a good story, uncommonly well told. Kudos!

Pat Burton
Nashville, Tennessee

CALENDAR OF VDS COMMUNITY EVENTS

Vanderbilt Divinity School Community Breakfast

"Depraved, Innocent, or Knowing? Evolutions in our Construction of Children"

Bonnie Miller-McLemore
Professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling

Thursday, January 30, 2003
7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

To make reservations for the Vanderbilt Divinity School community breakfasts at the University Club, please call 615/343-3994 or register on-line at divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/div/events/register.

Relevant Religion Lecture Series at the Scarritt Bennett Center

"The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Church"

J. Patout Burns
The Edward A. Malloy Professor
of Catholic Studies

Monday evenings,
January 27-February 3, 10, 17, 2003

"What do the Dead Sea Scrolls have to do with the Bible?"

Alice Hunt
Associate Dean and Lecturer in Hebrew Bible

Monday evenings,
March 10, 17, 24, 31, 2003

Call 615/340-7543 to register or write to spiritus@scarrittbennett.org.

Prophetic Diversity

A Vision for Heirs Through Hope



BY CHRISTOPHER K. SANDERS, MDIV'95
Director of Alumni/ae and Development

"Prophetic Diversity" might be just the phrase that evokes the meaning of Vanderbilt University Divinity School's commitments. It is unfortunate that the word "diversity" often carries associations of sensitivity training seminars that are part of the human resource strategy of many workplaces. To some critics, diversity is also a euphemism for quotas. Once again, the most

obvious connotation for diversity relates to employment. Prophetic diversity avoids these dead ends by locating diversity within a vision of life instead of locating diversity within a program or a particular sphere of life.

Prophetic Diversity names the insight that the human family's amazing variety and all the complicated networks of life in creation are a foundational gift of God worthy of honor and destined for renewal. In that sense, this vision is truly prophetic because the prophet sees the reality that is, despite appearances and shadows, and sees the new reality that will be. Such a vision makes those persons who see it "heirs through hope," in the words of The Book of Common Prayer.

The vision is compelling, but the way to its realization will continue to be painful. If diversity in the workplace has been slow in coming, how much more difficult it will be to achieve prophetic diversity as a way of life! It is sobering to remember that any vision of diversity worth pursuing must also include an analysis of power that offers an understanding of the forces that hinder progress.

Vanderbilt University Divinity School has long been a place where faculty and students have gathered to do the work of prophets. Two recent books provide a helpful understanding of the School's engagement with prophetic visions and power. The first is *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, edited by Professor Fernando Segovia and alumnus Eleazar Fernandez and embellished with an essay by Associate Professor Victor Anderson. The second is *Vanderbilt Divinity School: Education, Contest, and Change*, edited by Professor Dale Johnson and written by several professors emeriti, current faculty members, and alumni/ae. Evident in the pages of both volumes is a commitment to prophetic diversity accompanied by an analysis of social power.

The history of the Divinity School makes

one aware that the past continues to shape the School's identity but that the past alone cannot account for the vitality that perennially drives a progressive direction apparent in *A Dream Unfinished*.

The source of movement is clearly the annual coming together of over 300 students, members of the faculty, and staff who dedicate themselves to a dialogue about faith and certain progressive core commitments related to race, gender, sexual orientation, poverty, and ecology.

Interesting to me is what the Divinity School's official statements do not include. One finds no position on the Holy Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the procession of the Holy Spirit, the nature and number of the sacraments, the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the types of grace, the apostolic succession of bishops, and the authority of the Bible.

Coming from a communion that reveres the credal doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation and that relies on the sacraments as vehicles of divine grace, I began my theological studies perplexed that Vanderbilt devotes so much energy to controversial social teachings. My confusion provided a way for me to learn two important lessons. First, not taking positions on the traditional loci of theology makes it possible for Vanderbilt to assemble a wide variety of scholars, ministers, and activists in order to explore the intelligibility of the entire doctrinal system, often through dialogue and sometimes through argument. Had the Divinity School taken an official position on the Trinity, I would have had an excuse either not to think through the reasoning behind my more traditional views or to dismiss other views



without a second thought. Both options amount to intellectual sloth, and I am thankful that my professors and fellow students spared me easy answers.

The second lesson is the importance of the Divinity School's witness on social issues. While my theological education at Vanderbilt renewed my faith in the classic doctrines of the Church, my studies also have forced me to confront the inescapable reality that religion has been one of the important forces in channeling oppressive power. Inherent in that realization is the hope that religion can also become one of the most potent forces in dismantling injustice in society. A university-based divinity school is the ideal setting for exploring the connections between religion and social issues. A university's academic mission requires opening a dialogue for the mutual understanding among persons with different views. Sometimes a university's

mission also requires a leadership role of moral witness that involves taking a clear position and making efforts to persuade others to see that new vision. The Divinity School's ecumenical spirit embodies the first part of a university's mission. The statement of commitments is evidence of the second part.

Prophetic Diversity is not just an ideal for divinity school faculties and theological students. If diversity becomes a practice akin to an eleventh commandment, then it is no better than a sensitivity program at work. It must encompass all of life. Nevertheless, religious leadership plays an important role in propagating the vision. For 127 years, Vanderbilt Divinity School has been preparing progressive religious leaders of congregations, service agencies, and the academy. Your support makes it possible for the *Schola Prophetarum*, the School of Prophets, to minister, serve, and teach in pursuit of the renewal of cre-

On the Cover

Prophetic Diversity
2002

by Kazuya Arai Akimoto
Japanese painter
(born 1965)

water color, graphite pencil, and
water-resolve color pencil on paper
10 1/2" x 14 1/2"

The original drawing hangs in the Office of Alumni/ae and Development at Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

In the drawing *Prophetic Diversity*, artist Kazuya Arai Akimoto has interpreted Vanderbilt University Divinity School's commitments to theological education delineated on pages 9-11 of the current *Bulletin*. Flanked by a richly embroidered Bedouin veil, male and female ginkgo leaves, fish, and a sea shell, an arm draped by a tallith supports a fusion of interlocked hands to suggest the importance of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue in the School's curriculum. On the viewer's left, a sailing vessel reveals the influence of 19th-century German romantic landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich upon Akimoto and represents the power of education to transport one beyond the realm of the familiar. Embedded in the bloodred roses on the viewer's right is the pink triangle worn by the homosexual prisoners in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Akimoto also employs this image as an allusion to Matthew Shepard—the 21-year-old gay student at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, who was beaten and lashed to a fence on October 16, 1998, and died five days later—to illustrate the Divinity School's commitment to confronting the

heterosexism that prevails throughout organized religion and society.

Educated in Tokyo by Dominican nuns and priests, Akimoto studied archaeology and cultural anthropology at Keio University in Japan before traveling to Bremen and Munich to study ethnology and folk art. He received formal instruction at the Académie de Port-Royal and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris and at the Academia di Belli Arti in Perugia. His paintings have been exhibited in the museums of Munich, Paris, Tokyo, Milan, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Barcelona, New York, and his visual thesis on the threats to the environment was installed on the front lawn of the White House.

The editors of *Arte Al Dia* describe Akimoto as one who "visualizes the fluctuation of the inner and outer worlds through biomorphic pencil drawings which allow him to express the beauty of monochrome and line" and who "translates subjects from the abstract world into concrete, organic pictures."

Akimoto was graduated in 2001 from Radford University in Virginia where he studied philosophy and religion under Vanderbilt University alumni/ae Susan Kwilecki, MA'77, and Russell Inman Gregory, PhD'83. As a current student in the Graduate School's Department of Religion, he is writing his master's thesis on the ecology of the Book of Jonah under the direction of Professors Jack Sasson and Douglas Knight.

Victor Judge and Rick King
Fr. Patrick Kibby, the Cathedral
of the Incarnation
Christopher K. Sanders
Jane Tugurian

Dean James Hudnut-Beumler and the faculty of Vanderbilt University Divinity School welcome the following new members to our donor society, *Schola Prophetarum*:

David Adams and Carole Adams
David Glasgow and Van Pond Jr.
Frank Gulley Jr. and Anne Gulley
William Hook and Theresa Hook

To learn more about joining *Schola Prophetarum*, please contact Christopher K. Sanders in the Development Office at 615/322-4205 or at christopher.sanders@vanderbilt.edu.



Kazuya Arai Akimoto

From the Dean

Thou Shall Not Answer in Black and White

In Robert A. Caro's new biography of Lyndon Baines Johnson, the author recounts the exchange a young LBJ remembered involving a Texas school board official and a prospective teacher. Johnson, you may recall, was first a teacher, himself. The young teacher was desperate for a job, but the school board member wanted to know where he stood on evolution and science issues. He asked the man, "Do you teach that the world is round or that the world is flat?"

The young teacher replied, "I can teach it round or flat."



Have you ever noticed that some of the same people who want to see the Ten Commandments posted in the courthouse are the first to seek vengeance through the death penalty?

My question for you who are graduates of Vanderbilt University Divinity School is this: Do you teach it, preach it, administer it, and care for it round or flat?

I hope your answer is "No."

At Vanderbilt Divinity School we taught you to search for truth and to seek to do justice. However much you want to please the people whom you serve in the ministries and careers that have grown from the education you received here, you will serve them better if you tell them what you believe to be the truth without trying to tailor your remarks to what the audience wishes to hear. Although we worked at teaching you how to learn and to think theologically, it's up to you to supply the necessary element of character so that you lead with integrity, but now I want to warn you and to charge you.

First, the warning—just like those blue book exams you took during your studies at Vanderbilt, most of the important questions you will face as a Divinity School graduate will not be answerable with a simple "Yes" or "No."

I recently have had this driven home to me again in the midst of our public debate over whether the Ten Commandments should be posted in public buildings all over the state and whether Tennessee county commissions should resolve to live by biblical principles. For those of you who reside outside of Tennessee, you may be interested to know that approximately 90 percent of our county governments have answered the Ten Commandments posting question in the affirmative.

Not surprisingly, people in the media want to know what religious leaders, including the dean of the Divinity School, think about this issue. Are you for 'em or against 'em? If you are for them, you are religious; if you are against posting them in public buildings, then you want to destroy America and deny the biblical and moral foundations on which the country was established. People

want a "Yes" or "No."

But here is the answer they do not want to hear:

It is because I take religion very seriously, indeed, that I do not want it appropriated by a bunch of self-interested politicians who are afraid of the hard-right Christians who vote on the Ten Commandments question and other issues like a litmus test. It is because I am a religious leader who came from a school like Vanderbilt Divinity School that I am suspicious of the motives of those who want to press the issue. I hate what it does to stir people up about whether this community is faith-friendly when living by the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus seems to be so little a priority in the advocates' lives. "Love your enemies" is forgotten in this climate. Have you ever noticed that some of the same people who want to see the Ten Commandments posted in the courthouse are the first to seek vengeance through the death penalty? Finally, it is because I love a country where I am free to believe as I choose and to practice as I am led that I am determined not to force my faith on anyone else lest someday one's faith be forced on me.

As dean, I am asked questions posed in black and white although they really are questions in the gray zone—questions you also encounter in your vocations. You've been to divinity school, so you're considered an expert, but try answering these questions:

- Is Islam a religion of peace? Is Christianity?
- Must clergy who cross sexual boundaries in their work always be removed from pastoral office?
- Does God sanction human cloning?

The world—even the ecclesiastical world which should know better—wants a "Yes" or "No" answer to such questions. When you give an "It depends" response, you will be called weak, lacking in conviction, short of nerve, and unfaithful.



Dean James Hudnut-Beumler

I charge you to seek the truth, however complicated that truth may seem. And then I charge you further to address with integrity whatever questions, issues, and situations you face. At Vanderbilt Divinity School, we call ourselves a school of the prophets. I hope you have learned how prophets work; they see circumstances that others cannot or will not see, and then they tell what they see. By such prophetic visions, new realities emerge.

The Scriptures remind us that while foxes have their dens and birds of the air their nests, those who see as God may find themselves alienated and without a place to lay their heads. I cannot promise you riches, happiness, or the acclaim of the world, but I can point you to a broken and weary world, to a beautiful creation, and to the children of God, and I can remind you that with your traditions and with what you learned at Vanderbilt Divinity School you have the capacity to make a difference. Whatever you encounter, go in good faith, discern wisely, and act as though faith and discernment will make a difference.

Around the QUADRANGLE

*"There is a season for everything,
a time for every occupation under heaven..."*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1



Upper left: Pennsylvania met Kazakhstan when Scott Fritz, MDiv'02; Danna Ernekovna Balafanova, MA'02; Kurt Scheib, MTS'02, MA'02; and Saida Batyrkhanovna Agambayeva, MA'02, attended Gala 2002. The two students from the former constituent republic of the U.S.S.R. attended the University as Bolashak Scholars (the equivalent of Presidential Scholars) and earned graduate degrees in economics.

Above: Carpenter Scholar Melissa Peterson, MTS2, and Hyde Scholar Tricia Gardner, MDiv2, were among the students who enjoyed the festivities.

Far left: With cap, toothpick, big hair, and a lemon meringue pie, Lee Mitchell, MDiv'02, and Katy Scrogin, MTS2, momentarily transformed the VDS refectory into a truck stop during the 2002 spring gala.

Left: Annette Grace Zimondi, known to her peers as "Annie Grace," donned attire from her native Zimbabwe for the spring gala. The Divinity School alumna from the class of 2002 currently is enrolled in the University's Graduate Department of Religion.

GALA 2002 PHOTOGRAPHS BY PEYTON HOGE



A Time For Dancing

Vanderbilt University Divinity School students celebrated an evening of dinner, dancing, and diversity during the 2002 spring gala. Officers of the student government association selected the question, "Can't we all just dance together?" as the theme for the annual gathering of students and faculty. Guests were encouraged to wear attire representative of their cultural backgrounds.

A Time for Protesting

Right: Keri Ann Ehlinger, MDiv3, looks pensively at motorists on 21st Avenue, South, where she and other Divinity School students joined members of the Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing (TCASK) to protest the execution of inmate Abu-Ali Abdur Rahman. Formerly known as James Lee Jones, Abdur Rahman was sentenced to death in 1987 for slaying Patrick Daniels, a Nashville marijuana dealer. The United States Supreme Court issued a stay of execution on Monday, April 8, 2002, exactly 36 hours before his scheduled execution. Linda G. Manning, director of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt University, serves as spiritual advisor to Abdur Rahman.

Far Right: Sixteen-year-old Steven Clontz, a junior at Buckhorn High School in New Market, Alabama, and his 12-year-old brother, Phillip, (partially hidden by his sign) served as witnesses against the death penalty with their mother, Sherill Clontz, MDiv3, associate pastor of Epworth United Methodist Church in Huntsville.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PEYTON HOGE



A Time for Recreation

Far Left: John Alford, MTS2, posts up a defender during a recent intramural basketball team.

Left: Scott Fritz, MDiv'02, the self-proclaimed athletic director for Vanderbilt University Divinity School, drives in for a lay-up during a game against players from the Law School. The Divinity School's intramural team named themselves "The Hudnut-Beumlers" after the VDS dean.



Above Right: Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and historian David Halberstam delivered "The Media and Professional Expert" during March in Flynn Auditorium at the Law School. In his lecture, sponsored by the Cal Turner Program in Moral Leadership for the Professions, Halberstam stressed that the desire for making a profit in the media industry has resulted in "trivial journalism," citing as an example Disney's decision to discontinue the broadcasting of *Nightline* after two more years.

Author of *The Children*, which documents the lives of eight civil rights activists he met in 1960 as a reporter for *The Nashville Tennessean*, Halberstam also emphasized that "diversity is a form of political protection against the tyranny of a zealous majority." While illustrating his argument, he alluded to one of the pivotal events in the history of Vanderbilt University Divinity School, the Lawson Affair, when a local newspaper publisher launched "a personal jihad based on outdated feudalism against the University."

Left: The influences of scientific advancements in genetics upon the moral and ethical landscape were examined by theologian Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite in the 29th annual Antoinette Brown Lecture at the Divinity School. In her presentation titled "Adam, Eve, and the Genome: Feminist Theology Looks at the Human Genome Project," Thistlethwaite explored the relationship between feminist theology and genetic determinism and argued for the protection of vulnerable populations from abuses that could result from the capacity to code each person's genetic material. The president of Chicago Theological Seminary and professor of theology and culture, Thistlethwaite based her lecture upon a course she taught with Lainie Ross, associate professor of pediatrics and medical ethics at the University of Chicago and with Vanderbilt University alumna, Laurel Schneider, PhD '97, associate professor of theology, ethics, and culture at Chicago Theological Seminary.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID CRENSHAW

A Time for Appointments and Retirement

Nicholas S. Zeppos, J.D., Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and James Hudnut-Beumler, Ph.D., Dean of the Divinity School, announce the appointment of Dale S. Johnson, Doctor of Theology, as the Drucilla Moore Buffington Professor of Church History at Vanderbilt University

Upper Left: After ten years as administrative assistant in the deans' offices, Alice Kinnard retired from the Divinity School in June and moved to McMinnville, Tennessee, for her retirement years. Students and alumnae will remember her as the publisher of the School's weekly newsletter, *The Communicator*.

Upper Right: The 2002-2003 academic year marks not only the tenth anniversary of Kaye Murphey's role as assistant to the dean at the Divinity School but also her recent appointment as budget and financial aid officer for VDS. She will be responsible for managing the School's financial transactions and for applying to students' accounts the scholarships awarded by the financial aid committee.

Lower Left: Pat Daniel has assumed the responsibilities of activities coordinator for the Divinity School's Office of Alumnae and Development. She previously served as an office manager for Vanderbilt University's Medical Center.

Lower Right: Sherry Willis, who served for six years as activities coordinator at the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities and for eight years as administrative assistant in the Law School's legal clinic, has been appointed administrative assistant to Dean James Hudnut-Beumler and Associate Dean Alice Hunt.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID CRENSHAW



A Time for Critical Inquiry

Above Left: To inaugurate a cross-cultural dialogue on global health care issues, Ugandan AIDS activist Noelina Namukisa traveled to Nashville for 10 days in April to discuss how grassroots intervention has helped to reduce the rate of HIV infection in her country from 30 percent to 8 percent. The founder of Meeting Point Kampala—a non-governmental organization in the Namuwongo district of Kampala City, Uganda,—Namukisa is recognized as a leading authority on the anthropological implications of disease and specifically of HIV/AIDS. To counter the effects of illiteracy, the volunteers, social workers, and health care providers at Meeting Point teach about HIV in the contexts of music, dance, and drama. "We can demonstrate through drama how young girls who want to get rich at an early age acquire HIV; we can show what happens when women go to witchdoctors instead of testing centers, and we can teach what happens when those who are HIV+ are persuaded by Christian fundamentalists to stop taking medication and only pray."

Above Center: The Reverend Dr. Mona West signs a copy of the book she edited with Robert E. Goss, *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, for Diana Pepper, MTS1, in Cokesbury Bookstore at VDS. Pastor of spiritual life at the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, the world's largest church for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered congregants, West presented "Outsiders, Aliens, and Boundary Crossers: A Queer Reading of the Hebrew Exodus" during a lecture and discussion sponsored by the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality, GABLE, and the Vanderbilt Office of GLBT Student Life. The occasion marked the second time West had visited the Divinity School; in 1995 she attended the inauguration of the Carpenter Program. West, who earned her doctorate in Hebrew Bible from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has taught at Austin College and at Anderson College where she was a professor of current VDS student, Tricia Gardner, MDiv'2.



DAVID CRENSHAW

THE EDITORIAL STAFF DEDICATES THIS ISSUE OF

The Spire

TO THE MEMORY OF

Liston Oury Mills

OBERLIN ALUMNI PROFESSOR OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND COUNSELING, EMERITUS

(AUGUST 7, 1928 — APRIL 30, 2002)

Bridge Over the Ravine: *The Legacy of Liston Mills*

BY H. JACKSON FORSTMAN,
The Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology and
Dean of Vanderbilt University Divinity School, emeritus

In my unbiased judgment, Liston Mills, our Divinity School colleague, friend, and counselor, bridged the gaping ravine between human psychology as counseling and Christian faith better and more substantively than anyone else in his generation. Those of you who have not lived and worked within the historically received and contentious division in schools that want to prepare women and men for Christian ministry may not have grasped the weight of this statement.

What Liston's generation and mine inherited in theological education was a curricular split. The one side was called "academic theology," the other "practical theology." Both terms are prejudicial. If one part of the faculty understands itself to be engaged in "academic theology," the implication is that the other part is non-academic. On the other side, if the other part understands itself to be engaged in "practical theology," the implication is that the one part is impractical. It is a massive misfortune for the churches that these biases infiltrate the consciousness of students and affect to no good the internal dynamics of faculties.

Liston, in his thinking, in his teaching, and in his presence in the Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty, obliterated that distinction. He mastered both the psychological theories and the practices of counseling, but he sought always to show how his substantive struggle to understand Christian faith and its implications for human persons, the church, and the world grounded and gave a critical perspective on those theories and practices.

Consequently, Liston was not a minor player in the astonishingly collegial effort of our faculty to devise a curriculum and a way



of life in our teaching and research that showed promise and, at Vanderbilt, no little fulfillment of overcoming the malaise of theological education that I have described. For some years that achievement of the Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty was, so to speak, the talk of the town in theological schools in the United States and Canada.

Again, from my unbiased perspective, the Ph.D. program in Religion and Personality, of which Liston was the architect, is utterly distinctive. This program embodied Liston's comprehensive view. His heritage with its integrative commitments is today alive in graduates of his Ph.D. program in theological schools and other institutions throughout the country.

Liston was a colleague in the Vanderbilt Divinity School for 36 years. What can I say but that all of us thought of him as our good fortune, our esteemed colleague, and our friend. But he was also an esteemed colleague in the University as a whole. Over the years he established more substantive contacts with other colleagues in the University, I think, than virtually any other professor in our School. Liston's public accomplishments and his University citizenship brought him several of the most distinguished named awards that are given to Vanderbilt professors. His election as chair of the Faculty Senate of the University is testimony to his valued collegiality by professors throughout the institution.

Beyond that, Liston established close contacts with the finest persons working in human care, especially in Nashville, but also across the country, and one of his crowning achievements was his instrumental role in the founding of the Pastoral Care Centers of Middle Tennessee. Liston's circle of colleagues was astonishingly broad.

I believe it is correct also to say that in a deep and intimate sense "colleague" is an appropriate term for Liston's relationship with the church school class he directed for so many years at the Immanuel Baptist Church. Members of that group have the stamp of Liston on their souls, and they are grateful.

I am bold to speak for all of Liston's colleagues. As best we can, we have grieved, and we continue to grieve with his wife, Jennie, and their daughter, Sarah. At the same time, with deepest gratitude we celebrate his life. Our lives have been enriched by Liston's work with us, by his remarkable humanity, by his enduring friendship, by the astonishing way he struggled with the power of death and for so long looked death in the eye, and more ... much more.

(Dean Forstman delivered this eulogy on the occasion of Professor Mills' funeral conducted on Saturday, May 4, 2002, at Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.)

A Neighborly Wink

BY HELENE HARMON

I stood peering out the kitchen window that faced the river-stone driveway of the house next to ours. Our new neighbors, an attractive young couple, were surveying their home. Rumors describing new owners always precede their arrival; the neighborhood buzz reported he was a Baptist minister connected with Vanderbilt Divinity School and that she was a librarian at Hillsboro High School. My initial opinionated reaction was, "How lucky can we be?"



Our house contained seven children, five of whom were teenagers. Life never was sedate with souped-up cars rolling in and out of the driveway night and day, loud rock music blasting in every room, basketball games at all hours, or the younger children taking shortcuts by dashing across the neighbors' yards. Goody-goody religious neighbors, no doubt, would confuse and frustrate the lives in my household.

How mistook I was in my perception. Forty years have passed since Liston, Jennie, and Sarah joined our gang. Together, we have survived births, graduations, weddings, visits from relatives, arrivals of new puppies and kittens, moving to new homes, and yes, deaths. Liston's passing spread a pall over my family because we assumed he was invincible. His sense of humor, laughter, and quips always turned a daily crisis into "no big deal." His ability to listen with interest, even to young children, had the effect of compelling a person to rise to the occasion, meet a challenge, and gain an unimaginable level of confidence. My son-in-law once observed, "Having a conversation with Liston becomes an opportunity to learn about yourself." Yes, one could always learn from Liston.

I cannot remember hearing Liston speak uncharitably about anyone. Whenever a conversation showed any sign of becoming mean-spirited in tone, Liston would exchange a witty remark, and with his infectious laughter, he discouraged

anyone from making comments one might regret later.

Although he and I never had intense theological discussions, Liston provided pastoral care during a critical moment in my life. As I entered the vestibule for the funeral procession of my husband, I hesitated, uncertain of my ability to remain a composed widow. And then I saw Liston, sitting on the back pew. With the wink of an eye and the wave of his hand, Liston's gestures delivered a message, loud and clear: "Be dignified; set an example for the mourners, or this situation will deteriorate into Pandemonium." That was the message I needed.

I imagine Liston grinning as he makes his way through the pearly gates. My husband, with Marlboro cigarette in one hand and Liston's pipe in the other, beckons him from a stone wall.

"Where have you been?" he'll ask Liston as they sit down together.

Then the old friends will resume their favorite pastime—talking and solving the world's problems—as they did after cutting the grass on Saturday mornings.

Helene Harmon of Nashville, Tennessee, is a member of Retirement Learning at Vanderbilt University, a continuing education program sponsored by the Office of Community, Neighborhood, and Government Relations in the University's Division of Public Affairs. Her tribute to Professor Mills is based upon an assignment she composed for the seminar in autobiography offered during the fall semester of the 2000-2001 academic year.

A Double Share of Spirit

BY STATE SENATOR ROY BRASFIELD HERRON, MDIV'80, JD'80

My first year of theological studies was in Scotland; then I entered the joint divinity-law program at Vanderbilt University. During my first year of law school, my father developed congestive heart failure; consequently, I was unsure whether I would continue attending the University. But a kind family in Belle Meade offered this struggling student a room in the home of their recently widowed father, an 84-year-old attorney. This was quite a change from a roach-infested fire hazard off Music Row to "The Boulevard," but I managed to adjust.

On the first Sunday after moving into my new living quarters, I walked with my live-in landlord a few hundred feet up Belle Meade Boulevard to Immanuel Baptist Church. There to my surprise I found a Sunday School class taught by none other than the Reverend Dr. Liston Mills.

And teach the class Liston did.

He drew us into the discussion by questioning us, provoking us, and inviting us to consider the Scriptures and their implications for our lives. Here was Liston at his pastoral and professorial best. I became an admirer of Liston Mills as a Sunday School teacher before I took my first class with him at the Divinity School.

A perception held by some of the Divinity School students in the late seventies was that some faculty members seemed more focused on the doctoral students than those of us pursuing the master of divinity degree. Liston, however, seemed focused upon whoever was in his presence. He defied the stereotype of the cold, detached, distant academician. Liston was warm, serene but passionate, approachable, and compassionate. He made all of us feel important.

As the Southern Baptist on the Divinity School faculty, Liston may have been the most greatly out-numbered of any of the many minority groups that make the Divinity

School special. But if the adage, "One person with courage makes a majority," is true, then Liston had us all out-numbered. He never feared, or at least never showed his fears, when it came time for him to tell the truth as he interpreted the truth.

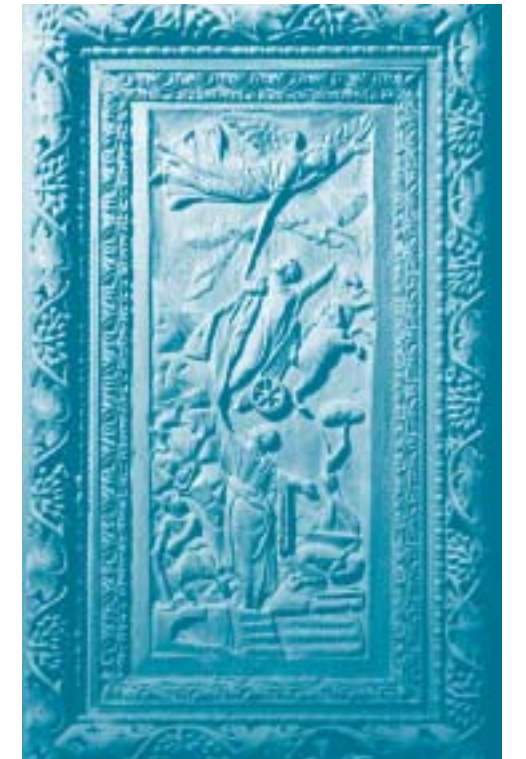
In his pastoral care and counseling classes, Liston taught us how to listen. More than that, he taught what to listen for and how to respond to what we heard. Liston Mills did not merely teach pastoral care. In class and out, he exemplified, demonstrated, and lived what he taught.

Liston Mills was a man of God. I hesitate to use the phrase "man of God" because some readers may think the language sexist and outdated. I thankfully recognize that there are many "women of God," but I use the expression because the more inclusive "child of God" does not seem quite right since Liston was a mature Christian and an example to those of us who were young in our faith. Liston was a man of God with the strength of character and wisdom that come with the maturity few achieve. If "man of God" seems antiquated, perhaps one reason is because today so few deserve that description. Liston Mills not only qualified for the description. He defined and personified the term for many of us looking for role models, teachers, pastors, and witnesses to the faith.

One Sunday during my first year at Vanderbilt, I missed Liston's Sunday School class. Earlier that morning a caller from home told me the congestive heart failure had finally claimed my father. Two days later, a pastor no taller than Liston but who also was compassionate and knew Scripture, reminded us of the story from the second chapter of Second Kings. He re-told the story of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

The older Elijah knew that he was at the end of his time on earth and repeatedly tried to get Elisha to leave him. But each time, Elisha replied, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." Finally, after they had crossed the Jordan River and just before Elijah was taken up into heaven, he said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." To which Elisha replied, "I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

As we remember Liston, that should be



Elijah carried to heaven relief detail from the wooden doors Santa Sabina, Rome ca. 432

our prayer. We should pray, as Elisha did, for a double portion of Liston's spirit. For what a spirit it was! And it is up to those of us touched by Liston's work and life to carry them forward.

The ministry and teaching of Liston Mills, his life and his love, will continue as long as we minister and teach—as long as we live and love—and as long as other children of God with whom we minister conduct their ministry and carry on that love in turn.

May that be forever.

Amen.

A Democrat representing the 24th congressional district, Senator Herron of Dresden, Tennessee, was one of the first two alumni/ae to earn a dual degree in divinity and law at Vanderbilt University. He is a partner in the legal firm of Neese, Herron & Miller-Herron and is the author of Things Held Dear: Soul Stories for My Sons, published in by Westminster John Knox Press, and Tennessee Political Humor, coauthored with L.H. "Cotton" Ivy and published by the University of Tennessee Press. During the fall semester 2002, the senator is co-teaching a course at Vanderbilt Law School with Professor Don Hall in legislative drafting.



Pastoral Laughter

BY MARY KATHERINE (KAKI) FRISKICS-WARREN, MDIV'92

Laughing at a student is poor form for a professor of pastoral care.

But Liston Mills laughed for me. He started with a smile, modulated to his Grinch-like grin, and had to sit down because his raucous guffaw was creating a disturbance in the hospital hallway.

I had decided to complete a unit of clinical pastoral education during the summer after my second year in the master of divinity program. The Veterans Administration Hospital was the convenient local site, and Liston was the small-group facilitator. Plaguing my semester were case themes that revolved around my not being taken seriously: patients flirted with me; nurses seemed too busy to think about spiritual issues; my case studies never seemed theologically profound. Liston was uninspired by my struggle; he merely assured me that my gifts were sufficient to my calling.

at me without cracking up, he suggested we unpack the “case.”

Twenty years later, this theme continues to replay itself, in various forms, as Liston knew it would. Making a difference in the world requires us to use our gifts as given and in the time when they are unveiled. Being who we are is the best we can offer. Liston’s laughter was saying, “Avoid taking yourself too seriously—keep your sense of humor—this is the only way you can remain in ministry for the long haul.”

I was not a student member of Liston’s inner circle; I was not someone he was

During this period of my academic career, I was determined to reinvent the 22-year-old longhaired Texan girl with the twang in her voice; on the day of laughter, however, I would be transformed. I pulled my hair back into a tight bun, retrieved from the back of my closet a brown suit with a straight skirt, and forced my feet into pumps—with heels. I looked seriously ministerial. As fate would have it, I clip-cropped down the hall of the VA Hospital at the exact moment Liston was stepping out of the chaplain’s office. He took one look at me and lost his composure. His amusement, at my expense, was hardly fleeting; no sooner than he would collect himself, he burst into laughter again. Finally, when he could look

grooming for a career in pastoral theology, yet Liston was attuned to my needs. When I was overmatched by my work on death row, Liston asked the questions that helped me determine what was happening and sidestep the pitfalls of one who was starting out in ministry. When I decided to marry Bill Friskics, Liston listened to me and offered insight. “You know,” he said, “you marry a family, not an individual.” He was right, and I’ve been blessed. When I decided to expand my congregational calling to include ministries of social justice, this traditional Southern Baptist man confirmed my call and commissioned me for ministry I could conduct while wearing my hair down.

Over time I learned to read Liston’s face. That smile was his way of saying, “You’ve got it; now go do something with it.” That grin meant he found pleasure in watching you resolve issues, that he knew you’d “get there.” That laugh meant, “Give it a break; you’re making this much harder than it has to be.”

Smiles, grins, and laughter—these were the teaching tools—and yes, the pastoral care I needed during my time at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Liston alone gave me a belly laugh. He showed me his teeth, and I learned to smile.

Reverend Warren is the executive director for Renewal House Residential Resources, a recovery community in Nashville for mothers recovering from addiction and for their children. She earned her baccalaureate from Texas Christian University before matriculating at Vanderbilt Divinity School where she serves as an adjunct lecturer in church and ministries.

Compassionate Realism

BY S. BRUCE VAUGHN, PHD'91

I write this tribute with a sense of impropriety, for the Liston Mills I knew was rarely comfortable receiving praise, much less the verbal demonstrations of affection to which I am prone. (However, I also know he would appreciate my satisfaction at having the last word.) This discomfort seems congruent with Liston’s hard-nosed realism, an attribute that permeated his work as a pastoral theologian, teacher, and mentor. Unlike many who consider themselves realists, Liston did not use realism in the service of cynicism, apathy, or callousness. Rather, he administered his pragmatism with care and concern. He often came across in class, as well as in private conversation, as a confrontational curmudgeon with a pastor’s heart. This disposition is reflected in two of my favorite classroom recollections.

On one occasion students were debating the importance of motivation in human behavior, and the students who believed that a questionable motive could obviate a kind act were gaining the upper hand. Liston listened thoughtfully for some time and then interrupted: “Now, you all will come to understand that there is precious little good in this world and that you must sing the doxology whenever it appears, regardless of the motive.”

In another session the class was discussing whether and how persons change. Liston bluntly remarked, “Human beings are fundamentally recalcitrant. They don’t change until they’re miserable.”

I also recall being the personal recipient of Liston’s compassionate realism. During my first semester of graduate work I was becoming disenchanted and confused and was considering leaving the program. I sought Liston’s

counsel one afternoon in his office. He listened attentively and patiently while I recounted a number of frustrating experiences and wondered aloud whether or not I belonged in the religion and personality doctoral program. He carefully responded to each of my concerns, for the most part reassuringly. Then he looked me straight in the eyes, drew a puff on his pipe, squinted as he gazed at me through the blue smoke, and concluded: “Mr. Vaughn, you are a gifted young man. If you weren’t, you wouldn’t be here. But you have to understand that one condition we expect of persons in this program is that they grow up. We don’t hold students’ hands as they do in some of the other programs around the country. Now, what you must do is decide what you want in life, and whether what we are doing here serves that agenda.”

You might think as you read these words that I must have felt insulted, demeaned, or shamed. I had none of those feelings, for the respect and regard with which Liston held me had been obvious during the entire meeting and was evident in his demeanor, even as he stated those challenging words. So, instead of leaving his office dismayed, I departed with a clearer sense of purpose and a determination to give my best effort to completing my studies at Vanderbilt.

That conversation remains to this day one of the finest lessons in pastoral care I have ever received. Today I attempt to embody this same sense of compassionate realism in my own work as a pastoral counselor, as well as on those occasions when I am called upon to supervise or teach.

When I attended Liston’s 65th birthday celebration, I told him of my appreciation for him and remarked that as long as I lived I knew he

would be part of me. This was one of those verbal displays of affection that Liston must have found a bit too sentimental for his taste, for he demurred rather embarrassingly. But I meant what I said. I still do. I am proud to say he was my teacher.

Vaughn earned the master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, the alma mater of Professor Mills. Upon fulfilling the requirements for his doctorate in Vanderbilt University’s Graduate Department of Religion, Vaughn began his practice as a counselor and currently serves on the staff at The Turning Leaf Pastoral Counseling Services in Brentwood, Tennessee.

