



*Hooding and  
Commencement Ceremony  
2025*

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
WAIT CHAPEL  
7 P.M. SATURDAY, MAY 17



# Hooding Ceremony

SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING  
SATURDAY, MAY THE SEVENTEENTH, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-FIVE  
WAIT CHAPEL

PRELUDE.....Matthew Bacon (MDiv '24)  
Organist

PROCESSION OF THE LIGHT\* ..... Claudia Amaya (MDiv '27)  
Lightbearer  
Mallory Challis (MDiv '26)  
Reader

PROCESSIONAL:\* "Sing A New World Into Being" (page 6).....NETTLETON  
Jelani McKnight (MDiv '27)  
Crossbearer

INVOCATION.....Tyra K. Bethea (MDiv '26)

DEAN'S WELCOME.....Corey D. B. Walker  
Dean and Wake Forest Professor of the Humanities

REMARKS.....Susan R. Wente  
University President and Distinguished University Professor of Biology and Biochemistry

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT READING: PROVERBS 4:20-25 ..... Philip Montgomery (MDiv/JD '29)

REFRAIN: "HOLY HORIZON"

This ol' book says a word to the wise;—

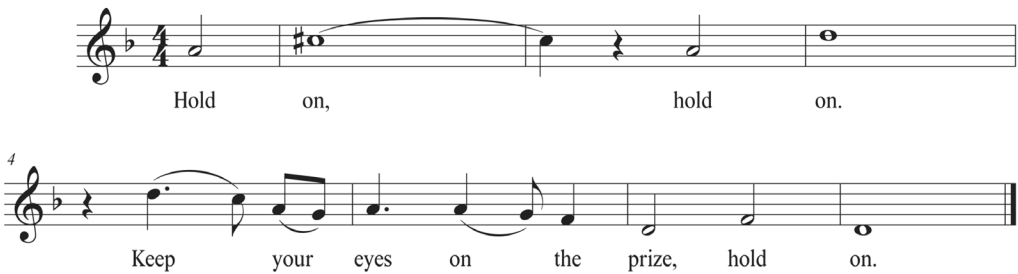
it tells the truth, it don't tell no lies. It says,

"Keep your eyes on the prize: Ho - ly Ho-ri - zon!"

NEW TESTAMENT READING: JOHN 16:29-33 ..... Dajah Lockett (MDiv '26)

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER ..... Maggie Clark (MDiv '25)

ANTHEM: "KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE"



*Spiritual, adapt. Alice Wine, arr. J. David Moore, Sally Ann Morris, Joshua Brian Campbell, Sheila Hunter, bass*

HOMILY .....Melva L. Sampson  
*Assistant Teaching Professor of Preaching and Practical Theology*

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES .....Corey D. B. Walker  
*Dean*

CONFERRING OF DEGREES ..... Susan R. Wente  
*University President*

HOODING OF GRADUATES ..... Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo  
*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and  
Earley Associate Professor of Catholic and Latin American Studies*

Brittani D. Hunt (MDiv '15)  
*Assistant Dean of Admissions and Student Services*

Mary Ellen Walter  
*Assistant Director of Academic Services, Assistant Registrar*

School of Divinity Faculty

PRESENTATION OF THE CLASS GIFT..... Nora Crouch (MDiv '25)  
Jason Wright (MDiv '25)

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

THE MARGARET WOODFORD GUTHRIE PRIZE ..... Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo

THE BILL J. LEONARD DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD PRO FIDE ET HUMANITATE.....Corey D. B. Walker

BENEDICTION.....Corey D. B. Walker

RECESSIONAL:\* "Go in Peace. Go in Love" (page 7)..... GIPGIL

*Please join us for a reception honoring the graduates in the Green Room of Reynolda Hall.*

DEGREE CONFERRED DECEMBER 20, 2024

## MASTER OF DIVINITY

Damisha Moore <sup>†</sup> ..... Cartersville, GA

## MASTER OF DIVINITY

MAY 19, 2025 GRADUATES

Elmer E. Amaya <sup>† ‡</sup> ..... Winston-Salem, NC

Lydia Joy Lazar-Ayers ..... Louisville, KY

Sophia Lynn Carter ..... Cherryville, NC

Margaret Christine Clark ..... Oxford, NC

Guila B. Cooper ..... Kernersville, NC

Kathryn Nora Crouch ..... Clemmons, NC

Maxwell Digman ..... Newton Falls, OH

Lucy Hirschenberger ..... Dallas, TX

Raymond S. Johnson ..... Bronx, NY

Benjamin Paul Sabetti ..... Kings Mountain, NC

Alex Mitchell Smith ..... Cypress, TX

Tyler Michael Smith ..... Siler City, NC

Devin K. Withrow <sup>§</sup> ..... Wichita, KS

Olena E. Withrow ..... Chandler, OK

Jason Rashad Wright ..... Sumter, SC

## MASTER OF DIVINITY / MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELING

MAY 19, 2025 GRADUATES

Emily Griffith Burke <sup>§</sup> ..... Boston, MA

Courtney Sareeta Jones ..... New Bern, NC

Shelby J. Miles ..... Durham, NC

Gabrielle Pohlman ..... Pike Road, AL

<sup>†</sup> *Ethical and Inclusive Leadership Certificate*

<sup>§</sup> *Interfaith Literacy and Leadership Concentration*

<sup>‡</sup> *Religious Leadership in Food, Health, and Ecology Concentration*

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Rev. Dr. Melva L. Sampson is Assistant Teaching Professor of the Practice of Preaching and Theology. A scholar, preacher, and public theologian, Dr. Sampson’s work sits at the intersection of homiletics, womanist theology, sacred memory, and digital religious practice. Her teaching and scholarship emphasize the liberative power of preaching as a spiritual, cultural, and justice-seeking practice rooted in African diasporic traditions. Dr. Sampson is widely recognized for integrating Afrocentric and Afrofuturist perspectives into theological education and pulpit practice. Her research interests include digital hush harbors, Black prophetic preaching, and the sacred storytelling traditions of Black women. As a pastoral leader and educator, she is committed to nurturing the next generation of faith leaders who embody both intellectual rigor and radical love. Through her teaching, she empowers students to proclaim a theology that heals, resists, and transforms.

CLASS OF 2025 GIFT

The Class of 2025 has given the gift of six liturgical albs for use in special ceremonial occasions and services throughout the year. These albs were worn for the first time at the recent Easter Vigil and some are being worn in tonight’s Hooding ceremony. The School of Divinity appreciates the Class of 2025’s efforts in contributing to our learning community.

STUDENT MARSHALS	PROCESSIONAL HYMN	NOTES
Jaylaa Brown (MDiv '26)	Matthew Bacon (MDiv '24)	• Please silence all mobile devices during the ceremony
Kelly Davis (MDiv '26)	<i>Organ</i>	• The commencement hashtags are #WAKEDIV2025 and #WFUGRAD
James Dolph (MDiv '26)	RECESSIONAL HYMN	• “Sing A New World Into Being” and “Go in Peace. Go in Love.” are used with permission under OneLicense.net #A-701691
Anne-Tillery Melson (MDiv '26)	Sally Morris	
Bailey Pittinger (BA '13, MA '15, MDiv '26)	<i>Piano</i>	

ABOUT THE MARGARET WOODFORD GUTHRIE PRIZE

The Margaret Woodford Guthrie Prize is an award established by Wiley C. Guthrie ('52) in memory of his wife. Recipients must have a superior scholarship record, a personality suited to the requirements of Christian ministry, and have effectively participated in the school’s activities.

ABOUT THE BILL J. LEONARD DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD PRO FIDE ET HUMANITATE

The Bill J. Leonard Distinguished Service Award Pro Fide Et Humanitate is the highest honor bestowed by the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. This prestigious award honors individuals who exemplify the University’s motto, Pro Humanitate, and the School of Divinity’s enduring commitment to diverse faith engagements and to serving as agents of justice, reconciliation, and compassion in Christian churches and other ministries.

Established by the late James and Marilyn Dunn, the award honors “the life contributions of Bill J. Leonard as teacher, scholar, historian, and as the first dean of the School of Divinity at Wake Forest.” James Dunn was a founding member of the faculty of the School of Divinity having previously served as executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, DC. Marilyn Dunn was a gifted mezzo soprano and an acclaimed soloist.

The inaugural award was presented during the 2009-2010 academic year, commemorating the School’s first class of entering students in 1999 and honoring the Reverend Dr. Bill J. Leonard’s decade of faithful service to the School.

## THE 2025 BILL J. LEONARD DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT

### EMMA JORDAN-SIMPSON

With her appointment in 2021 as President of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, the Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson became the first Black woman and non-Presbyterian to lead the seminary in its 200-year history. Prior to her appointment at Auburn, Rev. Jordan-Simpson was the 26th Executive Director of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR USA), which over its century of peacemaking has counted among its members the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Senator John Lewis, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Bayard Rustin.

Her path to leadership began at the House of Prayer Episcopal Church in Newark, NJ where she preached her first sermon at the age of 17. She enrolled in Fisk University as a first-generation college student because of her love for subversive speech and the Negro Spirituals, and their importance in the ongoing work of human liberation. She earned the BA in the double major of Religion and Music with honors before heading to Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York to earn the Master of Divinity. She earned the Executive Level Certificate from the Columbia Business School Institute for Not-for-Profit Management; and the Doctor of Ministry Degree (with distinction) from Drew Theological School.

Grounded in the Black church tradition, Rev. Jordan-Simpson claims the vocational identity of pastor and embodies that ethos among the people as one who understands ministry as a call to both spiritual and social transformation. Ordained in 1989 by the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, her leadership in New York City has been representative of her congregation's faith convictions and focused on building community and healing Black lineages.

Her leadership among New York's advocates centered on justice for children. As Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York, she worked with advocates to name and dismantle New York's cradle to prison pipeline crisis; to prioritize youth justice within New York's diverse faith communities; and, to close abusive youth prisons and redirect resources to invest in youth and their families. She was the founding Executive Director of Girls Inc. of New York City; and prior to that served as Executive Vice President of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

Rev. Jordan-Simpson is past President of American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York and serves on the Boards of FPWA, Faith Matters Network, NYC Kids Rise, and Western States Center. In addition to supporting the vocation of multigenerational community writers and editing 18 volumes of her congregation's annual Lenten Meditations, her writings also include the foreword for *Justice for Rizpah's Children: Radical Responses to Childhood Poverty*; by Marilyn Turner-Triplett published in 2019. Her prayers for a meditation on "Loving Our Daughters" were adapted and published in *Standing in the Need of Prayer: A Celebration of Black Prayer*, by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and Coretta Scott King.

Rev. Jordan-Simpson makes her home in the Great Borough of Brooklyn, NY and she and her husband Dr. Gary V. Simpson are the proud parents of three amazing adult children, Candace, David, and Rocky.

### PAST RECIPIENTS

<b>2010</b> BILL J. LEONARD	<b>2011</b> DOUGLASS "DOUG" M. BAILEY	<b>2012</b> LAURA BARCLAY (MDIV '08)	<b>2014</b> MICHAEL "MIKE" AIKEN ('71)	<b>2015</b> JO ANN TRETHAWAY
<b>2016</b> JEANETTE WALLACE HYDE ('58, LLD '10)	<b>2017</b> J. LEE HILL, JR. (MDIV '05)	<b>2018</b> GAIL R. O'DAY (1954-2018)	<b>2019</b> JOHN MENDEZ	<b>2020</b> MARK E. JENSEN
<b>2021</b> CHELSEA YARBOROUGH (MDIV '15)	<b>2022</b> ELIZABETH "BETTY" MILLER STRICKLAND	<b>2023</b> JILL CRAINSHAW	<b>2024</b> LINDA BROWN (MDIV '02)	

## SING A NEW WORLD INTO BEING



1. Sing a new world in - to be - ing. Sound a
2. Sing a new world in - to be - ing where each
3. Sing a new world in - to be - ing where the
4. Sing a new world in - to be - ing. Join the



bold and hope - ful theme. Find a tune for si - lent  
gen - der, class, and race brings its rain - bow gifts and  
home - less find a home, where no chil - dren ev - er  
an - cient proph - ets' cry for a time of health and



yearn - ings. Lend your voice and dare to dream:  
col - ors to God's lim - it - less em - brace;  
hun - ger but are filled in God's sha - lom;  
plen - ty when all tears have been wiped dry;



dream a church where all who wor - ship find their  
where the lines that once di - vid - ed form in -  
where all peo - ple work for jus - tice, where all  
when com - pas - sion flows like wa - ters, pour - ing



lives and loves be - long. Sing a new world in - to  
stead the ties that bind. Sing a new world in - to  
hate and venge - ance cease. Sing a new world in - to  
balm for all who grieve. Sing a new world in - to



be - ing. Sing as Christ in - spires your song!  
be - ing: risk trans - form - ing heart and mind!  
be - ing: raise the har - mo - nies of peace.  
be - ing: live the prom - ise you be - lieve!

## GO IN PEACE. GO IN LOVE

The musical score is written for a single voice part in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is simple and pastoral, with lyrics written below the staff. The score consists of six lines of music. The first line contains the lyrics 'Go in peace.' and 'Go in love.' The second line contains 'Go to seek.' and 'Go to serve.' The third line contains 'Go in hope to work and pray. And'. The fourth line contains 'God goes with you all the way.' and is marked with a first ending bracket. The fifth line contains 'And God goes with you all the way.' and is marked with a second ending bracket. The sixth line is a final cadence. The lyrics are: 'Go in peace. Go in love. Go to seek. Go to serve. Go in hope to work and pray. And God goes with you all the way. And God goes with you all the way.'

Go in peace. Go in love.

Go to seek. Go to serve.

Go in hope to work and pray. And

God goes with you all the way.

And God goes with you all the way.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953, TUNE: GIPGIL; Sally Ann Morris, b. 1952 © 2011 GIA Publications, Inc.



<sup>20</sup> My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.  
<sup>21</sup> Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.  
<sup>22</sup> For they are life to those who find them and healing to all their flesh.  
<sup>23</sup> Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.  
<sup>24</sup> Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.  
<sup>25</sup> Let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you.

*Proverbs 4:20-25*

<sup>29</sup> His disciples said, “Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech!  
<sup>30</sup> Now we know that you know all things and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.”  
<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?  
<sup>32</sup> The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.  
<sup>33</sup> I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution, but take courage: I have conquered the world!”

*John 16:29-33*



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UNIVERSITY

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SCHOOL *of* DIVINITY