



*Hooding and
Commencement Ceremony
2026*

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
WAIT CHAPEL
7 P.M. SATURDAY, MAY 16



Hooding and Commencement Ceremony

Seven O'clock in the Evening
Saturday, May the Sixteenth, Two Thousand and Twenty-Six
Wait Chapel

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

Procession of the Light..... Lisa Gregg (MDiv '28)
Lightbearer
Jelani McKnight (MDiv '27)
Crossbearer

Processional:* "Sing A New World Into Being" (page 6)..... NETTLETON

Invocation..... Valarie Perkins (MDiv '27)

Dean's Welcome.....Corey D. B. Walker
Dean and Wake Forest Professor of the Humanities

Remarks.....Susan R. Wentz
University President and Distinguished University Professor of Biology and Biochemistry

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 40:3-31..... Ronnie Liggins (MDiv '27)
Jelani McKnight (MDiv '27)

Cantor : A voice says, "Shout!"
All: "What shall we shout?"

Refrain: "Those Who Wait for the Lord"..... Sally Morris
Musician-in-Residence

Those who wait for the Lord shall re-
new their strength, they shall mount up and
fly and they shall
run and shall not be wea - ry; shall
walk and shall not grow faint.

New Testament Reading: Colossians 3:12-17	Claudia Amaya (MDiv '27)
Introduction of Speaker	Thomas Maxwell (MDiv '26)
Song: "Give Thanks with A Grateful Heart"	
<p>Give thanks with a grateful heart Give thanks to the Holy One Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son</p> <p>And now let the weak say, "I am strong" Let the poor say, "I am rich Because of what the Lord has done for us."</p> <p><i>Text and Music by Henry Smith (1978)</i></p>	
Homily	Wynnetta Wimberley <i>Assistant Teaching Professor of Practical Theology</i>
Conferral of Degrees	
Presentation of Candidates	Corey D. B. Walker <i>Dean</i>
Conferring of Degrees	Susan R. Wentz <i>University President</i>
Hooding of Graduates	Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo <i>Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Earley Associate Professor of Catholic and Latin American Studies</i>
	Brittani D. Hunt (MDiv '15) <i>Assistant Dean of Admissions and Student Services</i>
	Mary Ellen Walter <i>Assistant Director of Academic Services, Assistant Registrar</i>
	School of Divinity Faculty
Presentation of the Class Gift	Mallory Challis (MDiv '26) Bailey Pittenger (MDiv '26)
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:* "Siyahamba/We Are Marching in the Light of God" (page 7)	South African

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

Degree Conferred December 19, 2025

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

Roger Lee Epps, Jr. Martinsville, VA

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Courtney Gray Rosemont, WV

Darby Lynn Slaughter..... Cameron, MO

Adrian F. Starks Brooklyn, NY

Degree Conferred May 18, 2026

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

Claire Cox Saxapahaw, NC

Christopher Ray Robertson Greensboro NC

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Victoria Argento Raleigh, NC

Tyra K. Bethea Winston-Salem, NC

Dajah Keandra Lockett Brown Frederick, MD

Mallory Ann Challis Salisbury, NC

Kelly Davis Eastman, GA

Jamie C. Dolph Wakefield, NE

Joshua Gregg Littleton, CO

Sharon D. Hill Greensboro, NC

Thomas Nathaniel Maxwell Charlotte, NC

Anne-Tillery Melson Fredericksburg, VA

Bailey Mestayer Pittenger Winston-Salem, NC

April Blair Spears Winston-Salem, NC

India Trice Burlington, NC

Stephen Morris Walker District Heights, MD

Richard Alan Wetzel Greensboro, NC

Dennis Edmond Joshua Judah White Greensboro, NC

Wake Forest University School of Divinity Faculty

Jill Y. Crainshaw

Vice Dean of Faculty Development and Academic Initiatives and Professor of Worship and Liturgical Theology

Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo

Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Earley Associate Professor of Catholic and Latin American Studies

Gary Gunderson

Professor of Faith and Health of the Public

Melanie L. Harris

Professor of Black Feminist Thought and Womanist Theology, Professor of African American Studies, and Director of the Food, Health and Ecological Well-Being

Derek S. Hicks

Associate Professor of Religion and Culture

Kevin Jung

Professor of Theological Ethics and Moral Philosophy

Alton B. Pollard III

James and Marilyn Dunn Chair in Baptist Studies and University Professor of African American Studies

Charles "Austin" Rivera

Assistant Professor of Church History

Melva L. Sampson

Assistant Teaching Professor of Preaching and Practical Theology

Katherine A. Shaner

Associate Professor of New Testament

Corey D. B. Walker

Dean of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Wake Forest Professor of the Humanities, and Director of the Program in African American Studies

Neal H. Walls

Associate Professor of Old Testament Interpretation

Wynnetta Wimberley

Assistant Teaching Professor of Practical Theology and Faculty Director, Thriving Congregations Initiative

Student Marshals

Claudia Amaya (MDiv '27)

Tom Asimos (MDiv '26)

Nayasia Coleman (MDiv '27)

Lisa Gregg (MDiv '28)

Beulah Guillon (MDiv '27)

Abbie Patrick (MDiv '28)

Rebeca Segebre (MDiv '27)

Alfred Shirley (MDiv '28)

Ariel Smith (MDiv '28)

Notes

- Please silence all mobile devices during the ceremony
- The commencement hashtags are **#wakediv2026** and **#wfugrad**
- "Sing A New World Into Being" and "Siyahamba/We Are Marching in the Light of God" are used with permission under OneLicense.net #A-701691. "Give Thanks with A Grateful Heart" is used with permission under CCLI License #11144687.

Class of 2026 Gift

The Class of 2026 has contributed to the printing of new music books for use in Community Worship throughout the academic year. The School of Divinity gratefully acknowledges the Class of 2026 for their generosity and commitment to enriching our shared learning and worshipping community.

About The Speaker

Dr. Wynnetta Wimberley is Assistant Teaching Professor of Practical Theology and Faculty Director of the Thriving Congregations Initiative. She is also the Founder and Executive Director of HULDAH Consulting, where she provides care, counseling, and consulting for clergy, grounded in her belief that healthy leaders cultivate healthy congregations. As a Womanist pastoral theologian clinically trained in psychodynamic psychotherapy, marriage and family theory, and spiritually integrated counseling, her scholarship examines the often-overlooked crisis of depression among African American clergy, culminating in her foundational book, *Depression in African American Clergy* (2016). She has contributed to interdisciplinary research with institutions including Emory University, the CDC, and Tuskegee University on issues such as PTSD, chronic illness, and trust in healthcare among African Americans, and she is ordained in the American Baptist Churches, USA.

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.

Past Recipients

2010 Bill J. Leonard	2011 Douglass "Doug" M. Bailey	2012 Laura Barclay (MDiv '08)	2014 Michael "Mike" Aiken ('71)	2015 Jo Ann Trethaway
2016 Jeanette Wallace Hyde ('58, LLD '10)	2017 J. Lee Hill, Jr. (MDiv '05)	2018 Gail R. O'Day	2019 John Mendez	2020 Mark E. Jensen
2021 Chelsea Yarborough (MDiv '15)	2022 Elizabeth "Betty" Miller Strickland	2023 Jill Crainshaw	2024 Linda Brown (MDiv '02)	2025 Emma Jordan- Simpson

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.

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!

Siyahamba/We Are Marching in the Light of God

We are march - ing* in the light of God, we are
Si - ya - hamb' e - ku-kha-nyen' kwen - khos', si - ya -

1. march-ing in the light of God. *hamb' e - ku-kha-nyen' kwen-khos'.*
 2. march-ing in the light of, the *hamb' e - ku-kha-nyen' kwen, kha -*
 God. *khos'.*

We are march - ing,
Si - ya - ham - ba,
 light of God. *nyen' kwen - khos'.* We are march-ing, *Si - ya - ham - ba,* march-ing, we are
ham - ba, si - ya -

Oo
 march-ing, *ham - ba,* march-ing, *ham - ba,* we are march-ing in the light of God.
si - ya - hamb' e - ku-kha-nyen' kwen-khos'.

*Alternate text: dancing, singing, praying

3 A voice cries out:

*“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*4 Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*

*5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

Isaiah 40:3-5

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14



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