

June 2026

Charles Augustine “Austin” Rivera
Wake Forest University School of Divinity
P.O. Box 7719
Winston-Salem, NC 27109
riverac@wfu.edu

Academic Positions

Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Winston-Salem, NC)
Assistant Professor of Church History (2021–present)

Huntingdon College (Montgomery, AL)
Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion (2020–2021)

Education

Yale University, New Haven, CT (2014–2021)
Ph.D., Religious Studies: Ancient Christianity
Dissertation: “The Mirror of Merit: Divine Grace in Origen of Alexandria and Ephrem of Nisibis” (Christopher Beeley and Andrew McGowan, co-directors)

Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC (2009–2012)
M.Div. *summa cum laude*

The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2005–2009)
A.B., Classics (with honors)
Thesis: “The Art of Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon*”

Grants and Fellowships

Course Development Grant from The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University (2024)
Wake Forest Humanities Institute Faculty Seminar “Research and Publishing beyond the Tenure Boundary” (2023–2024)
Summer Writing Grant from Wake Forest Humanities Institute, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2023)
North American Patristics Society Dissertation Completion Fellowship (2019–2020)
John Wesley Fellowship, A Foundation for Theological Education (2015–2019)

Publications

Monograph

Grace, Justice, and the Gift of Salvation in Early Christianity: From Origen to Ephrem.
Forthcoming (expected publication December 2026), Cambridge University Press.

Edition and Translation

With T.C. Schmidt, *Rightly Knowing the One God: Commodian's Carmen Apologeticum (De Duobus Populis)*. Forthcoming with Brepols Library of Christian Sources.

Article

"The Angel Malachi: An Episode in the Making and Unmaking of Christian Tradition." Forthcoming in *Journal of Theological Studies*.

"The Soul of Jesus in the Land of the Dead: Origen on the Harrowing of Hell." *Harvard Theological Review* 118.4 (2025): 735–753.

"The Mercy Seat and the Lamb: Reframing Christ's Priesthood and Sacrifice in Origen." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 100.2 (2024): 257–288.

"The Birth of the Oriental Ephrem: The Prefaces to the Roman Edition of Ephrem's Works (1732–1746)." Submitted to *The Catholic Historical Review* as solicited article for special issue on Syriac studies.

"The Methodist Origen: Practical Divinity in the 3rd Century and the 21st." Manuscript in preparation.

"Two-Topic Form: Development, Structure, and the Literary Unity of Ephrem's *Madrache*." Manuscript in Preparation.

Contribution to Edited Volume

"God of Mercy, God of Wrath: Reading the Hard Parts of Scripture with the Early Church," in Frederick David Carr and Brady Alan Beard, *Reading Scripture in Wesleyan Ways* (Abingdon Press, 2025), 85–103.

"Sketching the Incarnation: Ephrem of Nisibis on the Theological Significance of the Artist's Craft," in Jeremy Begbie, Daniel Train, and W. David O. Taylor, *The Art of the New Creation: Trajectories in Theology and the Arts* (Intervarsity Press, 2022), 41–51.

Encyclopedia Articles

“Commodian,” in Jeffrey Bingham, Alden Bass, Elizabeth Dively Lauro, and Stephen Presley, *Reception of the Bible in Early Christianity* (De Gruyter Brill, forthcoming 2027).

“Ephrem,” in Jeffrey Bingham, Alden Bass, Elizabeth Dively Lauro, and Stephen Presley, *Reception of the Bible in Early Christianity* (De Gruyter Brill, forthcoming 2027).

Book Review

Pui Him Ip, *Origen and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*. Forthcoming in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.

Bradley Storin, *Self-Portrait in Three Colors: Gregory of Nazianzus’s Epistolary Autobiography* and *Gregory of Nazianzus’s Letter Collection: The Complete Translation*. *Ancient Jew Review*, 30 December 2020.

John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*. *Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion*, 30 June 2019.

Yonatan Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*. *Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion*, 3 February 2017.

David Aers, *Beyond Reformation? An Essay on William Langland’s Piers Plowman and the End of Constantinian Christianity*. *Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion*, 22 October 2016.

Phyllis Tickle with John Sweeney, *The Age of the Spirit: How the Ghost of an Ancient Controversy Is Shaping the Church*. *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51:1 (2016), pp. 227–229.

Conference Presentations

“The Anti-Marcionite Foundations of Ephrem’s Theology of Divine Names.” North American Patristics Society, May 2026.

“From the Garden to Gehenna: Structure and Development in Ephrem’s *Madrashe on Paradise* 1.” Society for Biblical Literature, November 2025.

“Commodian’s Anti-Jewish Patripassianism.” North American Patristics Society, May 2025.

“The Methodist Origen: The *Homily on Psalm 81* as the Heart of Origen’s Theology.” American Academy of Religion Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit, November 2024.

“Piety and Peace: Framing Evangelical Catholicity with Ephrem and Limborch.” Wesleyan Theological Society, March 2024.

“The Weary Songbird: Poetry in Hope of Reconciliation in Ephrem’s *Madrashe on Nisibis* 31–33.” Society of Biblical Literature Development of Early Christian Theology unit, November 2023.

“The Birth of the Oriental Ephrem: The Prefaces to the Roman Edition (1732–1746).” American Academy of Religion Traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity and Society of Biblical Literature Syriac Studies, November 2023.

“Ephrem the Eusebian: Syriac at the Center of the Trinitarian Controversies.” North American Syriac Symposium, June 2023.

“Forging a New Church History for a Global Methodism.” Wesleyan Theological Society, March 2023.

“Two Graces: John 1:16 in Origen and Augustine.” American Academy of Religion Augustine and Augustinianisms Unit and Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit, November 2022.

“The Greatness of John the Baptist: Ephrem of Nisibis on Election.” Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance conference, October 2022.

“A World of Moles and Fishes: The Critique of Dualist Cosmology in Ephrem’s *Discourses to Hypatius*.” North American Patristics Society, May 2022.

“Patristic Exegesis in Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on Genesis*.” Wesleyan Theological Society, March 2022.

“Did Ephrem Know Origen? Harmonious Interpretation in the *Commentary on Matthew* and the *Hymns on Virginity*.” North American Patristics Society, May 2021.

“Hagar’s Bestial Daughters: Christian and Barbarian in Ephrem’s Nisibis.” American Academy of Religion Middle Eastern Christianity Unit and Traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity Unit, November 2020.

“Sanctification and the Experts: Patristic Models for Wesleyan Theological Education.” American Academy of Religion Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit, November 2020.

“Sketching the Incarnation: Ephrem of Nisibis on the Theological Significance of the Artist’s Craft.” Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts Emerging Scholars Colloquium, September 2019.

“Investigation’s Changeful Wheel: Theorizing Historical Theology with Ephrem the Syrian.” Duke Graduate Conference in Theology, September 2017.

“Origen of Alexandria and the Doctrine of Christian Perfection.” American Academy of Religion Wesleyan Studies Group, November 2016.

Service

Steering Committee, Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit of AAR (2024–present)

Program Committee, American Society for Church History (2023)

Coordinator, Church History Working Group, John Wesley Fellows (2019–2022)

Steering Committee, Christian Poetics Initiative, Rivendell Institute (2016–2018)

Teaching Experience

Introductory and Intermediate Greek, Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Spring 2025, Fall 2025, Spring 2026)

“Humane Leadership: Christian and Confucian Perspectives,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Spring 2025, Spring 2026)

“Power in the Blood: The Meaning of the Cross,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Fall 2024)

“Poets Questioning God,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Spring 2023)

“Grace: East and West,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Fall 2022)

“Preachers of the Early Church,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Spring 2022)

“The Trinity, Gender, and Identity in the Early Church,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Fall 2021, Spring 2024)

“History of Christianity II,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Spring 2022ff.)

“History of Christianity I,” Wake Forest University School of Divinity (Fall 2021ff.)

“Biblical Interpretation in Church History,” Huntingdon College (Fall 2020, Spring 2021)

“Interpreting the Old Testament,” Huntingdon College (Fall 2020)

“Theology in the Contemporary Church,” Alabama United Methodist Course of Study (Summer 2020; online instruction)

“Interpreting the New Testament,” Huntingdon College (Spring 2020, Spring 2021)

Lectures, Presentations, and Invited Talks

“The Hidden Leaven”

Wake Forest University School of Divinity Hooding Ceremony (selected by graduating students, May 2022)

“The Neglected World of Syriac Christianity”

Wake Forest University School of Divinity Board of Visitors meeting (March 2022)

“Grace in Origen and Ephrem”

Invited talk at Wake Forest University School of Divinity (March 2021)

“Ecclesiology: Understanding the Church in a Season of Limited Gathering”

Guest on “At the Threshold” podcast hosted by Rev. Ashlee Alley Crawford and Rev. Dr. Shelly Petz (September 2020)

“The Earliest Christians and the Power of Scripture”

The Summit, Southwestern College (July 2020)

“Justice and Grace in Roman Mesopotamia: Ephrem’s *Madraše on Nisibis*”

Invited talk at Wabash College (December 2019)

“Poetry as a Spiritual Discipline: Learning from Gregory Nazianzen”

Workshop for “any-angled light: Poetry and the Mission of Your Church” at Institute of Sacred Music / Yale Divinity School (May 2017)

Professional Memberships

American Academy of Religion
North American Patristics Society
Wesleyan Theological Society
Society for Biblical Literature

Languages

Ancient: Latin, Classical Greek, Syriac, Classical Armenian, Old English, Biblical Hebrew
Modern: French (reading exam), German (reading exam)

References (Academic)

Andrew McGowan

Dean and President of Berkeley Divinity School and McFaddin Professor of Anglican Studies
and Pastoral Theology
Berkeley Divinity School/Yale Divinity School
409 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
andrew.b.mcgowan@yale.edu
(203) 432-9290

Maria Doerfler

Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Yale University
451 College St
New Haven, CT 06511-8906
maria.doerfler@yale.edu
203-432-0713

J. Warren Smith

Professor of Historical Theology
Duke Divinity School
Box 90968
Durham, NC 27708-0968
wsmith@div.duke.edu
(919) 660-3415

Church Ministry

Pastor, Murdock Ebenezer UMC and Eagle UMC, Murdock, NE and Eagle, NE (2018—2019)
Associate Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Emporia, KS (2012—2014)
Transition into Ministry Associate, Great Plains area of the United Methodist Church (2012—
2014)

Ordination

Ordained Elder in Full Connection, Great Plains conference of the United Methodist Church
(2017)

Commissioned Provisional Elder, Great Plains conference of the United Methodist Church,
(2014)

Licensed Local Pastor, Kansas East conference of the United Methodist Church (2012)

References (Church)

Rev. David Livingston

United Methodist Elder and District Superintendent, Great Plains Conference

ne.southeastds@gpcumc.org

Rev. Jeannie Jensen

Retired United Methodist Elder, Great Plains Conference

jwjensen4@gmail.com