

Dean's Forum

Spring 2022 Speaker Biographies

The Reverend Canon Stephanie Spellers

The Reverend Canon Stephanie Spellers is one of the Episcopal Church's leading thinkers and consultants around 21st century ministry and mission and is Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism and Reconciliation. Spellers is responsible for supporting the ministry of the Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church as it pertains to evangelism and reconciliation efforts at the local, congregational, diocesan, and churchwide levels.

Representative Leslie Herod

Representative Leslie Herod (HD-8) was elected in 2016 as the first LGBTQ African American in the General Assembly. Born on an Army base in Germany, she attended the University of Colorado and was the David Bohnett Leadership Fellow at Harvard University's JFK School of Government program for Senior Executives in State Government. She serves as the Chair of the House Finance Committee, Vice Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, and Chair of the Committee on Legal Services. Representative Herod also chairs the Colorado Black Democratic Legislative Caucus and the Arts Caucus.

Juston Cooper

Deputy Director Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition

Juston Cooper is a Denver native who has worked in social justice throughout his career, focusing on political engagement, public policy, strategic planning, organizational development, coalition building, and grassroots organizing. His work revolves around his belief that to build and mobilize political power in community we must understand the systemic issues and barriers that oppressed communities face.

M. Roger Holland II, M.Div., M.M., B.M.

Assistant Professor of Music and Religion, University of Denver

M. Roger Holland, II is a Teaching Assistant Professor in Music and Religion and Director of The Spirituals Project at the Lamont School of Music, University of Denver. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City where he received the Master of Divinity degree, Roger also served as Artist-in-Residence and director of the Union Gospel Choir for over 13 years. In 2015 Union awarded him the Trailblazers Distinguished Alumni Award, the first given to a graduate whose ministry is music, for his contributions to the legacy of African American music. Roger is the newly appointed editor of the *In Spirit and Truth* series published by GIA Publications, Inc., which reflects the aesthetic of Black Catholic worship.

The Reverend Doctor Sam Portaro

Sam Portaro is a retired priest of the Episcopal Church. A graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, Virginia Theological Seminary, and Princeton Seminary (DMin), he was ordained in 1975, served as Vicar of the Church of the Epiphany in Newton, NC; Episcopal Chaplain to the College of William & Mary and Associate Rector of Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, VA, 1976-1982; Episcopal Chaplain & Director of Brent House at The University of Chicago, 1982-2004; and CREDO Faculty, 2005-2017. Author of seven books, numerous essays and articles, he has served as a consultant, educator and preacher nationwide and in England. He lives in Chicago with his spouse, Christopher Dionesotes, with whom he enjoys the endless cultural and culinary bounty of that beautiful city.

Dr. Amy Erickson

Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Iliff School of Theology

Amy Erickson is associate professor of Hebrew Bible and the director of the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program at the Iliff School of Theology. Erickson has written articles on Jonah, Job, the Psalms, Zechariah, and Amos for academic journals and edited volumes. She is a regular contributor to workingpreacher.org, the Huffington Post ON Scripture, The Christian Century, and The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (de Gruyter). She has recently completed a commentary on the book of Jonah and its history of interpretation entitled *Jonah: Introduction and Commentary* (Illuminations; Eerdmans, 2021). She teaches a range of courses in biblical interpretation, including The Body and Sexuality in the Hebrew Bible, The Hebrew Bible and Ecology, and The Afterlives of Jonah. Her research interests include Hebrew poetry, poetic and mythological texts in ancient West Asian literature, and the history of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

The Reverend Michael Battle, Ph.D.

Currently appointed as Herbert Thompson Professor of Church and Society and Director of the Desmond Tutu Center at General Theological Seminary in New York, the Very Rev. Michael Battle, Ph.D. has an undergraduate degree from Duke University, received his Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, a master's of Sacred Theology from Yale University and a PhD in theology and ethics, also from Duke University. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1993.

Dr. Sarah Coakley

Since 2018 she has been an Honorary Professor at St Andrews University, and from 2019 a Visiting Professorial Fellow at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne and Rome. She is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, a member of the European Academy of Arts and Sciences, and holds honorary degrees from the Universities of Lund, St Andrews, Toronto and London.

Dr. Candida Moss

Candida Moss studied at Oxford University and Yale Divinity and Graduate Schools before moving to Notre Dame University to teach in the departments of Classics, Theology, and History. She is better known publicly for her work as a cultural commentator for CBS, CNN, BBC, and many other news outlets. Her most recent work focuses on the intersection of religion and politics, and the influence of religious ideology on international relations, policy making, and education.