



NEW BRUNSWICK
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Think Critically • Act Justly • Lead Faithfully

BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

MAY 17, 2024

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Participating in the Baccalaureate Service

Rev. Micah L. McCreary, PhD

President

John Henry Livingston Professor of Theology

Rev. Charles M. Rix, PhD

Director of M.A. in Theological Studies & Ministry Studies

Rev. Raynard Smith, PhD

Associate Professor of Pastoral Care/Pastoral Theology

Janice McLean-Farrell, PhD

Dirck Romeyn Associate Professor of Metro-Urban Ministry

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

Rev. Elizabeth Testa, MDiv

Director of Women's Transformation and Leadership,

Reformed Church in America,

Member, NBTS Board of Trustees

Rev. Beth LaNeel Tanner, PhD

Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs

The Norman and Mary Kansfield Chair of Old Testament

Rev. Nathan Jérémie-Brink, PhD

L. Russell Feakes Assistant Professor of the History of Global Christianity

Rev. Terry Ann Smith, PhD

Associate Dean of Institutional Assessment

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

Rev. Suzanne Wenonah Duchesne, PhD

Assistant Professor of Worship and Preaching

Director of the Mast Chapel

Rev. James Hart Brumm, DMin

Assistant Professor of Reformed Church Studies

Director, The Reformed Church Center and The Theological Writing Center

General Editor for the Beardslee Press

Alison Siener Brown, MM

Organist

BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024

7:00 PM

PRELUDE *Prelude* C.S. Lang

*PROCESSIONAL *Trumpet Tune in D Major* David N. Johnson

*LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT Micah L. McCreary

*VOTUM, SENTENCES AND SALUTATION

In the name of the Creator and of the Redeemer and of the Sustainer. **Amen.**

This is the day God has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

May the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all as we gather to celebrate and worship God together.

WELCOME

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

Charles M. Rix

Gracious Creator, Compassionate Christ, Welcoming Spirit,
we cry out to you who spoke in the beginning,
and by means of your Word
broke forth from the shadows of your creative chaos
making yourself known to us,
for this, we give our thanks and praise!

You know when we sit down and when we rise up;
you have been with us every step of the way.
You comforted us in our struggles,
celebrated with us in our triumphs,
and brought us thus far in your grace.
For this, we give our thanks and praise!

It is not your desire that any of your children should suffer.
You hear our cries, and you come from heaven to save,
with plans for our welfare and not for harm,
to give us a future with hope.
For this, we give our thanks and praise!

And so we, whom you fashioned with divine care
and created with curiosity, gather tonight,
reminded of your saving purposes for all who are oppressed,
seeking minds, hearts, and wills to hear your word to us,
so that we might face the future courageously,
living into our call with the same determination that led us to this place.
In Christ Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

* We invite you to rise in body or in spirit.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 1

Raynard Smith

Luke 13:6-9

Janice McLean-Farrell
Elizabeth Testa

SERMON

A Tale of Two Trees

Beth LaNeel Tanner

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (from the Belhar Confession)

Nathan Jérémie-Brink

We believe in the triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
who gathers, protects, and cares for the church through Word and Spirit.

This God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church,
the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

**We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest
in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled
with God and with one another.**

We believe that unity is, therefore,
both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ.

**We believe that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force,
yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought.**

We believe that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe
that separation, enmity, and hatred between people and groups is sin.

**We believe that anything which threatens this unity may have
no place in the church and must be resisted.**

We believe that true faith in Jesus Christ
is the only condition for membership of this church.

**Therefore, we reject any doctrine that absolutizes natural diversity in such a way
that this hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church.**

We reject any doctrine that professes that this spiritual unity is truly being
maintained in the bond of peace while believers are alienated from
one another and in despair of reconciliation.

**We reject any doctrine that denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue
this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin.**

We reject any doctrine that maintains that descent or any other human or social
factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.

**We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head,
the church is called to confess and to do all these things,**

even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them
and punishment and suffering be the consequence.

**We believe that Jesus is Lord. To the one and only God,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.**

RECOGNITION OF DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Charles M. Rix

RECOGNITION OF STUDENT AWARDS

Charles M. Rix
Beth LaNeel Tanner

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Suzanne Wenonah Duchesne
Terry Ann Smith

GATHERING SENTENCES

Gather us in,
the lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking,
the tired and aching
who long for the nourishment found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the done and the doubting, the wishing and wondering,
the puzzled and pondering
who long for the company found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the proud and pretentious, the sure and superior,
the never inferior,
who long for the leveling found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the bright and the bustling,
the stirrers, the shakers,
the kind laughter-makers
who long for the deeper joys found at your feast.

Gather us in,
from corner or limelight, from mansion or campsite,
from fears and obsession, from tears and depression,
from untold excesses, from treasured successes,
to meet, to eat, be given a seat,
be joined to the vine, be offered new wine,
become like the least, be found at the feast.

Gather us in!

INVITATION, CONFESSION, WORDS OF ASSURANCE

This is the table, not of the Church, but of Christ.
It is to be made ready for those who love God and
who want to love God more.
It is prepared for those who have much faith
and those who have little,
for those who have tried to follow and those who have failed.

**For all have failed and fallen short.
Forgive us, we pray,
for the things we have done
and have left undone,
for times we have not loved
as you have loved.**

Come then, through grace
all those who seek reconciliation,
and be assured of God's forgiveness
as you meet God here at this table of welcome
where there are no distinctions of age, gender,
race, class, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive ability, or status.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high, voices full and joyful:
these you deserve. ...

... So now, in gratitude, we join our voices
to those of the Church on earth and in heaven.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the One who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you and blessed is Jesus Christ,
who called you Abba. ...

... We cannot hear your words of peace
and forget the world at war.

Show us quickly,
**how to turn weapons
into welcome signs
and the lust for power
into a desire for peace.**

We cannot celebrate the feast of your family
and forget our divisions.

We are one in spirit, but not in fact.
History and hurt still dismember us.

**Heal our church, heal our world
in every brokenness.**

**Fill us with a longing for peace that will last
and a justice that will never fail.**

Amen.

THE STORY

Among friends gathered around a table, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and said “This is my body, it is for you.”

And later, he took the cup of wine and said, “This is the new relationship with God, made possible because of my death. Take this all of you, to remember me.”

So now, O God, accept these gifts which we offer to you in union with all your saints that have forged new pathways of justice and peace in your name:

Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again!

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts, that in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine we may know the presence of the living Christ and be renewed as the body of Christ for the world, redeemed by Christ’s blood. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever

Amen.

HYMN FOR COMMUNION

We Met a Stranger on the Road

MAST

James Hart Brumm
soloist

We met a stranger on the road
while we moved on (or ran away).
We thought we’d ease his heavy load,
but he kept his own thoughts at bay
and drew from us hopes we believed
were shattered by events and dead.
In time, we saw how we received
new life in breaking of the bread.

We journeyed further than we walked;
the outsider brought scripture in
and challenged us and, as we talked,
we found a new place to begin:
God makes new worlds from loss and death,
we should feel more than pain and dread.
That holy dream can catch our breath
and grow in breaking of the bread.

We saw this other as a friend,
inviting him to stay and share
our room and board at daylight’s end.
Our separateness thus bridged by prayer,
we saw this kin with newborn eyes:
our guest was Love Divine instead,
Christ in our midst, the grand surprise
revealed in breaking of the bread.

We quickly stood, were quickly gone,
and quickly running through the night
‘til, gasping, well before the dawn,
we told the news that sparked our flight.
The Resurrection was made real
for us; we are now sent and led
to our new lives as sign and seal
of hope in breaking of the bread.

THE SHARING

*This is the Lord’s Table. Everyone is invited to partake.
Please wait until all are served so that we may partake together.*

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have fed us at your table.
For this, we give our thanks.

You put your life into our hands;
now we put our lives into yours.

**Take us,
renew and remake us.**

From where we are
to where you need us

**take us,
renew and remake us.**

From the security of what we know
to the adventure of what you will reveal

**take us,
renew and remake us.**

From the deep ruts of old patterns
to the changing directions and destinies of your reign

**take us,
renew and remake us.**

What we have been is past
what we shall be, through you,
still awaits us.

**Take us,
renew and remake us.**

So, we may go and share the good news of God's love
through all the earth.

Amen.

BLESSING OF THE SENIORS AND PRESENTATION OF THE SEMINARY LIGHT

*BENEDICTION

Beth LaNeel Tanner

*POSTLUDE

Allegro maestoso e vivace

Felix Mendelssohn

WORSHIP NOTES:

The text “We met a stranger on the road” and the tune MAST were commissioned by Dr. Beth Tanner in honor of the Reverend Gregg A. Mast, Ph.D., on the occasion of his retirement as president of NBTS. The tune was composed by the Reverend Kathleen Hart Brumm ('92), and is copyright © 2016, Brumhart Publishing, Highland Park, New Jersey.

Prayer: S. Duchesne 2021, “Gathering Prayer”.

Affirmation of Faith: © 2006 Reformed Church Press. Originally published in *Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Study Guide for the Belhar Confession*. David Alexander. Used with permission.

Celebration Of the Lord's Supper adapted by S. Duchesne from “The Lord's Supper: Hungering for Justice,” from: Ellis and Blyth in *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) and “Bilingual Eucharist for Sojourners,” authorship unknown, English translation by Lydia Muñoz in “World Communion Sunday 2021 Resources” umcdiscipleship.org, used with permission.

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About our Baccalaureate Preacher



Dr. Beth LaNeel Tanner

Beth LaNeel Tanner is the Norman and Mary Kansfield Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and the Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs. She graduated from Purdue University, Eden Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary. She was ordained by the New Brunswick Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in October of 1997. In 1998, Beth Tanner was appointed as the Visiting Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Assistant Professor of Old Testament in 1999. She became a Full Professor in 2012.

As a scholar, Dr. Tanner specializes in Hebrew poetry, especially the psalms of lament. She has authored four books, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT commentary series), *New Proclamation Year B 2012 Advent through Holy Week*, *The Psalms for Today*, and *The Psalms Through the Lens of Intertextuality*. Her current book projects include *Ancient Israel and Judah: Historical and Social Context* for Westminster John Knox Press and *Psalms Book 1: A New Commentary from a Feminist Perspective* for Liturgical Press. She is also a frequent contributor to workingpreacher.com.

In addition to her work, Dr. Tanner enjoys traveling, photography, and developing her culinary skills. She and her husband live in Somerset, NJ, and have two adult children.

2024 AWARDS, PRIZES, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The Frances D. Beardslee Memorial Award

recognizes the graduating female student who exhibits excellence in scholarship and personal growth **Tracie L. Alston and Kelly J. Williams**

The Reverend John W. Beardslee, III, Award In Reformed Church History

recognizes to the student who excels in RCA History **Christopher Ryan**

The John W. Coakley Prize

is awarded to a master's student who has demonstrated excellence in history and theology coursework **Chun Ling (Angela) Wei**

The Reverend Frederick Mold, Jr., Award

recognizes the Reformed Church student who has exhibited excellence and competence in Reformed Church Polity. **Heather L. Wilson**

The Reverend Horace G. Underwood Prize In Asian American Ministry

is awarded to a student of Asian heritage who has excelled in scholarship and commitment to Asian American ministry. **Kae Yong (Joseph) Lee**

The Reverend Clara Woodson Award

recognizes the graduating senior who resides in the state of New York and whose love, compassion, and spiritual gifts have fostered the bond of Koinonia among students, especially the ones from New York **Kenyetta E. Morris**

The Faculty Council Doctor of Ministry Award

recognizes the Doctoral graduate who wrote a thesis with the most potential to transform communities for a more faithful mission and services **James E. Prioleau, II and Carl E. L. Stuart**

The Biblical Studies Award

recognizes the student who demonstrates excellence in hermeneutics. **Angela Klaus and Kimberly Tolbert**

The Homiletics Award

recognizes the student whose sermon exemplifies the seminary's values of critical thought and faithful exegesis. **Wendell Mickens**

The Faculty Council MA Award

recognizes the Master of Arts graduate with the highest GPA **Lee Ann Newland**

The Faculty Council MDIV Award

recognizes the Master of Divinity graduate with the highest GPA. **Robert J. Petillo**

The Faculty Council Dual MDiv/MA Award

recognizes the Dual Degree graduate with the highest GPA **Nkiru N. Menakaya**

The Faculty Council Certificate Program Award

recognizes the certificate student who has maintained the highest grades for all four semesters **Marilyn A. Correa**

2024 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

The 1784 Legacy Alumni Award

is given to an NBTS graduate of 25 years or more who has given dedicated service to God and God's people in the Reformed Church in America. This person will have exemplified dedication to the church, faithful service in ministry, deep pastoral care, and a commitment to life-long learning.

Rev. Dr. Renée House (MDiv 1987) has served the RCA as a faculty member, Library Director, and Dean at NBTS, as pastor of the Old Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston, New York, as a General Synod Professor, as a member of the Classes of New York and New Brunswick. Though retired, Dr. House currently is a member of the Mid-Hudson Classis, the Kingston Interfaith Council, and the Kingston Coalition for Housing Justice – an organization she helped create.

The Chaplaincy Alumni Award

is given to an alum whose public practice of ministry reflects an extraordinary model of effective ministry, significant service, and contributions to communities served by chaplains. This person will have completed at least four units of CPE, and will have graduated at least five years ago.

Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Wells (MDiv 1984) has a distinguished military career, serving in the United States Navy for well over thirty years in active duty and the reserves. During his time of service, he was called to active duty and was deployed to Afghanistan. Dr. Wells began his chaplaincy service as a Lieutenant in 1985 and retired as a Captain in 2005. Currently, Dr. Wells serves as the pastor of the Union Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) in Harlem, New York.

The Prophetic Ministry Award

is given to an alum whose exceptional leadership and unique contributions to community engagement reflect genuine empowerment, creative collaboration, and spiritual outreach. This person is committed to a prophetic theological understanding and will have graduated at least five years ago.

Rev. Kent McHeard (MDiv 2009) has maintained a powerfully compassionate pastoral presence in his community for many years. Rev. McHeard serves on the Amsterdam, New York School Board and as the chaplain for three local fire departments, in addition to working with the Boy Scouts of America and other community organizations. For 22 years, Rev. McHeard has faithfully served as the pastor of the First Reformed Church in Rotterdam, New York.

These Alumni awards were given at the annual Alumni Awards Banquet.

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