

Academy of Religious Leadership Annual Conference 2025

“Leadership As Justice”

Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO, USA and Online
April 24-26, 2025

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Leadership as Justice

Academy of Religious Leadership Annual Conference

April 24-26, 2025

Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO, USA and Online

(All times Mountain. Schedule subject to change.)

Unless otherwise noted, all conference events will be held in Shattuck Hall (or the Great Hall), directly to the right of the entrance and down the hall.

The Zoom link for all events will remain the same throughout the conference.

URL: <https://iliff-edu.zoom.us/j/96263485253>

Passcode: 766390

Thursday, 24 April (in person and on Zoom)

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Conference Registration and Reception – Iliff Lobby

Online Reception Host: Dr. Sandy Selby

Friday, 25 April (in person and Zoom)

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Light breakfast and conversation

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Session 1

Welcome, Introductions, and President’s Address: **Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi**

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Break (snacks provided)

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Session 2

Dr. Lisa Ann Dellinger and Dr. Anne Carter Walker – “Let Us Govern Around the Kitchen Table: An Indigenous Feminist Model for Religious Leadership”

Q&A Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Will Houts

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch (on-site)

JRL Editorial Board Lunch Meeting – Room S-106

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Session 3

Dr. Susan L. Maros with Dr. Phil Allen, Jr. – “Impact of Leaders’ Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity Development on Capacity for Just Action: Impediment or Bridge?”

Q&A Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Robert Martin

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Session 4
Jocelyn Brown and Dr. Zachary Wooten – “¡Sí Se Puede! Utilizing Organizational Religious Leadership to Create Social Change in Migrant Communities”
Q&A Facilitator: Dr. Scott Hagley

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Break (snacks provided)

3:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. Session 5
Dr. Rebecca M. David Hensley – “Un-Suturing Reflexive Whiteness: How Whiteness Operates and How to Dismantle It in Racial Justice Movements”
Rev. Kerri Parker – “Mainline Whiteness and Survival Questions: Strategies for Tricky Intersections”
Eunjin Jeon and Byung Ho Choi – “Reclaiming Leadership as Justice: Female Pastors Navigating Gender Normativity in the Korean Church”

4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Table Responses to Presentations
Facilitators: Rev. Clara King (Hensley), Rev. Linda Bobbitt (Parker), Dr. Alicia Granholm (Jeon & Choi)

5:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Reflecting in Community
Facilitator: Rev. Scott Simmons

6:00 p.m. Dinner (on-site)

Saturday, 26 April (in person and Zoom)

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Light breakfast and conversation

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
A Year of Invitational Listening and Contemplating the Future of ARL: Presentation and Conversations
Facilitators: Rev. Dr. Robert Martin, Dr. Scott Hagley, Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.
Conference Wrap-Up

10:45 a.m. – 11 a.m. Break (snacks provided)

11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
ARL Business Meeting

General Information

Iliff Wireless Access

Network Name: **Iliff Guests**

No password is required!

Zoom Information (for Online Participants and All Presenters)

The link to access Zoom is the same for the entirety of the conference and is:

<https://iliff-edu.zoom.us/j/96263485253>

Meeting ID: 962 6348 5253

Passcode: 766390

Getting To/From the Conference and Hotel

There is no shuttle service to/from the airport, hotel, or Iliff. Carpooling, Uber, or Lyft are the most viable options for traveling between locations.

Conference Address

Iliff School of Theology

2323 E. Iliff Ave.

Denver, CO 80210

Hotel Address (if staying here)

Hilton Garden Inn Denver/Cherry Creek

600 S. Colorado Blvd.

Denver, CO 80246

Directions to Iliff School of Theology

Iliff School of Theology is located just south of I-25 and S. University Boulevard on the corner of S. University Boulevard and E. Iliff Avenue. It is adjacent to the University of Denver campus.

The conference will be held in the one and only building of the seminary. You can only enter through the front of the building facing E. Iliff Ave. This what it looks like:



Driving and Parking Directions

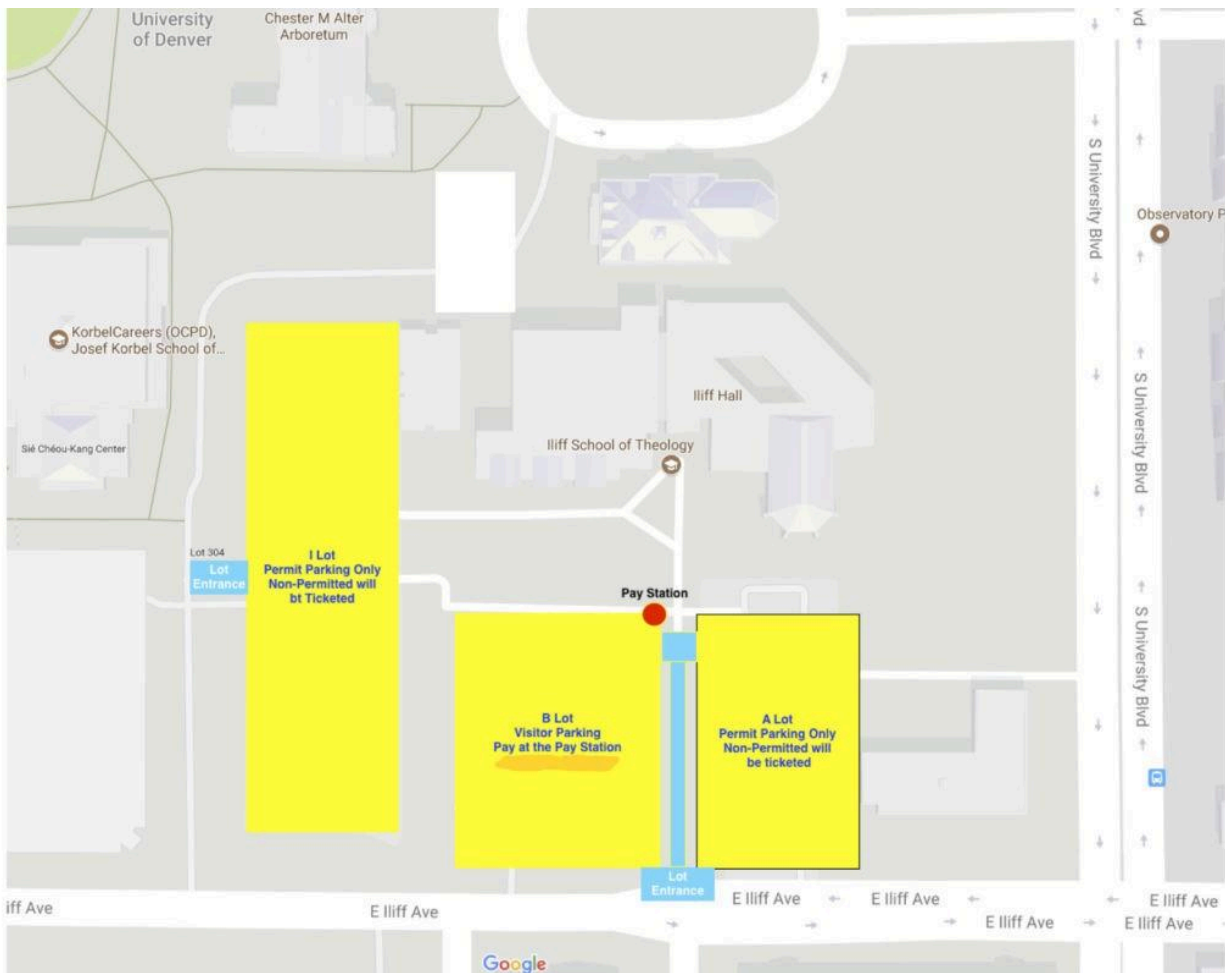
From the airport (approximately 35-40 minutes without traffic):

- Exit the airport and continue east on Peña Boulevard.
- As Peña Boulevard merges onto I-70, remain on the right and take the exit for I-225 South.
- Continue on I-225 South until the exits for I-25. Go north onto I-15 headed toward Denver.
- Take the University Boulevard Exit 205, then turn left onto S. University Boulevard.
- Turn right onto E. Iliff Avenue. The first driveway on the right is the parking lot for Iliff School of Theology. Please park in the west lot (to the left when you drive in) in front of Iliff (Lot B).
- **Parking:** The parking kiosk is as you walk into Iliff's main doors. It is \$2.00/hour or \$10 for the day. You enter your license plate # and can get a receipt texted to you. Alternatively, you can download the [ParkMobile app](#) on your phone and pay to park in Lot B through the app.

From the Hilton Garden Inn Denver/Cherry Creek (approximately 12-15 minutes):

- Head south onto S. Colorado Boulevard.
- Turn right onto E. Exposition Avenue.

- Turn left onto S. University Boulevard.
- Turn right onto E. Iliff Avenue. The first driveway on the right is the parking lot for Iliff School of Theology. Please park in the west lot (to the left when you drive in) in front of Iliff (Lot B).
- **Parking:** The parking kiosk is as you walk into Iliff's main doors. It is \$2.00/hour or \$10 for the day. You enter your license plate # and can get a receipt texted to you. Alternatively, you can download the [ParkMobile app](#) on your phone and pay to park in Lot B through the app.



Presenter Bios, Executive Summaries, and Bibliographies

“Let Us Govern Around the Kitchen Table: An Indigenous Feminist Model for Religious Leadership” – Dr. Lisa Ann Dellinger and Dr. Anne Carter Walker

Dr. Lisa Ann Dellinger (she, her, hers) currently is the Visiting Assistant Professor of Constructive Theologies at Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa, Oklahoma. She received her Ph.D. in the Theology, Ethics, and History program at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2020. She is a UM Women of Color Scholar, FTE Fellow, Louisville Postdoctoral recipient, and Iliff Tinker Visiting Professor. Dr. Dellinger’s work utilizes Christian theology, Native American studies, postcolonial theory, and Indigenous feminist/Womanist theory. She is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and Mexican American. She served as a local pastor in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Dr. Anne Carter Walker (Cherokee Nation; she/her/hers) is Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. Anne's career encompasses over twenty years in teaching, theological education administration, ministry, and nonprofit management. Anne holds a Ph.D. in practical theology, an M.A. in religious education, and an M.A. in ethics, all from Claremont School of Theology. Anne is the immediate past President of the Religious Education Association, and was an FTE North American Doctoral Fellow.

Abstract

Because of the colonization of Indigenous North Americans in both Canada and the United States, kitchen tables have become significant sites of anti-colonial resistance for Indigenous Feminists. In a context where colonial entities have sought to dismantle Indigenous meaning systems and sustainability through the breakdown of extended family kinship systems, everyday Indigenous feminists have reestablished the kitchen table as a space where women as generational leaders are infused with power, where knowledge and practices of resistance are cultivated and shared, where ceremony is practiced, and where ancestral wisdom is literally ingested through the sharing of time-honored family recipes. Meaning-making happens around these tables within the matrix of tradition, relationship, and practice with Granny, Auntie, and Mother as governing leaders.

The reestablishment of the kitchen table as a site of anti-colonial resistance is *good governance*—not only for Indigenous women, but for people of all genders and for communities of praxis outside of Indigenous circles who seek to decolonize institutional spaces—religious or otherwise. This presentation will detail and demonstrate the kitchen table practices of ceremony, story sharing, ancestorship, and blessing one another as a model for Indigenous

feminist religious leadership. Along the way, we will provide the epistemological foundations of kitchen table practice, detailing how an Indigenous worldview informs the practice and can contribute to decolonizing governing practices in spaces of religious leadership. Our delivery style will be a combination of oral presentation and demonstration, and may include digital video of kitchen table practice as developed by a community of Indigenous feminist scholars.

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Selected Publications (Dellinger)

- "Sin, US Settler Colonialism, and the Holy Spirit," ed. D. Stephen Long and Rebekah L. Miles (London and New York: Routledge, 2022) 401-15. Release date December 6, 2022.
- "Recovering an Ecologically, Embodied Humanity: Insights from Native American Women's Experiences," ed. Simonmary Asese A. Aihio Khai (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 155-71.

“Manifesting Evil: The Doctrine of Discovery as Christianized Genocide in the Lives of Indigenous Women and Their Communities,” *Feminist Praxis Against U.S. Militarism*, ed. Nami Kim and Anne Joh (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 29-61.

“Sin-Ambiguity and Complexity and the Sin of Not Conforming,” *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology*, ed. Steven Charleston and Elaine A. Robinson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 119-32.

Selected Publications (Walker)

Candidly Speaking: Refusing a White Supremacist World through Dialogue and Story, with Christine J. Hong. Cascade Books, Spring 2025.

“Dreams/Indigenous Futuring in the Theological Classroom,” in *The Wabash Center Journal Journal on Teaching* 4:1 (March 2023), 6-17.

“Let Us Govern Around the Kitchen Table: Embodying the Guild’s Anti-Colonial Commitments,” in *Religious Education* (Sept 2023), DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2023.2259701.

“Mixed Up and Messy: Culturally Hybrid Proposals for Vocational Exploration,” with Peter Cariaga, in *Religious Education* 115: 5 (13 Oct 2021), 493-505.

Nurturing Different Dreams: Youth Ministry Across Lines of Difference, with Katherine Turpin. Pickwick Publications, October 2014.

“Practical Theology for the Privileged: A Starting Point for Pedagogies of Conversion” in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16:2 (May 2013), 1430-6921.

“Was This Guild Made for You and Me?: A Dialogue,” with Christine J. Hong, in *Religious Education* 115: 1 (Jan-Feb 2020), 61-69.

“Impact of Leaders’ Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity Development on Capacity for Just Action” – Dr. Susan L. Maros with Dr. Phil Allen, Jr.

Susan L. Maros is affiliate associate professor of Christian leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary where she teaches courses on leadership and on formation, and supervises doctoral work. She is president of the Association of Professors of Mission and past president of the Academy of Religious Leadership. She serves on the board of the *Journal of Religious Leadership* and is Associate Editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. Her publications include *Power, Agency, and Women in the Mission of God* (editor, Pickwick, 2024) and *Calling in Context: Social Location and Vocational Formation* (IVP Academic, 2022).

Phil Allen, Jr. is a former pastor, poet, storyteller, filmmaker, and justice advocate. He is founder of the non-profit organization Racial Solidarity Project based in Pasadena, CA, and affiliate faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, *Open Wounds: A Story of Racial Tragedy, Trauma, and Redemption* (Fortress Press, 2021) and *The Prophetic Lens: The Camera and Black Moral Agency From MLK to Darnella Frazier* (Fortress Press, 2022).

Abstract

Ideally, religious leaders value diverse peoples, cultures, and experiences; demonstrate the capacity to discern unjust actions and structures; and enact just action in response. In reality, even leaders with a deep desire to do all three frequently act in ways contrary to their best intentions. This paper posits that one reason for the discrepancy between intention and impact is the influence of the leader’s racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity development. To the extent a person has not formed a healthy, holistic REC identity, they will act out of their personal, communal, and historical trauma, enacting and replicating unjust social norms, and thus perpetuating harm even when they intend to be a just leader. Conversely, when a person has deeply processed their REC identity, including all of the “non-innocent history” (Justo Gonzalez) that comes with that identity, and has come to a place of holistic awareness of themselves and their social group(s), along with appreciation for the experiences and identities of other peoples, this leader has a foundation to encounter the world from a place of grounded self-awareness, thus increasing the likelihood of engaging in just action in a generative manner.

This presentation explores a racial-ethnic-cultural identity development model based on the work of Janet Helms and Beverly Daniel Tatum, influenced also by William Cross and a framing offered by Khyati Joshi and Shanelle Henry. This model facilitates reflection on the following phases of development: implicit and explicit acceptance of societal norms, the experience of disorientation when faced with new awareness, processing implicit and explicit resistance, and the work of reorientating of one’s sense of identity leading to generative embodied presence in

just action. This presentation offers recommendations for personal development of the leadership educator as well as implications for their students and mentees in the classroom and in the community.

Bibliography

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“¡Sí Se Puede! Utilizing Organizational Religious Leadership to Create Social Change in Migrant Communities” – Jocelyn Brown and Dr. Zachary Wooten

Jocelyn Brown is currently pursuing an Erasmus Double Degree Master of Arts in International Migration and Ethnic Relations through Malmö University, Sweden and the University of A Coruña, Spain. She graduated from West Chester University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science: International Relations, where she participated in the Good Life Leadership Lab and the Interfaith Action Committee, among other activities. She is also a Program Assistant for the Virtual Leadership Institute at Cultural Vistas, a nonprofit that specializes in student and professional exchange programs.

Dr. Zachary Wooten is an Associate Professor of Leadership Studies at West Chester University of Pennsylvania's (WCU) Honors College, teaching ethics, leadership, and life worth living. He serves as a Director of WCU's Interfaith, Meaning-Making, and Spirituality Project which includes a Student Interfaith Action Committee, a Faculty and Staff Interfaith Advisory Board, and the Interfaith Leadership Fellowship program. He is currently researching religious expression in North America mediated on TikTok. Dr. Wooten is the PI of Leadership Hub grant from Yale's Center for Faith and Culture's Live Worth Living Initiative. He is also an ordained minister serving Willow Street United Church of Christ in Willow Street, PA.

Abstract

Due to colonial history and a complex relationship with the Catholic Church, Mexico is often skeptical of traditional Western philanthropy. Some organizations are attempting to reckon with the past and create a more just future by relying on leadership models that incorporate social justice. Religious leadership has an immense role to play in advancing migrant justice and creating sustainable social change in communities in both Mexico and the United States.

An ethnographic field study observed one organizational partnership between church and community in Cuernavaca, Mexico: the Wellspring Caritas Foundation (Caritas) and Fundación Comunidad (Comunidad). Founded in 1981 in Pennsylvania, Caritas is a religiously unaffiliated nonprofit but relies heavily on funding from a Lutheran congregation, with many leaders affiliated with the church. Caritas secures funding for community projects in Cuernavaca, utilizing the guiding principle of auto-gestión (self-gestation), which emphasizes that ideas generated and executed by the community will be more sustainable. This principle necessitates collaboration with local partners. Their primary partner, Comunidad, is one of Mexico's 21 community foundations, which bridge the gap between government, civil society, and individuals. Comunidad utilizes funding from Caritas to implement the social change projects in Cuernavaca, such as establishing a school for the children of seasonal sugarcane cutters.

The research team observed and interviewed leadership within the two organizations, volunteers implementing the projects, and members of the Lutheran congregation on a mission trip. The investigation explored the question, “What leadership model best explains how to empower migrants to enact leadership in their communities?” Our proposed presentation will specifically address the role and impact of religious leadership within these models.

Social justice serves as both a goal and a process, and the process must be democratic and collaborative. Contemporary leadership theory has increasingly integrated frameworks of social justice. As one example, the Strategic Social Change Model of Leadership (Dugan, 2024) posits that an organization’s internal and external leadership practices impact their outcomes, framing leadership as a vehicle for justice that can be honed.

Therefore, this study utilizes the Strategic Social Change Model to analyze the organizational structure and culture behind the Karitas-Comunidad partnership, with particular attention paid to the role of religious leadership. In particular, what organizational practices and values help their partnership overcome the stigma attached to religious philanthropy in Mexico to inspire new leadership in the volunteers, implement lasting social change, and overall, create a more just world for migrants in Cuernavaca? The study utilizes the Strategic Social Change Model as a lens for analysis of findings related to the success of Karitas and Comunidad’s leadership practices and outcomes. This unique case study highlights the importance of integrating community voices and experiences into leadership practices, aligning with themes of “leadership as justice.” It offers an example for religious organizations and their partners hoping to engage equitably with and advance the rights of marginalized individuals, in this case, migrants in their communities. The presentation will integrate photos and video from the organizations observed as well as problem-cause-solution structure and questions for consideration.

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“Un-Suturing Reflexive Whiteness: Recognizing and Dismantling White+Christian Dominance in Racial Justice Movements” – Dr. Rebecca M. David Hensley

Rebecca (Becky) is a recent graduate of the University of Denver / Iliff School of Theology’s Joint Doctoral Program in the Study of Religion and an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church. Her field of study is theo-ethics and her research focuses on the intersections of liberative theologies and Critical Whiteness Studies. She serves as adjunct faculty for Iliff School of Theology, teaching their personal-professional formation course where she enjoys introducing students to new ways of thinking and understanding systems of domination and oppression and imagining new ways to incorporate liberative theologies and praxis into their leadership in their religious institutions, non-profit organizations, and local communities.

Abstract

Critical Whiteness scholar George Yancy argues that the condition of whiteness is a social construct *that can be de-constructed*, and from which Whites (through great effort) can “un-suture” themselves. Womanist scholar Kelly Brown Douglas has stated that the work for White Christian leaders is to “help White Christians become free of a White moral imaginary.” As part of a larger project examining the lived experiences of community organizers in Texas who are working toward incarceration and immigration reform and/or abolition, this paper employs qualitative ethnography and Critical Whiteness Studies as frameworks for building a theo-ethical leadership praxis for White Christians to ethically engage in racial justice work from a critical whiteness perspective.

The purpose of the ethnographic research is to better understand how White Christians engage in and are impacted by the work of organizing in multi-race and multi-faith movements for racial justice. This paper focuses on the findings and analysis such movements have on White Christians (personally) and White Christian dominance (socially), asking whether such movements have the potential to “un-suture” White Christians from the “White moral imaginary.”

After briefly describing the specific ways justice-seeking White Christians enact White+Christian dominance within racial justice movements, the primary focus of the presentation involves understanding participants’ experiences and suggestions for ways to address and overcome *reflexive whiteness*, a term I use to describe “the movement between the denial or renunciation of structural or systemic forms of White privilege/power interspersed with the enactment of White privilege/power in a variety of quotidian interactions that may or may not be directly related to a specific racial trigger.”

Participants identified critical solidarity-building practices needed in the work of organizing for racial justice, which included: setting agendas and expectations for multi-race and multi-faith gatherings; White “caucusing,” as well as caucusing within differing racial groups; deep listening and relationship building; White people engaging in the practice of “checking” their own White privilege and that of their fellow White participants; and following the leadership of directly impacted persons. They also named several practical steps White Christian leaders can take, including financial support of multi-race and non-White organizations, supporting the work of BIPOC organizers, and providing leverage in organizing (i.e., utilizing White+Christian privilege to put pressure on elected officials or in some way advance the cause of the organization). Personal qualities such as self-awareness and a willingness to learn, a passion and commitment to the work, and a willingness to step outside of comfort zones were cited as vital traits for White Christians involved in racial justice work. Several participants also noted church involvement as having a positive impact on White Christians in their personal and communal processes of un-suturing whiteness.

These findings are analyzed alongside womanist and ecofeminist understandings of reparations and communion, and Indigenous methods of refusal, to build toward a theo-ethic of communal solidarity. The hoped-for outcome of this work is that it might provide a more ethically informed, practical leadership approach for justice-seeking White Christians who engage in racial justice movements.

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“Mainline Whiteness and Survival Questions: Strategies for Tricky Intersections” – Rev. Kerri Parker

Rev. Kerri Parker (she/her) is an ecumenical justice leader with a heart for stories. She currently serves as Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches and is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. During her tenure, the Council has become known nationwide for its leadership in faith-based pandemic response, crisis preparedness, and openly addressing White Christian Nationalism. Rev. Parker lives and works in places continuously inhabited by the Ho-Chunk people for millennia and honors their resistance and resilience. In relationship with the WI Intertribal Repatriation Committee, she helps predominantly white churches in Wisconsin explore possibilities for restorative action with Indigenous peoples. In 2023 she was honored with the United Church of Christ’s Avery D. Post Ecumenical Award. Rev. Parker earned her MDiv from Chicago Theological Seminary and is a candidate for the DMin in Prophetic Leadership at Iliff School of Theology.

Abstract

Single-axis thinking has hampered Mainline Protestant churches’ ability to navigate the intersection of whiteness and church survival questions. Narratives of decline interact with white normativity, an aversion to controversy, and a deeply polarized society to create a seemingly off-limits zone for leaders wishing to address matters of justice with racial implications. However, there is a more interesting story to be found at the edges.

Data from Wisconsin demonstrates pathways for leaders in unlikely places to undertake the work of decentering whiteness (DW) - statistically white or highly conservative areas, congregations highly anxious about their future, or congregations where few to no people are invested. While the common take is that it is too much of a vocational or congregational survival risk to address racial justice in such places, there is countervailing evidence. The Wisconsin data show key leadership strategies used to make the work possible and foster persistence in the face of obstacles. Beyond the conceptual commitment of clergy and lay leaders to DW, in these Midwest congregations, having leaders who model faith language, relational culture, and more permeable operating definitions of “church” all correlate with more DW practice and less anxiety in the congregation about its future. These leaders shift the focus from past patterns or future hopes/fears to a present openness model seeking change without shame. Spiritual and practical support flowing in both directions were critical to maintaining positive momentum and persistence.

Racial justice does not have to be off limits in predominantly white, survival-oriented settings. In fact, deft racial justice leadership can lead these churches through obsession with member retention and acquisition toward more creative futures. The presentation will discuss why

decentering whiteness is a helpful frame for leaders, illustrate some of the joys and challenges of doing this work in unexpected places, and suggest implications for justice-minded leadership formation.

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“Reclaiming Leadership as Justice: Female Pastors Navigating Gender Normativity in the Korean Church” – Byung Ho Choi and Eunjin Jeon

Byung Ho Choi is a PhD candidate in the Department of History and Ecumenics, specializing in World Christianity and the History of Religions at Princeton Theological Seminary. His current research focuses on the indigenous expressions of Christianity found in Southeast Asia, particularly as found in the archipelagic nation of Indonesia. His dissertation project examines Toraja Christianity that is practiced by the Toraja ethnic group that resides in the highlands of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. His methodological approach interlaces ethnographic and historical methodologies, closely analyzing how Toraja Christians have intricately woven their faith into the tapestry of indigenous practices—especially through their widely recognized funeral rituals.

Eunjin Jeon (she/her) is a PhD student in the Joint Doctoral Program at the University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology. Her doctoral research focuses on the identity formation of Korean and Korean American young women, examining aspects such as race, sex, gender, ethnicity, and spirituality in K-pop culture.

Abstract

Gender inequality remains a pervasive challenge in the South Korean Protestant Church, where male leadership dominates despite women making up the majority of congregants. This leadership imbalance is starkly visible in the largest Protestant megachurches, all of which are led by male senior pastors. While women contribute indispensably as associate pastors or directors of education, they are severely underrepresented in senior pastoral roles. This dynamic reveals a persistent glass ceiling, limiting women’s ascent within the patriarchal and hierarchical structures of the church.

At the heart of this paper is the concept of leadership as justice—challenging unjust systems and advocating for equality and fairness within religious leadership. Drawing on feminist scholarship from North America to South Korea—including the work of Phyllis Trible, Letty Russell, Boyung Lee, and Hyun Sook Kim—this paper explores the structural barriers faced by female pastors in South Korea. These barriers not only perpetuate gender injustice but also limit women’s full participation in leadership roles. This paper argues that many female pastors respond to these injustices through a radical praxis of women’s leadership that are communal, maternal, and interdependent. Their theological praxis of justice encompasses: (1) a koinonia-centered practice exemplified in an agape feast, (2) a reimagining of the image of God through the leadership role of motherhood, and (3) radical interdependence to sustain women’s solidarity-based leadership within the Korean context. By stepping outside the hierarchies of established churches, these women are building new congregations and collaborating with

Christian organizations, creating spaces where they can exercise leadership with greater agency and empowerment.

Using the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) as a case study, this paper draws on interviews with female pastors who have intentionally sought to assert their leadership both within and beyond traditional church settings, deconstructing and reconstructing the ministry in the process. Their stories highlight a pursuit and practice of justice in leadership, as they reclaim their vocational call despite systemic barriers. The women's leadership as justice underscores how the theological praxis of justice from Korean women's leadership rooted in justice challenges oppressive systems and inspires hope for a more inclusive future within the church. By examining how these pastors embody leadership as justice, this paper contributes to broader conversations about the role of religious leadership as a pathway to justice—not only within ecclesiastical contexts but also across broader societal structures.

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