

Teaching the Practice of Ministry at YDS: a Bicentennial Perspective

Italicized text is from *"This Grand Errand": A Bicentennial History of Yale Divinity School* (YDS, 2022) by Ray Waddle.



Training for the practice of ministry has been a central aim of Yale Divinity School from its beginnings in 1822. In homiletics, YDS dedicated two of its first four faculty positions to the discipline. When religious education, practical theology, and pastoral counseling emerged over the next 150 years, the School had a preeminent role in shaping them as modern academic fields.

Today, YDS continues to lead as the evolving methods of pastoral care, practical theology, and preaching meet the vitalities and challenges of the 21st century.

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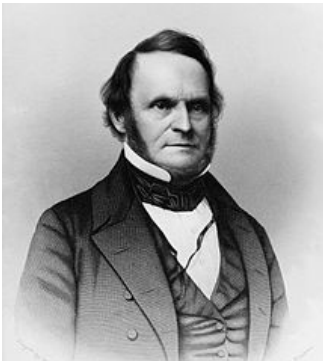
 [Lantz Professors](#)

Homiletics

Homiletics, the art and study of preaching, has been an important part of the YDS curriculum from the start. Among the founding professors of the School were **Eleazar Fitch**, Professor of Sacred Literature and Lecturer of Homiletics from 1822 to 1861, and **Chauncey Allen Goodrich**, Professor of Homiletics and the Pastoral Charge from 1822 to 1860. The School's national profile in homiletics was boosted in 1871 with the establishment of the annual Beecher Lectureship on Preaching. It remains the leading national lecture series on homiletics.



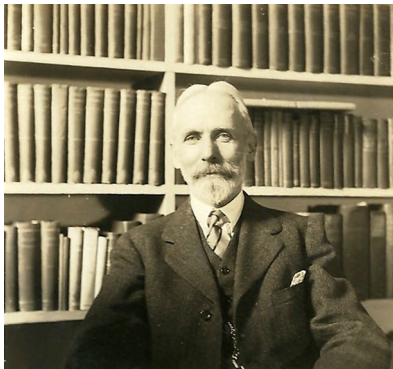
Eleazar Fitch



Chauncey Goodrich

Succeeding Chauncey Goodrich was **James Mason Hoppin**, who served as Professor of Homiletics and the Pastoral Charge from 1861 to 1879, when he became a professor of art history at Yale until his retirement in 1899.

Hoppin's successor in homiletics was **William Barbour**, who taught from 1879 to 1885. Following Barbour were **Lewis O. Brastow**, Professor of Practical Theology from 1885 to 1907, and **Henry Hallam Tweedy**, Professor of Practical Theology from 1909 to 1937.



Henry Hallam Tweedy

Tweedy's successor was **Halford Luccock**, who served as Professor of Homiletics from 1928 to 1953. A *Time Magazine* article about Luccock when he retired said, "As Professor of Homiletics at Yale's Divinity School, the Rev. Halford E. Luccock, 68, has spent the last 25 years teaching his theological students how to preach with wisdom and, if possible, with wit. Since 1948, writing under the name of Simeon Stylites in the *Christian Century*, he has given his readers a weekly column of pungently good-humored religious and moral criticism. His slogan: 'I believe in comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.'"



Halford Luccock

Overlapping with Luccock was **John C. Schroeder**, Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology from 1937 to 1947. Beginning in 1960, **Harry Baker Adams**, noted below as Horace Bushnell Professor, was the primary figure in the teaching of homiletics at YDS along with **William Muehl**, noted below as Stephen Merrell Clement Professor. From 1970 to 1977, **William Thomas Kennedy, Jr.** was Associate Professor of Preaching and Black Churchmanship.



Harry Baker Adams



E. William Muehl

Clement-Muehl Professors

Upon his retirement in 1989, YDS honored William Muehl by establishing the Clement-Muehl Professorship. Its first incumbent was **Richard F. Ward**, who was Clement-Muehl Professor of Communication Arts from 1993 to 1999. He was succeeded by **Wesley D. Avram**, Clement-Muehl Assistant Professor from 2000 to 2006.



Leonora Tubbs Tisdale

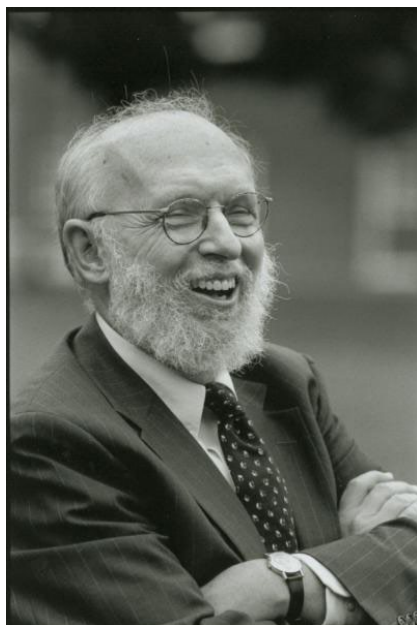
Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, joined the YDS faculty in 2006 as Clement-Muehl Professor of Homiletics and served until her retirement in 2018. She is the author of ten books, including *A Sermon Workbook: Exercises in the Art and Craft of Preaching* (co-authored with former YDS colleague Thomas H. Troeger), and *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*.



Poet and author **Christian Wiman** was named Clement-Muehl Professor of Communication Arts in 2020.

Lantz Professors

The J. Edward and Ruth Cox Lantz Professorship was established in 1985. Edward Lantz (1938 BD) wrote five books and many articles on the subject of religious communication and served as associate professor of communication and ecumenism at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.



The first incumbent of the Lantz chair was **David Bartlett**, who received his MDiv from YDS in 1967 and his PhD in New Testament from Yale in 1972. Bartlett served as minister and professor in various places before returning to YDS from 1990 to 2005. In addition to serving as Lantz Professor of Preaching and Communication, Bartlett was also Dean of Academic Affairs at YDS for a number of years.

As Lantz Professor of Homiletics, Bartlett combined gifts as pastor, preacher, and professor. His death in 2017 at age seventy-six occasioned a deep sense of loss for many at YDS who cherished his Gospel passion, pastoral heart, and wit.

Bartlett’s successor as Lantz Professor was **Thomas H. Troeger**, who taught at YDS from 2005 to 2015. At the time of Troeger’s retirement, Ray Waddle wrote, “In a period of great change in church and culture, Troeger’s career—his books, poems, hymns, and pedagogy—reflects deep encounters with the shifting frontiers of intellectual inquiry, human rights movements, tech revolutions, and biblical theology. His output of hymns exceeds 600, covering a range of contemporary themes. He is well represented in major denominational hymnals.”



Teaching homiletics at YDS in 2024 are **Carolyn J. Sharp**, Professor of Homiletics, and **Donyelle C. McCray**, Associate Professor of Homiletics. Sharp, previously Professor of Hebrew Scripture, focuses on the poetics, narrative art, and theology of biblical texts as resources for homiletical theory and practice. McCray gives attention to homiletics and Christian spirituality, focusing on African American preaching, sermon genre, and modes of authority.



Carolyn J. Sharp



Donyelle C. McCray

The Practice of Public Theology

Also on the YDS faculty is renowned preacher Bishop **William J. Barber**, who was appointed Professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Public Policy and Founding Director of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at YDS in 2022. Barber retired as pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he had served as senior pastor since 1993, and continues as founding president of Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.



Religious Education

In 1912, YDS made a permanent hire in this area—**Elias Hershey Sneath** (1884 BD, 1890 PhD), previously a Yale College philosophy professor. He designed a curriculum and articulated the moral aims of religious education nationally for children, adults, and professional study. He helped land funding for the School's Bushnell Professorship of Christian Nurture, the Stephen M. Clement Professorship in Christian Methods, and the Shattuck and Samuel Thorne Lectureship in Religious Education.

In 1919, Sneath and his wife, Anna Camp Sneath, also founded the School's Richard Sheldon Sneath Memorial Library of Religious Education, named for their seventeen-year-old son, who had died in the 1918 flu pandemic.

Frank Knight Sanders, YDS Dean from 1901 to 1905, was the first president of the Religious Education Association. Others teaching at YDS in the areas of practical theology and religious education during this era were **Lewis O. Brastow** (Professor of Practical Theology, 1885–1907), **Henry Hallam Tweedy**, (Professor of Practical Theology, 1909–1937), and **Benjamin Severance Winchester** (Assistant Professor of Religious Education, 1915–1918).



Elias Hershey Sneath

Two groundbreaking women taught Christian education at YDS in later years. **Iris Cully** was the first fulltime woman faculty member at YDS, serving as Associate Professor of Christian Education from 1965 to 1972. **Yolanda Smith** joined the YDS faculty in 2002 as Assistant Professor of Christian Education, serving in that capacity until 2008 when she was diagnosed with cancer. On disability, she continued to serve YDS part-time as a research scholar and a lecturer until 2015, the year before her death.



Iris Cully



Yolanda Smith



Almeda M. Wright

Currently serving as Associate Professor of Religious Education at YDS is **Almeda M. Wright**, whose research focuses on African American religion, Womanist spirituality, adolescent spiritual development, and the intersections of religion and

Horace Bushnell Professors

The Bushnell Chair of Christian Nurture was established in 1916, endowed by a \$100,000 gift from Horace Bushnell's daughter Dotha Bushnell Hillyer of Hartford. It honors the formative thinking of 19th century figure Horace Bushnell, the YDS graduate (1833) and Connecticut minister who pioneered the first modern arguments for Christian childhood education and moral nurture.



Luther Allan Weigle

After receiving his PhD in Philosophy from Yale in 1905, **Luther Allan Weigle** taught and was dean at Carleton College from 1905 to 1916. He came to YDS in 1916 as the first incumbent of the Horace Bushnell Professorship of Christian Nurture

Weigle was one of four YDS professors of religious education at this point, making the School the strongest in the country. He was a dynamo of writing, speaking, and organizing. His classes were packed—they often had to be moved across the street to Battell Chapel. It's difficult to overestimate the social capital he amassed for the School in his work to improve religious

Weigle was appointed Sterling Professor of Religious Education in 1924. In 1928, he succeeded Charles Reynolds Brown as YDS Dean and oversaw the School's move to 409 Prospect Street in 1932. [Weigle's personal papers](#) are held by the Yale University Library.

Succeeding Weigle as Bushnell Professor was **Robert Seneca Smith**. Born the son of a farmer in 1880, Smith received his BA, BD, and PhD from Yale (1903, 1906, 1927). Smith served Congregational parishes in New Jersey and New York, from 1906 until 1917, when he joined the faculty at Smith College. Smith was appointed Horace Bushnell Professor in 1925 and served until his death in 1939.



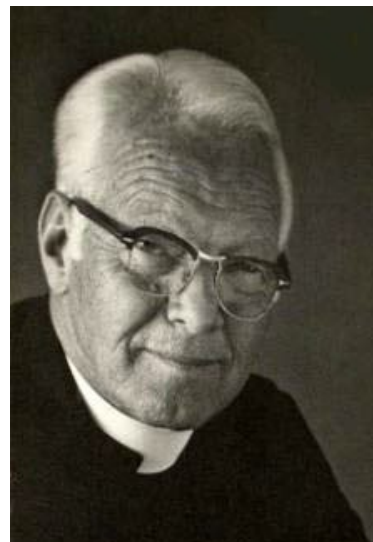
Robert Seneca Smith



Paul Vieth

Paul Vieth was born in Missouri in 1895 and came to Yale for his BD (1924) and PhD (1928). From 1931 to 1939 he was Director of Field Work at YDS and Associate Professor of Religious Education. After Robert Seneca Smith's death in 1939, Vieth became the Horace Bushnell Professor and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1963. Vieth was noted for his pioneering recognition of the value of audio-visual materials in religious education. [Vieth's personal papers](#) are held by the Yale Divinity Library.

Upon the retirement of Paul Vieth in 1964, **Randolph Crump Miller** became the Horace Bushnell Professor. Miller received his PhD from Yale in 1936 and then taught at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California, until his return to Yale in 1952. His 1950 book, *The Clue to Christian Education*, was highly influential in the field of religious instruction. From 1958 to 1978 he was editor of the interfaith journal, *Religious Education*, published by the Religious Education Association. [Miller's personal papers](#) are held by the Yale Divinity Library.



Randolph Crump Miller



Dwayne E. Huebner

Dwayne E. Huebner taught at Teacher's College, Columbia University from 1957 to 1982 and through associations with Union Seminary and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York became interested in religious education. Following Randolph Crump Miller's retirement in 1981, Huebner became Visiting Professor of Christian Education (1982–1985) and in 1985 was named Professor of Christian Education. He was the Horace Bushnell Professor of Christian Nurture from 1992 until his retirement from Yale in 1994.

In 1999, **Harry Baker Adams**, noted above under Homiletics, was appointed Horace Bushnell. He also served as acting dean of YDS from 2000 until his retirement in 2001.

By the 1990s, Adams had inspired countless Yale students from his many campus posts over four decades. He had been YDS field work associate director, homiletics professor, YDS associate dean for some twenty years, two times interim dean of ISM, University chaplain, master of Trumbull College, and acting master of Saybrook College.

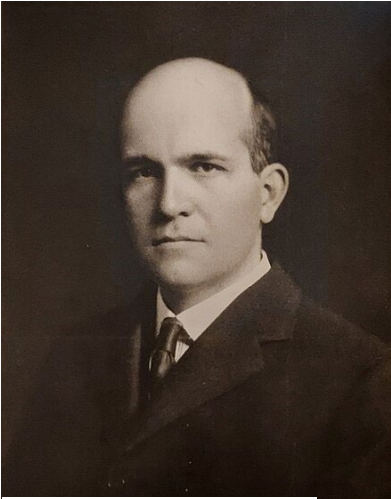
Joyce Ann Mercer came to YDS in 2016 as Professor of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care, having taught at Virginia Theological Seminary for ten years. She was appointed Horace Bushnell Professor of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care in 2018 and has also served as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs since 2021. She is the current editor of *Religious Education* journal.



Joyce Ann Mercer

Stephen Merrell Clement Professors

The Stephen Merrell Clement Professorship, was established in 1914 by a gift of \$80,000 from Clement's family after his death. Clement was an American banker, businessman, and industrialist who graduated from Yale College in 1882.



Henry Burt Wright

The first incumbent of the Clement chair was **Henry Burt Wright**, who served from 1914 until his death in 1923. Wright, the son of Yale's first college dean Henry Parks Wright, received his BA and PhD from Yale and immediately joined the faculty, teaching classics and history until his appointment as Stephen Merrell Clement Professor at YDS. Courses taught by Wright included Personal Evangelism, Rural Sociology, Leadership of Voluntary Bible-study Groups, and Religious Aspects of Student Problems. [Wright's personal papers](#) are held by the Yale Divinity Library.

Succeeding Wright as Clement Professor was **Clarence P. Shedd**. Born in 1887, Shedd received BA and MA degrees from Clark University before coming to Yale for his BD (1925) and PhD (1932). He taught in the fields of Christian methods and religion in higher education at YDS from 1923 to 1955, first as lecturer and later as professor, and was appointed to the Clement chair in 1939. [Shedd's personal papers](#) are held by the Yale Divinity Library.



Clarence P. Shedd

J. Edward Dirks was Associate Professor of Religion in Higher Education from 1955 to 1958 and Stephen Merrell Clement Professor of Christian Methods from 1958 to 1967. Along with Shedd, Dirks was a leader in Yale's Religion

Higher Education program, which documented various aspects of religion on college and university campuses, primarily in the 1940s through 1960s. [Records of the Religion in Higher Education program](#) are available at the Yale Divinity Library.

Next to serve as Stephen Merrell Clement Professor was **E. William Muehl**, who is noted above under Homiletics. Muehl was an attorney, lay theologian, and New Haven alderman who taught homiletics at YDS for forty-five years, from 1944 to 1989. Muehl's scholarship centered around the relationship between faith and social responsibility. The Clement Professorship became the Clement-Muehl Professorship at the time of Muehl's retirement.

Pastoral Care and Counseling

The post-World War II world was looking to US theological education, YDS Dean Liston Pope said—its pastoral theology, psychology of religion, congregational approaches, and scholarship—to supply moral leaders trained in a spirit of the “most searching intellectual inquiry,” without sentimentality or obscurantism.

Roger J. Squire Professors of Pastoral Care and Counseling

The fields of pastoral theology and counseling increased in importance during the postwar era. In the forefront was **James E. Dittes**. A graduate of Oberlin College, Dittes held three Yale degrees: a BD (1954), and an MS and PhD in psychology (1955 and 1958). He joined the Yale faculty in 1955, eventually teaching courses in the psychology of religion and pastoral counseling in both the Divinity School and Religious Studies Department of the University. He was appointed Roger J. Squire Professor of Pastoral Counseling in 2001 and retired the next year. Dittes's [personal papers](#) in the Yale Divinity Library document his academic career.



James E. Dittes

A prior Roger J. Squire Professor of Pastoral Counseling had been **E. Lee McGee (Street)**, who served on the YDS faculty from 1987 to 1997. McGee (1969 MAR) was one of the first women ordained by the Episcopal Church. Before teaching at YDS, she had worked as a priest and social worker with the chronically mentally ill, and in soup kitchens and shelters, in Hartford, CT. McGee's [papers](#) are also available at the Yale Divinity Library.



E. Lee McGee



Mary Clark Moschella

Mary Clark Moschella, who joined the faculty in 2010, is the current Roger J. Squire Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Prior to coming to Yale, Professor Moschella taught Pastoral Theology and Congregational Care at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Her research focuses on three main areas: ethnographic research methods in practical theology; joy in the ministry and in life; and narrative approaches to spiritual care.

Other past YDS faculty in the fields of pastoral theology and counseling include **Gaylord B. Noyce** (1952 BD), who taught pastoral theology from 1960 to 1994 and was the School's first dean of students.

Edward F. Dobihal was Clinical Professor of Pastoral Care from 1964 to 1987. Dobihal was a leading force in introducing hospice care to the US in 1973.



Gaylord B. Noyce

Henri J. M. Nouwen, a Dutch Roman Catholic writer and priest, joined the YDS faculty in 1971 and taught for ten years.

Nouwen's arrival aligned with a post-1960s zeitgeist. His time at YDS coincided with a reawakened student interest in spiritual formation, a desire to inject soulful individuality into graduate school traditions.

Nouwen was a man of prayer, vulnerability, and humor, indifferent to professorial decorum. In his classroom and in private conversation he drew listeners' attention to matters of the heart, challenging students to stay in touch with the interior life, devotional practices, lectio divina, gospel simplicity, and the call to solitude.



Henri J. M. Nouwen

Leon Watts served as Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology from 1975 to 1987.

In a 2015 interview in *Reflections*, YDS graduate Michael B. Curry (1978 MDiv), Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, looked back on his professors from this period:

“YDS was and is a place of creative ferment—ecumenical, interfaith—that helped me be open to the idea that God is the source of all truth. This freed me to converse with other traditions without fear. Where truth is found, God is there. I think of Brevard Childs, who taught Old Testament. He helped me see the Bible as a whole, but also in its details it had a message for us each day. Before the word ‘spirituality’ became popular, Henri Nouwen taught us how to pray, unhinging our prayers from our egotistical needs. Leon Watts made us see the connection between world and Word. He stressed that Jesus is as much about saving broken bodies as about saving souls.”



Leon Watts

Other YDS faculty in the fields of pastoral care and counseling included **Kristen Leslie**, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling from 1998 to 2010, and **Jan Holton**, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology from 2006 to 2015.

Janet K. Ruffing was Professor of the Practice of Spirituality and Ministerial Leadership from 2010 until her retirement in 2020. Prior to her arrival at YDS, Professor Ruffing, a Sister of Mercy, was Professor of Spirituality and Spiritual Direction at Fordham University from 1986 to 2010.



Janet K. Ruffing

Exhibit prepared by Martha Lund Smalley with assistance from Ray Waddle.

For more exhibits highlighting aspects of Yale Divinity School's history, see: <https://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/exhibitions>.