

PERKINS SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY
Craig C. Hill, Dean and Professor of New Testament

Perkins celebrates our vital connections with the Desert Southwest Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Continued Enrollment Increase

Overall enrollment for 2019-20 at Perkins School of Theology reflects a 6.6% increase from 2018-19. The Office of Enrollment Management also reported three consecutive years of significant growth in *new student totals*—with 2019 reflecting a more than doubled increase over 2016—contrasting with the trend of decline in schools of theology nationally.

Enrollment at Perkins for the 2019-20 academic year totaled 343 students, including 27 enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Fall 2019 statistics reflect the following: 63.3% of the entire student population are United Methodist and 37% are ethnic minority students. Master's degree programs comprise approximately 46% male and 54% female students. The Doctor of Pastoral Music (D.P.M.) program includes students from southern Asia taking classes in Dallas.

The hybrid Houston-Galveston Extension Program, in its third year of providing a combination of online and residential classes leading to the M.Div. and M.A.M. degrees, totaled 94 students during the 2019-20 academic year.

2019-20 Highlights

- “Reboot: The Congregation as Youth Worker,” an initiative of Perkins School of Theology designed to equip entire congregations to serve in ministry with youth, held its first retreat in September 2019 with representatives of the 18 diverse congregations selected to form its initial (starter) cohort. They include two African Methodist Episcopal churches, three Baptist churches, two Presbyterian (PC USA) churches, an Episcopal church, and 10 United Methodist churches of varying ethnic backgrounds—including First United Methodist Church of Mont Belview, Texas (Texas Annual Conference)—all without a full-time, paid youth worker and within a 300-mile radius of Dallas. The initiative co-directed by the Rev. Bart Patton, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Education and Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison, Associate Dean, Office of External Programs, is funded by a five-year, \$1 million grant awarded to Perkins School of Theology in late 2018 by the Lilly Endowment Inc.
- The Certification in Spiritual Direction Program at Perkins, launched in 2010, welcomed its largest cohort to-date in August 2019. The 26th cohort, with 17 members, includes clergy and laity from across the U.S. During the three-year, noncredit continuing education course, participants are trained in the art of accompanying and guiding others in their spiritual journeys.
- In 2019, Perkins opened its new Baptist House of Studies (BHS) which fosters community for ministerial students, faculty and staff who identify with the Baptist and Free Church traditions. The BHS is a spiritual, rather than a physical, house that especially supports and encourages students as they pursue their academic and ecclesial training in an ecumenical and university-based seminary. In October of 2019, BHS hosted Amanda Tyler, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, for two events on the Perkins campus. And in March 2020, BHS—with the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty—co-sponsored the Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State with keynote speaker and national interfaith leader Eboo Patel.
- More than 200 theologians, artists, musicians, scholars and community members gathered for a two-day conference Sept. 20-21, 2019, entitled “*The Art of Resilience – Latinx Public Witness in Troubled Times.*” The sold-out event, sponsored by The Center for the Study of Latino/a

Christianity and Religions at Perkins, Ignite/Arts Dallas: A Center for People, Purpose, Place at SMU Meadows School of the Arts and the SMU Meadows Division of Theatre, gave participants the opportunity to interact with outstanding Latinx scholars, local artists, and religious and community leaders to reflect deeply on race, gender and immigration as matters of moral and faith concerns. As part of the program, the Meadows School of the Arts hosted an art exhibit and a performance by New York Latina playwright Jessica Carmona of her original work, “Elvira: The Immigration Play.” Special music performed during the weekend was composed by Ars lubilorum, a Latin-American collective of composers—including Marcell Silva Steuernagel, director of Perkins’ Master of Sacred Music Program—who research the intersection of Christian liturgical traditions and new music.

- “*Hong Kong Protests: A Messianic Movement?*,” a panel discussion focused on the 2019 Hong Kong student protests, drew participants from across SMU and the Dallas area on October 22, 2019. Sponsored by SMU Perkins School of Theology, the Tower Center’s Sun & Star Program on Japan and East Asia and SMU’s Center for Faith and Learning and the Embrey Human Rights Program, the event—one of the first of its kind in the U.S. to examine the protests—featured Dr. Lap Yan Kung, professor of Theology, The Divinity School, The Chinese University of Hong Kong as the keynote speaker. A panel discussion—which examined the religious and secular issues underlying the protests and the implications for religious communities in Hong Kong and around the world—followed. The panel moderator was Dr. Sze-kar Wan, Professor of New Testament at Perkins, who organized the event.
- The globe came to Perkins during the 2019 Fall Convocation, held November 12. “*Mission Quest: Finding Your Place in God’s World*,” featured travel guide and activist Rick Steves, who headlined an opening event with 1,200 participants at SMU’s McFarlin Auditorium. Sharing the stage with Steves during the two-day event, also held at Highland Park United Methodist Church, were the Rev. Dr. Samira Izadi Page, a native of Iran who leads a ministry to refugees in Dallas, and the Reverend Dr. Célestin Musekura, a Rwandan and founder of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM). In addition to hearing speakers from three continents, attendees heard praise music in 17 different languages and human stories of hope and struggle from around the world.
- The 2019 Advent Worship Service, held December 5, marked three milestones: the 60th anniversary of Perkins’ Master of Sacred Music (MSM) program, the 80th anniversary of the Seminary Singers, and the 60th anniversary of the Advent service itself. Advent was first celebrated in Perkins Chapel in 1959, a tradition continued every year since. Three guest choirs from Dallas-area churches, led by alumni of the M.S.M. program, performed an anthem, and all three choirs performed Jane Marshall’s “Song of Simeon.” Worship followed the classic “Lessons and Carols” format, plus a reading by Dr. Ted Campbell, Professor of Church History, of one of Martin Luther’s sermons.
- Thanks to a partnership initiated with Cliff College in the U.K. and the Methodist Church of Great Britain, a Perkins intern was placed in England for the 2019-20 academic year. Third-year student Cori Clevenger—whose home church is First UMC in Liberty, Texas—interned in a three-point charge of Methodist churches in the Midlands area. Her internship is part of a pilot program that organizers hope will become ongoing. Internships give M.Div. students at Perkins an opportunity to integrate coursework of Bible, theology and ethics with ministry practice in the real world. Now, Perkins students have the chance to do this in another culture, broadening their understanding of Christian expressions from those found in the U.S.
- Two new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were signed during 2019-20, including the first with an international school of theology, as part of the ongoing initiative to deepen relationships between Perkins and undergraduate colleges, universities and international seminaries. A formal

agreement was reached with Project Transformation National, which sponsors a summer intensive for undergraduate college students who lead summer day camp programs for children and youth at urban United Methodist churches across the U.S. and who also explore vocations in ministry and service. In addition, the agreement with Bishop Han Theological School (BHTS) in Mindanao, Philippines, will promote collaboration and intercultural activities among theology faculty and students from the two institutions. Previous MOUs have been formalized with historically United Methodist institutions including Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana; Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas; McMurry University in Abilene, Texas; Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas; Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas; Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas; Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth, Texas; Wylie College in Marshall, Texas; and Presbyterian-related Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

- The Bolin Family 2020 Perkins Scholarship Luncheon was held Wednesday, February 5, 2020, with New York Times columnist and best-selling author, David Brooks as guest speaker. The luncheon, inaugurated in 2010, serves as a major fundraiser for student scholarships. This year's luncheon, which highlighted the 2019-20 Perkins Scholars, netted approximately \$75,000 for new scholarships.
- A two-day conference, "*In the Face of Barbarism: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Culture, Humanity and the Importance of Ordinary Life*," was held February 13-14, 2020, and included noted lecturers Victoria Barnett, Michael DeJonge, and Natalie Carnes. Supported by the Robinson Fund at Perkins, which encourages work at the intersection of theology and the arts, the event focused on the importance of everyday life in Bonhoeffer's theology and ethics. The conference concluded with a one-person play on the legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as adapted and performed by Al Staggs.
- Dr. Theodore Walker, Associate Professor of Ethics and Society at Perkins,
- discovered a lost manuscript—written 77 years ago—by Ernest E. Just, with an important message for modern readers. The unpublished book presents a cell biology-rooted theory of the origin and evolution of ethical behaviors. Dr. Walker and his team are now in the process of editing the manuscript to submit for publication.
- Dr. Evelyn Parker, Susanna Wesley Centennial Professor of Practical Theology, was in South Africa as a 2019-2020 U.S. Fulbright Scholar. Based at the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice and the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Western Cape in Cape Town, she worked on a project titled "Role of Religious Leaders in Preventing and Intervening in Teen Dating Violence in South Africa."
- The Rev. Dr. Rebekah Miles, Professor of Ethics and Practical Theology at Perkins, was named one of three Odyssey Medal Recipients by Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. The medals are presented annually by the Hendrix College Board of Trustees to individuals whose life achievements exemplify the Hendrix Odyssey Program. Miles, a 1982 Hendrix graduate, was honored for her research. A reception and medal presentation with Hendrix President William M. Tsutsui took place on November 14 in the Great Hall of the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock.
- Dr. Ángel J. Gallardo joined the Perkins faculty and staff as Associate Director of the Intern Program in summer 2019. Dr. Gallardo, who earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at SMU in 2018, previously served as a teaching assistant at Perkins and taught in the Regional Course of Study School. He holds leadership positions in various professional and Latino/a organizations, and has worked with faith-leaders, activists, and scholars both locally and internationally, including during an internship in Brazil.

- The Rev. Katherine Glaze Lyle of Dallas was named recipient of the 2019 Perkins Distinguished Alumnus/a Award by the Perkins School of Theology Alumni/ae Council. She was honored during a special banquet held November 12 at Perkins for her effectiveness and integrity in service to the church, continuing support for the goals of Perkins and Southern Methodist University, outstanding service to the community and exemplary character.
- The Houston-Galveston Extension Program will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2020. The original program, which launched in fall 1995, enabled students to take initial portions of their work toward Perkins degrees in Houston-Galveston and to complete their work on the Dallas campus. Key leadership (in their roles at that time) included Perkins Dean Robin Lovin, Dr. James Moore, pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Houston and Dr. Charles Millikan, pastor of Moody Memorial United Methodist Church in Galveston, in addition to other leaders within the Texas Annual Conference. Over the years, many outstanding students, including Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, have attended Perkins through the Houston-Galveston Extension Program—also known as “Perkins South.”

The highlights listed above are reflective of the vibrant engagement of Perkins faculty, staff and students during the 2019-20 academic year.

Perkins School of Theology is committed to those *called to serve* so that they might be *empowered to lead*. We thank our many colleagues, friends and alumni/ae in the Desert Southwest Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church for your generous support, including referrals of prospective students, as we continue our vital mission of preparing women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry.

Grace and peace,