

2026 Lenten Preacher Biographies • Cathedral Church of the Advent

Ash Wednesday, February 18 – Glenda Curry

Glenda Curry was invested as the 12th **Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama** in January 2021. She had been consecrated as Bishop Coadjutor in 2020. Prior to her election as bishop, she served as Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Homewood, Alabama. Ordained in 2002, she was Rector of Epiphany Episcopal Church in Leeds, Alabama, until her move to All Saints in 2004. Bishop Curry currently serves as Bishop liaison to Episcopal Church Cursillo Ministries. Before her ordination, she served as President of Troy University in Montgomery from 1992-1999, becoming Alabama's first female president of a four-year public university. She and her husband William have two children and seven grandchildren.

Thursday-Friday, February 19-20 – Daniel Stulac

Daniel Stulac is **Assistant Professor of the Old Testament** at **Briercrest College and Seminary** in **Caronport, Saskatchewan, Canada**. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, he worked as a campus minister and organic farmer in New Hampshire, and then as an agricultural missionary in Rwanda. He attended Princeton Theological Seminary and completed his doctoral studies in Old Testament at Duke University in 2017. In addition to numerous essays and articles, Dr. Stulac has published several books including the forthcoming *Worship and Waste: A Christological Companion to the Book of 2 Samuel*. He is married to Danielle, and they have two daughters.

Monday-Tuesday, February 23-24 – Ashley Null

Ashley Null was consecrated as the second **Bishop of North Africa** in the Anglican Province of Alexandria in 2025. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, he has served as a theologian as well as in parish ministry, including a term as Canon Theologian for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas. An old friend of the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Dr. Null is an internationally renowned scholar of Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation. He is the author of *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love*, and has published innumerable articles about the English Reformation. He also works as a sports chaplain, counseling Olympic and other elite athletes.

Wednesday, February 25 – Ronald Sterling

Ronald Sterling serves as **Lecturer in Pastoral Studies and Spiritual Formation** at **Beeson Divinity School** in **Birmingham, Alabama**. He is also Beeson's Director of Student Services, giving special attention to matters of racial reconciliation and student retention. An ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination for more than 20 years, Dr. Sterling is Pastor of Saint John AME Church in Birmingham. For several years he also has provided chaplaincy services to the UAB Health System as a PRN Chaplain. He is married to Kim, and they have three children and eight grandchildren.

Thursday, February 26 – David Gaston

David Gaston is a **Physician** in **Nashville, Tennessee**. Holding both M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, he is an academic physician trained in infectious diseases and clinical microbiology who directs the Molecular Infectious Disease Laboratory at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He also serves as an Elder at the City Church of East Nashville. Dr. Gaston grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, attending the Cathedral Church of the Advent, where Gil Kracke was his Youth Director. He and his wife Kate (our preacher on February 27) were married at the Advent, and their daughter Addie was baptized there by Craig Smalley.

Friday, February 27 – Kate Gaston

Kate Gaston is a **Writer** and **Women's Ministry Director** at the **City Church of East Nashville** in **Nashville, Tennessee**. An Alabama native, she was homeschooled before completing her undergraduate degree at Bryan College and attending graduate school at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She worked as a PA in a trauma and burn ICU for eight years before ping-ponging across the nation for her husband David's medical training. (David Gaston is our preacher on February 26.) Ms. Gaston enjoys homeschooling her daughter, writing, and oil painting. You can read her writing on the Rabbit Room Substack.

Monday-Tuesday, March 2-3 – Curt Benham

Curt Benham is the **North Campus Pastor** at **Trinity Episcopal Parish** in **St. Augustine, Florida**. After graduating from Florida State University, he led a college ministry in Romania. He returned to the States to attend Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, then moved to Atlanta to serve at a large regional church. After being ordained a presbyter in the Anglican Province of Rwanda, Mr. Benham planted a new church in Atlanta, where he served as Rector for 10 years. In 2020 he and his wife Michelle moved back to their native northeast Florida, where he was received into the Episcopal Church and joined the clergy team at Trinity Parish.

Wednesday, March 4 – Kristen Deede Johnson

Kristen Deede Johnson became the 11th **Principal** of **Wycliffe College** in **Toronto, Ontario, Canada**, in 2025. She is also the Helliwell Professor of Theology, Ministry, and Culture at Wycliffe. She previously served at Western Theological Seminary, where she was Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Dr. Johnson is widely published by both popular and academic publishers and is a sought-after thought leader on radio and podcasts. In 2017 a book she co-authored, *The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance*, was awarded Book of the Year by *Christianity Today* in the Politics and Public Life Category. She is married to Trygve (our preacher March 5-6), and they have two children.

Thursday-Friday, March 5-6 – Trygve Johnson

Trygve Johnson is the **Executive Director** of the **PreachFor Foundation**, an organization working to call, form, and empower a new generation of Christian leaders for the church. Ordained in the Reformed Church of America, he served 18 years as the Dean of the Chapel at Hope College, and is a co-founder of The Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination. Dr. Johnson wrote the book *The Preacher as Liturgical Artist*, and is the author of numerous articles and chapters on a theology of ministry and leadership. He and his wife Kristen (our preacher on March 4) have two children.

Monday-Tuesday, March 9-10 – Daniel van Voorhis

Daniel van Voorhis is a **Scholar-in-Residence** at **1517**, for whom he hosts the daily podcast *The Christian History Almanac*. After earning his Ph.D. in History from the University of St. Andrews, he spent 11 years teaching history and political thought at Concordia University. Dr. van Voorhis speaks on various topics in the history of the church, from its early beginnings through the 21st-century American evangelical church. He is the featured instructor in two 1517 Academy courses available at 1517.org: *The History of Christianity in America* and *A Brief History of the Reformation*. He and his wife Beth Ann enjoy life together in California with their two sons.

Wednesday, March 11 – Mark Rector

Mark Rector serves as **Associate Minister** at **Mountain Brook Baptist Church** in **Mountain Brook, Alabama**. He grew up in Mountain Brook and attended Furman University, majoring in Business Administration and Religion. Following Furman, he completed his Master of Divinity degree at Beeson Divinity School. Mr. Rector has served in both local church and parachurch youth ministry contexts. He is married to Anne, who teaches 9th grade at Mountain Brook Junior High School. He enjoys coaching his four children, playing golf when he can, and reading a good book.

Thursday-Friday, March 12-13 – Julie Canlis

Julie Canlis is **Liturgical Director** at **Trinity Church** in **Wenatchee, Washington**. She also teaches intensives in many graduate programs. A graduate of the University of Washington and Regent College, she earned a Ph.D. at the University of St. Andrews. Her doctoral work was published as *Calvin's Ladder*, which won the *Christianity Today* Award of Merit for Theology in 2011. Dr. Canlis was awarded the Templeton Prize for Theological Promise in 2007. While raising children, she produced the microbook *A Theology of the Ordinary*, which is about what happens when Ph.D.'s meet gardens, children, and chickens. She is married to Matt, and they have four children.

Monday-Friday, March 16-20 – Chad Bird

Chad Bird is a **Scholar-in-Residence** at 1517, where he co-hosts the podcast *40 Minutes in the Old Testament*. At 1517 he brings his deep knowledge of Scripture and theology to readers, listeners, and audiences around the world. Holding master's degrees from Concordia Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College, he has served as a pastor, professor, and guest lecturer in Old Testament theology and Hebrew. A prolific author, Mr. Bird has written numerous books, including *The Christ Key*, *Hitchhiking with Prophets*, and, most recently, *Untamed Prayers*. A Texan and an avid runner, he and his wife Stacy enjoy traveling together and spending time with their grandchildren.

Monday-Wednesday, March 23-25 – Charleston Wilson

Charleston Wilson has served as **Rector** of **Church of the Redeemer** in **Sarasota, Florida**, since 2020. He joined the ministry staff at Redeemer in 2014. Before attending seminary in 2009, he and his family were members of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Alabama. While in Alabama, he was a creative entrepreneur in the restaurant, timber, and wine industries. Mr. Wilson earned degrees from Samford University and Nashotah House Theological Seminary. He serves as President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of *The Anglican Digest*. He is married to Malacy, and they have two children.

Thursday-Friday, March 26-27 – Paul Zahl

Paul Zahl is **Dean Emeritus** at the **Cathedral Church of the Advent** in **Birmingham, Alabama**. He served as Dean and Rector of the Advent from 1995-2004. He left Birmingham to become Dean and President of Trinity School for Ministry, and later served as Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Chevy Chase, Maryland, before his retirement. Dr. Zahl earned his doctoral degree at the University of Tübingen in Germany. He has written a number of books, including *Grace in Practice* and *Peace in the Last Third of Life: A Handbook of Hope for Boomers*. He is also the voice of *PZ's Podcast*. He and his wife Mary have three adult sons, all of whom serve in different forms of Christian ministry.

Monday-Tuesday, March 30-31 – Mark Mattes

Mark Mattes is the **Lutheran Bible Institute Chair in Theology** at **Grand View University** in **Des Moines, Iowa**. An ordained Lutheran pastor, he served parishes in Illinois and Wisconsin before his call to Grand View in 1995. A veteran of our Lenten series, he has written several books, including *Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* and *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*. Dr. Mattes has also co-edited or co-translated several works and authored numerous essays and reviews. He is an associate editor for *Lutheran Quarterly* and serves on the Continuation Committee of the International Luther Congress. He is married to Carol, and they have three adult children and three grandchildren.

Wednesday-Thursday, April 1-2 – Robert Smith

Robert Smith is **Distinguished Professor of Divinity** at **Beeson Divinity School** in **Birmingham, Alabama**. He was Professor of Christian Preaching at Beeson for 25 years. Previously he served as Pastor of New Mission Missionary Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, for 20 years. He taught at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary before his call to Beeson. He won teaching awards at both schools, and he is the 2017 E.K. Bailey Expository Preaching Conference Living Legend. An old friend of the Advent, Dr. Smith has spoken and taught at schools and churches around the world. He has written several books, including the award-winning *Doctrine That Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life*. He and his wife Wanda are the parents of four adult children.

Good Friday, April 3 (Service begins at noon.) – Craig Smalley

Craig Smalley is **Dean and Rector** of the **Cathedral Church of the Advent** in **Birmingham, Alabama**. A graduate of The Citadel, he earned his M.Div. at Virginia Theological Seminary. After being ordained in 1995, he served churches in South Carolina and Texas before being called in 2001 to be Rector of the Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills, Alabama. In 2006 Dean Smalley joined the clergy staff at the Advent, where he has also served as Canon for Christian Education, Canon Missioner, Canon Pastor, and Chaplain to the Advent Episcopal School. He is married to Paula, and they have three children and one grandchild.