

THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE FORMATION

THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE | JUNE 9 -10, 2023



**Connecting Biblical Justice,
Human Rights, and Civil Rights:**

THE LAST FRONTIER

Throughout the prophetic literature in the Bible, God rejects Israel's feast and fast because the people ignored the biblical demands of justice in their social, moral, and economic lives (Isaiah 1: 11-31; 58: 5b-6; Amos 5: 21-24; Jeremiah 7:1-11; Ezekiel 8-9; Micah 6:6-8; and Malachi 2). The Bible discloses the mandate for Christians to seek first the Kingdom of God and the eternal beauty of His justice (Matthew 6:33). However, centuries after God's revelations, ideas of governance suggest a disconnect between biblical justice, human rights, and civil rights. The Institute for Justice Formation is seeking to address the apparent gap separating biblical justice, human rights, and civil rights in the light of critical biblical engagement. We take up the responsibility to bring together the academy and the church toward a biblical vision of human flourishing.

OUR LEADERS

Rev. Drs. Kenneth Pruitt, Drew Hill, and Rev. Samuel Feemster, JD., MDiv., along with our sponsors, welcome you. Turn to pages 2-8 to read what they have to say.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Starting on page 16, read more about our speakers and panelists.

GCBJF

The Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Formation is a program designed for students interested in what the Bible says about justice. Read more on page 25

REV. DR. KENNETH PRUITT

President, The John Leland Center for Theological Studies

“Welcome! As we gather to seek inspiration and encouragement in our pursuit of Biblical Justice, with ever increasing love for God and others we seek His heart, His righteousness - His justice. From recent personal study time in God's Word, the Holy Spirit held my focus upon one very powerful phrase in the Old Testament (a verse very familiar to all who are in search of God's justice): “to do justice and to love mercy” (Micah 6:8). Although this verse should be more fully understand with the complete exhortation, “to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God,” I could not quickly nor easily move past the phrase, “to do justice and the love mercy.” I have come to realize that justice and mercy run together to form one beautiful demonstration of God's heart. I cannot express justice without mercy, and more significantly I cannot express mercy without justice. How can I demonstrate mercy to others and not have a heart to set things right as God desires on earth even as it is in Heaven?



From within the context of Micah 6:8, mercy includes kindness and favor expressed one to another. The majesty and glory of our Christ has drawn us to the Father's love through His amazing kindness and favor – His mercy. Hebrews 2:17 describes Jesus as the merciful and faithful high priest in service to God to make atonement for the sins of the people (to provide justice and mercy as missioned by God). So, how do we walk before God and others in justice and mercy? Jesus exhorted, “be merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful” (Luke 6:36). May we genuinely pursue a life of justice and mercy which can only become a reality in us as we walk humbly with our God.

Let us remain diligent to the task of pursuing God's heart for justice, and may we enter the joy of our Lord. Thank you for presence at this conference.

With love,

Dr. Ken Pruitt

REV. SAMUEL L. FEEMSTER, JD, M.DIV.

Director, The Institute for Justice Formation @The John Leland
Center for Theological Studies

Welcome to justice advocacy!

On behalf of the Advisory Group of the Institute for Justice Formation and the Trustees of Leland Seminary, welcome to our 3rd annual "In Search of Biblical Justice" conference. If you attended either of our prior meetings, welcome back. If this year is your inaugural experience with us, we will do our best to ensure it is not your last!

For your enlightenment, we invited pastors, professors, and lay leaders to energize ongoing conversations about the connection between biblical justice, human rights, and civil rights. We hope that after spending this time together, we all will naturally advocate for the human family to experience shalom as God intended.

We have planned to eat, sing, preach, and share communion for our fellowship and worship. So, stay with us from beginning to end, make new friends, and journey into that frontier where we affirm and appreciate God's image in all his children.

In Service,

Samuel L. Feemster

Samuel L. Feemster
Director, IJF



REV. DR. DREW HILL

Senior Pastor; Conference Host, Memorial Baptist Church
Institute for Justice Formation Advisory Group

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the good folks of Memorial Baptist Church, let me extend a hearty greeting to you. We are so pleased to host the IJF Annual Conference here at Memorial. It is an honor to welcome such a distinguished roster of scholars and champions of biblical justice. Coming from diverse backgrounds and communities, what a blessing to share this time together, learning and growing as the people of God.

Memorial Baptist Church recently celebrated 75 years of ministry here in Arlington. I am the sixth pastor to lead this congregation, serving here since 2012. While our church's story is not without its darker chapters, through it all, God continues to shape and grow this body of Christ. We believe the cause of biblical justice is integral to the work of the Kingdom of God that Christ initiated, and we are thrilled to partner with other like-minded congregations in the Justice Formation Fellowship in support of IJF.

So please accept our hospitality, make yourself at home this weekend, and may we all be blessed, enlightened, and challenged from our time together.

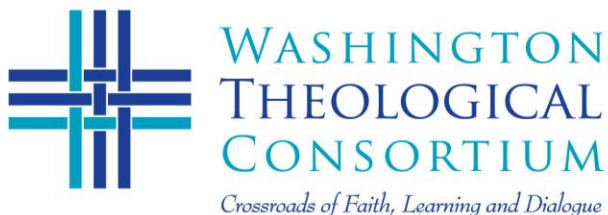
Blessings,

Drew Hill, Pastor



REV. DR. LARRY GOLEMON, PH.D.

Executive Director, Washington Theological Consortium



Dear participants at the Institute for Justice Formation Conference,

We at the Washington Theological Consortium are delighted to be co-sponsors of this year's conference by the Institute for Justice Formation which explores the links between Biblical Justice and Civil and Human Rights. Some have argued for the Christian origin of the entire notion of Civil and Human Rights, but the work to connect them deeply remains to be done. This is the goal and promise of this gathering.

We appreciate the ecumenical openness of the IJF Conferences, and the range of scholars and practitioners they bring for leadership. Moving academic work into the concrete practice of ministry and community work is always a challenge, and the IJF Conferences do a fine job at bridging those interests.

My personal thanks goes to Rev. Sam Feemster for his vision and leadership of the IJF, and for the newly renamed Leland Seminary for supporting the work of this conference and of the Institute.

Grateful to be on this journey with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry A. Golemon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Larry Golemon
Executive Director
Washington Theological Consortium

REV. SEAN ROBERDS, M.DIV.

Executive Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



Welcome to the 2023 In Search for Biblical Justice Conference.

Mid-Atlantic CBF is proud to join with the Institute of Justice Formation to bring you *The Last Frontier, Connecting Biblical Justice, Human Rights and Civil Rights*. Our motto at Mid-Atlantic CBF is Better Together. We believe this also applies to the pursuit of Justice. We are better, stronger and more committed to Justice when we join hands with each other. Coming together to learn, grow and to be formed by a justice loving God is what the world needs from the church right now.

Thank you for taking the time to join this vital conversation. Thank you for walking with us as we push forward in this Last Frontier. Thank you for your commitment to justice. Welcome!

Sean Roberds, Executive Coordinator
Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

DR. TOPE OYEGBILE

Trustee Ministry, Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Inc.



On Behalf of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, it is with great pleasure that we extend our sponsorship to the Institute of Justice Formation (IJF) for the In Search of Biblical Justice Annual Conference. As an institute dedicated to teaching and upholding the principles of Biblical Justice, we appreciate the invaluable work carried out by IJF.

We are proud to support the conference by providing presenter honoraria and covering some conference expenses. Our commitment to fostering education and empowering individuals aligns closely with the vision of IJF.

We look forward to our continued partnership with the IJF. We are honored to provide support to such a worthy cause.

Sincerely,

Tope Oyegbile

Dr. Tope Oyegbile
Trustee Ministry

REV. DR. ROBERT WALLACE, PH.D.

Senior Pastor, McLean Baptist Church



Thank you for your interest and support of the Institute for Justice Formation's 2023 annual conference.

McLean Baptist Church is a proud supporter of this meeting and a proud member of the Justice Formation Fellowship. "Biblical Justice" is just a simple way to say "God's kingdom come, and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is our prayer that this conference and the continued work of the IJF and JFF will help us to learn to be better members of that kingdom.

We pray for ears to hear, eyes to see, minds to understand, and perhaps, enough prophetic imagination to see the impossible made possible.

Robert Wallace, Senior Pastor
McLean Baptist Church



AGENDA

Friday, June 9, 2023

10 am	Welcome Rev. Dr. Drew Hill - Host Pastor Rev. Dr. Kenneth Pruitt, President, JLCTS Rev. Samuel Feemster, Director, IJF
10:30 am	Connecting Biblical Justice, Human Rights, and Civil Rights: The Last Frontier Henry L. Allen, Ph.D.
11:30 am	The Sanctity of Biblical Justice Rev. Samuel L. Feemster, JD., MDiv.
12:30 pm	Lunch (Box Lunch)
1 pm	Theological Anthropology and Human Rights Rev. Dr. Daniel Houck
2 pm	Public Theology and Human Rights Dr. Rick Elgendy
3 pm	Biblical Seeds, Theological Roots, and a Christian Vision of Universal Rights Allyson McKinney Timm
4 pm	Panel: Human Rights, Civil Rights, and the Mission of the Church Rev. Dr. James Victor Rev. Dr. Robert Wallace Rev. Dr. Jeffrey G. Willetts
Dinner (On-Site)	

Worship

7 pm – 8:30 pm

Welcome	Rev. Dr. Drew Hill
<i>Music</i>	
Introduction of Speaker	Rev. Samuel L. Feemster
<i>Music</i>	
Sermon	Dr. Drew G. I. Hart
Closing	

Saturday, June 10, 2023

9 am	Theological Ethics and Civil Rights Dr. Barbara Fears
10 am	The #MeToo Reckoning and Biblical Justice Rev. Ruth Everhart
11 am	Human Rights, Civil Rights, and Faith Formation Rev. Dr. Jim Melson
12 pm	Lunch and Workshop Connecting Human Rights, Civil Rights, and Biblical Justice: What must we do now? Dr. Drew G.I. Hart
1:30 pm	Communion Rev. Dr. Drew Hill

WORSHIP SERVICE, JUNE 9, 2023

Opening Selections	#244 We Have Come into This House
Justice Formation Fellowship Choir	#79 My Jesus, I Love Thee
Welcome	Pastor Drew Hill
Invocation	Pastor Sean Roberds
Justice Formation Fellowship Choir	Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round African American Spiritual, arr. J. David Moore, <i>Justice Choir Songbook</i>
Occasion	Rev. Kenneth Pruitt
Introduction	Rev. Samuel Feemster
Justice Formation Fellowship Choir	Hold to God's Unchanging Hand <i>African American Heritage Hymnal</i>
Message	Rev. Drew I. G. Hart
Justice Formation Fellowship Choir	Be the Change Marc Kaplan and Colin Britt, <i>Justice Choir Songbook</i>
Benediction	Pastor Drew Hill

SONG LYRICS

#244 We Have Come into This House

Verse 1

We have come into His house
And gathered in His name
To worship Him

(REPEAT)

We have come into His house
And gathered in His name
To worship Christ the Lord
Worship Him Christ the Lord

Verse 2

So forget about yourself
And concentrate on Him
And worship Him

(REPEAT)

So forget about yourself
And concentrate on Him
And worship Christ the Lord
Worship Him Christ the Lord

Verse 3

Let us lift up holy hands
And magnify His name
And worship Him

(REPEAT)

Let us lift up holy hands
And magnify His name
And worship Christ the Lord
Worship Him Christ the Lord

#79 My Jesus, I Love Thee

1. My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
2. I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
3. I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.
4. In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let Nervous Nelly turn me 'round,
turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let Nervous Nelly turn me 'round,
I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let Chief Pritchett turn me 'round,
turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let Chief Pritchett turn me 'round,
I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let Mayor Kelly turn me 'round,
turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let Mayor Kelly turn me 'round,
I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round,
turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round,
I'm gonna keep on a-walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GD-e8QvBsM>

Hold to God's Unchanging Hand

Verse 1

Time is filled with swift transition,
Naught of earth unmoved can stand,
Build your hopes on things eternal,
Hold to God's unchanging hand.

Refrain

Hold to God's unchanging hand,
Hold to God's unchanging hand;
Build your hopes on things eternal,
Hold to God's unchanging hand.

Verse 2

Trust in Him who will not leave you,
Whatsoever years may bring,
If by earthly friends forsaken
Still more closely to Him cling.

Verse 3

Covet not this world's vain riches
That so rapidly decay,
Seek to gain the heav'nly treasures,
They will never pass away.

Verse 4

When your journey is completed,
If to God you have been true,
Fair and bright the home in glory
Your enraptured soul will view.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=navP_n3mtH0

Be the Change

Be the change you want to see in the world,
Be the change you want to see in the world,
Be the change you want to see in the world,
And change will come to you.

Be the voice you want to hear in the world,
Be the voice you want to hear in the world,
Be the voice you want to hear in the world,
And change will come to you.

Be the light you want to shine in the world,
Be the light you want to shine in the world,
Be the light you want to shine in the world,
And change will come to you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJPSSWoM9RdU>

SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

In order of appearance

REV. DR. DREW HILL



Drew Hill was called as the sixth pastor of Memorial Baptist Church on April 15, 2012. Drew holds a Doctor of Ministry and a Master of Divinity from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and also studied Old Testament archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Drew has taught at two Baptist seminaries in Ukraine and has been involved in mission work in Canada, South Africa, Belarus, and India. Additionally, he has led various Bible study field trips to Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. Before coming to Memorial, Drew served as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Sedalia, Missouri for fourteen years.

REV. DR. KENNETH PRUITT



The Reverend Dr. Ken Pruitt presently serves as President of the John Leland School of Theological Studies. He has served in full time pastoral leadership for 26 years, and has experienced fruitful ministries in Texas, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Ken earned his Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) at Baylor University's Truett Seminary in Waco, Texas, specializing in Preaching and Theology. His M.Div. with Biblical Languages was earned at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth Texas. Ken also studied for one year in the School of Religious Education at Southwestern Seminary with a concentration in M Dr. Pruitt's continued priority for pastoral ministry centers on the communication of God's Word, congregational care, and discipleship.

His daily vision for the church involves the "equipping of the Saints" for the "work of ministry" (Ephesians 4). This vision has also involved ministry to pastors through a training center in India, where Ken regularly travels to teach marriage and Family Counseling. Ken earned his B. A. at Charleston Southern University.

REV. DR. SAMUEL L. FEEMSTER, JD, M.DIV.



Rev. Feemster is the founding Director of the Institute for Justice Formation and facilitator of core courses in its Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Formation program. In addition, he brings to his role a background in local church ministry, investigations and enforcement, and program development.

Rev. Feemster retired from the FBI after 28 years of service. At the FBI Academy, he conducted a research project focused on Officer Wellness and established Project BeStow (Beyond Survival Toward Officer Wellness).

Rev. Feemster is pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Arlington, VA. Under his leadership, Mount Vernon provided a respite and renewal center for the first responder community known as R.E.S.T. Stop East (Restoring Essential Servants Together) until gifting their property to the John Leland Center for Theological Studies.

As Director of the Institute for Justice Formation, Rev. Feemster leads efforts to investigate and promote the transformational character of biblical justice for leaders and communities through a holistic program of worship, education, and advocacy.

DR. HENRY L. ALLEN, PH.D.



Dr. Henry Lee Allen has been active as a sociologist within postsecondary education for nearly four decades, having taught at Bethel College (University), Calvin College (University), the University of Rochester (NY), the Rochester Institute of Technology, and Wheaton College. He has taught courses in **sociology** [sociology of education, sociology of science, urban sociology, mathematical sociology, etc.] and **criminology** [Violence in Minority Communities, Violence against Women, Sociology of Hate] across those years. Beyond these topics, Allen has pursued ongoing research regarding police shootings, race and ethnic relations, and the sociology of higher education.

Henry has been a consultant across many venues, such as the National Education Association (1993-2018), the American Bible Society, the African American Leadership Roundtable, and so forth. He has engaged scholarly presentations or venues such as the University of Oxford, Carnegie Mellon University, Wolfram Research, New England Complex Systems Institute, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the Athens Institute for Education and Research.

Altogether, Professor Allen has published nearly 40 scholarly articles across many research venues, including strategic domains across three continents. As a member of the newly-formed Advisory Group of the Institute of Justice Formation at John Leland Center for Theological Studies, Allen can integrate his undergraduate degree in biblical studies (and prior publications on church-related themes) with salient theological and sociological concerns related to justice. As a member of Jubilee Baptist Church, Hank has taught the Adult Sunday School class for 17 years as well as served periodically as a Bible Study teacher in the Pastor's absence.

REV. DR. DANIEL HOUCK



Danny has served as senior pastor of Calvary Hill since 2018. His goal is to lead people to grow in knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Having grown up in McLean, he is happy to be back in the Northern Virginia area with his wife, Katie.

Before coming to Calvary Hill, he completed his MDiv at Princeton Theological Seminary, a PhD in theology at Southern Methodist University, and worked as a research fellow at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He teaches theology at the John Leland Center for Theological Studies and is an author and speaker on the topic of Christianity and science.

DR. RICK ELGENDY



Dr. Elgendy teaches public theology and ethics and administers Wesley's academic programs in public theology. His research interests are animated by asking questions of subjectivity, spirituality, and politics at the intersection of political theology, systematic theology, and critical theory. His first book, *Life Among the Powers: A Political Spirituality of Resistance*, is currently in preparation. In addition to Wesley Theological Seminary, he has taught at Lake Forest College and the University of Chicago.

ALLYSON MCKINNEY TIMM



Allyson McKinney Timm (she/her) is a human rights lawyer, scholar, and faith leader with two decades of experience defending the dignity and rights of those on the margins, in the United States and globally. Her work promoting justice and equality has spanned the nonprofit, private, and academic sectors. After founding Justice Revival in 2017, Allyson was named "one of ten faith leaders to watch" by the Center for American Progress the following year. Her writing has appeared in *Christian Century*, *Sojourners*, *California Lawyer*, *The Independent*, *USA Today*, Yale Divinity School's *Reflections* magazine, and others.

As the Robert M. Cover-Allard K. Lowenstein Fellow in International Human Rights at Yale Law School, Allyson taught and supervised students in the Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, investigating and analyzing issues such as early and forced marriage, human trafficking, religious liberty, and human rights to education and housing. While at Yale, she co-taught an undergraduate course in human rights and served as a guest speaker and consultant on issues at the intersection of human rights and religion. During her time in New Haven, she earned a Master of Divinity degree at Yale Divinity School, where she co-led the Women's Center and organized a symposium on campus sexual assault.

REV. DR. JAMES VICTOR



The Reverend Dr. James E. Victor, Jr. carries out a long family legacy of Christian ministry. Like his grandfather and others before him, Dr. Victor has dedicated himself to pastoral ministry. Dr. Victor currently serves as the ninth pastor of the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia. Dr. Victor's last appointment before becoming the under-shepherd of Arlington's Mount Olive Baptist Church was as the Associate Pastor of the historic home church of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia. He was promoted to the Associate position from the Assistant Pastor's position due to his commendable work in the areas of pastoral care, community outreach, and worship. At Ebenezer, Dr. Victor steered the church's involvement in the I Have A Dream Project which was a model collaboration between churches and the business sector to ensure that a group of inner city second graders would be tracked throughout their school years and guaranteed the financial resources for a college education.

Dr. Victor earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He further prepared himself for ministry by receiving the Master of Divinity degree with magna cum laude honors from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, and the Master of Theology degree from the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. His thesis: *Just Over in the Gloryland: The Recovery of Otherworldliness in Black Theology* was well received by the Columbia faculty. Dr. Victor earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in the Preaching for the 21st Century tract from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC., and currently serves on their Board of Governors. Dr. Victor served previously as Director of Missions for the Progressive National Baptist Convention and as President of the Northern Virginia Black Pastors' Council. He is the immediate past president of the Baptist General Convention of Virginia and currently serves as the Second Vice President of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention.

Dr. Victor was licensed and ordained by his home church the Moore's Baptist Church in Kentucky. Dr. Victor enjoys reading, fishing, and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

REV. DR. ROBERT WALLACE, PH.D.



Currently serving as the Senior Pastor at First Baptist Church of McLean in McLean, VA, Rev. Dr. Robert Wallace has spent over 20 years as a Professor of Biblical Studies striving to bridge the gap between the academy and the church. While finishing his Ph.D. at Baylor University, he was ordained at First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, and he worked as a full-time pastor for several years. Throughout his academic career, Robert maintained an active, ecumenical ministry of supply and interim preaching.

He has a deep love of the Psalms, and much of his academic research has focused on that area. He currently is finishing a book with Baker Academic Publishing provisionally titled, "Reading the Old Testament Through the Psalms." The book brings together several of Robert's passions by using the Psalms as the entry point to make the rest of the Old Testament accessible to a Christian audience.

REV. DR. JEFFREY G. WILLETS, PH.D.



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey G. Willetts is a Baptist minister and leader with more than 20 years pastoral experience, serving three congregations in the Northern Virginia region. Dr. Willetts earned his BA in Religion & Philosophy at Campbell University, his Master of Arts in Religion at Yale University Divinity School, and his PhD in Philosophy at Swansea University, Wales, UK. In addition, Dr. Willetts is an experienced theological educator and denominational representative. He currently serves on a number of committees, commissions, or advisories for church-related or academic organizations, including: the Baptist World Alliance, the Society for Philosophy of Religion (vice-president), the Institute for Justice Formation (vice-chair) and Rising Day ministries. He is currently the President of the Network for Theological Engagement, a non-profit organization focused on the accessibility of theological education for the local church. Dr. Willetts is former Professor for Philosophy of Religion (2016-2021) and Dean (2016-2018) of Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta, GA. Dr. Willetts is also the former founding Dean (1998-2014), Vice-President (2007-2014), and Associate Professor of Divinity (1998-2014) and Professor of Divinity (2014-2016) at the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, in Arlington, VA. Dr. Willetts is a native of Wilmington, NC. He is married to the Reverend Elizabeth (Beth) Willetts, and they have three adult children. Dr. Willetts is an avid sportsman, enjoys golf and basketball, and loves to sing

DR. DREW G. I. HART



Drew G. I. Hart is a professor in theology, an author, and an activist with ten years of pastoral experience. His undergraduate work was in biblical studies at Messiah College, he received his Masters of Divinity degree with an urban concentration at Biblical Seminary, and he earned a PhD in the field of theology and ethics at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. During graduate school he was a part-time professor for several PA seminaries but in the Fall of 2016 he began teaching full-time as an assistant professor in theology at Messiah College.

After his undergraduate studies Drew spent most of his time pastoring and mentoring black and brown youth, working for an inner city after-school program, and working closely with Philadelphia based nonprofits. Today, along with

teaching theology, Drew continues to partner with community groups and churches across the country by facilitating anti-racism trainings, seminars, as well as delivering lectures and talks for colleges and conferences.

Regularly speaking across the country Drew brings together his pastoral experience with his academic training to challenge the Church on a variety of topics. He has been particularly invested in writing and speaking about white supremacy/racism and their entanglements with western Christianity, but Drew also speaks and writes about Christian discipleship, western Christendom, Christian history, liberation and oppression, radical peacemaking and nonviolent resistance, urban ministry, social media, etc.

Drew has a Christian Century hosted blog entitled 'Taking Jesus Seriously' while also writing occasionally for The Mennonite as well. His own personal site is <http://www.drewgihart.com>. He regularly sneaks in tweets

with the handle @DruHart and can be found on Facebook. He is the author of *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*. Drew and his wife Renee have three sons and live in Harrisburg, PA.

DR. BARBARA FEARS, PH.D.



Dr. Barbara Annette Fears is Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, D.C. She teaches courses in the history, philosophy and practice of ministry. Dr. Fears identifies as a womanist practical theologian, a critical race theorist (CRT) and a critical pedagogue. Her research focuses on matters of power, privilege and accountability in faith formation, praxis of faith and curriculum development. Recent works include a book review on *Critical Race Theory in Education*, an entry for Dr. Mary Boys in the *Database of Christian Educators of the 20th Century*, and article, *Race, Disability and COVID-19: A DisCrit Analysis of Theological Education*.

Dr. Fears previously worked in bio-behavioral studies with Midwest Research Institute, in documentation and training with AT&T and Lucent Technologies and in environmental, social and governance (ESG) advocacy with Wespath Investment Management formerly The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church. She has a Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies in Theology and Ethics, Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Education and Congregational Studies and a Preaching Award from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Dr. Fears has worked with the prison ministry of her Chicago church and currently serves as a chaplain for a local hospice agency.

REV. RUTH EVERHART



Reverend Ruth Everhart has been in ministry for more than three decades, serving churches in upstate New York, rural Illinois, suburban Maryland and Washington, DC. Right now she's the Transitional Pastor at Leesburg Presbyterian Church in Leesburg, VA.

Rev. Everhart is passionate about empowering faith communities to respond appropriately to sexual abuse. During the pandemic shutdowns she had the privilege of working with Eileen Campbell-Reed, PhD to create a workshop that equips leaders to do just that.

Ruth Everhart has written many articles, some of which have won awards. Highlights include two cover stories for *Christian Century* and an op-ed for the *Washington Post*. She recently posted a *Sojourners* article (about abortion), *Skin in the Game*. Other bylines include *Religion News Service*, *Patheos*, and *Feasting on the Word*. Rev. Everhart has also authored 3 books: *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct*, *Ruined*, and *Chasing the Divine in the Holy Land*.

REV. DR. JIM MELSON



The Reverend Dr. Jim Melson, an ordained minister in The United Methodist Church, is the Founder and Executive Director of Cornelius Corps. After serving as a pastor of churches in Virginia for 20 years, Jim founded Cornelius Corps in 2001 as a ministry of New Community Church in Washington, DC. New Community Church is part of a network of churches and ministries in DC called The Church of the Saviour. In 2020, Cornelius Corps became its own non-profit organization based in the Richmond, VA area. Our ministry continues through the financial gifts of individuals and churches that support our mission.

VOLUNTEERS

VONDA BELL, Conference Administrator



Vonda K. Bell, a member of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, currently serves as the Administrator for the Institute for Justice Formation. Vonda has spent the last decade working and volunteering on numerous boards and commissions.

As a civil servant and member of the Senior Executive Service, Vonda serves as the Chief Human Capital Officer for the Farm Credit Administration (FCA). Prior to joining FCA, Vonda served as the HR Director for the U.S. Census Bureau, where she was responsible for successfully leading an end-to-end optimization of the Human Resources program.

Vonda is a University of Alabama-Huntsville (UAH) alumnus. She holds degrees from Troy University (M.S. Human Resources) and UAH (B.S. Human Resources). Additionally, Vonda is a Society for Human Resource Management Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), as well as a certified Project Management Professional (PMP). Carolyn Burrell, Grants Coordinator Jeff Langford, Web Designer

RACHEL WEATHERS, Research Analyst



Rachel Weathers serves as a Wealth Management Client Associate in San Diego, CA. Prior working in the banking industry, Rachel worked for multiple non-profit organizations conducting research and hosting workshops on topics such as nonviolence, ethnicity, privilege, and power. Her research includes diversity training, community engagement, and holistic wellness of law enforcement officers, as well as emotional intelligence, dialogue, and conflict analysis skills. Rachel has also facilitated dialogue programs focused on race, privilege, and ethnicity for college students.

Rachel received her Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Shaw University and her Master's degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University.

REV. MEGAN THOMAS, M.A.R., Virtual Productions Manager



Meg graduated from Abilene Christian University in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology focusing on how evolutionary ethics inform Christian stewardship. She strives to welcome people from diverse perspectives and histories into the life of the church.

Before seminary, Meg served as co-pastor of Gateway Community Church in Bali, Indonesia, where she explored the intersection of faith and art. She was ordained to the work of the Gospel Ministry on November 2, 2014 at the First Baptist Church of Austin. In 2015 she graduated from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest with a Master of Arts in Religion. Meg now serves as the associate pastor of McLean Baptist Church

PREVIOUS IJF EVENTS

Second Annual Conference, June 15-17, 2022

Unresolved, controversial social problems involving race, poverty, violence, gender roles, and other tangible injustices have confused many. Into this often-toxic nexus, the Institute for Justice Formation has taken up the challenge to help the Church reach its potential as the salt and light of society regarding the pursuit of biblical justice.

Winter Webinar Series – Critical Engagement with Biblical Justice, March 12 – April 2, 2022

IJF faculty and local pastors discuss what the Bible says about justice, race, and truth and explore what the church must do now and how to move from conversations to constructive actions that disrupt injustice.

Critical Race Theory Seminar Series, October 30 – November 13, 2021

Critical Race Theory: Friend, Foe, or Opportunity? This three-session CRT seminar explored the foundations, the debates, and the implications of Critical Race Theory (CRT). What is the origin of CRT? Is CRT a danger to Christian beliefs, or does it help people of faith fight racism? Are CRT's positive, practical implications for the church and its witness to the world?

Inaugural Virtual Conference, June 17-18, 2021

For our inaugural conference, the Institute for Justice Formation brought together pastors, educators, practitioners, and conscientious believers to pursue biblical justice and tangible love for our times.

Short Course on Biblical Justice Christian Formation, November 7 – 21, 2020

This short course explores the Presbyterian scholar Michael Barram's *Missional Economics: Biblical Justice and Christian Formation*. The author conducted one session. Steven Reeves, Esq., and Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, two notable Church leaders, ran other sessions. In addition, IJF Cohort students conducted two breakout sessions.

Presbyterian and Race, September 19, 2020

Presbyterians and Race: A Reflective Experience in Power and Social Justice. This reflective walk in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, visited sites marking critical moments in the story of Presbyterians, White supremacy, and Black resistance from colonial days to the present.

The WTC Spring Faculty Event – Witnessing Whiteness, March 11, 2020

Author Kristopher Norris shared vital insights from his recent book, focusing on constructive steps to address the collaboration of “mainline” (White) theology in racism in the country. These include the three R's: Remembrance, Repentance, and Reparations. Norris's work builds on deep engagement with the theologies of Stanley Hauerwas and James Cone, among others.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN BIBLICAL JUSTICE FORMATION

The Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Formation is a non-degree, master's-level program of study designed for students interested in what the Bible has to say about justice and what relevance that has for people, particularly Christians, today. The program is ideal for people across all vocations who wish to point ways forward for everyone seeking to think and act in harmony with God – a community of equals pursuing biblical justice in the world today. Part-time students can complete the program in two years. Full-time students can complete the program in one year. Like the other programs at the John Leland Center, students who are working full-time may pursue this certificate without significantly compromising their family life and employment.

Graduation requirements include completing 18 semester credit hours in the prescribed curriculum, community event participation, and full payment of all tuition and fees. In addition, the program requires a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

Recommended Curriculum

MF 4301 Spiritual Formation (3)

B 1305 Interpreting the Old Testament, B 1505 Interpreting the New Testament, or Tools Based Bible Study (3)

EH 3205 In Search of Biblical Justice (3)

MF 4333 Justice, Church, and Society (3)

MF 4335 Critical Engagement with Biblical Justice (3)

MF 4339 Justice Formation Externship (3)

Extended Descriptions – Core Course

EH 3205 – In Search of Biblical Justice

Students in this course will identify characteristic features of the Bible's teachings on justice revealed through God's self-disclosure and reflect upon their availability to be a catalyst for Biblical Justice in our world.

This course is designed to guide the student's search for Biblical Justice by first examining what God declares about justice and righteousness in His word and secondly reflecting upon the responsibility of Christians to originate, implement, and sustain worship, educational, and advocational initiatives that promote the transformational characteristic of Biblical Justice for all persons across all callings who are interested in doing what is right and just, intrinsically.

MF 4333 – Justice, Church, and Society

Prerequisite for GCJF Cohorts – EH 3205

This course will challenge students to bring the transformational potential of the biblical texts to bear on critical current justice context regarding the distribution of social benefits and penalties, the exercise of legitimate power, fairness, and balance, and honoring the rights or entitlements of people made in the image of God. In addition, students will critique religious behaviors congruent or incongruent with Biblical Justice by reflecting upon and contrasting what we love and what God loves.

MF 4335-Critical Engagement with Biblical Justice

Prerequisite for GCJF Cohorts – EH 3205, MF 4333

Critical Engagement with Biblical Justice aims to explore the intersection between Western moral reflection and contemporary critical justice theory toward a philosophically informed Christian moral apologetic. This course guides the student's search for biblical justice through critical engagement with a contemporary justice theorist. Students will compare and contrast the ideology of a contemporary justice theorist with the course's information. The successful student will demonstrate the capacity to synthesize salient principles from selected theorists while articulating a personal justice formation paradigm.

MF 4339 – Justice Formation Externship (B/A)

Prerequisite for GCJF Cohorts – EH 3205, MF 4333, MF 4335

This externship is available to students in the Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Formation (GCBJF) Program. In collaboration with the instructor of record, students will create an opportunity for continued critical exploration and reflection about seeking justice in an unjust world through their chosen ministry. (If a cohort developed and pursued a group project throughout the program, that project might constitute a group externship.)

Students who satisfy the externship prerequisites but are uncertain about their ministry “calling” may take this opportunity to explore specific ministry settings to assess their “fit” for a particular vocation or position. Assessment of such exploration will include:

- Observing and networking with professionals.
- Conducting informational interviews and literature reviews.
- Weekly journaling about Biblical Justice and Christian Formation.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE FORMATION (IFJ)

BACKGROUND

Recent social events and cultural antipathies have exposed the urgent need to promote authentic justice afresh for generations within church and society. Police shootings of unarmed citizens, moral impotency, racism, ridiculous scandals, and political subterfuge have escalated cultural confusions about theological imperatives and biblical justice. Even seminaries need to engage issues related to sanctity of life, school shootings, sex trafficking, and the church's silence in the face of these extensive concerns. In short, our nation and its leaders seem to suffer from a 'ball of confusion' regarding truth, integrity, and authentic justice. Our society seems to be hurtling toward an abyss of sophistry. The Rand Corporation has denoted this penchant for confusion as 'truth decay.' A generation ago, the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned us to avoid the catastrophic decline associated with moralistic ignorance and conscientious stupidity. Something must be done to accentuate the virtues of character and righteousness everywhere, especially for future generations being choked by inept or insufficient notions of biblical truth and justice. We can move beyond the passive acceptance of perceptions that are the best of the worst, but not the best operations of justice.

PURPOSE

The Institute for Justice Formation @ The John Leland Center for Theological Studies (IJF) exists: (1) to investigate and promote the transformational character of biblical justice for leaders and communities, and (2) to advocate—across all vocations—for leaders and lay persons in public marketplaces and private domains to do what is right and just intrinsically, to be a 'profile in courage.' Employing the multi-pronged investigative approach of worship, education, advocacy, and evaluation (plus systemic feedback) pursuant to its vision and mission, IJF will accomplish relevant and evolving goals and objectives through the synthesis or convergence of these approaches.

OUR VISION

The Vision of The Institute for Justice Formation is to embody authentic truth as well as serve as a catalyst for Biblical Justice in our world. We will engage society wherever churches, communities, and authorities actively cooperate in serving people so that they may live in harmony with God and each other through the transformational character of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pursue "Embodying the spirit of Justice to inspire human flourishing."

OUR MISSION

The Mission of The Institute for Justice Formation is to establish enduring, robust relationships between religious and cultural institutions (along with civic organizations or agencies) through a holistic program of worship, education, and advocacy in order to unify, inform, and encourage the application of Biblical Justice by leaders and their organizations.

OUR VALUES

The Values of IJF are:

- *Truth and meaning*, as revealed in God's Word and His creative nature, which is the foundation of Justice. Truth is the essence of the search for meaning.
- *Integrity and sacrifice*, as demonstrated by God's faithfulness, which is the personification of Justice. Integrity compels sacrifice.
- *Love*, as demonstrated by God's Grace through the compassion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is the motivation for Justice.
- *Community*, as demonstrated by God's command for inclusiveness—to love our neighbors as ourselves, which is the jurisdiction of justice.
- *Empowerment*, as demonstrated by Jesus's merciful interaction with the blind, lame, diseased, and possessed. This is the volition of Justice.
- *Action*, to which we are called as children of God in order to bring healing to the wounded and seek peace in strife. This is the vehicle for Justice.
- *Joy and shalom*, the hallmark of human flourishing, which is the result of Justice. Joy is the sign of peace.

OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES

The Mission statement describes how IJF will achieve success. The Vision statement describes what that success will look like. Worshipful, educative, and advocative activities conducted and sponsored by The Institute for Justice Fellowship will be governed by the Values of IJF. To that end, students, professors, pastors, and public servants will engage in Christ-like behaviors to dismantle human concepts and conduct that separate man from God. Biblical Justice is experienced individually and in community when children of God make our brothers' and sisters' problems, of whatever origin, our own

THE INAUGURAL IJF COHORT

Graduation Date: June 4, 2022



Pictured left to right: Dr. Eric Foresberg, Deborah Louise Tillman, Vonda Bell, Rev. Samuel L. Feemster, Kelly Anderson, Rev. Dr. Clinton A. Feemster

Who We've Become

For their final project the inaugural cohort wrote reflection papers about their journey through the Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Program and its impact on their beliefs, behaviors, and ministry. Here are some of their thoughts:

Kelly Anderson

Through the course of this inaugural IJF cohort, I cannot say enough about the positive impacts this has had in both my ministry and in my life personally. When I entered into the cohort in the Fall 2020

semester, I honestly was not quite sure what I was getting into...Then I remember when professor Feemster asked me to join the cohort as the Spring 2021 semester began and even though I did not know what to expect, I was excited for the opportunity. Little did I know that the invitation from professor Feemster would lead me on such an incredible journey over the past couple of semesters. There are three categories that have shaped me deeply over the course of this cohort experience: The relationships, the readings, and the practical experience.

Vonda Bell

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? - Micah 6:8

Author Gregory Mobley, describes Micah as someone who "condemned religious practice unaccompanied by ethical performance." What a thought-provoking description! Micah is calling out those religious folks who know the Bible from cover-to-cover; go to church every Sunday; serve on every committee; participate in every communion—and yet sit silent in the face of injustice. As I reflect on my journey through the graduate certificate program in biblical justice, I can say with absolute certainty that I never want to fit Micah's description of someone who practices religion while simultaneously acting unethically.

Clinton Feemster

I have attempted to serve as a pastor for many years, and I am unsure if I have employed ministry as carefully as the scripture intended. Following this course, I hope to incorporate the information into our church so that we become a Justice Ministry focus church rather than a program focus church... I leave this course with a greater appreciation for justice and righteousness, along with a more profound commitment to living according to the standards of God's justice, and stand for people who are disenfranchised, marginalized, and disinherited. The church must take an active role in sounding the alarm for God's justice in an unjust society. The Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church is slowly moving towards a justice ministry. Our last church conference, we embraced the ministry of "Justice Involved." The idea is to place the same value on others as God has placed on us.

Eric Forsbergh

It is hard to underestimate the change wrought in me and my thinking since August 27, 2020, when I began my first class with the Institute for Justice Formation under Professor Feemster. In the past forty years of my life, I have undergone three profound periods of change in my life, and seminary at Leland has been one of them. My new understanding of faith, of biblical justice, and of poor and Black communities has informed my actions from this point onward. For example, I never expected to teach a class or give a sermon on racial justice to my all-White church, and now that will most likely happen, since all the signs are encouraging in the planning stages, even from the conservative members of my Leesburg Presbyterian Church.

Deborah Tillman

"If we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright."

The words above are from Amanda Gorman, reciting 'The Hill We Climb' at the inauguration and encapsulates my entire journey through the Graduate Certificate in Biblical Justice Program.

Before our first class ever convened, we were given a survey that asked: "Explain what biblical justice means to you?" Then, during our first class a quote from Cornel West was mentioned as a response. "Justice is what love looks like in public" Sounds good but for me what it looked like in public in the face of racial wounds was hatred and I was angry. Anger doesn't drive me anymore passion does but that is because the process of transforming my heart was what I prayed for throughout this entire journey...Throughout this journey, I have learned how to love more like Jesus loves. The courses in Biblical Justice have all been instrumental in my understanding of what love truly is. Hart says that love is revolutionary.

JUSTICE FORMATION FELLOWSHIP (JFF)

The Justice Formation Fellowship is a group of churches united to be a conduit for the transformative work of Biblical Justice in our world. The Bible testifies that our God loves and delights in Justice. But, more profoundly, our Bible testifies that our God requires us to do Justice.

We believe the image of God in humanity manifests as the love and pursuit of the Justice God love. We also believe Jesus commissioned the church, his body, to do Biblical Justice. Therefore, the Holy Spirit empowers individuals and communities to proclaim the message and practice the ministry of reconciling humanity to God and all peoples with each other.

Congruent with our commission, we see the Institute of Justice Formation as an essential movement in the academic institutions of the church that can, through an informed understanding of God's self-revelation, lead us to become a justice pursuing people. Therefore, we stand by the Institute of Justice Formation, pledging our support, prayers, and commitment to the work of Justice formation. We stand with each other as we seek to build a fellowship of Justice seeking congregations through worship, education, and advocacy.

Justice Formation Fellowship Participants include:

1. First Baptist of Herndon, Herndon
2. McLean Baptist Church, Mclean
3. Memorial Baptist Church, Arlington
4. Mount Vernon Baptist, Arlington
5. Parkwood Baptist Church, Annandale



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



The **John Leland Center for Theological Studies** is a seminary of Baptist tradition that welcomes students and teachers of all church denominations. Leland's purpose is to serve in the Kingdom of God through accessible, accredited theological education that equips its students to become transformational leaders in the global ministry of Jesus Christ.

The mission of the **Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Church** is to serve Baptist churches and Christians as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission they seek to minister in the name of Jesus Christ and according to the Biblical principles upon which Baptist Churches are built.

The **Washington Theological Consortium** is a community of theological schools and partners from diverse traditions that pursue ecumenical dialogue, interfaith understanding, and educational collaboration to better equip clergy and laity for the ministry of the Church in a diverse society.

McLean Baptist Church, McLean, VA MBC cooperates with other Baptist churches near and far through its membership in the Baptist World Alliance, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and the NorthStar Church Network of Northern Virginia. Four themes have developed at MBC over the past quarter-century: service, inclusiveness, music, and Christian education.

Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Crystal City Mt. Vernon is an active Christ-centered community where believers from diverse backgrounds experience the feast of faith, fellowship and food in the name of Jesus.

Memorial Baptist Church, Arlington, VA You can see the heart of Memorial Baptist Church in our vision: to be a church for all people who want to experience God's welcome; understand God's word, and join in God's work.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

01

Visit <https://www.iif-leland.org/calendar/> for future events.

02

A survey regarding this conference will be sent soon!

03

Go to iif-leland.org for more information.

04

See you again June 8-9, 2024 for our next conference!

The Institute for
Justice Formation

