

Conference Preacher



Rev. Gregory Bentley

Rev. Gregory J. Bentley was born in Thomasville, AL on October 30, 1969 to Juanita Bentley and William Thomas, Jr. He was raised in Pine Hill, AL in an extended family household, which included his mother, Juanita; his grandmother (“Mama”), the late Virginia Howze; his great aunt (“Nannie”), the late Estella Black; and his grandfather (“Daddy”), the late Aubry Howze.

Rev. Bentley was baptized and raised in the Saint Paul Primitive Baptist Church. He graduated from Pine Hill High School in 1986 and matriculated at Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa, AL. It is the only HBCU founded by the “Southern” Presbyterian Church (PCUS). During his time at Stillman College, he joined the Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church and answered his call to the ministry.

In addition to being raised in a Christian home, Rev. Bentley’s sense of call was heavily influenced by his college mentor, Dr. C.H. Thomas, a member of the religion faculty and an ordained Presbyterian minister. Dr. Thomas taught him that a minister must have “the learning and the burning.” Convinced of the importance of seminary training, after receiving the Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Stillman College in 1990, he matriculated at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, GA from which he received the Master of Divinity degree in 1995. He continued his studies at Auburn University in Montgomery, AL and graduated with the Master of Education degree in 1997. He was ordained at the Northern

Heights Presbyterian Church in Selma, AL on November 30, 1997 and led a bivocational career of pastoring and teaching Biology and physical science in the public school system until he came to Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, AL, in 2001. He was called to the pastorate of the Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, AL on January 1, 2012.

Rev. Bentley has served in various capacities in political and civic affairs, including a term as chairman of Minority Affairs for the Tuscaloosa County Democratic Party. He is a member of Leadership Tuscaloosa, Goshen Lodge #530 (Prince Hall), and a Life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Rev. Bentley contends, “The church is a hospital for sinners and not a museum for saints. It is a vanguard and repository of our noblest aspirations, traditions and values. In addition to the Black Church, the Black Family and the Black School must be mission priorities if we are to fully develop our potential as a people.”

Rev. Bentley enjoys good music...from Beethoven to Bessie Smith to BDP to Bluegrass. He also likes to read and play chess. He lives in Huntsville, AL with his wife, Diann, and his daughters, Miriam and Johari.

Keynote Speaker



Rev. Shanea Leonard

Rev. Shanea D. Leonard (they/them) is a pastor, teacher, consultant, community activist, and modern-day abolitionist. Shanea has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for over fourteen years. A native of Philadelphia, they received their B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with a focus in urban ministry. They currently carry out their justice mandate as the national Coordinator for Gender & Racial Justice for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Shanea has been serving communities and congregations in various capacities for nearly twenty years. Rev. Leonard has done extensive work within urban areas to eradicate systemic oppression in the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic despair. Shanea has worked extensively with local governments, social service agencies, universities, faith communities, and across international borders in a commitment to liberation for marginalized people. They have also spent time doing international outreach in Africa, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Shanea believes that God has given them a burden for people whom others have disregarded, oppressed, forgotten, or simply don't even see.

A justice warrior, Shanea is the founder & former pastor of JUDAH Fellowship, which at its height, was western Pennsylvania's only predominantly Black affirming faith

community. While in Pittsburgh, Rev. Leonard was a leading revolutionary voice of systemic change in the work of jail reform, LGBTQIA inclusion, racial justice, & civic well-being. Shanea has served several other organizations including being the chair of Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council and chair of one of the nation's leading reproductive justice organizations. Pastor Leonard is an often-quoted media contributor and an active, outspoken faith voice for justice. Most recently, Rev. Leonard was the chief architect for the PC(USA) international Week of Action and author of the Radical Welcome chapter of the new PC(USA) evangelism manual, "8 Habits of Evangelism," among other publications within and outside of the denomination.

Rev. Leonard has received numerous awards for their work in reproductive justice, leadership, queer education, and racial freedom. Shanea resides in Louisville, Kentucky but travels extensively for the cause of liberation of marginalized people. They live their life by the affirmation of Assata Shakur which states, "...it is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win... we have nothing to lose but our chains!" And the scriptural passage of Micah 6:8 which states, "The Lord has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." In their spare time, Shanea prides themselves on being an amateur DJ, comedian, pretty good chef, and godparent to 5 wonderful children!

Conference

Chaplains



Rev. Carlton Johnson

Carlton David Johnson is a native of Atlanta, GA. He received his undergraduate degree from Emory University in English with a concentration in literature from the African diaspora. Following a 25-year career in Project, Operation and Client Services Management, Carlton returned to the academy to receive the Master of Divinity at Johnson C. Smith Theological

Seminary and, more recently, the Master of Theology (Homiletics) from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. His area of research is the impact of African American preaching on grief and mourning.

Throughout his life, he has maintained an intimate concern for the disenfranchised, especially young African American males. He has worked diligently in the outreach ministries of the church and given himself to mentorship with the United States National Guard Youth Challenge Academy and his beloved Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Carlton serves as the Coordinator for the Office of Vital Congregations for the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. He previously

served as Chief Operations Officer for Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary. Carlton recently completed a two-year residency in Chaplaincy with Grady Health Systems where he developed a specialty in Emergency and Trauma Initiated Palliative Pastoral Care.

Carlton is an associate minister at the First Afrikan Presbyterian Church in Lithonia, GA where he leads the Ujima Men's Fellowship, Kijana Boys Rites of Passage, Fawohodie Ministry to the Incarcerated and their families, and serves in music ministry. He is a board member of the First Afrikan Presbyterian Church Community Development Corporation, the Presbyterian Pastoral Care Network and NEXT Church (Strategic Planning Team). He is a regular contributor to the Presbyterian Outlook monthly magazine.

Carlton and his wife, Cara, split their time between Atlanta, GA and Louisville, KY.



Rev. Alexandra Zareth

Alexandra Zareth (She|Her) is a child of God committed to helping reconcile people to themselves. As a mestiza female deeply rooted in indigenous spirituality, Alexandra is a Board-Certified Chaplain focused on bringing wellness through an intentionally holistic lens.

In addition to serving in various PC(USA) leadership positions since 2005 at the local, mid council, and national levels, Alexandra served as a trauma chaplain for Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, PA, directed National Programs for

Hispanic Clergy with Esperanza, Inc., has incorporated multiple 501(c)3s, is trained in community-based asset mapping, community organizing, various violence prevention & intervention best practices, and systemic therapeutic approaches.

Alexandra Zareth is finishing her PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy at Eastern University, and is an alumna of Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ (Master of Divinity) and St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX (BA in Psychology).



Rev. Julius Edah

Julius Edah is originally from Afikpo town, Ebonyi state in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. He is currently honorably retired from parish ministry under PC(USA) and seeking God's redirection as regards to what is next. He is also currently coordinating the ministry of Scripture Union Nigeria all over North America.

Julius has over 40 years of ministry experience. He is a Pastor and Priest by calling, training and ordination, a professional Chaplain (Board Certified), and a member of the International

Coaching Federation (ICF). He graduated in Chemical Engineering from the Institute of Management and Technology in Enugu, Nigeria (1981), earned a Diploma in Mission Studies from All Nations Christian College in England (1990), Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary (1997), and Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary (2015).

Julius is married to Bernice Edah and has a son (Chike Edah) who lives and works in Maryland.

We know there is so much going on in each of our lives and in the world. We will be discussing some heavy things throughout the conference, and for that reason, chaplains will be available both in-person and virtually.

**To connect with a Chaplain at any time
during the conference, call or text
(559) 927-3841**

Our conference chaplains have provided several resources in your retreat box/bag. These include: coloring sheets, a prayer labyrinth card, a self-care handout and worksheet, and a feelings/needs handout. There is also an emotions wheel included on page 26 in this journal to help you reflect on your well-being throughout this time.

Workshop Leaders



Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow

Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow is an active speaker and writer on topics of faith, culture, race, and technology. He is the host of the podcast, BRC & Friends, and the author of five books. His latest is, "In Defense of Kindness" (Chalice Press, 2021) and he is currently working on his next book, "Everything I Believe about God" (2023). Bruce has been ordained in the PC(USA) since 1995 and has led churches and been active in local politics in the San Francisco Bay Area for nearly three decades. He is also a Senior Consultant and Coach with Convergence and is a Gallup-Certified CliftonStrengths Coach. Bruce, his spouse, and two pups are currently empty-nesting in San Jose, CA, and can be found at www.reyes-chow and on most socials via @breyeschow.

A Healing Gospel for a Hurting World: *Worship & Craft of Radical Welcome*

Without claiming that we have some claim upon THE ONE TRUE Gospel of Jesus Christ or THE ONE TRUE WAY for the people of God to worship together, in the face of the rise of Christian nationalism, violent extremism, and divisive tactics, might we be bolder in claiming and articulating A Gospel that tells a different story? In our time, through the lens of worship, we will explore our hesitancy, talk tactics, and encourage one another to be Christians known for living lives of compassion, love, and justice in the world.



Rev. Dr. Robyn Michalove

Rev. Dr. Robyn Byrd Michalove is Associate Pastor for Mission at First Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, TX, where she has served since 2004.

Robyn is a graduate of Trinity University in San Antonio with a bachelor's in speech communication and Spanish. She earned her M.Div. from Wake Forest University School of Divinity, and her D.Min from Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth.

Intersections of Hope: *a 1001 New Worshiping Community & a Vital Congregation*

Spend time talking through her current context of serving in full-time ministry in both a 1001 New Worshiping Community and a vital, established congregation in downtown Fort Worth, TX. Share stories, hear stories, answer questions, spend time talking about "hope."



Rev. Pepa Paniagua

Rev. Pepa Paniagua (she/her) is the founding and organizing pastor of kin-dom community, a fully-affirming 1001 New Worshiping Community that is working to imagine what can be possible when:

- *All people in the margins are seen, heard, nurtured and empowered*
- *All people are safe to bring their whole selves*
- *All questions are celebrated as much as answers*
- *Inclusion, integration, and love are the norm*

Pepa is also an accidental camp director as the co-founder of kin-dom camp, a fully affirming camp for LGBTQIA+ youth. Pepa is a lifelong Presbyterian and lives with her wife and dogs in McKinney, TX.

Calling In: A Conversation Addressing Harm to, and Cultivating Spaces for Celebration of, the LGBTQIA+ Community

Explore ways that our denomination has been active in harming the LGBTQIA+ community and the ways that harm is still happening. You are invited to wonder what allyship could look like in your own life and the importance of prioritizing relationships from the understanding that we belong to one another as the body of Christ. Pepa will share about her work with kin-dom community and walking with people and churches as they move from places of harm, toward acceptance, welcome, and celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community.



Rev. Dr. Cheni Khonje

Rev. Dr. Cheni Khonje was born in Malawi and became a political refugee when she was less than a month old. Cheni is a nickname; her full name is Chenyangu which means "mother of the nation". She and her siblings grew up in Lusaka, Zambia and Hilversum, the Netherlands.

Kalibu & Ulongo: Radical Welcome & Relationship as Evangelism

We will discuss employing cultural insights from the Yao people, with sprinkles of Dutch hospitality, that enhance our effectiveness in spreading the love of Jesus Christ.

Conference

Artist



Rev. Rachel Hood Vogado

Rachel is a pastor and artist who has most recently served in congregational ministry settings, with an emphasis in Christian Formation and Education. Rachel received degrees in Art History and Museum Education from Florida State University and her Masters of Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary. Seeking to inspire faith communities and congregations to find ways to weave their stories with God's story through the visual arts, she has a great love for woodworking, welding and metal work, and textile arts.

Rachel is married to Chris Vogado, who is also a Presbyterian minister and a musician. When Rachel is not working with the church, she enjoys playing and listening to music, adventuring and exploring nature, sending cat photos, and learning a new hobby. Rachel can almost always be found with a cup of hot tea and doing something creative.

Conference

Musician



Phillip Morgan

Phillip Morgan has served as Director of Music at Central Presbyterian Church in Louisville, KY since 2012. He is also the Artistic Director of the Louisville Gay Men's Chorus. Phillip has had the privilege of leading the choir at the Presbyterian Youth Triennium, being a member of the Montreat Worship and Music Conference planning team, and looks forward to beginning his service on the Presbyterian Association of Musicians' executive board. Both a conductor and a singer, Phillip currently sings with the Louisville Chamber Choir and has been a featured soloist with the Louisville Orchestra, the Choral Arts Society, and a studio artist with the Kentucky Opera.