2021 Charles B. Copher Lecture Series

THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER

Dr. Lisa Allen-McLaurin
Helmar Emil Nielsen Professor, Church Music and Worship,
Degree Coordinator, MALC

Tuesday, March 23, 2021
at 11:00 AM EDT

Streaming Live on

RESPONDENTS

Dr. Maisha I. Handy
Associate Professor of Religion and Education
Former Vice-President for
Academic Affairs/Provost

Dr. Will Coleman
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Religions of the World

Rev. Amber Lowe-Woodfork
Teaching Assistant

PARTICIPANTS

Rev. Matthew Wesley Williams, M.Div., ’04
President

Dr. Reginaldo P. Braga Jr.
Interim VP for Academic Affairs/Provost

Mr. Jatin Gill
ITC Class of 2021
The Charles B. Copher Annual Faculty Lecture Series

The Charles B. Copher Annual Faculty Lecture Series, originally named The Annual Faculty Lecture Series, was initiated at the Office of The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center (JITC) in March 1979. It formed part of the Twentieth Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the ITC. This lecture series is now named in honor of Dr. Copher, who, for many years, served ITC in the dual capacity of Professor of Old Testament and Languages and as Academic Dean. The series enables faculty to be on the cutting-edge of their respective disciplines. For many years, the presentation occurred during the ITC Charter Week activities and lectures and were published by the Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center (JITC).

Dr. Copher completed his undergraduate work at Stowe Teacher’s College in St. Louis, Missouri, and Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned Bachelor of Divinity degrees from Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, and Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in Oberlin, Ohio. Dr. Copher received the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Boston University and later completed post-doctoral study at New York University and the University of Chicago Divinity School.

While pursuing graduate study, Dr. Copher pastored a number of churches in Ohio and Massachusetts. The main thrust of his career, however, was teaching. He served as Professor of Old Testament Studies during the 1950s. He was a visiting instructor at Clark College from 1943 through 1953. At the inception of the ITC, Dr. Copher joined the faculty, serving first as Professor of Old Testament Studies and Languages and later as Dean of Instruction. Later, he filled the post of Vice President for Academic Affairs. He retired in 1978 as Professor Emeritus of Old Testament.

Dr. Copher is widely published in religious journals and periodicals. The Christian Advocate, for example, has carried no less than sixty-three of his works. Other publications in which his writings appear, include: The Foundation, The Journal of Bible and Religion, Theological Education, and the JITC. In addition, he authored many student books, study guides, published sermons, and worship services. Two particularly popular works are: “The Black Presence in the Old Testament” in Stony the Road We Trod, edited by Cain Hope Felder, 1991, and Black Biblical Studies: An Anthology of Charles B. Copher, Black Light Fellowship, Chicago, Illinois, 1993.

Prior to his passing in August 2003, Dr. Copher was married to the former Marie White.
The Charles B. Copher Annual Faculty Lecture Series (2021)

Dr. Reginaldo P. Braga Jr.
Interim Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Provost Presiding

Prelude

Dr. Lisa Allen-McLaurin
Helmar Emil Nielsen Professor of Church Music and Worship
Degree Coordinator, Master of Arts in Liturgical Arts and Culture (MALC)

Invocation

Jatin Gill
ITC Class of 2021

Greetings

Rev. Matthew Wesley Williams, M.Div., '04
President

Occasion

Dr. Reginaldo P. Braga Jr.
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost
Associate Professor of Religion and Education
Degree Coordinator, Master of Arts in Religion and Education (MARE)

Introduction of Lecturer

Rev. Dr. Willie F. G-dman, '87, '01
Chaplain, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling

Lecturer

Rev. Dr. Lisa Allen-McLaurin
Helmar Emil Nielsen Professor of Church Music and Worship
Degree Coordinator, Master of Arts in Liturgical Arts and Culture (MALC)

“A Womanist Theology of Worship:
Recovering the Power of Ancestral Liturgies of Africans in America”

Round Table

Rev. Dr. Maisha I.K. Handy
Associate Professor of Religion and Education
Former Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Provost

Dr. Will Coleman
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Religions of the World

Rev. Amber Lowe-Woodfork, M.Div., '15
Teaching Assistant

Open Forum

Community

Acknowledgments/ Benediction

Dr. Reginaldo P. Braga Jr
The Rev. Dr. Lisa Allen-McLaurin is an Emmy-award winning pastor, professor, and public theologian. She is the Helmar Emil Nielsen Professor of Church Music and Worship and Degree Coordinator for the Master of Arts in Liturgical Arts and Culture (MALC) at the ITC (Atlanta, Georgia). Dr. Allen-McLaurin is an ordained elder in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and serves as the Coordinator for Practical Ministries in the Sixth Episcopal District. She graduated from Millsaps College and the University of Southern Mississippi with Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. degrees in piano and music education. She also holds the Master of Divinity degree from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

Dr. Allen-McLaurin’s teaching interests include worship in African American contexts, spirituality and theology in worship, and gender issues in the Black Church. She is the author of the forthcoming monograph, A Womanist Theology of Worship: Liturgy, Justice, and Communal Righteousness (Orbis Books), and two other texts: Worship Matters! A Collection of Practical Essays on the Practical and Spiritual Discipline of Worship (Creative Publishing, 2015) and Development Comes Before Deliverance: A 9-Week Sermon Series and Bible Study for Pastors and Congregations (Creative Publishing, 2018). She has authored many articles, including “The Theo-Ethics of Negro Spirituals as Folklore and Their Import and Implications for 21st Century AfricansinAmerica,” published in the fall 2019 Journal of the ITC and is a featured contributor in the 2020 People’s Voice Webby award-winning documentary, A King’s Place: Reclaiming the Black Church’s Civil Rights Past. Dr. Allen-McLaurin is a noted composer and arranger and, in 2019 debuted her Advent Cantata, Christmas is Waiting to Be Born: An Advent Cantata Inspired by the Works of Howard Thurman at the ITC. She is also a featured musicologist in the 2015 Emmy-award winning documentary, Reflect, Reclaim, Rejoice: Preserving the Gift of Black Sacred Music.
In addition to her work at the ITC and in the CME Church, Dr. Allen-McLaurin serves on the Arts, Religion and Literature, and Music and Religion Program Unit Steering Committees of the American Academy of Religion; the editorial board of *The Methodist Review Journal*; and holds memberships in the Society for the Study of Black Religion, *Hymns for Him* Board of Directors, and the National African American Leadership Council.

Dr. Allen-McLaurin is CEO/curator of *Sunday’s Coming*, a weekly online worship planning webinar; CEO/Founder of *Creating Collegiality*, a collaborative leadership mentoring program; a member of the Sisters Chapel Advisory Council at Spelman College; a mentor with the RISE Together National Mentorship Network; and is a 2018 inductee into the Morehouse College Board of Preachers. Dr. Allen-McLaurin feels a great responsibility to help leaders, particularly women, shape and hone their academic and ministerial gifts. She is married to Thomas McLaurin and their blended family includes five children and two granddaughters.
A native of Chicago Illinois, the Rev. Dr. Maisha I. K. Handy is an administrator, professor, minister, pastor, and activist. Dr. Handy is committed to the struggle for justice and liberation as a womanist scholar/practitioner. She began her journey through higher education at Lincoln University (Jefferson City, MO) receiving the Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology/Criminal Justice (1989). After relocating to Atlanta, Georgia, she received the Master of Divinity degree with honors from Candler School of Theology, Emory University (1994) and the Ph.D. degree in Religion (Theology & Personality) from Emory University (2002). Dr. Handy served as both the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost (2015-2021) and Associate Professor of Religion and Education at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia, where she has been employed for 21 years.

During her tenure as faculty at the ITC, Dr. Handy served as the Black Women in Church and Society Womanist Scholar (2006-2007). She is the author of “Fighting the Matrix: Toward a Womanist Pedagogy for the Black Church” in The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center and co-author of “Getting Real” in Keep It Real: Working with Today’s Black Youth. Dr. Handy founded the “Holla If You Hear Me!” hip hop forum, a series that engages the hip hop generation, the church, and the academy in community dialogue that stemmed from the Religion and Hip-Hop course she established at the ITC. She continues her work as a womanist scholar/practitioner committed to the unique HBCU experience of theological education.

Dr. Handy also currently serves as the founding pastor of Rize Community Church (Atlanta, GA), an africentric and radically inclusive ministry. Known as “Pastor K” or “Umi K,” she is a minister and theologian who is dedicated to pastoral mentoring and prophetic preaching. Dr. Handy was licensed (1991) and ordained (1994) to the gospel ministry at First Baptist Congregational Church of Chicago (Baptist/UCC) and ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After 7 1/2 years of serving as the pastor of Rize, the Leadership Team continues to work together to develop a growing and thriving church community that strives to bring healing and transformation to the world by the Holy Spirit alongside the church and the wider community.
Dr. Will Coleman, Respondent

Dr. Will Coleman is the Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Religions of the World at the Interdenominational Theological Center (Atlanta, Georgia) and the author of Tribal Talk: Black Theology, Hermeneutics and African/American Ways of “Telling the Story” (Penn State Press, 2000). This publication was nominated for the Grawemeyer Award in Religion by Penn State Press (2001). This is a multidimensional study of the retentions of African Traditional Religions, especially Hoodoo and Vodun, among freed African Americans (late 1800s – 1920s), especially in South Carolina and Georgia. Also, it surveys the historical African Diasporic connection between Vodun, Ifa, and Nkisi of West Africa with Candomblé (Brazil), Santeria (Puerto Rica), Lukumi (Cuba), Vodou (Haiti), and Hoodoo (Southern United States). It demonstrates how this ancestral spiritual legacy is indispensable for a contemporary, constructive Black Theology.

Dr. Coleman also offers online courses and virtual publications with an extensive and massive audio and audio-visual archive on a variety of spiritual and religious topics.

Dr. Coleman’s educational experience includes Bachelor of Arts., Rhodes College [Religion major] (Memphis, TN); Master of Divinity, Columbia Theological Seminary [Theology and History of Christian Thought concentration] (Decatur, GA); Ph.D. [“with distinction”], Graduate Theological Union [Philosophical Theology, Systematic Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Theological Hermeneutics] (Berkeley, CA).

His teaching experience includes institutions Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, GA) as Associate Professor of Theology and Hermeneutics (1993-2000). Dr. Coleman has taught the following courses at the ITC (2002-present) including: Introduction to Christian Theology; Reformed Theology; Presbyterian Polity; Paul Tillich; Theological Hermeneutics; Introduction to Christian Ethics; Introduction to Philosophy and Theology; Systematic Theology; History of the African American Churches; Introduction to the Philosophy and Practices of African Traditional Religions; African and Middle Eastern Religions.
Rev. Amber Lowe-Woodfork, M.Div., '15, Respondent

Rev. Amber Lowe-Woodfork, M.Div., '15 is from Columbia, MS. She earned the Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Mississippi (Oxford, MS) in 2012. After deciding to serve the community through ministry, Amber enrolled in Phillips School of Theology at the Interdenominational Theological Center (Atlanta, GA). She graduated in 2015 with Highest Honors and received the Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in Ethics. Amber is currently in pursuit of a Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature at Clark Atlanta University (Atlanta, GA). She will continue her studies in the fall at Indiana University (Bloomington, IN). Her research focuses on the intersection of Afrofuturism, myth, and religion in the writings of Octavia Butler.

Rev. Lowe-Woodfork is an ordained Elder in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She has served as Senior Pastor at St. James CME Church (Perry, GA); Mount Zion CME Church (Rome, GA); and, Good News Community CME Church (Lithonia, GA), and is currently the Assistant Pastor at the Historic West Mitchell Street CME Church (Atlanta, GA). Rev. Lowe-Woodfork is the former Assistant Faith Organizer at the New Georgia Project and is currently the Director of Faith Outreach for Sarah Riggs Amico for U.S. Senate. She has also served as the Faith Consultant for the ACLU of Georgia as well as Director of Faith Outreach for several political candidates including former City Council President Ceasar C. Mitchell, Jr, Peter Aman, State Rep. Keisha Waites, Travis Townsend, and Helen Zenobia Willis. Rev. Lowe-Woodfork has also worked in campaign finance as the Deputy Finance Director for Fani Willis for Fulton County Superior Court Judge, State Rep. Erica Thomas, and Magistrate Judge Cassandra Kirk.

Rev. Lowe-Woodfork’s pastoral and public ministry are rooted in liberation theology and social justice. Her sermons, bible studies, and lectures always focus on public policy issues while highlighting the idea that social justice is at the hem of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When she is not busy, Rev. Lowe-Woodfork contributes essays on her WordPress blog, Bellus Mantis. She enjoys time spent with her eight nieces and nephews, playing football and basketball with her husband and brothers, cooking, reading, yoga, running and biking, and visiting art and history museums.
The Charles B. Copher Annual Faculty Lecture Series

The following persons have delivered the lectures:

2021 Lisa Allen-McLaurin, Ph.D. Helmar Nielsen Professor, Music & Worship
2019 F. Keith Slaughter, Th.D. Assistant Professor Psychology and Pastoral Care
2018 Will Coleman, PhD. Adjunct Professor
2017 Reginaldo Braga, Ed.D. Associate Professor, Christian Education
2016 Lynn St. Clair Darden, Ph.D., Associate Professor of New Testament
2015 Vanessa Lovelace Ph.D., Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible
2014 Temba Mafico, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Services/Provost
2013 L. H. Whelchel, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Church History
2012 Mark A. Lomax, D.Min., Assistant Professor, Homiletics
2011 Willie F. G-dman, Th.D., Assistant Professor, Psychology and Pastoral Care
2010 Margaret Aymer-Oget, Ph.D., Associate Professor of New Testament
2009 Jamal-Dominique Hopkins, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of New Testament
2008 George Thompson, Ph.D., Associate Professor Leadership & Ministry Practice
2007 Lisa M. Allen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Church Music and Worship
2006 Riggins R. Earl Jr., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Christian Ethics
2005 Michael I.N. Dash, D.Min., Associate Professor of Ministry and Context
2004 Mark Ellingsen, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Church History
2003 Kenneth E. Henry, S.T.M., Associate Professor of Church History
2002 Melva Wilson Costen, Ph.D., Helmar E. Nielsen Professor, Music and Worship
2001 Edward L. Smith, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Systematic Theology
2000 Tumani Mutasa Nyajekia, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Missiology and Religions of the World
1999 Rosetta E. Ross, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Ethics and Public Policy
1998 Marsha Snulligan Haney, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Missiology and Religions of the World
1997 Anne S. Wimberly, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Christian Education and Church Music
1996 Edward P. Wimberly, Ph.D., Jarena Lee Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling
1995 Ndugu G. B. T’Ofori-Atta, D.Min., Associate Professor, Church and Society
1994 Temba L. Mafico, Ph.D., Professor, Old Testament
1993 Darius L. Swann, Ph.D., Professor, Missiology and World Religions
1992 Carolyn L. McCrary, Th.D., Assistant Professor, Psychology and Pastoral Care
1991 Randall C. Bailey, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
1990 Stephen C. Rasor, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Sociology of Religion
1989 H. Wayne Merritt, Ph.D., Associate Professor, New Testament
1988 Thomas J. Pugh, Ph.D., Professor, Psychology and Pastoral Care
1987 Charles B. Copher, Ph.D. Academic Dean Emeritus
            Gayraud S. Wilmore, D.D., Distinguished Visiting Professor
1986 Jacquelyn Grant, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Systematic Theology
1985 David K. Rensberger, Ph.D., Associate Professor, New Testament
1985 Jonathan Jackson, Th.D., Professor, Christian Education
1984 Riggins R. Earl Jr., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Christian Ethics
1984 W. Thomas Smith, Ph.D., Professor, Church History
1983 J. Deotis Roberts, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor, Systematic Theology
1982 Justo Gonzalez, Ph.D., Visiting Professor, History of Theology
1981 Jacquelyn Grant, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Systematic Theology
1979 John W. Waters, Ph.D., Professor, Old Testament