



President's
Report
Fiscal Year 2024





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1. University Christian Church hosted the Inauguration ceremony.
2. Rev. Natalya Cherry, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Methodist Studies and Theology, led the procession, carrying Brite's gonfalon.
3. Faculty, staff, Trustees, and distinguished guests processed to the hymn, "Joyful, Joyful."
4. Rabbi Peter Stein, Senior Rabbi of Temple B'rith Kodesh in Rochester NY, offered the Invocation.

"While we miss him terribly in Rochester .. it is inspiring to see my friend and faith-partner embark on this important task.... As Moses blessed Joshua, 'May you have strength and courage in your heart' ... May this holy learning community led by Dr. Cady be nourished by deep and inspired study ... leading us to create a world of justice and peace.... May the power of today endure."

Rabbi Peter Stein,
Invocation



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5. University Christian Church Chancel Choir, directed by Dr. Todd Prickett.

6. Second-year M.A.T.M. student, Derrick Gay, led the liturgical summons to worship. A graduate of Florida A&M, Derrick is also Vice Moderator of Brite Black Seminarians Association.

7. Dr. Daniel Pullin, President of TCU, welcomed Brite's president to campus.

8. Rev. Yvonne Gilmore, Vice President and Chief of Staff, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), offered greetings from the denomination.

9. The Rev. Dr. D. Newell Williams, President Emeritus of Brite, welcomed his successor.



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10. Rev. Dr. Robert Allan Hill, Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University, delivered the Inaugural Prayer. Rev. Dr. Hill is also President Cady's father-in-law.

11. President Cady affirmed vows presented by representatives of constituency groups: Trustee Virzola Law, (and r. to l.) faculty member Tim Lee, alumna Courtney Richards (M.Div., 1996), student Shenée Simon, and staff member Monica Bradley (M.Div. 2021).

12. Rev. Caesar Rentie (M.T.S., 1997) Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, accepted the nomination of Stephen Cady on behalf of the Search Committee, Trustees and Brite community.

13. Students Rev. Emily Davis (l.) Cornelius Heath (r.), and Rev. Margarita McDonald (at piano and not pictured) performed "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

"This is the day that God hath made, and I'm glad about it.... It was my honor to chair the search committee that brought us to this day.... Now it is my privilege and honor to formally present our selection for the third president of Brite Divinity School, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady, II.

Rev. Virzola Law,
Chair, Board of Trustees
Presentation

We commit to support Brite Divinity School as it lives out its mission to educate and inspire people to serve God's diverse world as leaders in churches, the academy, and public life.

Community Response



14. Rev. Virzola Law, Chair of Board of Trustees, presented Stephen Cady as candidate for president and later offered the Declaration of Inauguration.

15. Dr. Stuart McDonald, Immediate Past Chair of Brite's Board of Trustees and Dr. Michael St. A. Miller, Executive Vice President and Dean, present the symbol of the office to President Cady.

16. Second-year M.Div. student and moderator of the Brite Student Association, Haley Hampton, delivered the charge to President Cady. She invited other students to join her in laying hands on President Cady.

"Stephen, surrounding you right now are the current students of Brite Divinity School.... We commit to being alongside you Most of all, we welcome you into communion with us.... Our charge and hope for you is to tell the truth about barriers born from this institution, to tell the truth about what the present means, and to tell the truth about what the future can mean for us. Stephen Cady, will you commit to dreaming of futures yet imagined, to bolstering our courage before powers and principalities, and to nurturing our love for one another as we wrestle with meaning and justice, questions of love and calling upon our lives?"

Haley Hampton, Second-year M.Div. Student
Moderator of Brite Student Association
Charge to the President



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“The success of this president is not up to him. The success of President Cady is up to us. I am looking at the people who will make Stephen successful. I learned a long time ago, as a pastor, that it is good churches that make good pastors, and not the other way around.... You know what to do. Pray.... Encourage.... Give.... Recruit.... Look y’all, nothing like a Baptist preacher giving a charge to a congregation in a Disciples church for a Methodist pastor!”

Rev. Dr. Charles F. Johnson
Secretary of the Board of Trustees
Charge to the Community



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17. The Rev. Dr. Charles F. Johnson, secretary of the Board of Trustees, called on all of Brite’s stakeholders to support President Cady.

18. Dr. Oluwatomisin Oredein, Assistant Professor in Black Religious Traditions, Constructive Theology and Ethics, read an original poem entitled “We. ”

19. Sean Mahan, member of Asbury United Methodist Church, Rochester, NY read Joel 2:28 in a translation by Rev. Wil Gafney, Ph.D., The Right Rev. Sam B. Hulse Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite.



20. Rev. Dr. Russ Peterman, Senior Minister of University Christian Church and Trustee of Brite, explained that the shared table and meal are a key expression of community life among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In that spirit, everyone was invited to attend the luncheon reception at TCU's Legends Club and Suites to celebrate the occasion.

"This is not our work, but God's work, so that God's work will be done in the world.... I am here to accept on behalf of the Board of Trustees, and to accept and celebrate on behalf of all the dreamers who will come to this place and find their voice ... the Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady II as the third president of Brite Divinity School. We look forward to the ways in which God will use his giftedness to further the mission and vision of Brite Divinity School.

The Rev. Caesar Rentie,
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
Response



Abridged Inaugural Address “A Dream of Justice and Joy”

This is a season of dreaming for Brite Divinity School—a moment to consider both who we are and who God is calling us to be.

*Maybe you’ve brought a dream for Brite today?
I know I have.*

What if we shared them? ... Those who have been a part of congregations that I have had the honor of serving ... know just how important dreaming is to me.... What is a dream if not a reminder of what has always been at the heart of the gospel—the promise that what is, is not what has to be....

Whether we remember it or not, we come from a long line of dreamers.... Thomas and Alexander Campbell dreamed of a table that was open to all.... Barton Stone dreamed of a church without creedal tests for membership ... Who could have imagined where their dreams would lead? But that’s the thing about a dream, isn’t it? Once it’s shared in community—we never really know where it will take us.

The good news for us as people of faith, is that we don’t have to...at least not fully. No, in some ways, our job is to muster courage enough to offer our imperfect and incomplete dreams to the community and trust the community itself to perfect them....

Addison and Randolph Clark dreamed of a school where men and women could receive a classical education and develop character.... And in 1873 ... that dream came to life.

Lucas Charles Brite ... fearful of the direction higher education was taking, made a gift to create a separate institution with its own trustees, free from the liberalizing influence of the broader university. And so, in 1914, Brite College of the Bible became its own institution ... on the basis of Brite’s dream of preserving a conservative biblical theology.... The first lesson we had to learn as a free-standing institution was in some ways the most important one ... that we need not hide from the truth wherever we find it, because where there is truth, there is God.... That has become our Brite idea—in some ways it is the Brite idea....

Here we sit 110 years later, still dreaming. Here we sit with dreams of our own. To be clear, at our core, we still bear the dream at the heart of the Disciples tradition—a dream of a table open to all. We just usually call that by another name—justice. What is justice if not a dream of a table, a church, a community, a state, a nation, a world that is open to all....



And we really do mean all—for everyone born.... And to be clear, I am committed to honoring that dream....

Every generation has had to dream big dreams to become more fully who God is calling them to be. The question is, what is our dream? What are our Brite ideas?

I went into ministry twenty years ago because despite everything lastingly good in my life coming one way or another from the church, I looked around and realized that almost none of my peers could say the same thing.

I said “yes” to Brite, because after twenty years in pastoral ministry, I recognized that I can’t make that difference in the church alone...we need another generation of faith leaders who can help us take faithful steps toward that world transformed by God’s love, mercy, and justice.

And everything we do is in service to that.... The dream of a world transformed—of a table that is truly open to all.

But that, friends, is just the start.... I dream of justice, yes, but also of joy. We need both, don’t we? After all, justice without joy is empty, and joy without justice is sin.... Justice is about making sure everyone is at the table, joy is about appreciating the time that we’re there.

Maybe that’s where Brite can learn from TCU. It is, after all, ranked one of the happiest campuses in the country. What if we were too? How would that change the church, academy, and public life? In this season ahead, what if we were merry and Brite?

Friends, if the end of our faith is mutual enjoyment of God...then we ought to enjoy the journey to get there.

I have a dream of justice and joy. Of a table that is big enough for all, and a spirit capable of enjoying it.

*What is your dream?
What is your Brite idea?*

Today is our chance to re-commit to dream big dreams and listen for who God is calling us to be. I don’t know exactly where we will go from here, but so long as we keep trying to build a table of justice and joy, the future is Brite.

May it be so. Amen.



The full Inaugural Address can be viewed at <https://youtube.com/live/dkPIPXhqE48>

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Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared. Thank you for your kindness and generosity for myself and the many others with you who have made this dream come true.



Frank Webb
M.Div. Student

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New Colleagues

Brittany Brooks joined Brite in July as Vice President for Business and Finance. She brought over ten years of non-profit accounting experience, including The University of Texas Dallas Center for Brain Health, the Dallas College Foundation, and CC Young Senior Living. She is a Dallas native with an MBA from the University of North Texas at Dallas and is a certified public accountant. Brittany and her husband have two young daughters.



Rev. Dr. Erin Edwards is Brite's inaugural Director of Ecclesial Innovation, made possible by a generous gift from Tim and Sylvia Stevens. Erin earned her D.Min. from Pacific School of Religion and came to Brite from Davis, CA, where she was Founder, Lead Pastor, and Executive Director of Live on Purpose Community Church, a fully affirming, inclusive, and diverse church. She has over two decades of experience in pastoral care and spiritual leadership. She is ordained by the Christian Church. Erin and her wife, Chelsea, recently welcomed their third daughter.



Dr. Chaitanya ("Chai") Motupalli is Brite's new Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. After earning two degrees in science and a B.D. in India, he pursued an S.T.M. at Union Theological Seminary in New York and a Ph.D. in Ethics and Social Theory at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. He has worked in academic and ecclesial contexts for over a decade, serving as an Assistant Pastor, Director of Student Life and International Students and Scholars at GTU, and most recently, as Associate Director of Laity Training in the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church, where he is a certified candidate for ordination. Chai and his wife, Callie, have a daughter.



Center for Theology and Justice

An electric atmosphere filled Carr Chapel the night of April 11, 2024, as Brite launched its new Center for Theology and Justice. The program, which student volunteers primarily led, was surrounded by visual art curated by students and local artists, along with icons and poetic compositions that spoke to the power of theologically centered justice. The event opened with a live jazz band and included a commissioned poem from Brite's own esteemed faculty member, Dr. Tomi Oredein. The launch program included introductions by the center's inaugural Fellow, Erma Sinclair-Davis, and presentations from Center for Theology and Justice Executive Director, Rev Dr. Jeremy L. Williams. Two awards added to the excitement. The Rev. Ali Lopez-Valcarcel, pastor of University Christian Church Rio Grande Valley, received an Alumni Excellence award for her consequential work in the borderlands with migrant communities. The renowned Fort Worth organization, Transform 1012 N. Main St., received the Community Impact award for its efforts to transform the city's former Ku Klux Klan headquarters into a community-centered pentacle of healing and justice. A relevant and critical keynote given by The Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas brought the program to an energetic conclusion. Afterwards, the more than 150 ministers, organizers, artists, academics, and community members in attendance enjoyed a catered reception with more live music in Brite's Bass Conference Center.



The launch of the Center for Theology and Justice was an example of the trifold pillars of the CTJ that include affirming and expanding student-centered spiritual and intellectual efforts toward justice, amplifying the work of congregations and community organizations committed to justice in and beyond Fort Worth, and serving as a coalition-building space for all these entities to build toward a brighter collaborative future, where abundant life is accessible and possible for God's creation. Given the launch's overwhelming success, the CTJ looks forward to hosting events of similar capacity.

Chalice Circle

Brite is honored to recognize the following congregations
for their support in Fiscal Year 2024.

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Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church - Fort Worth, TX
South Hills Christian Church - Fort Worth, TX
The Welcome Table Christian Church - Arlington, TX
University Christian Church - Fort Worth, TX
Urbandale Christian Church, Dallas, TX, Legacy Fund *
Washington Avenue Christian Church - Elyria, OH
Wilshire Baptist Church - Dallas, TX

Ministry is meeting the needs of people to the glory of God, and I believe the Brite donors are doing ministry by way of scholarship support for Brite students like me. It is no secret that accepting a call from God and receiving higher education is costly in different ways. In an ever-changing world, spiritual leaders should be equipped to serve God's creation by meeting their needs for the glory of God. I desire to take what I am learning at Brite and do ministry in the context in which God has placed me for the glory of God and the edification of God's people. I am beyond grateful that God has made a way for me to discern my call and obtain higher education in theology with no financial burden amid the other burdens that naturally come.



Ian Bell
M.Div. Student

Sustainers Circle

Brite wishes to recognize donors who made regular, recurring gifts, monthly or quarterly, in Fiscal Year 2024.

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"God is on display at Brite. Through the commitment to curating an environment of inclusivity, flourishing, and curiosity for all to come. Through its pursuit of community, hospitality, and breaking bread with one another. I see God on display in classroom conversations, meals with my peers, and the encouraging words from faculty. Your generosity has immeasurably blessed me and my family. Not only does it alleviate the financial stress of graduate school, but it allows me to focus my energy on the investment in my ministry and school. I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power that occurs when God partners with Brite students. I am so grateful for your witness and support of the Divine's activity here at Brite.

*Thank you for partnering with us as we faithfully pursue our callings.
Your generosity is holy"*



Selah Peterson
M.Div. Student

With Appreciation

Dr. Michael Miller has chosen to step down from his role as Executive Vice President and Dean at the end of the academic year. During his 6-year term, he helped guide Brite through the pandemic and all of the changes it required in instructional delivery and general life at Brite. He directed Brite through the labyrinth of two accreditations and played a leading role in the creation of Brite's new strategic plan. He also served as interim president for two periods of time after the retirement of Newell Williams. "Dean Miller has been a faithful and tireless leader for Brite and a true gift to me as I have begun my tenure here. I will forever be grateful for his kindness and warm welcome," said President Cady.



Dean Miller eagerly looks forward to returning to the classroom and the opportunity to write. He does so with the deep appreciation of the Trustees, President Emeritus Williams, Interim President Michael Cooper-White, and President Cady.

Emergency Relief

Life is full of surprises, not all good, and some expensive. A loved one hundreds of miles away dies. A child has a medical crisis. A commuter's car breaks down. Students have no immunity to such hardships. Already stretched financially by regular expenses, life's vicissitudes can blow up their budgets. To step in with timely help, an anonymous donor has created a fund to provide emergency relief to Brite's students. Named in honor of the Rev. Dr. Scott Colglazier, this new emergency fund stands ready to aid students when financial emergencies arise. All are invited to contribute to this fund to help students when they face a financial emergency.

Brite Circle

Brite Circle honors those who support Brite Divinity School with annual, cumulative gifts of \$1,000 or more.

Brite Circle members' support maintains Brite's standard of excellence in academics and pastoral training and helps individuals answer their calls to ministry, transforming their lives, as well as the churches, institutions, and communities they will serve.

Please consider becoming a member of the Brite Circle this year.



For more information on opportunities to support Brite, please contact:



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Brite Divinity School
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