



Session 2: Wednesday, June 5, 4:15–5:45 p.m.

Arts and Spirituality

“Barbie, Dolly Parton, and Taylor Swift: Creativity, Strength, and Truth Telling”

Location: Pembroke

Micki Pulleyking, *Missouri State University*, Convener

- **Nancy Posey**, *Lipscomb University*
- **Karen Fletcher Smith**, *Northern Seminary*
- **Sarah Stone Watt**, *Pepperdine University*, Respondent

Culture is strongly shaped by the arts, religion, music, film, and storytelling. Here we explore the intersection of justice, spirituality, imagination, embodiment, and the arts. By looking at the music of Taylor Swift, Dolly Parton, and the storytelling of writer-director Greta Gerwig, this session will focus on truths of the imagination. The arts help humans access aspects of our experience, enhancing our understanding of ourselves, others, and our world as a path to transformation.

Micki Pulleyking, *Missouri State University*, “Barbie’s ‘Contemplation of Incarnation’ will preach!”

“What Was I Made For?” asks the *Barbie* ballad as she seeks answers to the meaning of becoming human. Director Gerwig weaves symbolic contact between Barbie and her creator, (Ruth Handler), with Michelangelo’s, “The Creation of Adam”. Barbie wants agency, to be more than a conduit through whom stories are told. As Barbie faces her fears, her creator takes her hands and tells her to “feel”. Scenes of people and emotions, joys and sorrows, flash before Barbie’s eyes; she is troubled and “called” to see women and men set free from their packaging.

Nancy Posey, *Lipscomb University*, “Southern Icon Dolly Parton: More than Glitter and Butterflies”

Few people achieve celebrity status without polarizing a large segment of society. Dolly Parton, however, has reached superstardom while crossing religious, political, and socio-economic barriers. Through her love of music and gift of songwriting, Parton has expanded her influence into all areas of culture. Her success has afforded her the freedom to chart her own path and improve countless lives without losing touch with her roots. The presenter will trace Parton’s spiritual roots from the fundamentalist church where her grandfather was “an old time preacher man” to her current expressions of spirituality and generosity.

Karen Fletcher Smith, *Northern Seminary*, “Swift Lament: Pop Liturgy for Ecclesiastical Wounds”

Liturgy gives guidance, voice, and supplication when our words cease. How can we express lament when familiar worship songs, prayers, and sermons trigger fresh wounds? This paper argues for the use of pop liturgy to bring voice and healing to those wounded by the church. The depth of lyrics from Taylor Swift offers the modern Christian applicatory words to their ecclesiastical wounds. Through the writing of Swift, listeners can find a sing along experience that brings a pop theology of lament when familiar ecclesiastical language brings more harm than good.

Business and Economics

“Economics from a Christian Perspective”

Location: Yarnton

Russell Dabbs, *Lubbock Christian University*, Convenor

- **David Johnson**, *Harding University*
- **Janice Hauge**, *University of North Texas*
- **Nate Barton**, *University of California Riverside*

Christians who teach in the economics area have unique research interests. In this session we will explore the connection of family and the economy, government involvement in the marketplace and the economics of sanitation in the developing world.

David Johnson, *Harding University*, “Strong Family, Weak Economy?”

A certain degree of family loyalty or identity is critical to accomplish its role of socializing its members so that they may thrive in the broader society. However, a too-strong family identity may compromise the ability of its members to extend trust to those outside the family, trust that is requisite for the development of the broad associations that characterize a modern, progress-prone economy. Manifestations of the lack of these associations are fewer and weaker civic and social institutions, small and short-lived businesses, nepotism, and corruption. The existence of these manifestations will alter the structure of business in those countries and limit economic potential in various ways. The purpose of this paper is to investigate this association between family loyalty and prospects for economic progress, also known as the “paradox of the family.”

Janice Hauge, *University of North Texas*, “BEAD’s Overlooked Demographic”

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program was designed to expand high-speed internet access to all U.S. households. The program focuses on infrastructure deployment and compels providers to offer fiber connectivity; however, fiber typically is more costly to install than DSL, cable, satellite, or wireless services. This increased cost is detrimental to unserved households that might be served using a different technology or who choose to connect using a technology better suited to their needs. In particular, the BEAD program omits provisions for the hearing impaired despite their being significantly impacted by the broadband deployment efforts each state undertakes. Among the impending changes are decreased emphasis on teletypewriter services and increased emphasis on captioning and video relay services. While significant research is being conducted on BEAD funds, fiber costs, political opportunism etc., the relatively smaller concern of managing changes to the systems and devices needed by the hearing impaired is largely overlooked; however, to these individuals and their families, the impacts of broadband policy are substantial. As such, this research seeks to quantify the costs of compliance of BEAD subgrantees with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Janice Hauge, *University of North Texas* “When Government Involvement in Antibiotic R&D is a Flawed Approach”

The economic paradox of investing money to develop a product that will be used as infrequently as possible has caused many pharmaceutical companies to shut down antibiotic research and development branches. What, if anything, is the role of the federal government in supporting antibiotic research development? Ever-increasing transmission and modification of antibiotic resistance mechanisms in pathogens pose serious concerns to pharmaceutical developers and healthcare providers. The overuse of antibiotics in agriculture and over-the-counter remedies for undiagnosed, possibly viral, infections has acted as a selective force on harmless and pathogenic bacteria alike, to favor propagation of hereditary material that confers resistance to antibiotics commonly introduced to humans via water supply, food products, hospital visits, and prescribed medication. Such routine over-exposure to antibiotics has produced a population of bacteria equipped with an ability to develop resistance within days to a drug that took a decade to develop and prove safe. The future of antibiotic production therefore faces an ethical and economic dilemma: to what extent should the government intervene to ensure provision of potentially life-saving antibiotics, and at what point does federal involvement inhibit independent research from developing life-saving antibiotic treatment?

Nate Barton, *University of California Riverside*, “Government Officials and Collective Action Challenges to Low-cost Sanitation Initiatives in Rural Busoga”

In this paper, I examine the role of local government leaders in overcoming collective action challenges facing low-cost sanitation initiatives in rural Uganda. By applying a difference-of-differences (DiD) design to novel observational data from 2,931 survey data points across 10 rural communities in the Busoga region of Southeastern Uganda between 2022 to 2023, this study finds that evidence of community buy-in is associated with the presence of low-cost sanitation facilities such as latrines but that the total number of government officials present is associated with fewer facilities after controlling for confounders.

Early Career Scholars in Theological Disciplines

“Ordinary Language, Stanley Cavell, and Theology”

Location: Lamb and Scroll

Daniel Crouch, Convener

- **Katherine Ellis**, *Baylor University*
- **Andrew Whitworth**, *Baylor University*
- **Charles Regli**, *Baylor University*

Katherine Ellis, *Baylor University*, “Born Again: Stanley Cavell on Wonder and Childlike Conversion”

This paper considers connections between Stanley Cavell’s account of childhood language learning and the gospels’ description of childlike conversion. Throughout the gospels, childhood is not presented as a life stage that is underdeveloped, limited, or pejoratively infantile. Instead, the gospels point to the way in which followers of Christ are to be re-inducted, reborn as the Gospel of John puts it, into the world brimming with wonder and finitude. Entry into the Kingdom of God is not cast in terms of mastery or mining for solutions. Instead, it is to be received, relished and shared with childlike wonder. Cavell offers an account of language learning dependent on wonder. Language is not a means of mastery but is instead accompanied by strangeness and clumsy delight. Language’s boundlessness, its capacity for playful shifting and transfiguration ironically posits a boundary, a limit on what can and should be grasped. The potency and potentiality of language is not one which we can claim, wield, or control. Resisting finite projectability, or a sense of ourselves as “finished subjects,” language renders us children. The childlike wonder of words invites hopeful, new, and expansive perceptions and receptions of community, creatureliness, and God.

Andrew Whitworth, *Baylor University*, “Now is Not the Time or Place: The Lesson of Vigdis Hjorth’s *Will and Testament* for Theological Ethics”

Vigdis Hjorth’s 2016 novel *Will and Testament* tells the tragic, complicated story of a Norwegian family through the eyes of Bergljot, one of four siblings. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that the varying distances and tensions between Bergljot and the rest of her family are the consequence of a past, unacknowledged traumatic event. Reading *Will and Testament* with Stanley Cavell’s notion of acknowledgement in mind, the relationships between the characters demonstrate what it means to acknowledge another person and what might be the cost of failure in this regard. In this paper I want to first lay out the main conflict of the novel in a way that will both familiarize those who have not read the book, but also to distill the way in which the various characters understand the conflict differently, which will be important for my later analysis. After that, I will explore the notion of acknowledgement laid out by Stanley Cavell as a response to problems posed by skepticism. Finally, I will examine how four different characters respond to the same situation as a way of illuminating both the actions of the characters and particular aspects of what it means to acknowledge another and the implications for Christian theological ethics.

Charles Regli, *Baylor University*, “The Need to Ascend and Descend: Stanley Cavell as a Modern Aristotle”

This paper argues that Stanley Cavell offers both a challenge and opportunity to contemporary theology. In his *Claim of Reason*, Cavell challenges Christian theology by objecting to its ethical demands to pursue eternal values.

Cavell depicts this desire to ascend as haunting the modern predicament, leaving it unable to rest in valuing the other. I take this challenge as an opportunity for theology to wrestle with the modern predicament. I argue, by engagement with Cavellian theologian Stephen Mulhall, that Christian theology retains eternal values but that Cavell's depiction of human language depicts how they relate to the other.

Gailyn Van Rheenan Endowed Session on Mission and World Christianity

"The Missional Necessity of Discernment"

Location: Stone Chapel

- **Mark Love**, *Rochester University*
- **Scott Hagley**, *Pittsburgh Theological Seminary*, Respondent

Love is professor of theology and ministry and director of the Master of Religious Education in missional leadership program at Rochester University. He holds a PhD from Luther Seminary and a DMin from Abilene Christian University. Love served congregations in Texas and Oregon in full-time ministry for 17 years before moving into the world of academia. He consults with congregations across the United States who are interested in cultivating a missional identity. His most recent book is *It Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit* and to *Us: Acts, Discernment, and the Mission of God* (2023 Wipf and Stock).

Discernment occupies a prominent place in many discussions of what constitutes mission. It is imperative to underscore that discernment must transcend a conventional role as a mere procedural facet in the determination of missional action; rather, it is a necessity for any theology of participation. This presentation endeavors to connect the areas of discernment and missional theology, exploring theological, biblical, and philosophical sources.

Hermeneutics of Unity in and after Scripture

"CSC 2025 Planning Session"

Location: Malamat

Please join us for a discussion where we will work to lay plans for the group into 2025 and thereafter. This discussion is open to all who are interested in the work of the Hermeneutics of Unity in and After Scripture session.



Practical Theology

“The Doctor of Ministry Degree in a Changing Context”

Location: Journals Room

Ron Bruner, *Editor, Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry*, Convener

- **Jack Holland**, *Emmanuel Christian Seminary*, “Redesigning a Thirty-year-old DMin Program”
- **Tim Sensing**, *Abilene Christian University, Graduate School of Theology*, “The Professional Doctorate: A Comparison and Distinction”
- **Carlus Gupton**, *Lipscomb University*, Respondent

Over the last thirty years, Doctor of Ministry (DMin) programs have functioned in a world of flux. Beyond the tectonic shifts in church life, students have changed their expectations, the Academy has adjusted to new realities, the Association of Theological Schools has rewritten the degree standards, and practical theology has matured as a discipline. This session is a conversation about what the DMin degree has been, what it is, and what it should be.