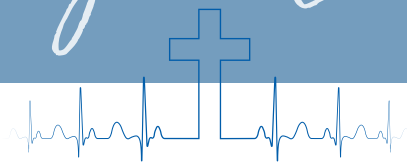




Healing Ministries



Members of the Perkins community minister to the sick, the suffering, the marginalized and the dying, as chaplains, pastors and community leaders.

A 50-year-old man without health insurance walks into the ER at a county hospital with severe abdominal pain. After a few blood tests, a cursory exam and 12 hours in the waiting room, he's given pain medication. He leaves the hospital with a huge bill — but no answers. And when the pain returns a few weeks later, he's back in the ER again.

Now imagine repeating that scene again and again over the course of year.

The Rev. Freedom McAdoo tells this story to show how difficult it can be for uninsured people in underserved

“We work with people in the community who need help understanding and navigating through the clinical space at hospitals and need to know how to advocate for themselves.”

FREEDOM MCADOO



communities to navigate the healthcare system — and how the DFW Faith Health Collaborative, the nonprofit she leads, can assist.

“This gentleman didn’t know how to obtain a primary care provider within the hospital’s network,” said McAdoo, who is executive director and co-founder of the Collaborative. “He had no insurance and no idea how to get financial assistance for the hospital bill. He didn’t know the language to use to advocate for what he needed.” Volunteers in the Collaborative helped the man connect with a primary care provider and a gastroenterologist, who diagnosed an ulcer. Now he’s scheduled for a procedure which should help correct the problem.

That’s just one example of how DFW Faith Health Collaborative has helped people in marginalized communities. And McAdoo, who earned her M.Div. at Perkins in 2015, is just one of many members of the Perkins community — alumnae/i, students and others — who are helping to minister to the physical, spiritual and mental health of the community. Here we meet just a few of them.

FREEDOM MCADOO

DFW Health Collaborative

DFW Faith Health Collaborative helps congregations create or strengthen their internal health ministry, establishing an avenue for local hospital systems to provide preventive information and local health resources. The Collaborative also trains a core group of volunteers in faith communities to support patients before, during and after hospital stays by assisting them in making healthier decisions, providing transportation to and from medical appointments, helping patients communicate their health needs with the appropriate care providers and connecting them to community resources that can help improve their quality of life.

Recently, the Collaborative deployed paid community educators to canvass homes in low-income neighborhoods to provide information on vaccinations. The Collaborative also offered COVID-19 education to the Fair Park community for more than six months and is currently supporting the programming of the vaccine distribution at McAdoo’s church, Abundant Life AME Church, as part of a partnership between the Collaborative, Abundant Life and MCI Diagnostics. (Dr. Michael W. Waters, a Perkins grad, is the church’s pastor.)

“We work with people in the community who need help understanding and navigating through the clinical space at hospitals and need to know how to advocate for themselves,” said McAdoo. “We have caregivers who partner and support their neighbors in navigating the health system. When that happens, we see better outcomes and patients live longer.”

STEPHANIE BOHAN

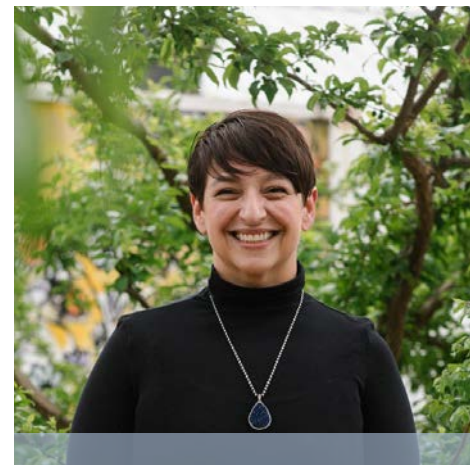
Bonton Farms

Before Bonton Farms was established, access to healthy food in the Bonton neighborhood of Dallas was non-existent. Not surprisingly, the cardiovascular disease rate there is 54% higher than the rest of Dallas. Incidences of diabetes are 45% higher; cancer is 58% higher.

“So many of the diseases that are more prevalent in South Dallas are related to the lack of healthy food and the lack of access to preventative healthcare,” said Stephanie Bohan, an M.A.M. student at Perkins and Director of Health and Wellness Services at Bonton Farms.

Residents in the Bonton area also struggle with factors such as past incarcerations, poverty, underemployment and unemployment and lack of health insurance, all of which inhibit many from seeking health care.

“How do we get people well, rather than just treating disease?” Bohan said. “By offering easy-to-access preventive medicine and supportive services that promote wellness. Right now, people here tend to access medical care on an emergency basis. They don’t get routine primary care.”



“We want to empower people to get healthy, so that we can break the cycle that has kept residents of south Dallas sick for so long.”

STEPHANIE BOHAN



“Methodist was created as a healing ministry.”

JULIE YARBROUGH

Bonton Farms will soon build a 10,000-square-foot clinic, which will offer primary medical care provided by Parkland Hospital, as well as some specialty medical care. Bohan joined Bonton Farms recently, after ten years serving as executive director of the Agape Clinic, a free medical clinic in East Dallas.

“We hope the Bonton Farms Health & Wellness Center will become the medical home for our residents as well as a place where they come for exercise, nutrition, cooking classes and other educational programming that promotes health and wellness. We want to empower people to get healthy, so that we can break the cycle that has kept residents of south Dallas sick for so long.”

Bohan adds that her Perkins education — and in particular, the classes she has taken with Dr. Hal Recinos — are helping her better serve the mostly Black and Latino clients at Bonton Farms.

“His classes are teaching me cultural awareness, diversity and competence,” she said. “It’s helping me to meet people where they are, to understand them, honor them and give them their agency in their health decisions. Each culture views health and wellness differently. We strive to respect the cultural emphases of each patient’s beliefs, values and spirituality as they relate to their illness and treatment.”

JULIE YARBROUGH

Serving the Underserved

In 1921, a men’s Sunday school class at First United Methodist Church in Dallas identified an urgent need for medical care for people in Dallas’s southern sector. On Christmas eve in 1927, Methodist Dallas Hospital in Oak Cliff opened its doors.

Today, the not-for-profit Methodist Health System continues to offer compassionate quality healthcare. In 2020, Methodist spent some \$180 million of its net patient revenue on charity and uncompensated care to provide healthcare services to the underinsured and uninsured patient population in the southern sector of Dallas County.

Julie Yarbrough, a member of the Perkins Executive Board, is immediate past chair of the Board of Methodist Health System and has served on this fiduciary board for 13 years.

“Methodist was created as a healing ministry,” Yarbrough said. “From humble beginnings, Methodist Health System has become one of the leading healthcare providers in the North Texas area.”

She is especially proud of the system’s response to COVID-19.

“People in the southern sector of Dallas have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 because of preexisting healthcare conditions and large numbers of family members in the same households,” she said. “From the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the response of Methodist Health System has been collaborative, compassionate and mission-focused in order to save lives and keep patients and staff safe. The vaccine clinic at Methodist Dallas has administered almost 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine.”

Yarbrough also ministers to those who grieve as author of a series of books on grief. She was motivated to write about grief after the 2004 death of her husband, the Rev. Leighton Farrell (M.Th. 1953), a United Methodist minister for over 50 years, and the death of her father eight months later.

“When Leighton died, I felt that something good must come out of his tragic and untimely death,” she said. “The only way this seemed possible was to write about the pain and suffering of this enormous loss to my life and find a way to share in the experience of grief with others.”

Yarbrough hopes her most recent book, *Present Comfort: Meditations on Modern Loss and Grief* (Invite Press, April 2021) will speak to readers following the extraordinary losses and upheavals that have affected so many in 2020, due to COVID-19, racial reckoning and natural disasters.



“I’ve always wanted to walk with others, to affirm them that they are not by themselves. Not to rescue them, but to sit with them and to be a resource.”

WILLACIN PRECIOUS GHOSTON

“In writing about grief, especially in the context of our current culture, I seek to meet those who grieve where they are emotionally and spiritually by offering comfort, encouragement and hope,” she said.

WILLACIN PRECIOUS GHOLSTON

Called to Serve

In 2003, the Rev. Willacin Precious Gholston traveled to Botswana to serve at an AME mission. At the time, Botswana had the highest number of AIDS infections in the world, with one in three people infected. Daily, she witnessed people succumbing to the dreaded disease.

“I had people literally dying in my arms of AIDS,” she said. “While I was equipped to run the administrative side of the mission, I left the mission field desiring to acquire ministry training for how to be with people who are sick, suffering and dying.”

Gholston’s experiences in global missions put her on a path that brought her to Perkins, where she earned a M.Div. in 2009, ultimately leading to her current position as manager of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Programs at Methodist Health System in Dallas. She ministers to patients as a chaplain and leads the training and education for chaplain students in the hospital system.

“I’ve always wanted to walk with others, to affirm them that they are not by themselves,” she said. “Not to rescue them, but to sit with them and to be a resource.”

An ordained elder in the AME Church, Gholston proudly notes that no one on the chaplain staff at Methodist Charlton Medical Center contracted COVID-19 during the pandemic. Through a partnership with a local nonprofit, Gholston was able to obtain PPE for her staff independently, keeping them safe without taking away from the medical staff.

Gholston first learned about CPE certification in a course taught by Dr. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner at Perkins.

“I was sitting in Jeanne’s class and realized, ‘This is exactly the type of training that I want and need,’” she said. “I knew I wanted to minister to the sick, the suffering and the dying.”

COURTNEY WEBB

Connecting with Children

Courtney Webb (M.Div. 2017) was drawn to the chaplaincy in college, when she got to know the chaplain at her great-grandmother’s nursing home.

“Chaplain Ralph was incredibly kind and understanding,” she said. “I didn’t know it was a job before meeting him.”

Today, Webb is an ordained deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and a staff chaplain at Children’s Memorial Hermann hospital in Houston, providing spiritual care in the ER, the pediatric and neonatal ICUs, labor and delivery and pediatrics, and for hospital staff.

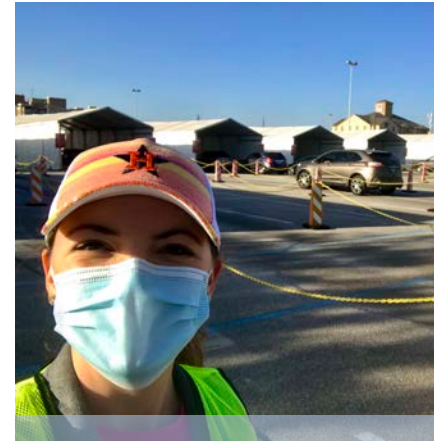
For Webb, it’s a dream job.

“It’s amazing to get paid to be with people who just need someone to listen or support them during challenging times in their life.”

Her special passion is for teens with behavioral and mental health issues.

“A lot of my job is just being with kids going through difficult things, who need to be able to talk about it,” she said. “I try to create a space for them to express themselves through play.”

She uses a church-based curriculum called Godly Play, which incorporates Bible stories like the parables of the mustard seed and the good shepherd.



“A lot of my job is just being with kids going through difficult things, who need to be able to talk about it. I try to create a space for them to express themselves through play.”

COURTNEY WEBB



“Over the pandemic, we developed a strong relationship with our neighbors and we want them protected.”

GEOFFREY MOORE



Hamilton Park UMC served as a vaccination hub. Pictured: Sheron Patterson (right) and her husband Robert Patterson.

Sometimes she works with Holy Listening Stones, a set of 28 symbols that help spark conversations with young patients.

“We get to use all these different ways to be with kids, to give them a safe space and a way to find emotional and spiritual and physical healing,” she said.

Her job also involves hospitality — shepherding parents and family members during traumas and medical emergencies. “

“Sometimes I’m helping the parents find where they’re going, or helping them call other family members or just bringing a cup of water,” she said. “It’s being with them during that initial shock.”

PRACTICING PARISH MEDICINE

While chaplains worked the front lines, many Perkins grads in parish ministry also worked to help protect the health of their communities. Many pivoted quickly to support COVID-19 testing locations, and later, as vaccination hubs.

Hamilton Park United Methodist Church in Dallas

hosted COVID-19 testing in the summer of 2020, and this spring, offered its parking lot as a vaccination hub.

“Over the pandemic we developed a strong relationship with our neighbors and we want them protected,” said Dr. Sheron Patterson (M.T.S. 1983, M.Div. 1989, D.Min. 1996). “We spent the summer as a COVID-19 testing site. It was imperative that Black and Brown communities be tested. So it was only natural that we offer the COVID-19 vaccine. Also there is a hesitancy about the vaccine in our community and the church is a trusted voice.”

St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church in Mesquite, Texas, helped replenish the Red Cross’ critically low supply of blood, starting in March 2020.

“We wanted to not only serve our congregation during this time but also to respond to the pandemic itself — to help support the public health effort and public health officials who were working to turn the tide,” said Dr. Geoffrey Moore (M.M. 2003, M.Div. 2010, Ph.D. 2020), the church’s lead pastor.

Brian Moeschler, a member of the church and a regional donor services executive with the American Red Cross Blood Services, alerted the church to the need. Sponsors of blood drives that had been scheduled for months were canceling, and the country was within days of running out of blood.

“All we needed to do was open our doors and provide space,” Moore said. “Of course, space was something we had in abundance. Our building was eerily silent and empty.”

The American Red Cross provided the staffing and followed protocols to ensure the safety of donors and volunteers. The first few drives were held in classrooms, but as the need grew, the church moved the drives to the sanctuary.

“Like the community that prayed there every week to become ‘the body of Christ for the world, redeemed by his blood,’ this community, too — or, perhaps, more literally — would be providing redeeming blood for a world in need,” Moore said.

Over the course of the last 16 months, the congregation of 150 people has hosted 31 drives and collected more than 900 units of blood, impacting more than 2,700 people.

“And more importantly, more than 900 people from the community around us — people who would never had known who we were — have come forward as donors to partner with us in this effort,” Moore said.