



E-Newsletter JULY 2026

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**A Steadfast Hope in
Challenging Times**



Faculty/Staff News

Dr. Vergel L. Lattimore

There are seasons when the headlines feel especially heavy. News of violence, acts of hatred, and renewed debates over fundamental rights can leave many feeling discouraged, anxious, or weary. While these experiences do not affect every member of our community in the same way, they remind us that we are deeply connected to one another.

As a seminary community, we are called to be people who seek understanding before judgment, compassion before division, and hope even in difficult circumstances. We acknowledge that members of our community bring different life experiences, perspectives, and concerns. We also affirm that every person is created with inherent dignity and deserves to be treated with respect and justice.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Those words invite us not to assume we all carry the same burdens, but to cultivate the kind of community that listens, learns, and stands with one another in love.

In moments like these, our shared work is not simply to react to the news, but to continue forming leaders who are grounded in faith, committed to truth, and equipped to serve a world in need of healing. Every act of kindness, every thoughtful conversation, every pursuit of justice, and every commitment to reconciliation helps build the beloved community we seek.

May we continue to be a place where every person is welcomed, every voice is heard with respect, and hope is nurtured even in uncertain times. Together, we can bear one another's burdens and move forward with courage, humility, and grace.



Dr. Vergel Lattimore, President and Professor of Hood Theological Seminary, will engage with the community in the following activities:

Dr. Lattimore was the Military Speaker for the 250th Celebration, City of Harrisburg, NC (7/3/26)

He attended a Chaplain Endorser's Webinar sponsored by the National Conference on Ministry to Armed Forces (NCMAF) (7/8/26)

Preach at Greenville Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, Charlotte, NC

Dr. Lattimore will attend the Board of Bishops/Connectional Council meeting and the Commission of Chaplaincy Retreat, Greenville, SC (7/16-7/17/26)

FaithLearnThrive News



July: National Ice Cream Month

Scoop Up Some Summer Joy: Celebrating National Ice Cream Month

July is one of the warmest months of the year, bringing bright sunshine, family vacations, neighborhood cookouts, and long summer evenings. It's no surprise that July is also recognized as **National Ice Cream Month**, the perfect time to enjoy a cool, sweet treat while making lasting memories with the people we love.

Whether your favorite flavor is classic vanilla, delicious chocolate, fruity strawberry, or something with lots of toppings and surprises, ice cream has a unique way of bringing people together. It reminds us that joy is often found in life's simplest moments, a shared cone with a grandchild, laughter over melting sundaes, or an evening stroll with family after dinner.

As followers of Christ, these moments of simple joy can also remind us of God's goodness. **James 1:17** tells us, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights."* While ice cream may seem like a small pleasure, it can serve as a gentle reminder that God delights in blessing us—not only through life's major milestones but also through the everyday moments that refresh our bodies, lift our spirits, and strengthen our relationships.

Summer is often a busy season filled with activities and commitments. National Ice Cream Month offers us an invitation to slow down, savor the present, and spend meaningful time with those God has placed in our lives. Consider gathering friends, family, or neighbors for an ice cream social. Create a toppings bar with fresh fruit, nuts, chocolate syrup, whipped cream, and colorful sprinkles, and enjoy an afternoon of fellowship and laughter. Sometimes ministry happens around a kitchen table just as beautifully as it does in a sanctuary.



Flipping the Switch: Reimagining the Summer Season in Ministry

By Apostle Myra Bellinger, MSW

For many churches, summer brings a familiar challenge: lower attendance, fluctuating giving, and disrupted routines. Yet perhaps summer is not a season to survive, but a season to steward.

Rather than viewing these months as a setback, ministry leaders can embrace summer as an opportunity for creativity, connection, and renewal. This may be the perfect time to strengthen discipleship through small groups, create intergenerational fellowship opportunities, engage the community through outreach initiatives, and invest in leadership development.

Summer also reminds us of the importance of rest. Healthy leaders build healthy churches, and seasons of renewal are essential for sustained ministry.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV) reminds us, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."* Wise leaders discern the season they are in and steward it well.

This summer, let's flip the switch and view the season not as a slump, but as an opportunity for ministry momentum.

As you enjoy the sweetness of July, remember that the greatest refreshment comes from the One who renews our hearts. Just as a cool scoop of ice cream provides relief from the summer heat, God's grace refreshes our souls every day. May this season encourage you to pause, give thanks for His many blessings, and share His love through simple acts of kindness and hospitality.

So, whether you enjoy your ice cream in a cone, a cup, or piled high in a sundae, take a moment to thank God for His abundant goodness. May your July be filled with refreshing treats, joyful fellowship, and the sweet reminder that God's blessings are all around us.

Happy National Ice Cream Month—and don't forget the sprinkles!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

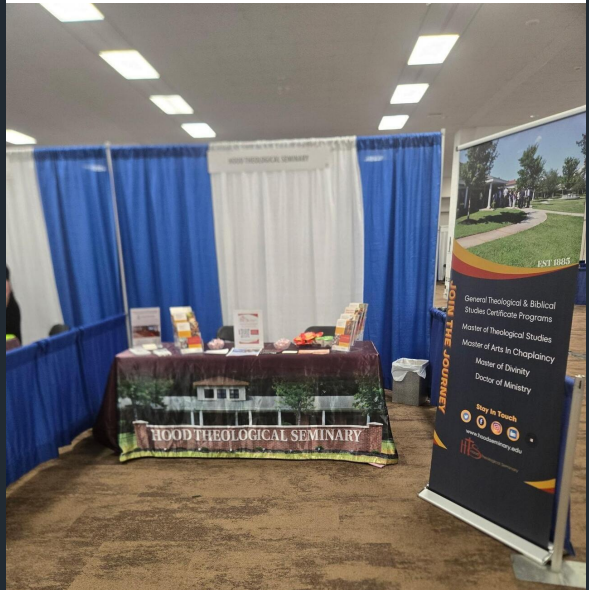
To all our Faculty, Staff, Alumni & Donors - A JUBILANT July Birthday with many more to come!

SEEKING PASTOR



HOODEMPOWERS

We Empower Rural and Small-Town Churches



The Institute for Rural & Small-Town Ministry & Leadership has been busy, and we are excited to share with you what we've been up to. Reverend Wilder and I attended the Global Methodist Conference in Winston Salem on June 17th and 18th. The event was very nice, and we met lots of other vendors. It was fun to meet a lot of Hood Theological Seminary Alumni, who stopped by our booth to just say "Hi"!

Our review board met on June 29th and 30th to review the 50 grant applications we received for 2026. We will be giving out checks to our grant recipients in person during our second quarter workshop on July 18th. The people who submitted the applications worked hard, and we are excited about the recipients! Our review board is amazing, and they managed to review all fifty applications in two days.

Our second quarter workshop will be held on July 18th in the Aymer center on campus. We are excited to welcome back our existing participants and are excited to welcome the new grant recipients for 2026. Together, we can make positive changes that will impact the future long after we are gone.

Pastoral Opportunity for Hood Theological Seminary Alumni

Pastoral Position Available – Tucker's Grove Church

Tucker's Grove Church is prayerfully seeking the pastor God has called to lead its congregation. As of **July 8**, the Church Council officially appointed a **Pastoral Search Committee** to begin the search process.

Individuals who feel led to apply are invited to submit their pastoral application materials to:

Tucker's Grove Church Pastoral Search Committee

5982 Tucker's Grove Church Road
Iron Station, NC 28080

This opportunity has been shared with Hood Theological Seminary through **Vanessa Ross** of the Pastoral Search Committee, and we are pleased to make it available to our alumni and ministry network.

Please join us in praying for Tucker's Grove Church, its Pastoral Search Committee, and for the pastor whom God is preparing to shepherd this congregation.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." — Matthew 9:37–38

New Calvary Church

New Calvary Church is prayerfully seeking qualified candidates to serve as its next Pastor. The congregation is looking for an experienced, spiritually grounded leader who is committed to biblical teaching, faithful shepherding, and meeting the spiritual needs of the church community.

The most exciting thing going on at The Institute for Rural & Small-Town Ministry & Leadership is that we now have a third member on our team.

Welcome, Rev. Francis King. We are excited to have you on board!

Remember to check out our website: hoodempowers.org, to see the Monthly Spotlights. This will show you how the churches and ministries are benefiting from the grants they have received.





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The Tribe of R.U.T.H. Retreat is Returning!

There is something extraordinary that happens when women answer God's call—and something even more powerful when they gather to encourage one

Ideal candidates will demonstrate sound theological understanding, strong leadership skills, and a passion for preaching and teaching God's Word with clarity, conviction, and compassion.

Interested applicants are invited to submit a current résumé for consideration to:

New Calvary Church Pulpit Search Committee

P.O. Box 1562
Durham, NC 27702

Please submit all application materials by mail.

Planned Giving



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The **Center for Bold Leadership** is excited to announce the return of the **Tribe of R.U.T.H. Retreat**, an inspiring experience designed to nurture, equip, and empower women faithfully serving in ministry and leadership. More than a retreat, Tribe of R.U.T.H. is a sacred space where women can pause, be renewed, and reconnect with both their calling and one another.

Inspired by the biblical story of Ruth, whose courage, faithfulness, and unwavering trust in God changed the course of history, this retreat celebrates women who continue to answer God's call with boldness and grace. Like Ruth, today's women in ministry often navigate unique challenges while remaining committed to serving God's people. This retreat reminds us that we were never meant to walk that journey alone.

Participants can look forward to a day filled with meaningful worship, engaging conversations, practical leadership development, spiritual encouragement, and authentic fellowship. Whether you are clergy or laity, a seasoned leader or just beginning to discern God's call on your life, the Tribe of R.U.T.H. offers opportunities to grow, be refreshed, and build lasting relationships with women who understand the joys and realities of ministry.

As Scripture reminds us, **"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay...your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16)**. Ruth's words continue to inspire a community of women committed to walking alongside one another in faith, purpose, and service.

Mark your calendars now and watch for additional details, including registration information, speakers, and the full retreat schedule. We invite you to come expecting renewal, encouragement, and a fresh reminder that God continues to call, strengthen, and equip women to lead with courage and compassion.

The journey is always richer when we



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- ~ Do you have an IRA?
- ~ Are you at least 70 1/2 years of age?
- ~ Would you like to help HTS in its mission to prepare women and men for bold and creative leadership for the Christian church for a diverse world?

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Tribe of R.U.T.H. Retreat!

For more information, readers can visit [The Center for Bold Leadership](#).

The Dates for the Tribe of RUTH Retreat are August 28 and 29th. To purchase tickets, the link is:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/tribe-of-ruth--2026>

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jeverett@hoodseminary.edu

Visit our [Planned Giving](#) website for lots of helpful information.



In Memoriam

We hold in prayer all within our community who are grieving the loss of loved ones. Grief is a sacred and complex journey, and there is no fixed timeline for sorrow or healing. In moments of loss, may you know that you are not alone and that your pain is seen and honored.

As a community of faith, we remain committed to walking alongside you with compassion, patience, and care. May the presence of God bring comfort in the midst of sorrow, and may hope quietly emerge as a sustaining gift, even in the hardest days.

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