

Rebecca F. Spurrier
Columbia Theological Seminary
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Columbia Theological Seminary

Associate Dean for Worship Life and Assistant Professor of Worship,
2016 – Present

EDUCATION

Emory University, Graduate Division of Religion

Ph.D., Theological Studies, 2016

Dissertation: *Works of Love: Beauty and Fragility in a Community of Difference*

Emory University, Candler School of Theology

M.Div., 2009

Calvin College

B.A., English Literature, 1996

BOOKS

The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship, Fordham University Press, 2019

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

“Many Ways to Pray: Consenting to Shared Space as Worship” *Call to Worship* (forthcoming)

“Unlearning Ableism in Worship” in *Vision* (forthcoming)

“Dis/abling Liturgical Theology,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Liturgical Theology*, ed. Porter Taylor and Khalia J. Williams (Wiley Blackwell Publishing, forthcoming)

“Captivated by the Normate and Summoned by the Holy Many: A Conversion Story” in *Ecclesial Practices Journal*, August 14, 2024

“Disability, Human Difference, and the Sacramentality of Access,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Sacraments and Sacramentality*, ed. James Farwell and Martha Moore-Keish (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022)

“On Ramps,” in “Symposium on *Transgressive Devotions* by Natalie Wigg-Stevenson,” ed. Ben Menghini, *Syndicate*, Feb. 20, 2023, <https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/transgressive-devotion/#on-ramps>.

“Worship and Disability,” in *A Worship Workbook: A Practical Guide for Extraordinary Liturgy*, Gerald C. Liu & Khalia J. Williams (Abingdon Press, 2021)

“For What and for Whom Do You Pray?: Coercion, Consent, and the Healing of Ableism,” *The Yale ISM Review* 5, no.1 (2019)

“Worship as Intervention?: Breaking Silence on World Suicide Prevention Day,” *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (2019)

“Unfolding Space: Human Difference in Common Worship,” *Call to Worship* 51, no. 3 (2018)

“Remembering the Neighborhood: Church, Disability, and Religious Memory,” *Religions* 8 no. 10 (2017)

“Disabling Eschatology: Time for the Table of Our Common Pleasure,” *Liturgy* 31, no. 3 (2016)

“Presences and Absences: An Introduction to ‘Engaging Religious Experience: A Return to Ethnography and Theology,’” *Practical Matters*, no. 6 (2013), with Susannah Laramee Kidd

BOOK REVIEWS AND ESSAYS

“Review of *Autism and Worship*, by Armand Léon van Ommen,” *Interpretation* (forthcoming)

“Advent Dreams of a Dis/abled Future,” *Columbia Connections* (blog), December 3, 2021, <https://www.ctsnet.edu/advent-dreams-of-a-dis-abled-future/>

“God with Us: Why Do We Worship God Together?” *Vantage* (Fall 2019)

“Review of *The Holy No: Worship as a Subversive Act*, by Adam Hearlson,” *Homiletic* 43, no. 2 (2018)

“Review of *Fieldwork in Theology: Exploring the Social Context of God’s Work in the World*, by Christian Scharen,” *Practical Matters* (2017), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/?p=3295>

“Review of *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge*, by Natalie Wigg-Stevenson,” *Interpretation* 70, no. 4 (2016)

“The Disabled Church: Desiring Difference within Congregational Life,” *Studying Congregations* (blog), August 19, 2015, <http://studyingcongregations.org/blog/the-disabled-church>

LECTURES AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Moved by the God of Moses’s Mouth,” Sermon and Forum Presentation, Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN, July 2024

“Disability Wisdom in Worship and Prayer: Themes and Questions from Disabled Christians,” Workshop Presentation, Institute on Theology and Disability, Boston, MA June 2024

“Good News for the Whole Creation in an Age of Earth Crisis,” co-led presentation with Dr. Musa Dube, Christian Leadership for a Climate Changed World Conference, St. Simon’s, GA, January 2024

“The Disabled God Is God With Us: Experiments in Liturgical Formation,” North American Academy of Liturgy, Seattle, WA, January 2024

“Whose Bodies? What Technologies?: Cocreating Access as Worship,” Caldwell Lecture, Louisville Seminary, Louisville, KY, November 2023

“Disability Centering Worship and Prayer as Spiritual Practice” Keynote Plenary Address and Worship Leader, Institute on Theology and Disability, Waco, TX, June 2023

“We Can Do All Things: Practicing Anti-Ableism in Worship” Schmiechen Lecture, Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, October 2021

“Twenty-Five Years after ‘The Disabled God’: Confronting Ableism, Transforming Religious Symbols,” Summer Institute on Theology and Disability, Holland, MI, May 2019

“Disability Justice, Theology, and Christian Worship,” Korean Presbyterian Lay Education Institute, Columbia Seminary, Decatur, GA, October 2019, 2023

“Worship as Intervention?: Breaking Silence on World Suicide Prevention Day,” North American Academy of Liturgy, Denver, CO, January 2019

“Naming: Aesthetics of Healing and Claiming,” North American Academy of Liturgy, Vancouver, BC, January 2018

“Desiring (Disability) Justice in Worship,” Just Worship Conference, Center for Lifelong Learning at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, September 2018

“The Mouth of a Labyrinth: Beauty, Theology, and Disability Justice,” Summer Institute on Theology and Disability, Azusa, CA, June 2017

“Take My Hand: The Reading and Touching of Common Prayer,” American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, GA, November 2015

“The Disabled Church: Arts of Naming Human and Divine Presence,” Society for Disability Studies, Atlanta, GA, June 2015

“The Artworks of a Disabled Church: A Frame for Difference within Common Prayer,” Summer Institute on Theology and Disability, Atlanta, GA, May 2015

“Touching the Distant Other: Revisiting Spivak’s ‘Harlem,’ Recalling Absalom Jones,” North American Academy of Liturgy, Minneapolis, MN, January 2015

“Artistries of Difference: Disrupting Ritual, Disabling Liturgy,” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 2014

“From Funky Fingernails to Faith Claims: Beauty and the Works of Disability,” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 2014

“Arts of Becoming Church: Disrupting and Weaving Bodies through Difference,” International Conference on Religion, Illness, and Disability, Stavanger, Norway, May 2014

“Disregarding Charity, Desiring Difference: Disabling the Works of the People,” “Theological Research and the Church,” Graduate Conference-Workshop, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, March 2014

“Hiding and Holding Community: The Poetics of Seeking Real Presence,” North American Academy of Liturgy, Albuquerque, NM, January 2013

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

“Building Bridges to Belonging,” Expert Panelist/Consultant, Baylor University, 2024

“Disability and the Church: Human Difference and Practicing Christian Community (Book panel on Spurrier’s *The Disabled Church* and Barton’s *Becoming the Baptized Body*), Respondent, American Academy of Religion, 2022

“Practicing Hope in Catastrophic Times,” Presider, American Academy of Religion, 2022

“Ethnography, Embodiment, and Virtual Worship,” Presider, American Academy of Religion, 2021

“Prayers in Defiance of Empire: Book Panel on Cláudio Carvalhaes’s *Liturgies from Below*,” Presider, American Academy of Religion, 2021

“Liturgy and Interdisciplinary Methods,” Panel Presentation at Emerging Scholars Meeting, North American Academy of Liturgy, Denver, CO, January 2019

Panel on Disability and the Church, Panelist, Candler School of Theology, 2016

COURSES

“Introduction to Christian Worship,” Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2024

“Christian Worship, Human Difference, and Divine Justice,” Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2018, 2022, 2023

“Sacred Space, Time, and Liturgical Imagination,” Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2017, 2023

“Introduction to Practical Theology,” Co-Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2020, 2023

“Imagination and Resilience for God’s Changing World,” Co-Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2021

“Cuba Explorations” (Immersion Course), Co-Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2020

“Disability and the Church,” Instructor, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2019

“Christian Systematic Theology,” Instructor, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, 2015

“Religious Ritual, the Body, and Disability,” Instructor, Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Emory University, 2014

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Academy of Religion
North American Academy of Liturgy

SERVICE

Friendship Center Board Member, Holy Comforter Church, 2019–2024
Co-Chair, Ecclesial Practices Group of the AAR, 2022–2024
EDI Committee, North American Academy of Liturgy, 2022–2024
Committee Member, Status of Person with Disabilities in the Profession at AAR, 2019–2023
Membership Committee, North American Academy of Liturgy, 2019–2022
Steering Group Member, Ecclesial Practices Group of the AAR, 2019–2021
Spiritual Life Committee Member, L’Arche Atlanta, 2015–2021
Local Planning Committee, North American Academy of Liturgy Annual Meeting, 2019
Consultant, The Louisville Institute, Spring 2017

GRANTS

Teacher-Scholar Grant, Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, 2020–2021
(\$18,000 award for collaborative research to support a worship resource that addresses ableist images and language in worship.)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Dissertation Fellowship, The Louisville Institute, 2015
Academic Excellence Award, Candler School of Theology, 2009
Hoyt L. Hickman Award for Liturgical Scholarship and Practice, 2009
Ministry Fellow, Fund for Theological Education, 2007
Robert W. Woodruff Fellowship, Candler School of Theology, 2006–2009

EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

Practical Matters (www.practicalmattersjournal.org)
Issue Co-Editor, “Engaging Religious Experience: A Return to Ethnography and Theology,” 2012–2013

ADDITIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Jones Program in Ethics, Emory University
Graduate Workshop Co-Facilitator with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Access as Ethical Path to Diversity,” 2015

Youth Theological Initiative
Instructor, “Divine Love, Disability, and Beautiful Bodies,” 2012

Donetsk Christian University (Ukraine)

Instructor, “English as a Foreign Language for Theology Students,” 1997-2000

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Acting Director of Student Life and Spiritual Formation, 2009-2010

Interim Director of International Initiatives, 2010

Office of Worship staff, 2006-2009

Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship/Atlanta Mennonite Church

Interim Pastor, 2009

Elder, 2009-2011; Leadership Council, 2023

Worship Committee Chair, 2008-2011, 2021-2023

Worship Committee Member and Worship Leader, 2007-2023

Institute for Cultural Partnerships

Program Manager, 2007-2009

Mennonite Central Committee

Community Building Partner in Zaporozhye, Ukraine, 2001-2004