



DUKE
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CELEBRATES



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April 17, 2023

Dear Divinity School Community,

On behalf of the entire Duke University community, I want to express our gratitude for the Office of Black Church Studies as we celebrate its 50th anniversary.

The Divinity School and Office of Black Church Studies have a proud history of advancing racial equity at Duke. The alumni honored today inspired Duke University to pursue a more equitable and just campus where all community members can thrive. Through its support for students and faculty, lectures, experiential learning opportunities, and interdisciplinary partnerships, OBCS has played an integral role in building a vibrant and inclusive Duke community.

Thank you to all the students, faculty, staff, pastors, churches, advocates, stakeholders, and partners who have supported the Office of Black Church Studies. We celebrate with you the extraordinary achievements of the past 50 years and look forward to OBCS' continued success in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Vincent Price
President, Duke University





Edgardo Colón-Emeric
Dean of the Divinity School and
Irene and William McCutchen Professor
of Reconciliation and Theology

April 17, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for joining us to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School. Founded in 1972 as the Office of Black Church Affairs, OBCS has been forming leaders for service in, to, and through the church for half a century and is one of the earliest Black Church offices among all U.S. theological schools.

OBCS hosts world-renowned preachers and lecturers, provides formation and pastoral care for students, and is leading efforts to develop, preserve, and share the resources from the Black Church for the whole church. I believe that the teaching that has come to us from its directors, professors, staff, students and churches has been invaluable in advancing the academic excellence and ecclesial relevance of the Divinity School.

We are grateful for you and for all those who make the work of the Office of Black Church Studies possible through your gifts to support scholarships and the Bethea Fund. The path is long and there is more work to be done but “we’ve come so far by faith.” We covet your continued prayers and support that will allow OBCS to “keep keeping on.”

I find it significant that the celebration of this semi-centennial coincides with the great 50 days of Easter. The Easter Jubilee offers a glimpse of a world where the risen Christ and the power of the Spirit are at work in Christian community. The OBCS Jubilee plays a similar role in the DDS community. In this celebration, history and hallelujahs resound in harmony. The great company of OBCS scholars, staff, students, supporters, and sojourners is a host of witnesses to the Easter surprise. The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

Paz y bien,

Edgardo Colón-Emeric
Dean of the Divinity School
Irene and William McCutchen Professor of Reconciliation and Theology





4/17/2023

Dear Friends of the Office of Black Church Studies:

I extend my deepest gratitude to all who have supported the Office of Black Church Studies (OBCS) over the past 50 years. We have indeed 'come this far by faith' and know that we stand on the shoulders of greatness as we continue to carry the mantle passed onto us by the anointed men and women who paved the way and shined a light along the path of excellence.

Today, we honor the legacy created by the African American alumni who were trailblazers and pillars for OBCS. Together, the Duke University Divinity School family celebrates the blessing OBCS has been to the church, community, academy, and world during the past 50 years. We remain committed to being a thoroughfare to the theological life of the School and intellectual work of the University.

We embark on the next 50 years with great expectations of continued excellence in theological education, vocational formation, research, publishing, and transforming experiences for our students, colleagues, alumni, congregations, and global partners. Thank you for your continued support as we look forward to all that God has in store for OBCS in our service "from the Black Church for the Whole Church."

We are grateful and rejoice in the marvelous blessings celebrated during this momentous occasion. To God Be the Glory!

Sincerely,

Regina A. Graham

Regina A. Graham



THE JOSEPH B. BETHEA FUND



This endowment is established to honor Bishop Joseph B. Bethea and give thanks for his life and legacy within the Office of Black Church Studies (OBCS) at Duke Divinity School and well beyond. Bishop Bethea was the founding director of the Office of Black Church Studies, serving from 1972 – 1977.

Bishop Bethea is remembered for his friendship and guidance of a generation of men and women who came to Duke Divinity because of Bishop Bethea's confidence in them and a vision he had for their lives. As Rev. Dr. Bill Lee, D'78, recalls, "Joe Bethea laughed his Joe Bethea laugh and after quoting Genesis 5:24, said, "Bill, if you are faithful in your studies, I will walk with you like God walked with Enoch. You are not coming to Duke; you are going through until they call your name on graduation day."

Bethea was instrumental in Duke Divinity School becoming the first mainline seminary in the South to require a course in Black Church Studies for graduation for all Master of Divinity students. He went on to become the first African-American elected to the episcopacy by the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.

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