

Womanist Preachers



Rev. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais is a licensed pastor and elder in the United Methodist Church and most recently served as the Associate Pastor of Congregational Care at First United Methodist Church in Lewisville, and was the first African American clergy in that church's 137-year history. Additionally, she has served as the Associate Pastor of Discipleship at the historic St. Luke "Community" United Methodist Church in Dallas, and as the Associate Pastor at The Woods United Methodist Church in Grand Prairie. A 2013 Magna Cum Laude graduate of Perkins School of Theology at SMU, Yvette earned a Master's of Theological Studies degree with a concentration in Church History. Yvette is a native of Dallas and has more than 25 years of experience in media, corporate communications, public relations and non-profit, including receiving a congressional appointment to serve as the Public Relations Specialist at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Yvette also holds a BA in Journalism from the University of North Texas, is a published author and has edited several books. Look for her forthcoming book, *Being Ruth: Pressing Through Life's Struggles*, later this spring. She and her husband, the Rev. Carl Lavallais, live in Dallas.



Rev. Dr. Valda Jean Combs is many things, but social justice is her calling. Her activism in the wake of the deaths of African-Americans at the hands of police; on behalf of reproductive justice for women and responsible sex education, and as an ally for LGBTQ people is proof of a wide-ranging appreciation for the dignity of every member of the beloved community. A history maker, Combs is the first African-American elected as County Attorney in the United States of America. Ordained a Baptist minister, Combs is an itinerant preacher and associate minister at Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, TX; a member of JustTexas, Faith Voices for Reproductive Justice, and a practicing attorney. Valda is also a coach to female clergywomen and author of the blog, Notes from a Nappyheaded Woman. She holds the doctorate in law from the South Texas College of Law; earned the Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, and a B.A. in psychology from University of Houston. Combs is the mother of one daughter, Alexandria Jean Combs-Morgan and a breast cancer survivor, Combs states, "I plan to continue preaching, advocating, and making trouble until God calls me home."



Rev. Cherisna Jean-Marie is a Haitian-American born and raised in Newark, NJ to the parents of Joseph (deceased) and Grace Jean-Marie. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Communications from Kean University in Union, NJ. After five years in Higher Education, Rev. Cherisna answered her call to ministry and matriculated into Vanderbilt Divinity School as a second career student. In 2010, Rev. Cherisna completed her Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt Divinity School. During commencement, she was awarded the coveted Florence Conwell Prize for outstanding preaching. She is known as an authentic and passionate preacher and teacher of God's Word. In 2012 she was ordained into the Christian ministry by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at New Covenant Christian Church in Nashville, TN where she served as an Associate Minister. She completed her Chaplaincy work in Atlanta, GA offering up the ministry of pastoral care and counseling to a diverse community of all walks of life and faith traditions. She is a co-contributor for the African-American lectionary, a book project entitled, "These Sistas Can Say it", and Partner Prayers for Advent 2014 with the Bethany Fellows Group (Disciples of Christ). She is a Bethany Fellow (Disciples of Christ) and a member of the National Consortium of Black Women in Ministry- Nashville Branch, and she serves as the Vice President of the Fellowship of Black Disciples Clergywomen. She begins her ministry work at Jarvis Christian College/Church in January 2016 as the College Chaplain and Senior Pastor. Rev. Cherisna is a visionary who possesses tremendous gifts for ministry. She has dedicated her life to building the Kingdom of God.



Rev. Kamilah Hall Sharp is a native of St. Louis, Missouri and currently residing in Desoto, Texas with her spouse Nakia and daughter Anaya. She is currently a Ph.D. student in Biblical Interpretation-Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. Kamilah also holds a B.S. in Business Economics from Florida A&M University, a M.Div. from Memphis Theological Seminary, and a J.D. from Indiana University-Bloomington. She is an ordained minister in the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) and believes she was created to serve others. She is interested in issues of justice that intersect with race, economics, and gender and fair housing.



Lacie Jefferson is a graduate of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. Lacie has served in the nonprofit sector, local parish and as a chaplain to children and their families. Most recently, Lacie has been serving as an educator to a rambunctious and lovable group of seventh graders. Lacie is especially concerned about the spiritual and emotional growth and development of women and children of color, and has devoted the majority of her ministry to these causes.



Leah Jordan is from Fort Worth, Texas and a member of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church where she serves in the youth and young adult education department. Leah received a B.S. in Rehabilitation Studies from the University of North Texas in 2011. She graduated as a Walker Preaching Scholar from Brite Divinity School at TCU in May of 2016 with a Master of Divinity. Jordan is a Supplemental instructor at Tarrant County College. She is currently in pursuit of a Th.M. in History and Theology at Brite Divinity School.



Rev. Dr. Irie L. Session is an ordained clergywoman with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) where she has served as an Associate Area Minister and Sr. Pastor of New Life Christian Church, Rosemont Christian Center, and The Avenue (Warren Avenue Christian Church). She holds an undergraduate degree in Social Work; a Master of Divinity w/concentration in Black Church Studies from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University; and a Doctor of Ministry in Transformative Leadership and Prophetic Preaching from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. This year, Irie celebrates 30 years providing Social Work services and ministry in Dallas. Currently, and for the past fourteen years she's been Resident Pastor and Director of Spiritual Support with New Friends New Life – a Dallas based non-profit that provides comprehensive services to trafficked teen girls and sexually exploited women and their children. Irie has helped hundreds of women and their children overcome backgrounds of abuse, addiction, poverty and limited opportunities. As part of her ministry with NFNL she also oversees women's prison outreach. Dr. Irie is a published author. Her latest publication, *Murdered Souls, Resurrected Lives*, is available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and at Barnes & Noble. In 2014 she was commissioned by JUSTWOMEN Christian Women's Magazine to research and write in their series on, "Women in the Bible Seeking Justice." Dr. Session's contributions were articles on, *The Daughter of Jephthah* in Judges 11 and, *Tamar* in 2nd Samuel 13. She also has an upcoming article in the Spring 2017 issue, *Blessings and Burdens: Ministry with Survivors of CSE (Commercial Sexual Exploitation) and Sex Trafficking*. Currently, Dr. Irie writes a weekly blog RealTalk with Dr. Irie for her website www.dririe.com and live streams RealTalk Bible Study Tuesday evenings at 7:00pmest, on Facebook. Through her gifts of teaching, preaching, and writing, Dr. Irie's raison d'être, is to empower women and dismantle patriarchy. Irie is the single mother of a talented and creative daughter, India Liana.

