



Yale Divinity School



CONVOCATION 2004

Alumni Awards Honorees

A Tip of the Hat to Five Distinguished Alumni

A theologian, an advocate for gay and lesbian rights, a peace activist, a U.S. congresswoman, and a veteran of the civil rights movement were honored with Yale Divinity School distinguished alumni awards during Convocation week Oct. 11-14. Greeting some 135 alumni and friends of YDS at the Alumni Awards Banquet, Angelique K. Walker-Smith, '83 M.Div. and president of the YDS Alumna Board, described the five honorees as representative of "YDS at its best... people making a real difference in the world."

George A. Lindbeck, '46 B.D., '55 Ph.D., Alumni Award for Distinction in Theological Education.

George A. Lindbeck, the Pitkin Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at Yale and mentor to generations of YDS students over a teaching career that spanned more than four decades, was presented with the Alumni Award for Distinction in Theological Education.

Lindbeck, a prominent Lutheran theologian and major player in ecumenical relations, earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 1946 and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Yale University in 1955.

Born in 1923, the son of Lutheran missionaries in China, Lindbeck came to the U.S. when he was 17. He earned his undergraduate degree from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. In presenting the award, Alvord Beardslee, '53 B.D., '55 S.T.M., pointed to Lindbeck's contributions to ecumenical theology as a lasting legacy, calling Lindbeck "a major teacher of major teachers." For his part, Lindbeck told the audience, "There is nothing that moves a teacher more than to have a student say they learned something from them." He cited fellow Yale professors Hans Frei, Paul Holmer and David Kelsey as major influences on his thought.



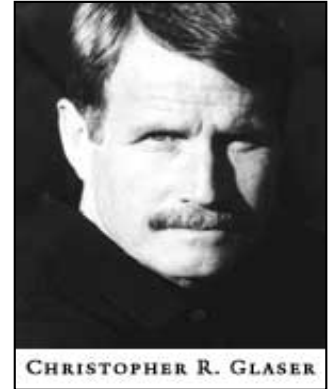
GEORGE A. LINDBECK

From 1951 until 1993, Lindbeck taught at the Divinity School and in the University's Department of Religious Studies. His ecumenical activities included service as a delegated observer of the Lutheran World Federation at the Second Vatican Council. He also was a member of the national and international Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue groups from their beginnings until his retirement from the Lutheran co-chairmanship of the international group in 1987.

He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, a recipient of the Wilbur Cross Medal from the Yale Graduate School Alumni Association, and holds seven honorary doctorates from the U.S. and abroad. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984) and, most recently, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (2002). He lives in West Burke, VT.

Christopher R. Glaser, '77 M.Div., Alumni Award for Distinction in Lay Ministry

Christopher R. Glaser, a prominent advocate of gay and lesbian rights and spiritual leader of Midtown Spiritual Community, an interfaith contemplative community in Atlanta, was presented with the Alumni Award for Distinction in Lay Ministry. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 1977.



CHRISTOPHER R. GLASER

While at YDS, Glaser founded the predecessor group to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Transgender (GLBT) Coalition and, during a campus ministry internship at the University of Pennsylvania in 1976, founded a gay and lesbian peer-counseling program. During his senior year at Yale Divinity School, he began serving on the Task Force to Study Homosexuality of the former United Presbyterian Church as its only openly gay member. Upon graduating in 1977, Glaser served 10 years as founding director of the Lazarus Project, a ministry of reconciliation between the church and the GLBT community located at the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church in California. Glaser helped found, and later led, Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns (now More Light Presbyterians,)

As an openly gay candidate for the ministry, he was denied ordination. Susan Klein, M.Div. '77, who presented the award, said, "Although denied ordination in the Presbyterian Church, Chris continued to serve God by challenging the church to become truly inclusive, and his influence on the church has been profound and revolutionary."

Glaser said, "I look forward to the time when a gay man or lesbian can qualify for the ordained ministry. I look forward to the time when there is not such a big distinction between the lay and ordained ministry,"

Formative influences on him during his years at Yale, Glaser said, included Joan Forsberg, Letty Russell, John Boswell, and Henri Nouwen.

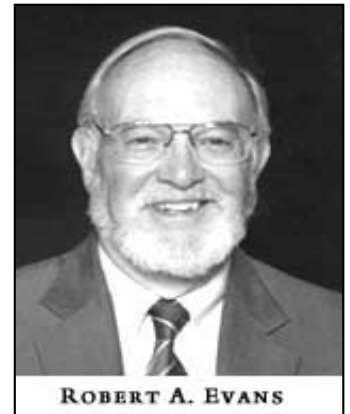
Glaser has published nine books, including *Uncommon Calling*, *Coming Out as Sacrament*, and, most recently, *Henri's Mantle: 100 Meditations on Nouwen's Legacy*.

Robert A. Evans, '59 B.A., '63 M.Div., William Sloane Coffin Award for Peace and Justice.

Robert A. Evans, '59 B.A., '63 M.Div., Executive Director of the Plowshares Institute in Simsbury, CT, was chosen for the William Sloane Coffin Award for Peace and Justice.

The Plowshares Institute seeks to promote a more just and peaceful world community through research and education, service to developing communities, and innovative training in conflict transformation.

As executive director, Evans leads intensive traveling seminars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and conducts national and international seminars on skills training in conflict transformation. He serves as a senior fellow at the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town, South Africa and as senior trainer at the Centre for Empowering for Reconciliation and Peace based in Jakarta, Indonesia.



ROBERT A. EVANS

The William Sloane Coffin Peace and Justice Award honors the long-time Yale chaplain and civil rights activist. In presenting the award to Evans, Allison Stokes, '76 M.Phil, '81 M.Div., '81 Ph.D., said, "In Robert Evans we have a person who embodies the spirit of William Sloan Coffin."

Over the course of his career, Evans has written extensively on peace building and has taught and developed peace skills for community leaders and mediators around the world. His techniques of "conflict transformation" have impacted the peace process from post-apartheid South Africa to the brutal Indonesian resistance to East Timor 's independence, from the slums of Peru to the streets of inner-city Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Hartford.

Evans, who served as an assistant to Coffin as a student, said he was thankful "for the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of

William Sloane Coffin in some minor way.” He offered his own definition of the “axis of evil” concept that has become so much a part of the American political vocabulary of terrorism. The “real” axis of evil, Evans said, includes poverty, war, and environmental degradation.

Evans also studied at the universities of Edinburgh, Berlin, and Basel and received his doctorate from Union Theological Seminary in New York. An ordained Presbyterian pastor, he has served churches in the U.S. and Europe.

Lois Capps, '64 M.A.R., Alumni Award for Distinction in Community Service

U.S. Representative Lois Capps from California's 23rd Congressional District was presented with the Alumni Award for Distinction in Community Service. A nurse by profession, Capps is the founder and co-chair of the House Nursing Caucus and also draws on her extensive healthcare background as co-chair of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition, the House Cancer Caucus, the Congressional Biomedical Research Caucus, the Congressional School Health and Safety Caucus, the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus, and the House Democratic Task Force on Health.



LOIS CAPPS

Capps was born in Ladysmith, WI in 1938. After graduating with honors from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, she worked as a nursing instructor in Portland, OR. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Religion from Yale Divinity School in 1964 while working as head nurse at Yale-New Haven Hospital. She has received honorary doctorates from Pacific Lutheran University and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

She was sworn in as a freshman member of the 105th Congress in 1998, succeeding her late husband, Congressman Walter Capps, in California's 22nd District. Since January 2003, she has served as representative of the newly drawn 23rd District.

Capps was unable to attend the banquet, as she was involved in an election-year debate in Santa Barbara. But in a letter read at the ceremony by presenter Javier Viera, '98 S.T.M., she said, “Growing up in a pasonage predisposed me toward a life of public service. And becoming a public health nurse allowed me to focus on my community, as did my long marriage to Walter, a Yale-trained professor of religious studies and my predecessor in Congress. What I didn't count on was the way my education here and my own life experiences would prepare me to be a U.S. Representative. I draw upon YDS resources every day.”

In his own remarks, Viera called Capps “a voice of reason and passion in the U.S. Congress;” a staunch advocate for improved education, health and the environment; and one of “only a handful of” congressional leaders actively working for peace and reconciliation among Palestinians and Israelis.

Robert E. Seymour, Jr., '48 B.D., Alumni Award for Distinction in Ordained Ministry

Robert E. Seymour, Jr., '48 B.D., pastor emeritus at Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, NC, received the Alumni Award for Distinction in Ordained Ministry. Delois M. Brown-Daniels, '80 M.Div., presented the award, hailing Seymour as “a champion of social justice” who helped found an interracial congregation “that challenged racial segregation.” Seymour became Binkley Memorial's first pastor after serving churches in Warrenton and Mars Hill, NC.



ROBERT E. SEYMOUR, JR

During Seymour's 30 years at Binkley Memorial, it was a congregation on the front lines in the battle over integration and participation of women in Baptist churches. Seymour's ministry was not only prominent in the civil rights struggles of the 50's and 60's. He raised a prophetic voice of resistance during the Vietnam years. All the while, he was seen as a compassionate and vocal advocate on behalf of the aged and the poor. Dean Smith, the prominent basketball coach emeritus at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and a parishioner of Binkley Memorial, once said of Seymour, “Bob was brilliant in communicating his intelligent thoughts from the pulpit... I was nurtured by the ministry of Bob Seymour for 30 years.”

At the awards banquet, Seymour recalled Chapel Hill in 1962 as a “typical segregated town.” One of the first African-American interns at Binkley Memorial was a young African-American student from Union Theological Seminary, Jim Forbes, well known now as The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes Jr., senior minister at Riverside Church in New York City. Seymour said the presence of

Forbes as summer intern, “transformed the congregation.” Binkley Memorial was originally established as a Southern Baptist congregation but eventually affiliated with the American Baptist Churches.

Born in Greenwood, South Carolina, Seymour came to Yale Divinity School as a Navy chaplaincy candidate after completing an undergraduate degree at Duke. (At the awards ceremony, he quipped, “Unlike many of you, I did not apply to YDS, I was ordered to come here!”) He received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Edinburgh. After his retirement in 1988, Seymour founded the Chapel Hill Senior Center. He has written four books: *Whites Only*, *Aging Without Apology*, *A Village Voice*, and *When Life Becomes Worthwhile*. He is also a regular columnist for *The Chapel Hill News*.

At Yale, recalled Seymour, it was Liston Pope who introduced him to the social aspects of the Gospel, including its application to issues of human rights. “The racial issue has been on the front burner for my entire ministry,” he said.