



# Yale Divinity School



## CONVOCATION 2004

### Berkeley Divinity School Pays Tribute to Five with Honorary Degrees

Berkeley Divinity School awarded two honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees and three honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees during an Evensong held at Convocation 2004, which coincided with Berkeley's 150th anniversary. Preaching at the Evensong was the Rev. Peter Gomes, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church and Member of the Faculty of Divinity at Harvard University.

Awarded honorary Doctor of Divinity Degrees were Curtis Gustav Almquist, Superior of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, a monastic order based in the Diocese of Massachusetts; and Robert John O'Neill, '81 M.Div., bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado. Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees were awarded to Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, '76 Ph.D., minister of children's nurture and children's missioner at the Episcopal Church of St. Paul and St. James in New Haven, CT; Christian R. Sonne, '57 B.A., former chair of the Trustees of Berkeley Divinity School; and Phyllis Tickle, contributing editor in religion to Publishers Weekly.

Following is the complete text of each of the citations:



**Curtis Gustav Almquist**, you are the current Superior of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, a monastic order that through the integrity and openness of its community life has inspired the spiritual life of not only the Diocese of Massachusetts, but the whole Episcopal Church. In this capacity, you succeed a line of leaders of the Cowley community who have led a dramatic renewal based on a commitment to making the religious life meaningful in the twenty-first century. In honoring you, we honor by implication the wider fellowship of brothers that has supported you and shaped your own vision of the spiritual life. Your preparation for this important ministry began in Moline, Illinois, where you were born in 1952. Coming from an evangelical background, you studied at Wheaton College and Michigan State University. From there, you went to do mission and social work in many of the neediest places in the world: Haiti and Eastern

Europe, as well as in the urban center of Chicago. Upon your graduation from Nashotah House in 1984, you served as Curate of St. Simons Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois, before entering the Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1987. There you have served as Novice Guardian, Assistant Superior, and as the Senior Brother at Emery House, the Society's retreat center in West Newbury, as well as a Chaplain to the House of Bishops, before being elected Superior by your community in 2001.

As Superior, you have exemplified Richard Benson's vision that Cowley brothers should be "men of the moment," keeping the walls of the monastic house porous to the world by engaging in many ministries, especially with students, and by exploring the possibility of a ministry for the Society in the Holy Land. As a testimony of your understanding of the priestly life, you are sought after as a spiritual director by priests and bishops of the Church, and you are known as a pastor of keen psychological insight. Your infectious Christian faith touches many people in profound ways, enlivening their own sense of Christ's presence with them.

Curtis Gustav Almquist, for your witness to the importance of the spiritual life in the Church, for your steadfast leadership of a flourishing monastic community, for your care and concern for all of God's people, and for your engagement in the cares and concerns of the world around you, the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School is proud to confer on you the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*.



**Robert John O'Neill**, during two long-tenured pastorates in your twenty-two year priesthood, you have proven to be a highly effective leader in the Church and an eloquent minister of the Gospel. Your spiritual gifts are clear for all to see in the way you go about your work of bearing witness in all times and places to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

You received the degree of Master of Divinity from the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale in 1981. You were ordained to the priesthood at St. John's Cathedral in Denver where you served a distinguished tenure of ten years as Canon Educator of the cathedral.

You led your parishioners as Rector of the Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, Massachusetts by deepening their prayer life, extending their scope of evangelism, enriching their Christian education, raising their stewardship sights, and urging them on to greater outreach.

In June 2003, you were elected Bishop Coadjutor in the Diocese of Colorado, were ordained and consecrated to the episcopate in October 2003, and you became the 10 th Bishop of Colorado on the first day of this year, 2004. The serious strains that exist within the Anglican Communion are mirrored in the Diocese of Colorado, where you have patiently and prayerfully urged your communicants to stay in relationship with one another, to pray together, and to discuss and listen to their diverse theological views. You have committed yourself to helping your communicants identify common ground on which they can stand together and engage in the one ministry to which we are all called.

You were instrumental in arranging a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Rowan Williams, that took place last month at Lambeth Palace with you and three of your fellow U.S. bishops. While your conversation is being held in confidence, you disclosed your purpose in meeting as a firsthand opportunity to describe the different contexts for ministry in four dioceses, and to share directly with the Archbishop local experiences in the wake of the last General Convention. You have said that the conversation centered on your collective efforts at diocesan levels to maintain unity while working toward reconciliation within the Church. You also considered various ways in which U.S. bishops and the Archbishop might be mutually supportive of each other.

From your time as a youthful Californian when you partnered in TV commercials with a future U.S. president, you now enjoy being at the controls of an airplane, and pedaling even higher on your bicycle over Rocky Mountain passes, and finally coasting back down to your piano bench where you entertain your listeners with ragtime.

The Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale is proud of your leadership in the Church, gives thanks for your ministry, and wishes to enhance your role as the chief teacher in your diocese by conferring upon you, Robert John O'Neill, the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa.



**Gretchen Wolff Pritchard**, you were born in Evanston, Illinois. In 1972 after graduating from Bryn Mawr College you moved to study at Yale where you received your PhD in English in 1976. New Haven has been your home ever since: it has been where you have shared your life with your husband Arnold and raised your three daughters, Grace, Margaret and Marion.

Even as a college student you were active in children's ministries and you have continued to devote your vocation to the formation of young people. For the past twenty-five years you have been the Minister of Children's Nurture and Children's Missioner at the Episcopal Church of St. Paul and St. James, New Haven, Connecticut.

Early in your parish ministry you created The Sunday Paper, a weekly pictorial lectionary for children, as a supplement to the Sunday school curriculum – it continues to be used in many parishes throughout the country. Other publications would follow: - Alleluia, Amen (a communion book for children), Go Tell it on the Mountain (a collection of pageant scripts), New Life (a baptism book for young people), Sunday Paper Junior, for younger children, and Risen with Christ, a description of Holy Week and Easter celebrations. You have drafted diocesan guidelines for Christian initiation and in 1992 Cowley press published your book Offering the Gospel to Children. Most recently you documented significant experiences that formed your own faith in Learning to Love.

You continued to immerse yourself in children's mission as you created innovative and interactive programs for children. In 1994 you developed Light and Peace which was later reorganized as a structured children's program and replicated by other parishes. In January of 2000 the Mustardseed Club opened with children attending this after school program two days a week. These programs have expanded and continue to provide children in an urban setting with nurture for their bodies as well as their souls. You were the birth mother of Beulah Enterprises which creates and makes available books and toys for imaginative spiritual play.

Throughout your ministry you have witnessed many changes but your commitment to and deep caring for children has been constant. Through storytelling and your sense of the scriptural drama you have provided a stable and centering presence in your parish. You have gifted the wider church with imaginative and practical ways to nurture children in their faith. For over thirty years, you have dedicated your energy and enthusiasm to bring the children 'out of the basement' and to foster their love of a lively Gospel. Through your personal interaction and contemporary publications you have enriched the lives of countless children and adults who have come to know the scriptural story as their own.

Gretchen Wolff Pritchard because you have done so much to exemplify Berkeley's long commitment to the ministry of education and Christian formation, the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale is honored to bestow upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.



**Christian R. Sonne**, throughout your life you have personified what the writers of the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer meant about the ministry of the Laity. It says in part that "the ministry of lay persons is to...bear witness to Christ...according to the gifts given them...and to take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church."

Wherever you have lived, you have been an active member of the local Episcopal Church serving on the vestries, as warden, and as a lay reader. You served as a Trustee of the Venture Fund of the Diocese of New York and then for ten years as its President. You were a charter Trustee of the Diocese of New York.

For much of the time that you were serving your local parishes and Diocese, you were also giving generously of your time, talent, and resources to the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School. You have been present at several critical times in the life of this institution and have helped make and implement the tough decisions that were necessary for the future of the School.

The original decision to affiliate with Yale Divinity School was pivotal in the on-going life of Berkeley. Although it changed the nature of the Berkeley experience, it greatly enhanced the academic focus for the students, and brought the School into a wider world of the Church. You were there to help foster this change. And then most recently you presided over the Board of Trustees at a time of great tension and uncertainty. You helped move the School in new directions including the signing of a new Affiliation Agreement with Yale Divinity School and the search for the current Dean of Berkeley. In all of these actions, you always had the best interests of the institution in the forefront of your decision making.

Because you have been so steadfast in following the Outline of the Faith, and because you have led with conviction and dedication throughout the church, the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale is pleased to bestow upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.



**Phyllis Tickle**, raised in rural Appalachia, you attended Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, graduated from East Tennessee State University, and earned a Master of Arts degree at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina in 1961. You began your career as a college teacher and, for almost ten years, served as academic dean to the Memphis College of Art before entering full time into writing and publishing.

You have been for many years Contributing Editor in Religion to Publishers Weekly, the international journal of the book industry, where you previously served as the journal's Religion Editor. You are widely recognized as an authority on religion in America and a much sought after lecturer on the subject. In addition to lectures and numerous essays, articles, and interviews, you have authored some two dozen books addressing religion and spirituality, including the widely-acclaimed "Stories from The Farm in Lucy" trilogy published in 2004, and "The Divine Hours," a three-volume contemporary manual of prayer completed in 2001. Some of your other recent works include "The Shaping of a Life – A Spiritual Landscape," a memoir of the life of prayer, released in 2001, and "The Sharing of a Life – A Religious Landscape," a work in progress due out in 2005. Your 1998 book, "God Talk in America," was a Main Selection of the Catholic Book Club that year, and "Rediscovering the Sacred: Spirituality in America," won a 1996 Catholic Press Association Book Award in Spirituality.

In 1996 you received the Mays Award, one of the book industry's most prestigious awards for lifetime achievement in writing and publishing, and specifically in recognition of your work in gaining mainstream media coverage of religion publishing. To that end, you are frequently cited and interviewed about spirituality in America in print media such as Time, Newsweek, The New York Times, and The Episcopalian, and in electronic media including PBS's "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly," "Faith and Reason," and online resources such as Beliefnet.com and explorefaith.org.

You have served the Episcopal Church as a Lay Eucharistic Minister and Lay Reader, as well as a sometime vestry member and teacher, including twice being a speaker at the Trinity Institute of Trinity Church, Wall Street. You have served on a number of advisory and corporate boards, including the Executive Board of Forward Movement Publications. You were honored in 1983 by the Episcopal Communicators with the Polly Bond Award for Excellence in Spiritual Writing. The mother of seven children, you make your home with your husband, a physician, on a small farm in rural West Tennessee, a life from which you have drawn in your spiritual writing.

You have described religion as “a rope of meaning,” including strands of morality, the body of the church, and spirituality. Through your writing, speaking, and prayer, you have shown people both outside and within the church how spirituality can be woven back into that rope. For your life's witness and ministry of showing us how to engage in “God Talk” in American culture, the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale is pleased to confer upon you the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.