

DANIEL WADE McCLAIN, PhD

Systematic Theology | Formation | Theology and Artificial Intelligence

Scholarly Profile

Systematic and historical theologian working at the intersection of sacramental theology, theological anthropology, and practices of discipleship. Across two decades of teaching, research, and parish ministry, my work has been animated by a single question: what does it take for a person to grow? That question has shaped research rooted in Bonaventure and the medieval tradition — exploring how the doctrines of creation and the Trinity function not merely as propositions to be believed, but as formative structures shaping attention, affection, and participation in the divine life.

My work examines how persons are formed through attention, embodied perception, and love as participation in divine life, with current research exploring childhood, disability, and critiques of cognitive developmental models that equate personhood with intellectual capacity. These same convictions have shaped my work as a pastor and teacher and now drive my engagement with education and artificial intelligence in a technological moment that fragments attention and displaces embodied presence.

Teaching Areas

- Biblical Theology
- Church History / Historical Theology
- Systematic Theology
- Theology of Creation
- Christian Formation and Spirituality
- Theology and Culture
- Christian Ethics and Technology
- Children, Formation, and Spirituality
- Theology and Artificial Intelligence
- Theology and Education

Academic Appointments

- Adjunct Professor of Theology, University of Dayton** 2021–2023
- Taught undergraduate theology courses in theology and children's literature and the Protestant Reformation
- Affiliate Professor, General Theological Seminary** 2018–2022
- Directed master's thesis; Reader for additional thesis, supporting graduate theological formation
- Visiting Assistant Professor & Director of Program Operations, Loyola University Maryland** 2012–2018
- Directed graduate academic and ministry formation programs within the Theology Department
 - Supervised student theses and supported graduate theological formation
 - Coordinated institutional assessment and accreditation processes, including work with Middle States and the Maryland Higher Education Commission
 - Supported curriculum planning, faculty coordination, and program administration across multiple graduate initiatives
- Lecturer in Writing, George Washington University** 2010–2011

Ecclesial Leadership

- Rector / Priest-in-Charge, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Oakwood, OH** 2020–2024
- Led parish life with sustained attention to formation, preaching, and institutional and strategic direction
 - Supervised seminarians and ministry interns in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and liturgical leadership
 - Founded and directed Seminarian Internship Program (2021)
- Chaplain & Associate Rector, William & Mary / Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, VA** 2018–2020
- Directed campus ministry and developed programs integrating intellectual and spiritual life
- Associate Priest for Children & Family, St. David's Episcopal Church, Baltimore, MD** 2017–2018
- Led and developed Godly Play formation program

Theology, Educational Formation, and Artificial Intelligence

- Intervention Specialist, Reynoldsburg City Schools** 2024–present
- Literacy intervention, co-teaching in inclusive ELA classrooms, and close analysis of student growth to inform instruction
 - Current research examines how students are formed in attention and habits of learning in classrooms shaped by emerging technologies, with particular focus on metacognition, literacy development, and student confidence and habits of learning
 - Principal Preparation Program (in progress; completion December 2026), American College of Education — training in instructional leadership, supervision, and school culture
 - Developed AI-integrated instructional unit focused on the formation of student attention, student agency, and reflective learning in secondary ELA

Courses Taught (Selected)

- Introduction to Theology
- Medieval Theology
- Creation and Evolution
- Church History
- Anglican Theology
- Protestant Reformation
- Theological Aesthetics
- Christian Ethics (Service-Learning)
- Theology and Children's Literature
- Foundations ELA / Literacy Intervention
- Inclusive Secondary English Language Arts

Publications (Selected)

- “The Original Vision: Edward Robinson and the Spiritual Life of Children,” *Church Life Journal* (2024)
- “Everyday Trinity: Theology, Prayer, and the Christian Life,” *Sewanee Theological Review* (2021)
- “The Structure of Theology: Creation and Recreation in the Breviloquium and De sacramentis,” in *Saint Bonaventure: Friar, Teacher, Minister, Bishop*, ed. T. Johnson, K. Wrisley-Shelby, M. K. Zamora (2021)
- “What (Not) to Do with the Trinity: Doctrine, Discipline, and Doxology in Contemporary Trinitarian Discourse,” *Anglican Theological Review* (2018)
- Reading Scripture as a Political Act, co-edited with Matthew Tapie (Fortress Press, 2015)
- “Repurposing the Body: Sacramentality and the Poetics of Discipleship,” *Anglican Theological Review* (2014)

Forthcoming

“The Secret Spiritual Lives of Children,” forthcoming (2026), McGrath Center for Church Life, University of Notre Dame (Lilly Foundation grant)

“Human Service and Human Centrality: an Ecumenical Reconsideration of Anthropocentrism” (submitted; forthcoming in volume from the McGrath Center for Church Life, University of Notre Dame, Templeton Foundation grant)

Selected Presentations

“Attentive Belonging in the Age of AI: Reclaiming Formation, Participation, and Human Agency in Education,” IMPT Capstone Presentation, McGrath Institute for Church Life, University of Notre Dame. Accepted June 2026.

“Attentive Belonging: Wisdom Formation, Attention, and Shalom in the Age of AI” (with Cyrus Olsen, Scranton, and Ian Marcus Corbin, Harvard Medical), Wisdom in the Age of AI conference, Kuyers Institute for Christian Teaching and Learning, Calvin University. Accepted October 2026.

“Ourselves, Our Souls, Our Bodies: Recovering Childhood as the Foundation of Integral Spiritual Growth.” Contours of Wonder: Childhood and the Liturgical Imagination Symposium. University of Notre Dame. April 2024.

“Beyond the Wardrobe: Forming the Spiritual Lives of Children through the Imagination.” Rinehart Lecture in Practical Theology, Ashland University. November 2019.

“Spiritual Free Play in the Adaptation of Parables in Harry Potter and Godly Play.” Children's Studies Unit, American Academy of Religion. 2018.

“‘All of the things which should be sought’: The Lord's Prayer as the Summit of Desire in Bonaventure's Breviloquium.” Baylor University Honors College. October 2017.

Intellectual and Field Leadership (Selected)

- Seminar Leader, Scriptural Reasoning Program, Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, Xavier University (2025–2026)
- Co-organizer, Theologians of Ohio Conference (with Jana Bennett and Jason Fout) (2022–2023)
- Subject Area and Reviews-in-Depth Editor, Anglican Theological Review (2017–2023)
- President & Board Member, Society of Scholar Priests (2019–2022)
- Steering Committee Member, American Academy of Religion (2014–2021)
- Vice President & President, Mid-Atlantic Region, American Academy of Religion (2013–2015)
- Peer Reviewer, Teilhard Studies (2022)
- Essay Judge, Charles Hefling Student Essay Competition, Anglican Theological Review (2020, 2021)
- Essay Judge, Goodwin Prize, Theological Horizons (2013)
- Leader, Clergy Book Study, Diocese of Southern Ohio (2021–2022)

Formation and Pedagogy

- Trained Godly Play storyteller; collaborated with Jerome Berryman (2019–2022) on children's formation, narrative pedagogy, and practices of attention
- Certificate in Service-Learning, Center for Community Service and Justice, Loyola University Maryland (2014); developed and taught Service-Learning courses (2014–2018)
- Co-developer, Art & Philosophy Curriculum, Benjamin Franklin High School in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2005–2007)
- Retreat facilitator, Diocese of Southern Virginia (2019) and St. Paul's Episcopal Church (2021–2023)
- Led student pilgrimage to Canterbury, England (2020), as a practice of communal and embodied formation

Education

Ph.D., Historical and Systematic Theology, The Catholic University of America

Dissertation: An Hexaëmeral Reading of Bonaventure's Breviloquium

M.Phil., Historical and Systematic Theology, The Catholic University of America

M.A., Christian Thought, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

B.A., Philosophy and Religious Studies, Liberty University

Research Areas

- Theology of creation and the Trinity (Bonaventure and the medieval tradition)
- Sacramental theology and theological anthropology
- Children's spiritual experience and formation
- Theology, imagination, and narrative
- Education, attention, and artificial intelligence

Professional Development and Recognition

- Principal Preparation Program, American College of Education (completion December 2026)
- Episcopal Preaching Foundation, Preaching Excellence Program II (2023)
- Sermons featured in Anglican Digest (2018–2021)