

For Immediate Release: April 11, 2023

NEW BUTLER CHAIR OF HOMILETICS & HERMENEUTICS

JONI SANCKEN, PHD JOINS VST JANUARY 2024

VANCOUVER, BC. April 11, 2023. The Vancouver School of Theology is pleased to confirm that The Rev. Joni Sancken, PhD will join the school effective January 1, 2024.

The prestigious Butler Chair in Homiletics & Biblical Interpretation is one of only two in Canada, and among a very few supported by an endowment in the world.

Joni teaches in the area of homiletics. Her interests include theological approaches to preaching, women preachers, preaching about the cross and resurrection and preaching in a context of trauma. She is a member of the Academy of Homiletics. Joni completed her BA at Goshen College (1998), MDiv at Princeton Theological Seminary (2004), and PhD at the Toronto School of Theology (2009) under the direction of Professor Paul Scott Wilson.



She has written five books: *Getting to God: Preaching Good News in a Troubled World* (Cascade, co-authored, 2023), *All Our Grievs to Bear: Responding with Resilience After Collective Trauma* (Herald Press, 2022), *Words that Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls* (Abingdon, 2019), *Stumbling Over the Cross: Preaching the Cross and Resurrection Today* (Cascade, 2016), and *New Proclamation: Year C 2013, Advent through Holy Week* (Fortress Press, co-authored, 2012). In addition, Joni has contributed extensively to her field with many articles and chapter contributions to other texts.

Joni Sancken is an ordained pastor with Mennonite Church USA and has served as a pastor in Mennonite congregations in Indiana and Pennsylvania. Her credentials are currently held by Central District. Prior to joining United Theological Seminary as a tenured faculty member, she served as Assistant Professor of Preaching and Practical Theology at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, VA, where she also served as the director of their Preaching Institute. Joni also served as a sessional faculty member at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Candler School of Theology as a postdoctoral fellow at Emory University. Joni is married to Steven Schumm, and they have a daughter, Maggie, and son, Theodore. She enjoys spending time with family, taking long walks with her dogs, reading memoirs, and watching all kinds of documentaries.

“I am excited to join the community at VST and honored to be part of a group who embodies generative engagement with the world, academic rigor, and commitment to the church. VST is a wonderful place for students to explore God’s calling.”

- Joni Sancken

“We are thrilled at this appointment which will strengthen the ministry of preaching in the church. Prof Sancken brings impressive gifts of scholarship, enthusiasm for the work of theological education and love for students to our school. Her presence will amplify our ability to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the 21st century.”

- Richard Topping, VST President & Vice-Chancellor

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About The Butler Chair in Homiletics & Hermeneutics

The Butler Chair was established through a generous donation from the Rev. Ralph Hibbert Raymond Butler, together with his wife, Mrs. Wanda Butler, and The Rev. E. Laura Butler. The donors wanted to honour their parents with this gift. The chief purpose of the gift is to strengthen the preaching ministry of the Church and to equip people to proclaim the gospel with vigour and clarity. The full position title: *the Reverend John Ralph Butler and Elisabeth Letitia Baker Butler Chair of Homiletics and Biblical Interpretation* was first held by The Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee from 2015 until August 2022, and will now be held by Dr. Sancken.

About VST

VST's core mandate is to educate and form thoughtful, engaged, and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century. VST is a leading theological school, viewed as a change agent and innovator for the church.

VST is an affiliated college of the University of British Columbia ranked in the top 100 schools globally and in the top 10 of most improved theological schools. VST has been recognized by *In Trust Magazine* for its realizing transformational change as it renews theological education. A recipient of a prestigious Pathways for Tomorrow grant from the Lilly Endowment, VST is redefining the critical role of theological field education in preparing clergy. VST is accredited by the Government of British Columbia, and in North America by ATS (Association of Theological Schools).

The Vancouver School of Theology celebrates its foundational relationships with the Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, and United Church of Canada. VST also welcomes students from many Christian communions, other faith traditions, and Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Studies Program at VST is central to the school's identity and commitments.

The Vancouver School of Theology recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2021. VST, through its predecessor schools, has been teaching theology in Vancouver since 1893.

The Vancouver School of Theology acknowledges that the land on which they are located is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People.

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