

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a mound of dark, rich soil. The hand is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame. Below the hand, a vast field of similar soil stretches towards the horizon, with some blurred green plants in the distance. The overall tone is earthy and contemplative.

⊕ KING
INSTITUTE
FOR FAITH & CULTURE

cultivating
Fertile Ground

The Institute for Faith & Culture seeks to provide a place for conversation where seekers can freely explore a wide range of life's difficult questions and discover common ground.

A group of approximately 20 students are sitting in a circle on a green lawn, surrounded by large, leafy trees. The scene is outdoors, likely on a university campus, with a red brick building visible in the background. The text "Feeding the Soul" is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

Feeding the Soul



In today's polarized environment, issues of faith and popular culture often appear to be at cross purposes. Attempts at conversation between those of diverse origins, beliefs, and backgrounds only seem to widen the distance.

The space where these powerful forces intersect, though, offers rich ground where mutual understanding, healing, and personal growth can take root.

Cultivating this ground is the work of the King University Institute for Faith & Culture. Since 2007, the Institute has welcomed widely recognized thinkers, authors, musicians, scholars, and philosophers to interact with students and a regional audience in a welcoming environment that catalyzes growth and understanding. The Institute serves as the standard bearer of the University's long-time exploration of the liberal arts — in conjunction with King's mission of equipping students to answer the call of excellence inherent in the Christian faith.

Far from pushing others away or apart, the conversations that arise here are artful, substantial, and inspiring, bearing fruit that feeds all those hungry for connection, beauty, and healing.

A top-down view of approximately ten hands of various skin tones and ages, all cupped together in a circle. Each hand holds a small, vibrant green seedling with a few leaves, rooted in dark, rich soil. The hands are positioned in a way that they all point towards the center, creating a sense of unity and collective care. Some hands have accessories like a black beaded bracelet, a brown leather watch strap, and a silver metal watch. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with grass or foliage.

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Andrea Baker
Mezzo Soprano



Rachel Held Evans
Author, 1981-2019

Deep Roots

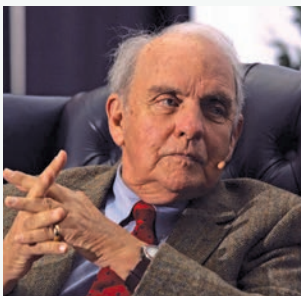
For more than 150 years, King has served as a locus of learning and inspiration for students, alumni, and community members. The University's well-rounded slate of academic and artistic programming has served as a launch point in thousands of lives, equipping and empowering scholars, scientists, ministers, artists, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and more.

The Institute for Faith & Culture provides an additional source of inspiration, a vision of what can be for students who are considering vocations in medicine, social work, engineering, music, education, political science, technology, and more. It also provides a framework in which those on campus and others in community can effortlessly blend as we seek to gain a deeper understanding of our world's changing needs.

The Institute is distinctively positioned to offer this annual speaker series, which is unique to the region and a rarity in the nation. Our deep roots in the Christian faith, combined with our long-term practice of being comfortable and present in challenging conversations, give rise to events where guests of many different backgrounds feel welcome, heard, and can freely contribute to the growth of understanding and community.



Makoto Fujimura
Artist, speaker, author



“Vocation. It comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a man is called to by God. There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Super-ego, or Self-Interest ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

— *Frederick Buechner*



*Susan Warsinger,
Holocaust survivor*



Our goal is simple:

To present and maintain the finest Christian speaker series ...

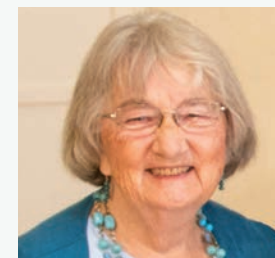
... not only in our region, but across our nation.

To provide a steady foundation for the future ...

... to ensure that the Institute for Faith & Culture continues to offer opportunities to students, faculty, alumni, and the community at large for many years to come ...

... for thoughtful dialogue that enriches the academic experience of students, helping to cultivate lives that are fully inhabited and bear rich fruit ...

... to help prepare students to excel as thoughtful, resourceful, and responsible citizens with a passion for serving God, the church, and the world.



“Thank you for inviting me to be a part of the Institute’s series of events for 2018-19. King University administration, staff, faculty, and students were so welcoming and receptive, and the execution of details so seamless, that the days with you were a pure joy. I must confess my disappointment when I read the prospectus for the year and knew I would be too far away to attend any others. What an amazing lineup — addressing such varied aspects of our lives, challenging us both as citizens and people of faith. These programs are truly gifts for both the University and the wider Bristol community.”

Katherine Paterson, Class of ‘54

Author, two-time winner of both the National Book Award and the Newbery Award, 2019 winner of the E.B. White Award for achievement in children’s literature



“We have too many channels these days, of course. So many distractions dull our sense of inquisitiveness, our capacity for hope, our faith in positive change. [The Institute’s] programs aim at keeping the virtues of wonder and contemplation alive. In a whirl of diversion, we offer these moments of focused consideration, opportunities for reflection.”

— **Dale Brown, Ph.D.**
1949-2014



“Our joyous endeavor is to discover and celebrate faithful voices in all dimensions of human culture, and to create spaces where conversations are crafted and friendships ignite. Work of this kind is a catalyst for community, drawing people together in the love and service of God and neighbor.”

Martin Dotterweich, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Faith & Culture

Those Who Till the Ground

The idea of the Institute for Faith & Culture first took root at King with the arrival of Dale Brown, Ph.D. A longtime leader of Calvin College’s Festival of Faith & Writing, Dr. Brown wanted to develop a program that would provide King University students, as well as the surrounding community, with regular access to foundational thinkers. His vision was to create an opportunity to cultivate conversation on issues of Christian faith and culture, stepping out into larger spaces via the compassion, courage, and wisdom found in the work of writer and theologian Frederick Buechner.

Inspired by Buechner’s work, Dr. Brown began compiling a list of experts in art, medicine, ministry, writing, politics, history, music, science, theology, and other vocations who could spark meaningful conversation and generate an exchange of ideas. In 2008, The Buechner Institute at King University was born, and was inaugurated with an address from Buechner himself.

Each month, Dr. Brown carefully selected speakers whose life experiences, academic grounding, and incomparable wisdom could intentionally generate discussion in a temperate zone, a place between what he called “abject secularism and shrill sectarianism.” Topics focused on the central issues of our time, with speakers generating open, accessible discourse and sharing the opportunity for audience interaction.

Following Dr. Brown’s death in 2014, the Institute’s name was changed to the King Institute for Faith & Culture. His greatness of mind and heart still guides the organization’s path, however, particularly in the Institute’s ongoing commitment to welcome distinguished speakers who interact with the university community and the community at large. Buechner’s legacy at King remains strong as well, most visibly via the Institute’s annual Frederick Buechner Lecture, sponsored by the Frederick Buechner Center.

Today, the Institute is led by Martin Dotterweich, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of History and Political Science at King University, who continues Dr. Brown’s dedication to addressing questions about where culture and faith connect and collide, with a vision to expand the Institute further with additional speakers and opportunities to engage the community through shared, thoughtful conversation that may lead to lives more fully inhabited.

With annual topics that have ranged from fear, uncertainty, and brokenness to faith, redemption, hope, and wisdom, the conversations that take place at King University’s Institute for Faith & Culture lead us into spaces of wonder — and remind us how God plants different gifts in each of us, in order to benefit all of us.

Nourishing hearts and minds

Past Institute speakers are those who have found fulfillment in their callings and talk about their vocations with passion, wonder, and joy. Audiences are given the opportunity to share in the presence and the wisdom of those who are nourished through the act of sowing their gifts and talents in hopes of meeting the needs of others.



*John Perkins, left,
with Alexander Whitaker,
President of King University*



Jan Karon, author



*Martin Dotterweich, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Faith &
Culture, left,
with Justo Gonzalez,
historian, theologian, author*



Kate Bowler

Associate Professor,
Duke Divinity School;
author

"I can't reconcile the way that the world is jolted by events that are wonderful and terrible, the gorgeous and the tragic. Except that I am beginning to believe that these opposites do not cancel each other out."



Scott Cairns

Poet, memoirist,
librettist, essayist

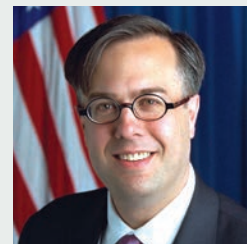
*"May our afflictions be few,
but may we learn not to
squander them."*



Guy Consolmagno

Director of the
Vatican Observatory

"I want reasons to have faith in my faith, to have a reasonable confidence that there is actually truth in what my religion teaches me about God and my relation to God. And that faith has to be based on something within myself that I already trust: it has to be consonant with my experience of the universe and my abilities to reason about that universe."



Michael Gerson

Former presidential
speechwriter, current policy
fellow and op-ed writer

"Christians have seldom been less appealing than when acting in the name of 'Christendom.' But when the faithful have ignored political power, they have sometimes again brought discredit on their ideals. Sins of omission can be as deadly as sins of commission. So the exercise of politics requires walking a tightrope."



Justo Gonzalez

Historian, theologian,
author

"There is a close relationship between faith and reason, for one cannot function without the other. Reason builds its arguments on first principles which cannot be proven, but are accepted by faith. For the truly wise, faith is the first principle, the starting point, on which reason is to build."



Nikki Grimes

Author, poet, journalist

"You have to take people one at a time, check out what's in their head and heart before you judge."



Jan Karon

New York Times
bestselling author

"We don't have to do great things to make a difference. We can make a great difference by doing small things graciously."



Katherine Paterson

National Book Award and
Newbery Award-winning
author, E. B. White Award
winner, alumna 1954

"Peace is not won by those who fiercely guard their differences, but by those who with open minds and hearts seek out connections."



John Perkins

Minister, civil rights
activist, author

"I believe in the inherent dignity of all human beings. The Bible states clearly that God created men and women in His image from the very beginning (See Genesis 1:27). No matter how damaged people become, they still bear that image. No matter how much people have been oppressed or how much they have oppressed others, the part of them made in His image is worth rescuing and restoring."



Marilynne Robinson

Novelist, essayist

"There are two occasions when the sacred beauty of Creation becomes dazzlingly apparent, and they occur together. One is when we feel our mortal insufficiency to the world, and the other is when we feel the world's mortal insufficiency to us."



Barbara Brown Taylor

New York Times bestselling
author, speaker, and self-
described spiritual contrarian

"Human beings may separate things into as many piles as we wish — separating spirit from flesh, sacred from secular, church from world. But we should not be surprised when God does not recognize the distinctions we make between the two."



Philip Yancey

Author

"If my activism, however well-motivated, drives out love, then I have misunderstood Jesus' gospel. I am stuck with law, not the gospel of grace."



“The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt.”

— *Frederick Buechner*



"On a recent visit to King University, I had the privilege of addressing a meeting of the King Institute for Faith & Culture. I was deeply impressed by the attentiveness of the participants and the quality of the conversation. The Institute brings King University faculty together with people from the broader community representing various professions and walks of life to discuss the great existential questions of meaning and value. It is a model of town-gown cooperation. Bristol is truly blessed to have such an institute in the community."

Robert George

McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University



"What an honor to be part of your speakers' series. I was so impressed with the warm welcome and thoughtful questions from the audiences. I also found the conversations at the receptions and meals interesting and enlightening."

Esther Starobin

Holocaust survivor

Help us Grow

As part of a non-profit organization, the work — and the growth — of the Institute relies on the support of those who seek to preserve and enrich diverse conversations, gatherings, and the discovery of common ground. We are seeking fellow explorers who are willing to journey with us into the vast and challenging territories created wherever faith and culture meet, explorers who are interested in staking out areas of conversation and influence for deep and fruitful cultivation.

The Institute has had long-term success in welcoming speakers who are not theologically, politically, or

culturally uniform to join us on campus and throughout our community. This has benefited both students and guests — in the past year alone, the Institute has partnered with other organizations to host events with area churches of multiple denominations, in Bristol's main hospital, and at the city's public library. We are very grateful for, and proud of, our area partners who help erase the boundary lines between campus and community.

Even in our small region, there is a hunger for this kind of programming. We welcome between 125-250 people to our events, with many more joining in

through our online and social platforms. We believe there is also a need for this kind of restorative outreach, as our society becomes increasingly fragmented and polarized.

Currently, the Institute's funding is provided through the University's budgeting process and charitable donations — which means it can fluctuate from year to year. Our goal for the immediate future is to endow the Institute, providing a stable, annual resource, continuing the work accomplished to date, and allowing for further development.

*Join us
in working this good ground.*