

Free to Believe National Conference 2018

Main Speaker: DIANA BUTLER BASS; Bible Studies: Trevor Dennis

Diana Butler Bass (Ph.D. Duke University) is an award-winning author and internationally known public speaker and thought leader on issues of spirituality, religion, culture, and politics.

She has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, PBS, CBS, and FOX, has been interviewed on numerous radio programs, including shows on NPR, CBC, and Sirius XM, and has work featured in numerous print and online newspapers and magazines including *Time*, *USA Today*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. From 1995-2000, she wrote a weekly column for the *New York Times* Syndicate. She was a founding blogger for both *Beliefnet* and *Huffington Post* religion. Her bylines include the *Washington Post* and *Atlantic.com*. She has preached and taught in hundreds of church, college, and conference venues in North America and beyond.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Diana Butler Bass was raised in Scottsdale, Arizona, and loves Santa Barbara, California as her “soul” hometown. She lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her husband, Richard Bass, and their dog, Rowan. These days, she balances travel (which she loves) with her concerns for Virginia politics, a passion for environmental issues, supporting local farms, reading poetry, cooking, gardening, Washington Nationals baseball, and Duke basketball.

You can follow her online at www.dianabutlerbass.com, her public author page on Facebook, and on Twitter @dianabutlerbass.

Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks comes out on 3rd April, 2018. The publisher press release summarizes the book:

If gratitude is good, why is it so hard to give? In Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks, Diana Butler Bass untangles our conflicting understandings of gratitude and sets the table for a renewed practice of giving thanks.

Take a look at the world around us. Are we living out of a place of gratefulness? Do our lives and communities embody gratitude? Even though a recent poll found that four out of five Americans feel gratitude in their daily lives, cultural observer and theologian Diana Butler Bass finds that claim to be at odds with the discontent that permeates society.

Bass, author of the acclaimed, award-winning Grounded, explores a gap: we may feel grateful as individuals but that seems to have little to do with the larger divisions in our societies. Using her trademark blend of deep spiritual insight and timely research, she shows how gratitude can be understood through four different lenses, examining how it affects us emotionally and ethically on a personal level and

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on a communal level. Me and we; emotions and ethics—gratitude plays out differently in each of these arenas.

In this wide-ranging book, full of honest stories and heart-rending examples from history and her own life, she offers suggestions for reclaiming gratitude that can lead to greater connection with God, our loved ones, our world, and even our own souls. It's time to embrace a more radical practice of gratitude – the surprising virtue that heals us and helps us thrive.

Lectures will explore the surprising complexity of thanksgiving, how we understand gratitude, how we practice it, and why it is so important in these difficult days.

Trevor Dennis is passionate about the Bible and its extraordinary artistry, about opening up the world of biblical scholarship to a wider audience, and about being honest about it all.

For years he's taught, written and preached as he believes, no more, no less. He's accused Matthew of blasphemy in the course of a sermon in Chester Cathedral (on the subject of the ending to the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave in Matthew 18), while on the other side he's tried to reveal the great treasures to be found in the Old Testament to people tempted to write it off as hopelessly patriarchal and violent (there is patriarchy and violence aplenty, sure, but there's so much else). He once taught Old Testament studies at Salisbury and Wells Theological College, perhaps the most liberal of the Church of England's theological colleges, before joining the staff at Chester Cathedral.

He retired in 2010, and is married to Caroline. They have four children and eight grandchildren.

He has written extensively on the Old Testament and the Gospels, and has six collections published of sermons written in story form or in blank verse. His publications include *The Book of Books: The Bible Retold*, Lion Hudson, 2003; *God in our Midst*, SPCK, 2012; *The Circle of Peace: An Antidote to Distress*, written with Ken Lewis, SPCK, 2015; *The Gospel Beyond the Gospels*, SPCK, 2017.