



# 2021 Annual Report



Yale Center for Faith & Culture  
AT YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

# Friends,

I believe that the good is always more fundamental than evil. To believe that God created the world is to believe that the world's goodness is primordial. Whatever evil may befall us and whatever evil we may perpetrate cannot undo it; nothing can.

We have lived under a dark cloud for the past two years. Time itself, as some have noted, has taken on a vagueness and indeterminacy that leads to dread. With the threat of war, economic turmoil, a virus that won't go away, and a polarized political world, it would be easy to simply accept the dark cloud and give up hope for the light of the sun to ever break upon us again.

The basic Christian conviction of primordial goodness can and should sustain us in times such as these. But it is all too easy to lose this perspective. The twisted state of things has a way of eclipsing what we know to be true: that life itself—and the very life with which each of us is alive—is God's gift.

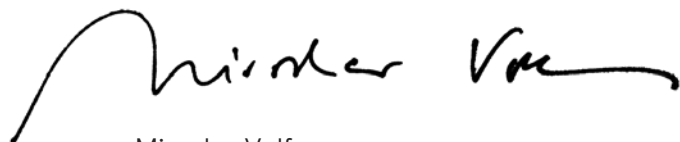
Even through the dark cloud, small rays of light are shining upon us. Can we see them? How many times do we ignore glistening gems of life—mere inconsequential fire-flies, we think—and instead focus on the darkness that envelopes us? I think of the late-tenth-century Japanese poet Izumi Shikibu's short verse (translated by Jane Hirshfield):

Although the wind  
blows terribly here,  
the moonlight also leaks  
between the roof planks  
of this ruined house.

For the past year, we have been attending to those rays of light, identifying them, appreciating them, drawing attention of others to them. It's my honor to present an overview of our work at the Yale Center for Faith & Culture in 2021.

Thank you for the light you bring. Thank you for your friendship and support.

Yours,



Miroslav Volf

Director, Yale Center for Faith & Culture

Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology, Yale Divinity School



# “I wrestle not against flesh and blood.”



**David Dark**  
American writer and cultural critic  
Assistant Professor of Religion and the Arts, Belmont University





# Christ & Flourishing

## Highlights

- Seven new Christ & Being Human courses were taught by our current Pedagogy Fellows in the US, the UK, and Switzerland. This spring 2022, as our grant enters its third and final year, two additional courses will be taught.
- On June 2-3, 2022, we will host 25-30 Christian scholars and pastors representing a diversity of colleges, universities, and seminaries, as well as a small number of churches—each of them preparing a syllabus, outlines, and development plan to implement a Christ & Being Human-style course at their institution. Faculty from Azusa Pacific University, Wheaton College, Eastern University's Prison Education Program, Fuller Theological Seminary, Loyola University of New Orleans, Virginia Union University, and others will join us.
- Miroslav and Ryan submitted *The Home of God: A Brief Story of Everything* in October 2021, for publication in August 2022. To check out the book, [click here](#).

## The Home of GOD

A BRIEF STORY OF EVERYTHING

Miroslav Volf

Ryan  
McAnnally-Linz

**“My imagination is being stretched as I consider what Christian higher education can and should be.”**

Sara Schumacher  
St. Mellitus College, London, UK



**“As a trained biblical scholar working in a Historically Black Theological Institute, engagement in the project has only buttressed and crystalized my pedagogical orientation related to teaching biblical studies that strives towards Christian spiritual formation.”**

Jamal-Dominique Hopkins  
Dickerson-Green Theological Seminary



**“The courses we’ve created and principles we’ve drafted provide honest clarity for institutions that may have drifted and at the same time signal a direction back through a radical return to Jesus-focused pedagogy.”**

Matt Smith  
Azusa Pacific University



**“Zoom and our pedagogy fellows have taught me something about presence this past year; while nothing can replace the experience of being physically present to one another, watching a real community form amongst our pedagogy fellows has helped me to see that the possibility of being present—emotionally, intellectually, spiritually—to one another can be realized even when we aren’t present physically.”**

**Drew Collins**

Associate Research Scholar /  
Director, Christ & Flourishing Program



EPIISODE 45 / Christian Witness in Turbulent  
Times / Miroslav Volf & Mike Cosper



**“Once a person has done evil, they have destroyed a significant part of themselves. They have made that turn towards non-being, non-existence, chaos, disorder, and loss.**

**And so when you execute a person who has already done that kind of moral damage to themselves, not to mention all the damage they’ve done to other people, but at that point, the only thing remaining in them is the good, which is that this is a human being, alive and made in the image of the living God.**

**And so at that point, that’s all they have. And you’re destroying it.”**



**Elizabeth Bruenig**  
Journalist, *The Atlantic*

# Life Worth Living



## Highlights

- **Life Worth Living at Yale:** We taught 101 students in seven seminar sections of Life Worth Living, and Matt taught 18 first-years in his Education & the Life Worth Living course.
- **Life Worth Living Book.** Miroslav Volf, Matt Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz completed a book to bring the Life Worth Living approach to a general readership. It will be published in early 2023 by Penguin.
- **Dent the Future.** Matt Croasmun and Evan Rosa took Life Worth Living on the road to Santa Fe, New Mexico, speaking at Dent the Future Conference in October.
- **Life Worth Living Educators Cohort.** More than 25 educators from nine schools across Connecticut gathered at Grace Farms for a two-day intensive workshop with projects ranging from designing new courses, transforming advising curricula, renewing a theology department, and reimagining a capstone year around LWL questions. Hundreds of secondary students will be impacted for years to come.
- **Grace Farms Life Worth Living Course.** Two cohorts of 20-25 participants from across the country (and a few overseas) dug into the LWL questions in light of the world's religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions in this seven-week course. Weekly discussions happen synchronously over Zoom, facilitated by readings and asynchronous lectures between meetings. Interested? [Click here for more.](#)



## Student Perspective

**“This class is one of the best classes I’ve taken at Yale... Articulating my vision of a life worth living was an incredibly orienting experience, and perhaps one of the most important things I’m taking away from my time at Yale.”**

Yale Life Worth Living Student  
Spring 2021

## YCFC Staff



**Ryan McAnnally-Linz**  
Associate Director



**Evan Rosa**  
Assistant Director for Public Engagement



**Karin Fransen**  
Senior Administrative Assistant

Book Sneak Peek

# The Hunger for Home: Food & Meals in the Gospel of Luke

Forthcoming in 2022 from Baylor University Press

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The hunger for home sums up our hearts' deepest longings. Temporally, this hunger seems to pull us in both directions at once. Home is the object of nostalgia (The Wizard of Oz's "there's no place like home") and yet also the focus of our most imaginative hopes (West Side Story's "Somewhere"). Whether we're trying to find our way back home or convinced that we're looking for a home we've never known, the longing for home captures this orientation of the human heart: "back" to a past yet to be realized, "forward" to become what we've always been intended to be from the beginning. The hunger for home is return and advent intertwined. It is memory and imagination. Restoration and transformation. Creation and consummation. As such, it captures both the "backward" and "forward" of the Christian tradition. Home is what grounds the entire trajectory from Eden to the New Jerusalem: the world at home in having become the home of God.

Yet, as the saying goes, the path to the human heart is through the stomach. There are perhaps few stronger memories of home, few things that can bring us more intimately back to our homes of origin than the smell of a favorite food. Even one whiff can bring to mind a whole set of relations that extend beyond any food or any one meal but are at the same time evoked by and implicated in any meal that took place there.

Luke's prodigal's return is driven by a literal hunger for home. His desire to return begins with a hunger so profound that

he longed even to eat the food he was feeding the pigs. The memory of the way his father provided ample food even for the workers triggers a powerful desire to return to the father's home. Sure enough, when the prodigal returns home, he is greeted with a meal. As much as it is effected in his father's embrace and gift of a ring, the prodigal's return is realized also in his nostrils, in the familiar smell of home cooking. The return home is sealed in a meal: in the tastes, smells, physical touch, companionship, and relations with all those who belong to this home, in sharing the fruits of this particular land, cared for and cultivated by these people, at the invitation of the father whose embrace constitutes this extravagant home.

The claim here, if we have ears to hear, is this: the home of God, too, is enacted in a meal. There are tastes and smells of the home of God. As Luke presents him, Jesus is the herald of the home of God, made known in his invitation to the table.



**Matthew Croasmun**

Associate Research Scholar /  
Director, Life Worth Living Program



**Miroslav Volf**

Director, Yale Center for Faith & Culture /  
Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic  
Theology, Yale Divinity School



**“We are  
creatures in  
time.”**



**Reverend Tish Harrison Warren**

Anglican priest, *New York Times* Columnist



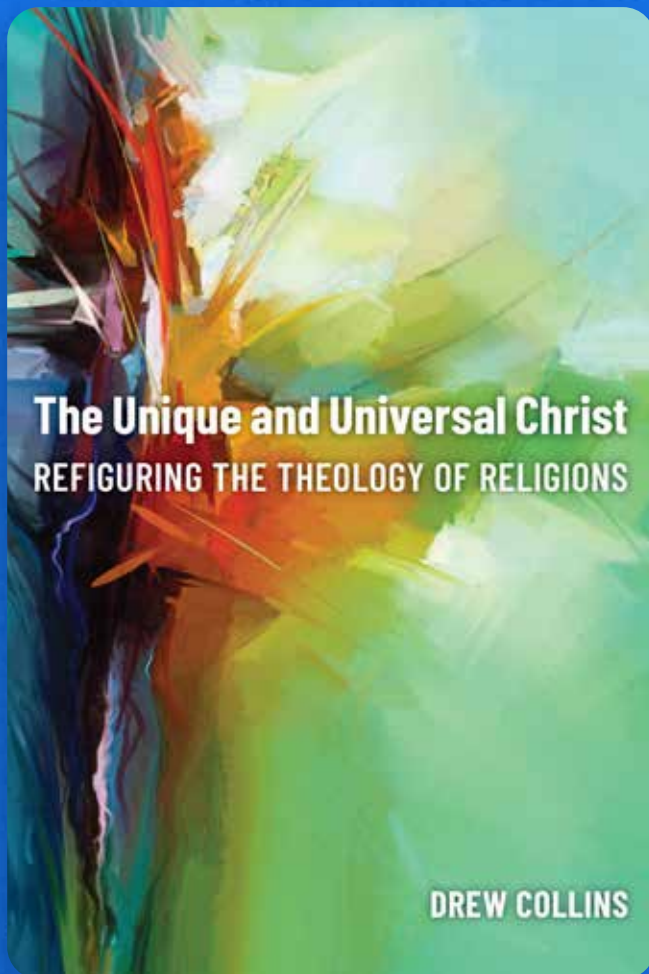
# Public Engagement

## Highlights

- We produced 56 episodes of the For the Life of the World Podcast, generating 125,000 downloads
- 58,758 pageviews and 26,070 unique visitors to *faith.yale.edu*
- Miroslav Volf appeared in 42 remote speaking engagements, invited lectures, or interviews, in addition to YCFC's teaching and media offering



## Featured Book



### *The Unique & Universal Christ: Refiguring the Theology of Religions*

Drew Collins's *The Unique and Universal Christ: Refiguring the Theology of Religions* came out through Baylor University Press in November 2021. To check out the book, [click here](#). David F. Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus, University of Cambridge says of the book: "Collins ... shows how his approach both illuminates the Christian ecumenical movement's significant engagements with other religions during the past century, and also opens up constructive, generous, and humble ways in which Christians can both be true to Jesus Christ and also relate wisely to those in other religious traditions."



Krista Tippett & Miroslav Volf recording their podcast conversation / EPISODE 58 / Befriending Reality: Engaging Otherness with Hospitality, Artfulness, and Particularity at Depth (March 6, 2021)



We're grateful for your friendship and support. As we look forward we're hopeful and resolved to remain faithful to our founding purpose of helping people envision and pursue lives worthy of our humanity.

**[faith.yale.edu/give](https://faith.yale.edu/give)**



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