

JOSEF SYKORA

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Teacher. Pastor. Administrator

A. WORK EXPERIENCE

2024–present **Dean of the School of Theology and Northeastern Seminary**, Roberts Wesleyan University, Rochester, NY

As the dean of the school, I am responsible for all internal and external matters related to governing the school of theology.

Notable achievements:

- Served on an Academic Cabinet that oversees the academic side of the University
- Participated in the team overseeing the merger between Northeastern Seminary and Roberts Wesleyan University
- Oversaw two focused visits related to the merger (ATS, MSCHE)
- Participated in the Steering Committee aimed at embedding the Seminary within the University's structured, policies, and procedures.
- Spearheaded two national searches for new professors (New Testament and Practical Theology)
- Organized a team that applied for and received a \$1M grant concerning the implementation of virtual reality in online education (Lilly Endowment Inc.)
- Led a team that applied for and received a \$10M grant concerning the restructuring of theological education within the Free Methodist Church (Lilly Endowment Inc.)

2020–present **Associate Professor of Biblical Interpretation**, Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY (tenured May 2020)

2015–2021 **Director, Doctor of Ministry Program**, Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY.

In addition to overseeing the program, I developed its assessment plan, recruited new advisors, and began an annual colloquium of selected dissertations. The program doubled in size during these six years.

2015–2020 **Assistant Professor of Biblical Interpretation**, Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY

2011–2015 **Senior pastor**, Cirkev bratská, Bratislava, Slovakia

In addition to the normal responsibility of a senior pastor of a 300+ member church, I was heavily involved in several activities started by this local church, such as two elementary schools, a high school, a house for elderly, and a

facility for people with special needs. The former pastor and I also started to offer quarterly silent retreats focused on *lectio divina* and contemplation. I also started a biannual academic workshops and retreats, aimed at equipping pastors and leaders from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary.

2006–2015 **Missionary, responsible for theological education**, Free Methodist World Missions, Indianapolis, IN

In this role, I frequently traveled to European countries with Free Methodist presence where I mentored local church leaders and missionaries and taught them classes focused on biblical interpretation.

2006–2011 **Associate Pastor**, Cirkev bratská, Bratislava, Slovakia

Besides developing and overseeing a ministry for adolescents and teenagers, I was tasked with a ministry of spiritual direction and coaching for Christians and non-Christians seeking spiritual counsel.

1997–2001 **Lecturer**, Czech student ministry, Brno, Czech Republic

In the indigenous campus ministry, which I joined even before my University studies, I was involved in evangelism, discipleship, and eventually leadership responsibilities in the local city chapter.

B. TEACHING EXPERIENCE (most classes taught both onsite and online)

- **Biblical Interpretation**
 - Introduction to Biblical Exegesis
 - Genesis 37–50
 - Numbers
 - Deuteronomy
 - Joshua
 - 1 Samuel
 - Wisdom Literature
 - Psalms
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - James
- **Biblical Languages**
 - Hebrew I + II
 - Greek I
- **Historical Theology**
 - Relevant theological ideas from the first 1,500 years
 - Relevant theological ideas from the Reformation era
- **Research and Methodology**
 - Introduction to Qualitative Research
 - Literature Review
 - Foundations in Biblical and Theological Research
 - Advanced Biblical and Theological Research
- **Homiletics**

- o Preaching
- **Custom Classes**
 - o The Courage to Be Human (exploring the issue of human vulnerability and limitedness from biblical and pastoral perspectives, co-taught with Mandy Smith; DMin level)

C. EDUCATION

- 2016 **Durham University**, Department of Theology and Religion, Durham, UK
 - PhD in Old Testament
 - Thesis: “The Unfavored: Judah and Saul in the Narratives of Genesis and 1 Samuel.” Supervisor: R. Walter L. Moberly
- 2006 **Asbury Theological Seminary**, Wilmore, KY
 - MA in Biblical Studies
 - MA in Theological Studies
 - o Award for Excellence in Biblical Studies
 - o Member of Eta Beta Rho, Hebrew Society
 - o Member of Theta Phi, Theological-Philosophical Society (president of Asbury chapter, 2005-2006)
- 2002 **Schloss Mittersill Study Centre**, Mittersill, Austria
 - Diploma in Christian Studies
- 1997 **Masaryk University**, Brno, Czech Republic
 - Master’s in Law (MGR)

D. RESEARCH INTERESTS

Most of my academic and popular work revolves around these questions:

- How may Christians conceive fruitful and faithful biblical interpretation? (Theological Interpretation of Scripture)
- How may we make sense of God’s favoritism? (Theology of Election)
- How may we illuminate the problematic aspect of God’s violence? (Violence in the Bible)

E. PUBLICATIONS

Academic Books

Coping with the God Who Plays Favorites. Baker Academic (under contract). Explorations in the biblical theology of election with ramifications for the contemporary life of faith.

The Unfavored: Judah and Saul in the Narratives of Genesis and 1 Samuel. Siphrut 25. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018.

The Unfavored was reviewed by:

Nicol, George G. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43.5 (2019): 154.
Cartledge, Tony W. *Review of Biblical Literature* 8/8/2019.
Harger, Adam. *Expository Times* 130.10 (2019): 472–473.
Curtis, Tony. *Journal of Theological Studies* 71.2 (2020): 814–816.
Wénin, André. *Revue théologique de Louvain* 52.2 (2021): 286–87.

Trade Books

Numeri (Numbers). Everyday series. Prague: Biblion, 2025. A commentary, written in Czech for the series focused on making the biblical text accessible to dominantly secular audience.

With Daniel Pastirčák. *Boží strom zla (God’s Tree of Evil)*. Bratislava: Calder, 2014. A collection of sermons approaching the opening chapters of Genesis and Jesus’s parables as riddles unlocking key concepts of our present reality. Written in Czech and Slovak.

Academic Book Chapters

“David’s Shadow in the Rejection of Saul: A Hermeneutical Thought-Experiment in 1 Samuel 13–15.” Pages 199–218 in *Topics of Theology of the Hebrew Scripture, Volume 2*. Edited by Soo Kim Sweeney, David Frankel, and Marvin A. Sweeney. SBL Press, 2024.

“Deuteronomy.” Pages 171–213 in *Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary*. Edited by Corneliu Constantineanu and Peter Penner. Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2022.

Trade Book Chapters

“Ako tvoriť svet bez múrov” (How to Create the World without Walls). Pages 165–174 in *Generácie veriacich (The Generations of Believers)*. Bratislava: Porta Libri, 2024.

Journal Articles

“A Different Kind of War: Deuteronomy 20:10–14 and Luke 10:1–24 in Dialogue” *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 18.2 (2024): 171–190.

“Where Are My Roots? Reading Jeremiah 17:5–10 with Karl Rahner,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 18.1 (2024): 3–21.

“Only Be like the Philistine Priests! A Comparison of the Philistines’ Offering in 1 Sam 6 and the Sacrificial Actions of Eli’s House in 1 Sam 2–4,” *Vetus Testamentum* 69.4–5 (2019): 702–721.

“Mission that Transforms: Joseph’s Development in Genesis 37–50,” *Canadian Theological Review* 4.2 (2015): 11–18.

Book Reviews

Benjamin D. Giffone, 'Sit at My Right Hand': The Chronicler's Portrait of the Tribe of Benjamin in the Social Context of Yehud, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 28.1 (2021): 57–59.

John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie, Sleuthing the Bible: Clues that Unlock the Mysteries of the Text, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 27.2 (2020): 255–257.

Isaac Kalimi, Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel, *AJS Review* 44.1 (2020): 187–189.

L. Daniel Hawk, The Violence of the Biblical God, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 26.4 (2019): 642–644.

F. PRESENTATIONS

Academic Presentations

2025 "Psalm 78: The Riddle about Election." SBL Annual Meeting. Theology of Hebrew Scriptures Section. Boston. November 22, 2025.

 "Between the Dead and the Living: The Theology of Priesthood in Numbers 16–17." SBL Annual Meeting. The Christian Theology and Bible Section. Boston. November 22, 2025.

2024 "Serving Higher Authority: The Impact of the Canonical Ordering on Joseph's Actions toward the Egyptians in Genesis 41–47." SBL Annual Meeting. The Genesis Section. San Diego, November 23.

2023 "The Value of Being Emotional: Joseph's Vulnerability in Genesis 42–50." SBL Annual Meeting. The Genesis Section. San Antonio, November 19.

 "Between the Dead and the Living: The Role of Priesthood in Numbers 16–17." CATA Conference. Toronto, May 28.

 "The Crucial and Unknowable Heart." Bible, Mission, and Context in Central and Eastern Europe. Prague, March 3.

2022 "Where Are My Roots? Reading Jeremiah 17:5–10 with Karl Rahner." Virtual EGLBS, March 18.

2021 "Hope for Dogs: The Syrophoenician Woman in Mark 7:24–30 as the Unchosen Who Saves Her Children." SBL Annual Meeting. The Gospel of Mark Section, San Antonio, November 22.

 "Like Fish in an Evil Net: Ecclesiastes 9:11–12 and Coping with Unfavorable Circumstances." SBL Annual Meeting. The Bible and Practical Theology Section, San Antonio, November 20.

“Like Fish in an Evil Net: Ecclesiastes 9:11–12 and Coping with Unfavorable Circumstances.” Virtual EGLBS, March 18.

2020 “A Different Kind of Crusade: Jesus’s Commissioning of His Disciples in Luke 10:1–24 as the Reworking of the Rules for Warfare in Deuteronomy 20:10–14.” Virtual SBL Annual Meeting, The Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible Section, December 2.

2019 “The Sword of God’s Judgment: Romans 13:1–7 and the Song of Moses.” SBL Annual Meeting, The Intertextuality in the New Testament Section. San Diego, November 25.

“Honoring the God of the Ark: Comparing the Ritual Actions of the Philistines (1 Sam 6) with Those of Eli’s House (1 Sam 2–4).” SBL Annual Meeting, The Books of Samuel Section. San Diego, November 24.

“Who Bears the Sword? Romans 13:1–7 and the Song of Moses.” EGLBS. Akron, OH, March 14.

2018 “David’s Shadow in Saul’s Rejection: A Hermeneutical Thought-Experiment in 1 Samuel 13–15.” SBL Annual Meeting, The Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures Section. Denver, November 18.

“Judah’s Rewriting of Israel’s Tradition: The Composition of Genesis 37–50 and the Concept of Election.” Institute for Biblical Research, The Pentateuch Section. Denver, November 16.

“Only Be like the Philistine Priests! A Comparison of the Philistine Offering in 1 Sam 6 and the Sacrificial Actions of the Elides in 1 Sam 2–4.” EGLBS. Akron, OH, March 16.

2017 “David’s Shadow in Saul’s Rejection: A Hermeneutical Thought-Experiment in 1 Samuel 13–15.” EGLBS. Akron, OH, March 17.

2016 “The Mission of Joseph, the Character of God: Joseph’s Development in Genesis 37–50.” Participating in God’s Mission Conference. Northeastern Seminary, March 19.

2015 “Like King, Like Priest: Eli’s and Saul’s Rejection in 1 Samuel.” Durham Old Testament Seminar. Durham, UK, March 3.

Selected Lectures and Workshops

2024 “On Protecting Sabbath.” Undergraduate chapel talk. Roberts Wesleyan University.

“Prisoners of Hope.” Convocation speech. Roberts Wesleyan University.

“Narrative Theology and Ethics: The Role of Narrative in Discipleship.” Workshop for religion and ethics teachers at a bilingual high school in Bratislava, Slovakia.

“Reading Joshua as Watching Movies.” Workshop for lay leaders. Bratislava, Slovakia.

“How the New Testament Reads the Old Testament: Lessons in Intertextuality.” Workshop for small group members of the local chapter of the Navigators movement. Bratislava, Slovakia.

“Tested by the Spirit: Luke 4:1–13 and the Power of Discipline.” Workshop for Free Methodist pastors, Rochester, NY.

2023 “The Power of Poetic Storytelling” With Jae Newman. Workshop exploring the role of storytelling and poetry for post-secular audience. Rebuild conference. Rochester, NY.

“Individual and Collective Responsibility” Workshop for religion and ethics teachers at a bilingual high school in Bratislava, Slovakia.

“The Bible and Homosexuality” Online workshop for religion and ethics teachers at a bilingual high school in Bratislava, Slovakia.

2022 “Voices from the Past: Spiritual Nourishment and Direction among Desert Fathers and Mothers.” Online workshop for religion and ethics teachers at a bilingual high school in Bratislava, Slovakia.

2021 “1 Samuel as Christian Scripture.” Online lecture and discussion for South African Theological Seminary.

2019 “Introduction to Pentateuch” Two-day retreat for pastors from American Baptist Churches. Syracuse, NY.

G. SKILLS

Fluent in Czech, Slovak, and English

Reading knowledge of Hebrew, *Koine* Greek, and German

H. CHURCH AFFILIATION

Ordained in Cirkev bratská, Slovakia

Ordination transferred to the Free Methodist Church of North America

I. PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

Editorial board of the Canadian-American Theological Review since 2019
Member of the Canadian-American Theological Association since 2019
Member of the Institute for Biblical Research since 2018
Member of the Society of Biblical Literature since 2013

J. TRAINING

ATS school for new deans (December 2024)
A weeklong ATS workshop for mid-career faculty (May 2021)

I. ECCLESIAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Member of the interviewing ordination board of the Genesis Conference of the Free Methodist Church
Frequent pulpit supply preacher
Interviewed on podcasts in Czech, Slovak, and English