

Dr. Brad R. Braxton

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Brad R. Braxton is President and Professor of Public Theology at Chicago Theological Seminary, a progressive graduate school of theology known for its leadership in social justice and interfaith engagement. He is also the Founding Senior Pastor of The Open Church, an inclusive congregation in Baltimore, Maryland committed to social activism, LGBTQ+ equality, and interfaith collaboration.

He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament studies from Emory University, where he was a George W. Woodruff Fellow, a master's degree in theology from the University of Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and a B.A. degree in religious studies from the University of Virginia, where he was a Jefferson Scholar and a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Dr. Braxton is the author of five scholarly books exploring the intersection of religion and social justice, including two books appearing in 2023. Fortress Press published in 2023 *Open: Unorthodox Thoughts on God and Community*, a collection of Dr. Braxton's essays and sermons examining religion from a progressive perspective. Beacon Press published in 2023 *A Master Class on Being Human: A Black Christian and A Black Secular Humanist on Religion, Race, and Justice*, which Dr. Braxton co-authored with the noted secular humanist Dr. Anthony Pinn. This book explores the differences and similarities between black religious and black secular communities in the ongoing struggle for social justice. Additionally, Dr. Braxton's books *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience* and *Preaching Paul* are frequently used in divinity school and seminary courses.

Dr. Braxton is also a seasoned educator who has held professorships at Southern Methodist University, Vanderbilt University, and Wake Forest University, as well as lectureships at Georgetown University, Harvard Divinity School, and McCormick Theological Seminary. His leadership has extended beyond the academy to cultural, philanthropic, and religious organizations. He formerly served as the Director of the Center for the Study of African American Religious Life at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, the Program Officer for Religion in the Public Sphere at the Ford Foundation in New York City, the Senior Minister of the Riverside Church in New York City, and the Senior Pastor of Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

As a testament to his expertise in interfaith collaboration, the Smithsonian Institution selected Dr. Braxton in 2020 as the Senior Program Advisor for [*Creative Encounters: Living Religions in the United States*](#), the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The Smithsonian Institution hosted in 2023 a multifaceted program on the National Mall in Washington, DC, which examined the diverse tapestry of religious communities and experiences in the United States. The two-week festival attracted more than 100,000 people to the National Mall. Dr. Braxton conceptualized major themes for the program and wrote a successful grant proposal in 2020 to the Lilly Endowment, which received \$1.5 million to support the festival.

Dr. Braxton is an ordained Baptist minister and a highly sought-after lecturer and preacher. In 2007, he preached at Westminster Abbey in London, England. His Westminster Abbey sermon on justice and non-violence was part of the bicentennial commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. He has also preached and lectured in Benin, Canada, Ghana, and South Africa.

His wife, Lazetta Rainey Braxton, is a nationally recognized Certified Financial Planner and Co-Founder and Co-CEO of 2050 Wealth Partners, a firm that provides wealth management and comprehensive financial planning. They are the proud parents of a daughter, Karis, a creative and inquisitive college student who loves to dance and draw. The Braxtons also enjoy the company of Sampson, their Labrador Retriever/Terrier.