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The Reverend Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson becomes President of Auburn Seminary

After an 11-month search, the leadership of this historic institution
transfers with grace, love, and joy.

NEW YORK, NY - Auburn Seminary is pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Dr. Emma Jordan-Simpson as our new president. She succeeds the Rev. Dr. Katharine Henderson, Auburn's 10th president, who began [stewarding this transition](#) with Auburn's Board of Directors in November 2020.

"We knew when we launched the nationwide search for Auburn's next President we would receive strong interest for such an exciting leadership opportunity. The inundation of interest in both number and quality of candidates from social justice and faith-based communities was invigorating," said **Mary Byron**, Auburn Seminary Board Chair and co-chair of the search committee. "The Board and I thank Katharine for 28 years guiding Auburn and twelve years as our president, and for bringing Auburn to the edge of what is possible for a truly multifaith, multiracial movement for justice. We are absolutely thrilled to welcome Emma, whose professional and personal life is shaped by the intersection of, and relationship to, faith and social justice."

Previously, Rev. Jordan-Simpson served as the Executive Director of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR USA), the US branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Under Rev. Jordan-Simpson's leadership, FOR USA built capacity to strengthen relationships with local chapters and affiliates; launched a new fellowship for emerging leaders; made a critically important investment in its own mission in the form of a new board-controlled fund; and deepened its work with the IFOR branches around the world to make a just peace the new normal.

As Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York, she worked with advocates to name and address New York's cradle to prison pipeline crisis, closing abusive detention centers and redirecting resources back into community. She was the founding Executive Director of Girls Incorporated of New York City, and Executive Vice President of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

"Answering the call of this moment is an honor," said **Rev. Jordan-Simpson**. "Auburn, both the institution and the people, have shaped me; and we share the commitment to practice multifaith leadership, justice, and deep relationship. I am excited to find ways for Auburn to

grow with care and integrity to heal historic wounds, and move closer to the ideals of democracy where we share the responsibility of welcoming all.”

“It feels just right, a true calling of the Spirit,” said **Rev. Dr. Katharine R. Henderson**. “I have known Emma for decades since I had the pleasure of admitting her to Union Theological Seminary when I was Associate Dean of Students there. As a member of Auburn’s inaugural Sojourner Truth Leadership Circle cohort, she has both shaped our trajectory and been shaped by our programs for incredible leaders like her. Emma will bring fresh leadership, wisdom, and deep experience to this moment in our 200-year-plus history. I trust her! I also appreciate the work of the Auburn Board in engaging in a search process with integrity and rigor. I rejoice in our new president, and I can imagine the ancestors do too!”

Kim Anderson, Auburn Board, and search committee members were looking for a leader who would be able to both hold the complexity of an organization in transition and bring forward what is possible.

“Emma is a quiet storm whose winds sweep you safely to waters you might not have been able to imagine,” she said. “Auburn has a vital role to play in bringing the expertise required to meet the moment with collective action to shared values across lines of faith, race, geography, and more. I believe everything happens for a reason and, most importantly, at the appointed time. This is the time for both Auburn and Emma to build upon Katharine’s incredible legacy and step forth into new possibilities and purpose, called in new ways that continue to emerge.”

“I am a beneficiary of Auburn’s commitments and its investments in women and in multifaith leadership,” said Rev. Jordan-Simpson. “It is a blessing to continue this lineage of building a world where no one is excluded and where we are writing a better letter to the future than the one we received. The opportunity to deepen Auburn’s capacities to keep these waters troubled in this next chapter of its unfolding story is the sacred call I am answering. As I begin today, Auburn’s work continues to unfold apace. Tomorrow, October 2, we will convene a faith coalition flanking the Rallies for Abortion Justice in DC and across the US, and later this month on October 14, we will share key learnings from nearly a year of research with communities exploring ‘what it means to belong to each other.’ I could not be more ecstatic!”

Rev. Jordan-Simpson was ordained by The Concord Baptist Church of Christ, a historic freedom faith congregation in Brooklyn, NY. She is a graduate of Fisk University (BA double major – Religious and Philosophical Studies and Music, cum laude); Union Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity), and Drew Theological Seminary (Doctor of Ministry). She is the President of the Board of American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York and serves on the Board of Directors of the FPWA.

She and her husband, the Rev. Dr. Gary V. Simpson, live in Brooklyn and are the proud parents of three amazing adult children.

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