



### **Three New Members Join the Forum for Theological Exploration's Board of Trustees**

**ATLANTA (October 22, 2021)** -- The Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) is pleased to announce the election of Mr. Ernest Brooks, Rev. John Helmiere, and Rev. Aracelis Vazquez-Haye to its [Board of Trustees](#).

"FTE will greatly benefit from each of these new leaders' unique experiences and talents as we move into a new iteration of our work to inspire faithful leadership," said FTE President Stephen Lewis. "We look forward to collaborating with them on building a new way forward for the church and the academy."

FTE's Board of Trustees is responsible for governing and advancing the organization's mission to cultivate diverse young adults to be faithful, wise, and courageous leaders for the church and academy. Elected by the [Association of Theological Schools \(ATS\)](#), FTE trustees serve three-year terms that can be renewed up to two times.

**Mr. Ernest Brooks** is a managing associate at Isaacson, Miller, one of the nation's leading retained executive search firms, where he also serves as co-lead of the firm's social justice + advocacy practice area. His practice as an executive search consultant is informed by the diversity of his leadership experiences spanning a broad range of mission-driven institutions. Mr. Brooks has successfully recruited presidents, chief executives, c-suite and senior functional and program leaders for organizations across sectors including higher education, k-12 education, and youth development, faith-related organizations, social justice + advocacy, and philanthropy/collective impact.

Prior to joining Isaacson, Miller, Mr. Brooks served as president and CEO of Academy of Preachers, Inc., a national ecumenical vocational discernment and development organization for young people exploring pathways in and refining their gifts for ministry. He previously served as special assistant to the CEO of The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change and as assistant dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College, among other roles. In addition, he was a Higher Education Fellow for Graduate Diversity Initiatives at the University of Chicago.

A passionate advocate for effective social-sector leadership, he has served on governance and advisory boards for several national and local organizations including Interfaith Community Initiatives, Southern Initiative Algebra Project, Rural School and Community Trust, and Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership honor society. Additionally, Mr. Brooks has led consulting engagements with numerous organizations in the areas of mission and vision development, strategic planning, program design and launch, organizational governance, and change management.

Mr. Brooks is a proud alumnus of Morehouse College, Duke University, and The University of Chicago.

**Rev. John Helmiere** is the founding pastor of Valley & Mountain, a mystical-subversive church based in south Seattle, and he serves as co-convener alongside Rev. Osagyefo Sekou. He is also the co-founder and former executive director of The Collaboratory, a progressive organizing incubator and arts space in Seattle. Born and raised in Tampa, Rev. Helmiere studied religion, philosophy, and physics as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College, and went on to receive an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, where he was awarded the Tweedy Prize in 2010.

As an FTE Ministry Fellow, he visited eight progressive, innovative churches around the country, which was a crucial part of his preparation process before planning Valley & Mountain in 2010. On multiple occasions over the past decade, Rev. Helmiere has created and led workshops and facilitated learning labs at FTE events. He strongly believes in the mission and the efficacy of FTE.

Rev. Helmiere has been formed by a vast array of mentors, friends, activists, artists, intentional communities, and sidewalk saints. He is constantly being educated by his two daughters, Charis and Juniper, and his wife Frederica, a scholar who works at the intersection of spirituality, ecology, and international relations. He is an activist and organizer involved in many movements and was the founding chairperson of the Interfaith Economic Justice Coalition. Rev. Helmiere has also been a fellow with the Beatitudes Society and the Louisville Institute.

**Rev. Aracelis Vázquez Haye** is the project manager for the Network of Theological Entities (ReDET) at the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH). Prior to this role, she served as the director of The Yale Youth Ministry Institute, college chaplain at Connecticut College, and associate pastor at Church of the City, New London, Connecticut (Iglesia de la Ciudad).

Rev. Haye is an ordained American Baptist minister. She has had the honor to serve in the academy and the local church. Her work with youth and young adults within the church, community, and on college campuses helped form community-wide coalitions on justice projects that addressed issues of immigration, education inequality, homelessness, racial injustices, and violence. She has taught courses on community engagement, diversity, and social justice and youth ministry at St. John's University, Connecticut College, Three Rivers Community College and Yale University's Youth Ministry Institute.

She holds a Master of Divinity from Yale University, and a master's in education from Loyola University of Chicago. Her work and passion for theological education and social and prophetic justice are the fuel that drives her to learn more, serve others, and to lead with action.

**About Forum for Theological Exploration**

The Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) is committed to cultivating diverse young adults to be faithful, wise, and courageous leaders for the church and the academy. FTE provides resources and a forum for young adults and students to explore their purpose and call to pastoral ministry and teaching.

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