

# Perkins School of Theology to launch Fresh Expressions House of Studies

BY NAKOYA LOUCKS

Perkins School of Theology Southern Methodist University is preparing to launch a transformative new program, the Fresh Expressions House of Studies, on June 1, 2025. The initiative is designed to provide innovative theological education that equips students to lead ministries both inside and outside traditional church settings.



**Michael Beck**, a trailblazer in the Fresh Expressions movement in North America, has been appointed as the program's inaugural director. The Perkins faculty approved the initiative in December 2024.

Begun in 2003 by the Methodist Church of Britain and the Church of England, Fresh Expressions is a creative, interdenominational movement that shares the gospel and builds communities in unconventional spaces. From dog parks to EV charging stations, local pubs to assisted living centers, these ministries aim to reach those who may feel hurt, harmed, or marginalized by traditional church experiences.

“This represents a paradigm shift in theological education — offering a traditional seminary experience while creating a dynamic space for reimagining ministry and leadership for a new generation,” said Beck.

“This program will build on Perkins’ legacy of equipping faithful leaders, expanding the vision to embrace new, transformative forms of ministry that serve the present age. Students will learn how to lead church plants that are organic and innovative, which may never take place in church buildings but will reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.”

The Fresh Expressions House of Studies will create a network of students, faculty, and community leaders exploring new approaches to ministry. Students will engage in spiritual formation, mentorship, internships, and real-world ministry practice in nontraditional settings. Program leaders are also working to develop specialized courses and an academic concentration related to Fresh Expressions for Master of Divinity students.

Dean *ad interim* Hugo Magallanes emphasized the program’s alignment with Perkins’ Wesleyan heritage. “In a time of uncertainty about the future of the church at large, Fresh Expressions reclaims a distinctive Wesleyan

emphasis,” Magallanes said. “The Fresh Expressions House of Studies will allow us to reach students seeking rigorous theological education while inspiring creative approaches to sharing the gospel.”

Beck, an ordained United Methodist clergy, brings extensive experience to this role. He has consulted with hundreds of churches, denominations, and networks, and

currently oversees contextual church planting as director of Fresh Expressions UM at Path 1/Discipleship Ministries. Beck holds a Doctor of Ministry in semiotics and future studies from George Fox University, a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary, and is completing a PhD in sociology at the University of Florida.



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