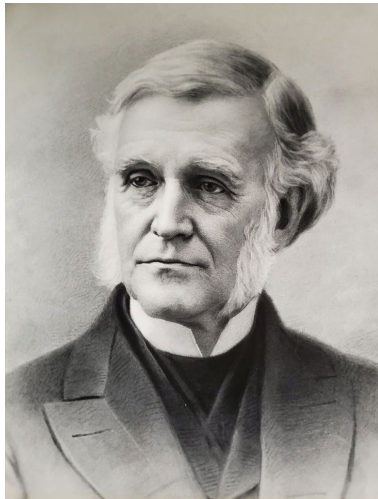


Deans of the Divinity School

An exhibit at the Yale Divinity Library, 2022 March-October
Italicized text is from *"This Grand Errand": A Bicentennial History of Yale Divinity School* (YDS, 2022) by Ray Waddle.

George Edward Day 1888-1895



In the early years after the Divinity School was established in 1822, there were no deans. According to statute, the Yale president of the time (Jeremiah Day, 1817-1846, then Theodore Dwight Woolsey, 1846-1871) presided over YDS faculty meetings but the faculty were left to fend for themselves in the realms of finance and administration. As the School consolidated, it became clear that its own head was needed, so longtime faculty member George Edward Day was appointed as the first dean in 1888. He was 63 years old at the time and served until he was 80.

Born in Massachusetts in 1815, Day came to Yale College (1833 BA) at age fourteen, taught at a disabilities school in New York for two years, then entered YDS, graduating in 1838. Within a year he had a role in the drama of the Amistad and its captive slaves languishing in a New Haven jail. Day, along with a small group of YDS students, taught the captives English during their year of incarceration so that they could make their case for innocence in a U.S. court of law.

Day soon after became a Congregational minister in Massachusetts before heading to Ohio to teach at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. After 15 years there, he was hired at YDS as Hebrew professor in 1866, a critical period of post-war rebuilding for the School.



This miniature portrait of George Edward Day was presented by Day to his mother in 1835.

In 1891, age seventy-six, Day and his wife, Olivia Hotchkiss Day, started a missionary library at the School, hoping to stir student interest in missionary vocations. At this time there were no missions courses. Day gave himself to this work for the rest of his life – another thirteen years – donating books and cataloguing volumes at his own expense. His estate gave \$100,000 to ensure its future... The Day Missions Library, as it was later called, quickly became the largest university-based missionary library in the world.



The original Day Missions Library building was constructed in 1913 on the Divinity School campus that was on the corner of Elm Street and College Street.

George Park Fisher 1895-1901

George Park Fisher was born in Massachusetts in 1827, received a BA from Brown University, and studied at Yale Divinity School and Andover Theological Seminary, graduating from Andover in 1851. He then continued his studies in Germany before returning to Yale in 1854.

When George Park Fisher arrived at Yale in 1854 to be pastor of the College church, YDS was still housed in cramped Divinity College, the aging Nathaniel Taylor was still teaching, and the Civil War was still a mere dread hypothetical.



In 1861, the year the war broke out, Fisher became the School's first professor of church history, a post he held nearly forty years. After a half-century association with Yale, Fisher was named YDS dean in 1895, succeeding George Day and shepherding the School into the new century.

Like George Edward Day, Fisher's primary role as dean of the Divinity School was still more as a figurehead, presiding over the faculty meetings but with little involvement in fundraising or other managerial tasks.

Frank Knight Sanders 1901-1905



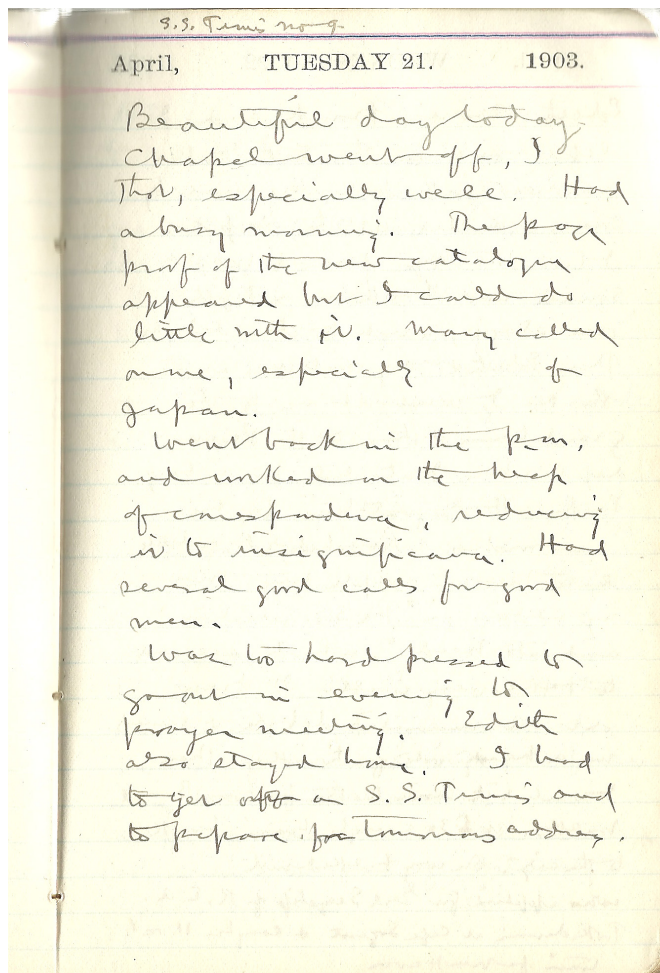
Frank Knight Sanders was born in Sri Lanka of American missionary parents. He graduated from Ripon College in Wisconsin in 1882 and then returned to Sri Lanka to teach at Jaffna College for four years. He received an MA from Ripon in 1888, a PhD from Yale in 1889, and then joined the Yale to teach Semitic languages.

He was a popular professor and YMCA convention speaker who had visions of building a great biblical languages facility someday that would bestride YDS and the College.

In 1900 Sanders was offered the presidency of Iowa College. He was ready to take it and move to Grinnell, Iowa, when Yale President Arthur Hadley let him know that he wanted him to be dean of YDS. With mixed feelings, Sanders wrote Iowa College to turn it down, saying he was being given a chance of a lifetime to pursue the task of "reorganization, reunification, and the founding of a great center of Biblical studies" as YDS dean.

That's not how it turned out. He apparently misread the evolving administrative demands on a twentieth-century dean – the expectation that he would crisply raise money in order to enhance faculty and curriculum.

Newly installed, Sanders found himself consumed not by the pursuit of a new biblical studies center but by everyday administrative duties. And he soon discovered that YDS was running a deficit, a sum that grew to \$25,000 by 1904. Building repairs further burdened the expense sheet. These cross-purposes led to a financial crisis. The man who hoped to lead YDS and Semitic languages to greater glory resigned the next year "with the keenest regret."



An excerpt from Sanders' 1903 diary describes his duties as Dean. From the [Frank Knight Sanders Papers](#) held at the Divinity Library.

Edward Lewis Curtis, Acting Dean 1905-1911

After Frank Sanders resigned as dean, the Divinity School had some trouble finding a successor for him. Edward Lewis Curtis, YDS Holmes Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature, was appointed as acting dean despite his being in somewhat fragile health.

Curtis was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1853. He transferred from Beloit College to Yale as an undergraduate, then studied at Union Theological Seminary and the University of Berlin. He taught at McCormick Theological Seminary from 1881 until he joined the YDS faculty in 1891. In 1911, shortly before a new dean was to relieve Curtis of his acting dean responsibilities, Curtis died of a heart attack at age 57.



Curtis wasn't keen to do administration – he much preferred working on his soon-to-be-acclaimed commentary on the Book of Chronicles. But he agreed to the task while YDS offered the permanent job to one candidate after another – four such offers in four months, five all together, all declining. Curtis's tenure stretched to two years, then three, finally six. These turned out to be among the most eventful in YDS history. By all accounts, despite heart condition and failing eyesight because of a stroke, Edward Curtis ushered the School into a flourishing new period.

Curtis was handed the acting dean's role at an institutional low point – enrollment in decline, the coffers nearly bare, the buildings crying out for repair. Prompted by the Corporation's offer of matching funds, Curtis immediately forged a remarkable partnership with YDS faculty, forming two teams to go in search of donors.

Then he turned to augmenting the faculty with important new appointments. By 1907, working with professors Frank Porter and Benjamin Bacon, he helped engineer historic curriculum reform that made YDS a national pacesetter. That same year, YDS signaled its shift to a nonsectarian identity.

Charles Reynolds Brown 1911-1928



Charles Reynolds Brown was born in Bethany, Virginia [now West Virginia] in 1862 and attended the University of Iowa and Boston University. He then pastored Congregational churches in Cincinnati, Boston, and Oakland, California before he was called to be Dean of Yale Divinity School in 1911.

By the time Brown retired in 1928, enrollment at YDS had more than doubled and school funds had nearly doubled. During the years of his retirement he continued to preach and write extensively. He died in 1950 in New Haven.

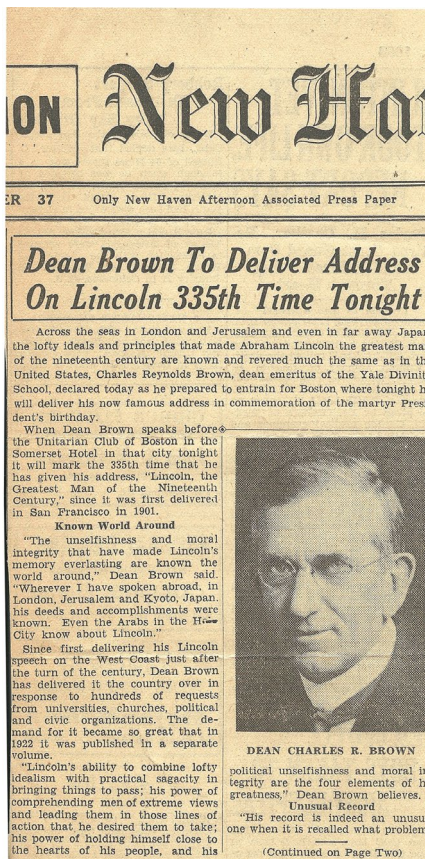
When Charles Reynolds Brown became dean in 1911, he had never held a faculty position anywhere before. He was a parish minister, a genial personality, and probably the best preacher in America. The skills he brought to YDS – homiletical, diplomatic, pragmatic – matched the needs of the moment. YDS was impatient for stability at the top (there had been no permanent dean since 1906) and eager to return to preeminence after a decade of enrollment decline and financial volatility.

Brown was resolved to expand the School's New England demographic and build a truly national student body. He had personally experienced the breadth of the nation – born in West Virginia, schooled in Iowa, accomplishing pastoral work on both coasts over the last 22 years. He was familiar with current issues, whether modernist perspectives on Christian faith or the wage struggles of working people. He lectured widely on Abraham Lincoln – on 356 public occasions – as the greatest man of the 19th century.

He came to YDS from a large Congregational church in Oakland, CA, but he was no stranger to the School. He had given the Beecher Lectures in 1906. Now he threw himself into the new work as teacher, administrator, and far-flung recruiter. During a 17-year tenure, he visited 156 colleges and universities in search of prospective students, sometimes five or six schools a week.



Dean Charles Reynolds Brown seated at center with the Divinity School faculty in 1922. Brown's successor, Luther Weigle, is in the top row, second from the left.



A newspaper article in the [Charles Reynolds Brown Papers](#) held at the Divinity Library commemorates the 365th time he delivered his lecture on Abraham Lincoln.

Luther Allan Weigle 1928-1949



Luther Allan Weigle was born on September 11, 1880 at Littlestown, Pennsylvania and prepared for college in the public schools of Altoona, where his father, Dr. Elias Daniel Weigle, was pastor of the First Lutheran Church, and in the Preparatory School of Dickinson College. He graduated from Gettysburg College in 1900 and attended the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg for two years before coming to Yale for further graduate study. After receiving his PhD from Yale, Weigle taught at Carleton College for a decade. In 1916 Weigle arrived at YDS as Bushnell Professor of Christian Nurture, then in 1924 became Sterling Professor of Religious Education, and served as Dean from 1928 to 1949.

When Luther Weigle was named dean in 1928, it marked a new era for the School. On his watch, academic standards were raised, admission requirements toughened, and the curriculum revised. Women were finally admitted for the BD degree in 1932, and Prospect Street became the site of the new Sterling Memorial Quadrangle. Weigle came to YDS with a national reputation for preparing religious educators, and he solidified the School as a preeminent place for studying the discipline.

Weigle's national profile was an asset to YDS as well. He served in leadership positions for the American Association of Theological Schools, Yale-in-China, the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Christian Education, the International Sunday School Association and the Religious Education Association, among other groups.



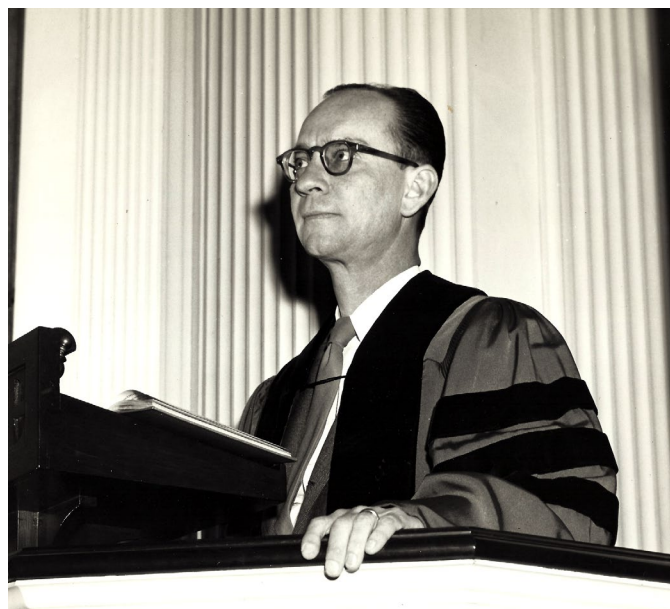
Throughout these years, Weigle was also at the center of a major undertaking in 20th century religious history, leading the effort to produce the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, much of which was centered at YDS. When the New Testament version was released in 1946, he became the public face of the new translation in newscasts and congregational celebrations nationwide.



The [Luther Allan Weigle Papers](#) held at Sterling Memorial Library consist of 60 linear feet of correspondence, articles and printed materials, reports, notes, papers, sermons, subject files, writings, and other papers.

Liston C. Pope 1949-1962

Liston Corlando Pope was born on September 6, 1909 in Thomasville, North Carolina. He was educated at Duke University (AB., 1929; BD, 1932) and Yale University (PhD, 1940). He served as pastor of churches in North Carolina and New Haven, Connecticut (1932-1938), professor of Social Ethics (1938-1973) and Dean (1949-1962) of Yale Divinity School, author and editor. He was active in the Congregational Christian Churches denomination (1850-1960) and the ecumenical movement, particularly the World Council of Churches, and in organizations involved in theological education. He died in Norway in April, 1974.



In the 1950s, YDS Dean Liston Pope was a tribune of mainline Protestant influence. The Cold War period depended on schools like YDS, he said – Christian in commitment, ecumenical in outlook, and open to new frontiers of knowledge. During his deanship, the School doubled its faculty and erected five new residential buildings on campus. Pope was also a social ethicist, the Gilbert L. Stark Professor of Social Ethics from 1947 to 1973, doing painstaking sociological research on church, labor relations, and race.

Pope criticized church progress in race relations, and he was the first YDS dean to feature racial justice prominently in his work.

The [Liston Pope Papers](#) held by the Yale Divinity Library include more than 36 linear feet of documentation of his life and work.

FREEDOM BUS RALLY

DATE: Tuesday May 23, 1961.

TIME: 5:30 P. M.

PLACE: New Haven Green.

PURPOSES:

1. TO PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT FOR THE RIDERS OF THE "FREEDOM BUSES."

These courageous American students are demonstrating to our country and to the world that segregation and racial violence must be and will be eliminated from American society.

2. TO URGE YALE STUDENTS AND NEW HAVEN CITIZENS TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR FULL RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS EQUALITY.

Racial discrimination is not just a Southern problem. It is a national problem and a New Haven problem. Segregation is unjust, whether it be in the South by law or in the North by custom.

3. TO ADD A STUDENT PROTEST TO THE NATIONAL SENSE OF OUTRAGE OVER THE FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALABAMA.

Governor John M. Patterson of Alabama thinks only white citizens are entitled to the "equal protection of the laws." Yet the Fourteenth Amendment extends these guarantees to all persons, regardless of race or creed.

4. TO ADD TO THE GROWING CRY FOR FURTHER AND MORE EFFECTIVE CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION.

SPEAKERS: Members of the Faculty of Yale University and of Wesleyan University and Members of the Yale Student Body, including:

The Rev. William S. Coffin, Yale University Chaplain.
 Dr. John D. Maquire, Professor of Religion at Wesleyan University.
 Mr. Nathan Opoku, Graduate Student from Ghana.
 Mr. Henry Clark, Graduate Student.
 A message from Dean Liston Pope, who is unable to attend in person.
 The Rev. Gaylord Noyes, Professor of Pastoral Theology at the Yale Divinity School.

SPONSORS: Graduate and undergraduate students of Yale University.

NOTE: HOME-MADE POSTERS WILL BE APPRECIATED. THERE WILL BE TV COVERAGE.

Flyer for a rally in New Haven at which Dean Pope gave a statement

Robert C. Johnson 1963-1969

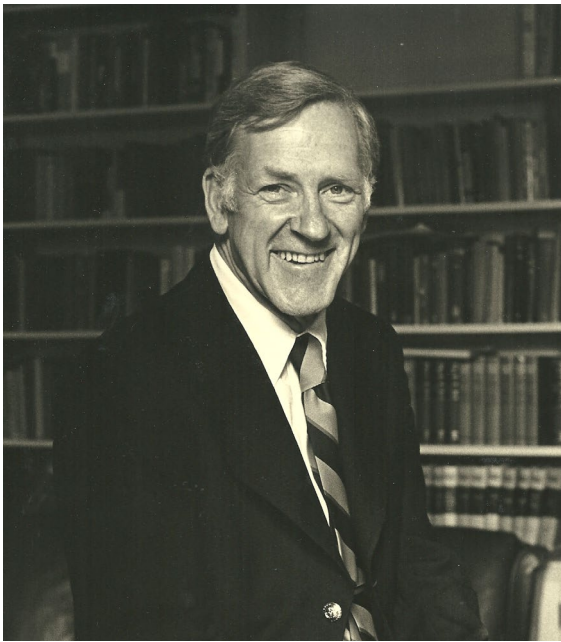


Following a short acting deanship by YDS professor Charles Forman, Robert C. Johnson was appointed dean in 1963 and served until 1969. Johnson was born in Knoxville, Tennessee. He received BD and MST degrees from Union Theological Seminary and a PhD from Vanderbilt. A Navy chaplain during World War II, he later served two Presbyterian churches, then taught theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary before coming to Yale.

Arriving at YDS in 1963, Johnson immediately faced a faculty morale problem after Yale created a Department of Religious Studies that moved the religion PhD programs out of YDS, where the offices had been located. Only some YDS faculty received joint appointments in the new program downtown. Johnson repaired faculty solidarity, gathering professors for evening theological discussions, establishing a faculty dining room, even rehabbing the refectory ceiling acoustics for the sake of better lunchtime conversation.

Johnson helped establish a joint degree program in urban studies with the Schools of Art and Architecture and a joint program with the School of Music, which laid the groundwork for the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale. Professor Johnson stepped down from the deanship after one term to return to his teaching as a professor of theology. He was named the Noah Porter Professor of Religion at the Divinity School in 1990 and retired later that year.

Colin W. Williams 1969-1979



Colin W. Williams served as Dean from 1969 to 1979, a volatile time in American society. In 1970, thousands of people streamed into New Haven to protest the trial of Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers. During that tense spring, 'teach-ins' replaced classes at the Divinity School, led by a newly appointed dean, Colin Williams. Like his predecessor, Robert C. Johnson, Williams devoted many hours to meetings with students and faculty in order to develop responses to the stream of crises.

Born in Australia, Williams brought an unusual range of experiences to the Quad. He studied theology at Drew University (1958 PhD), served as a Methodist minister in Melbourne, and taught historical theology at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston and at the University of Melbourne. In 1963, returning to the U.S., he headed the evangelism department at the National Council of Churches in New York. He was directing the doctor of ministry program at the University of Chicago when YDS tapped him as dean. His tenure was framed by innovations amid looming anxieties. He could report to the University that faculty repute and healthy enrollment trends made YDS "the place to go," but he also worried about student debt and a dearth of scholarships. His decision to affiliate with Berkeley opened YDS to new ecclesial vistas, but it also put him in power struggles with some senior faculty who opposed it. His push for greater Black faculty representation resulted in some progress but at a frustratingly slow pace. Williams saw his deanship decade as a period of transformations and inevitable conflicts that netted YDS gains in liturgics, art, literature, clinical training, and field supervision. By 1979 he described an institutional identity shift underway these years: "Previously we were 'interdenominational' but primarily in the 'Reformed' tradition. Now we moved toward becoming fully ecumenical."

Leander Keck 1979-1989

Born in North Dakota in 1928, Leander Keck received his BA from Linfield College, BD from Andover Newton Theological School, and a PhD from Yale in 1957. He taught at Vanderbilt Divinity School and Emory University before coming to YDS as Dean and Winkley Professor of Biblical Theology in 1979.



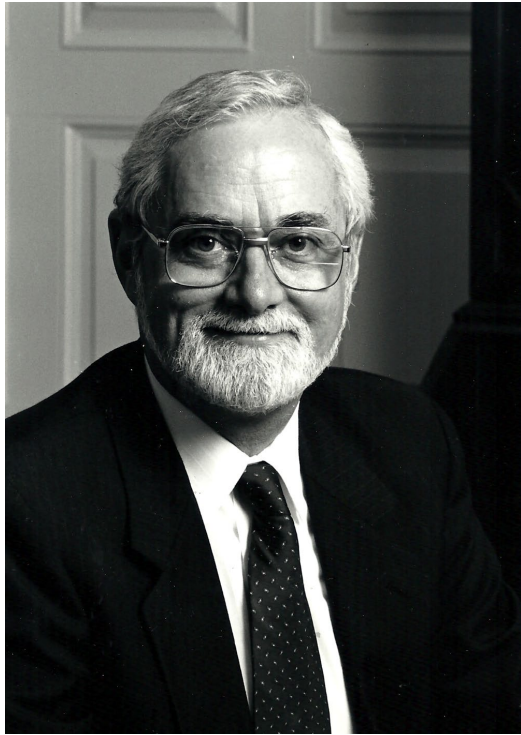
In 1979, inflation was soaring, an energy crisis was afoot, Yale was under pressure to balance its budget, and mainline Protestant church influence was slumping. It was not necessarily the most favorable moment to become dean of a divinity school...

A widely recognized New Testament scholar, Keck came to YDS from Candler School of Theology at Emory, where he chaired the graduate school's division of religion. On the Quad he set about strengthening alumni ties, raising financial support, and organizing an unofficial board of advisors.

Peering at the prospect of a stream of retirements over the next two decades, Keck generated a long-range planning report. The 1985 document outlined faculty hiring plans and financial strategies. To that end, his tenure's fundraising efforts were historic: four endowed professorships, each representing a \$1 million endowment from private donors, plus 24 new scholarship endowments of \$50,000 or more.

The [Leander E. Keck Papers](#) held by the Yale Divinity Library consist of more than 10 linear feet of writings, lectures, course-related materials, and correspondence documenting his life and work.

Thomas W. Ogletree 1990-1996



After Aidan Kavanagh served as Acting Dean from 1989 to 1990, Thomas Ogletree was appointed Dean in 1990 and served until 1996. Born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1933, Ogletree received his BA from Birmingham-Southern College, his BD from Garrett Theological Seminary and his PhD from Vanderbilt. He then taught at Birmingham-Southern, Chicago Theological Seminary, and Vanderbilt Divinity School before serving as Dean of Drew Theological Seminary from 1981 to 1990.

When he was named dean in 1990, Thomas W. Ogletree brought liberationist theological passion to the work. Born in the South, he was shaped by 1960s activism. Whether as minister or scholar or teacher, he sought to be a change agent for social justice, especially racial justice, and institutional reform.

Early on, he challenged YDS to carry its remarkable legacy into pluralistic, perilous contemporary times. Educating future moral leaders requires resistance to trends of cynicism, self-interest, and the weakening of social institutions such as family and church, he said.

On Ogletree's watch, the "Save the Quad" storm broke after Yale administration called for a thorough review of the School's functions and goals. Ogletree mobilized initial responses and resistance to the threat of a YDS relocation downtown. His task was to steer the School while facing the prospect of a downsized operation and an alarmed alum base that feared for the very future of YDS. In 1996, when a new dean was chosen to manage the crisis, Ogletree returned to the faculty as Marquand Professor of Theological Ethics, retiring in 2009..

Richard J. Wood 1996-2000

Born in Michigan in 1937, Richard Wood received his BA from Duke University, MDiv from Union Theological Seminary, and a PhD from Yale in 1965. In 1966, he joined the philosophy faculty at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Wood left Earlham to serve as academic vice president of Whittier College in 1980 but returned to Earlham in 1985. An ordained Methodist who later became a Quaker, Wood was known as a Japan religion specialist.



Wood had been president of Earlham College in Indiana (1985–1996) when YDS offered him the deanship. He was hired to manage a crisis: he faced complex challenges right away amid uncertainty about the School's future, and his decisions sometimes generated tensions, outcries, and clashes with students. His brief was to rebuild student enrollment, balance the budget, replenish faculty appointments after a wave of retirements, honor recommendations of the 1995 Kelsey Report regarding the future of YDS, and create consensus around a renovation plan for the Quad, a roiling controversy that was far from resolved in 1996.

During his time, the School beefed up student recruitment and recharged the Annual Fund. By 2000, enrollment had risen back to target range of 310 full-time students. But Wood's support of a scaled-down Quad – siding with Yale administration – caused a cascade of protest among those who wanted to preserve the entire Quad. Ultimately arguments for saving the whole Quad prevailed by 1999.

Wood presided for one term, leaving months earlier than expected in 2000 to become president of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia.

Rebecca S. Chopp 2001-2002



YDS professor Harry Adams filled in as Acting Dean from 2000 to 2001 when Rebecca Chopp was named Dean. Born in 1952, Chopp received her BA from Kansas Wesleyan University, MDiv from St. Paul School of Theology and PhD from the University of Chicago.

In 2001 YDS made history when it hired its first woman as dean: Rebecca Chopp, a Kansas-born, Methodist-ordained feminist theologian who had come to YDS from Emory University, where she was provost.

During her brief time at Yale, Chopp focused on fundraising, outreach to an alum community still reeling from the Save the Quad wars, and commenced strategic planning, regarding YDS as a place with deep Christian roots progressively interpreted, and dedicated to church life.

To the surprise and disappointment of many, Chopp's tenure ended less a year later when she was unexpectedly offered the presidency of Colgate University. For her this launched a new professional trajectory and an executive administrative career as president of Colgate University (2002–2009), then president of Swarthmore College (2009–2014), and finally chancellor of the University of Denver from 2015 to 2019.

Harold W. Attridge 2002-2012



Born in New Bedford, MA in 1946, Harold Attridge received a BA from Boston College, BA and MA from the University Cambridge, and a PhD from Harvard in 1974. Attridge taught at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University (1977–1985) and the University of Notre Dame (1985–1997), where he also served as the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters. He came to YDS in 1997 as the Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament and is now Sterling Professor of Divinity Emeritus.

Attridge, the first Roman Catholic as YDS dean (Catholic scholar Aidan Kavanagh was interim dean in 1989-90), served ten landmark years. He oversaw landmark improvements and became a reassuring presence to alums after a season of institutional turbulence. Financial tasks were a constant theme throughout his tenure. He led an historic \$38 million fundraising effort, boosting scholarship assistance to \$5.4 million annually. On his watch the monumental \$49 million renovation of the Quad stayed on track. He collaborated with the Institute of Sacred Music on the \$4million renovation of Marquand Chapel, replacing the pews with moveable chairs and installing a new baroque organ in the balcony. Attridge appointed more than a dozen senior faculty and created three endowed faculty chairs.

He took seriously the School's public voice on issues of the day. YDS hosted national panels on poverty, nuclear disarmament, immigration, citizenship, Muslim-Christian relations, climate change, the history of women at YDS. He spoke out against capital punishment. He organized initiatives regarding evangelism, youth ministries, and church renewal.

Gregory E. Sterling 2012-



Current YDS Dean Gregory Sterling received his BA from Houston Baptist University, MA in Religion from Pepperdine University, and MA in Classics from the University of California, Davis. In 1990, he received a PhD in Biblical Studies with a specialization in the New Testament from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Sterling joined the faculty at the University of Notre Dame in 1989 as a Visiting Assistant Professor and became a regular member of the faculty in 1990, earning promotion to Associate Professor in 1995 and to Professor of Theology in 2000. Sterling became Dean of the Graduate School at Notre Dame in 1997 and served in that role until coming to Yale in 2012.