

Shonda Nicole Gladden

Professional Synopsis: An Americanist trained in Womanist methodologies whose research sits at the intersections of philosophy, art, gender, and cultural studies; it explores the plantation as a trans-historic materiality that influences modern American institutions.

Education:

- PhD, American Studies (2025)
Indiana University-Indianapolis
Concentrations: American Studies, Womanism, Film Studies, Nonprofit Management (Individualized Minor)
- Executive M.B.A. (Currently enrolled, anticipated completion date, May 2026) Indiana University-Indianapolis, Kelley School of Business
- Master of Divinity, Systematic Theology
The Wesley Theological Seminary (2004)
Concentrations: Pneumatology, Jürgen Moltmann
- Master of Theological Studies, Black Studies,
The Wesley Theological Seminary (2004)
Concentrations: Martin Luther King, Jr., Negro Spirituals as Theological Works, Egypt
Thesis: A Theological Quest for Truth Through an Examination of Egyptian Religious Symbols and Related Christian Symbols and Practices
- Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy,
Morgan State University (2000)
Concentrations: Writings of Paul, Logic, Philosophy of Religion, Clergy Women
- Diploma, University High School Program
Suitland Senior High School (1995)
Concentrations: Behavioral and Social Sciences

Current Primary Employment:

IU Indianapolis Division of Student Affairs

Education Specialist, August 2022- Present

Develop and lead initiatives that promote civic responsibility, leadership skills, and academic excellence. Co-facilitate the R.I.S.E. Scholars program, engaging students in research, inquiry, service, and campus involvement. Coordinate major programs within the Office of Student Involvement, equipping undergraduate leaders with skills to facilitate workshops and educational programming campus-wide. Collaborate with various campus offices to plan and implement educational sessions, lecture series, and instructional support. This role actively contributes to the cultivation of a vibrant and engaged campus community through targeted programming and leadership development opportunities.

Professional Affiliations, Community, and Campus Service:

- IU Hearing Committee, Appointed Member
- IUI Chancellor's Student Advisory Board Selection Committee, Appointed Member
- IUI Undergraduate Commencement Speaker Selection Committee, Appointed Member
- IUI Black Faculty and Staff Council, Community Engagement Committee Co-Chair
 - Black Graduation Program Volunteer (2024, 2025)
- IUI Black Women Thriving Steering Committee, Member
- IUI Upward Bound Academic Coordinator Search Committee, Chair
- IUI Upward Bound Assistant Director Search Committee, Member
- IUI Black Student Union, Former Advisor
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Kappa Chapter, IUI Campus Advisor
- American Academy of Religion, Member; Women's Caucus Past Co-Convener
- Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), Member
- NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), Member; Region IV-East Indiana State Coordinator (2023-2025); New Professionals Liaison (2025-2027)
- African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), Ordained Itinerant Elder
- National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), General Member
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Graduate Member (Chi Chi Omega Chapter)
- The District Theatre, Board Director; Vice Chair, Former Board Secretary
- Faith in Indiana, Former Board Director; Former Vice President
- Connectional AME Church RAYAC (Former Treasurer)
- Connectional AME Church Women in Ministry
- Fourth Episcopal District Women in Ministry (Former Worship Leader)
- Indiana Annual Conference Women in Ministry (Immediate Past Coordinator)

Skills, Certifications, and Qualifications:

- JagsCARE Training Certificate
- Indiana University DEI Leadership Certification Certificate
- CIRTLL, Associate
- Green Dot Bystander Intervention, Instructor
- Meta (Facebook) Certified Community Manager
- Meta (Facebook) Certified Digital Marketing Associate
- IUPUI Intercultural Competence Certificate (Basic and Mid-Level Certifications)
- Indiana Notary Public
- Reading knowledge: Latin and French

Research and Other Academic Employment Experience:

Columbia University CARSS (Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics & Social Justice)

Oral History Project Research Fellow, August 2021- December 2022

Content Development Working Group Member, August 2016- December 2018

Conducted research for an oral history project exploring the faith lives of Black LGBTQ+ congregations and denominational leadership. Previously worked as a consultant in the development of a culturally relevant, multi-faceted, and holistic toolkit on sexual and gender politics for use throughout the Black Church ecosystem.

IUPUI Arts & Humanities Institute

Graduate Assistant, August 2019- May 2022

Worked as a graduate assistant to the Religion, Spirituality, and the Arts Seminar. Previously conducted oral histories for the COVID-19 Oral History Project, provided technical assistance to a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and provided thought partnership on a community-engaged research project studying racial justice, arts, and activism in Indianapolis.

Vibrant Faith

Coach Consultant, December 2017- December 2021

Worked as a coach consultant on the Creating a Culture of Vocation Initiative (funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.) wherein I coached congregational teams as they created new resources and experiences centered on their understanding of calling. Provided research consultation in the compilation of final qualitative data reports.

Princeton Theological Seminary (Contractor)

Graduate Research Assistant, October 2013- December 2016

Served as the AME Research Assistant during the data collection process of “The Christian Youth: Learning and Living the Faith Project (CY: LLF), compiled oral interviews and documentary witness through onsite interviews.” Additional information about this position can be found here: <http://theconfirmationproject.com>

Reid Temple Christian Academy

Lead Teacher, August 2009- May 2010

Instructed and managed classroom activities for twelve full-day preschool students; held supervisory responsibility for one teaching assistant.

Morgan State University

Adjunct Instructor, January 2005- May 2008

Course: Phil 109- Introduction to Logic

Instructor of record; developed and facilitated multiple semester-long sections of undergraduate level CORE Course in syllogistic Logic through lecture, seminar discussion and small group work.

Wesley Theological Seminary

Teaching Assistant, August 2002- May 2005

Courses: Systematic Theology, Church History

Primary Instructors: Dr. Beverly Mitchell, Dr. Josiah U. Young

Assisted instructors of record in preparing small group sessions, graded papers, lectured and researched current trends in field to complement course syllabi.

Howard University (Contractor)

Departmental Assistant, August 2002- May 2004

The Office of the Provost

Coordinated university-wide conferences and workshops; prepared dynamic presentations using PowerPoint; assisted in developing and editing university publications; and consistently met challenges associated with promotion to lead temporary employees with the responsibility of training/overseeing temporary staff.

Youth English School

Teacher, December 2000- February 2001

Incheon United Methodist Church (Incheon South Korea)

Developed curriculum and taught introductory conversational English and basic grammar to grade school students for whom English was a secondary language.

Selected Academic Presentations and Publications:

- "Theo-Moral Imagination in the Digital Age: AI, Womanist Visual Culture, and the Pursuit of Freedom," (Paper to be presented in the Artificial Intelligence and Religion Unit at American Academy of Religion, 2025)
- "Call and Response in the Digital Age. From Plantation Blues to Algorithmic Hymns: Ethno-Curatorial Rememory and Algorithmic Authoritarianism" (Paper in progress; commissioned for inclusion in Sage Journals Dialogues on Digital Society in the special issue on Authoritarianism in the Digital Age, 2025)
- Towards a Womanist Philosophy of Religion: Notes on Kendrick Lamar's N95, Tillichian Ultimate Concern, and The Socialist Decision (Paper presented in the Critical Approaches to Hip Hop & Religion and Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Units at American Academy of Religion, 2023)
- When the Caged Bird Takes Flight: On Stacey Abrams and Isaiah 40:31 (Paper presented in the Sacred Texts and Ethics and Scriptural Reasoning Units at American Academy of Religion, 2023* requested for publication in Journal of Scriptural Reasoning)
- These Stories Must Be Told: Preliminary Observations by a Black Scholar Practitioner on Silences in the Archive (published in Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals, <https://doi-org/10.1177/1550190620981033>)
- The Plantation's Fall and the Nonprofit Sector's Rise: Addressing the Influence of the Antebellum Plantation on Today's Nonprofit Sector (first author, co-authored journal article, approved for publication effective July 31, 2021 in Administrative Theory & Praxis, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2021.1959167>)
- *Drag* Me to Church: Trans-Versing Black Church Performance Through Ball Culture (Paper presented in the Queer Studies in Religion Unit at American Academy of Religion, 2020)
- "Where Do We Go From Here: Trans-Versing the SOUL of Black Folx" (Paper presented in the Black Theology Unit and Theology of MLK, Jr. Unit at American Academy of Religion, 2020)
- Trans-versing Blackness: The Making of A Blues Homecoming. (Paper presented in Cone and Expressive Arts Session of Retrospect and Prospect Conference on the campus of Northwestern University, 2019)
- Becoming Spirit Led People: The Role of Confirmation and Equivalent Practices in Identity and Faith Formation in the 21st Century (Performance lecture presented at The Confirmation Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary, 2018)
- Becoming: Reflections on Maximizing Failures and Living into My Best Self. Manuscript produced and published through Good to the SOUL (June 2016). ISBN-10: 0997559101.

- First AME Las Vegas Portrait. Research findings produced through The Confirmation Project utilizing the Portraiture methodology as explicated by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot. (2016) http://theconfirmationproject.com/portrait_gallery/the-first-ame-church-las-vegas/.
- Constructing A Womanist Philosophy of Religion: Examining Ultimate Concern and Mythic Nostalgic Imaginations. (Panel paper presented in Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion and Culture Group Panel Presentation at American Academy of Religion, 2015)
- Not Buying the Game: Commodification and The Limbo of The Wire. Paper presented in Black Theology Group Session the American Academy of Religion, 2013)
- Pneumatologically Speaking: Tongues, Dance and Spirit Workings in African American Religious Experience. Accepted paper presented in Black Theology Group Session at American Academy of Religion, 2011)

Select Awards, Honors, Professional, and International Experience:

- Lilly Clergy Renewal Grant Recipient, 2024
- Compelling Preaching Initiative- Indianapolis, Council Member & Cohort Facilitator, 2022-Present
- The Social Justice Quarterly, Editor, 2023-Present
- DEAP NextUp Mentoring Program, Mentor, 2023-2024, 2024-2025
- IU Indianapolis Staff Mentoring Program, Mentor, 2023-2024
- IUPUI Center for Service and Learning Community Engagement Associates Mentor, 2023-2024
- Indiana University Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Leadership Certification Program Inaugural Cohort Member, 2023
- IUPUI Ghana Study Abroad Trip Experience Co-Director, 2023, 2024
- IUPUI Office of International Affairs Sustainable Development Goals Grant Recipient, 2023
- IUPUI PFFP 3MT/3MP Competition Judge, 2022, 2023
- IUPUI Elite 50 Recipient, 2021
- IUPUI PFFP 3MT Competition Winner, 2021
- ARNOVA ESS 3MT Competition Second Place Winner, 2021
- Regional Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS) 3MT Competition Finalist, 2021
- Spirit & Place Festival Event Curator (Common Grounds Cinematic Conversations Film Festival), 2021
- IUPUI JAG Action Grant Recipient, 2020
- Do Good X Inaugural Fellow, 2017
- Wabash Pastoral Leadership Program Fellow, 2014-2016
- American Academy of Religion, Women's Caucus Co-Convener, 2011-2013
- AARAMA Kenyan Delegation Member/Youth Mission Coordinator, 2008
- South Africa Youth Mission Trip Coordinator, 2003 & 2006
- Bermuda Aids Outreach Missionary Immersion, 2004
- Wesley Theological Seminary Student Body President, 2002-2004
- Miss Black Maryland, USA 2003-2004
- Wesley Theological Seminary, Association of Black Seminarians President, 2001-2002
- Czech Republic Choral Tour, 2000, Germany & Switzerland Choral Tour 1996
- Spokesman (MSU Campus Newspaper) Editor 1996-1999, Managing Editor, 1999-2000

Congregational and Community Impact Experience:

Broadway United Methodist Church (Indianapolis, IN)

Senior Associate Pastor

Founding Director of the Center for Religion, Arts, and Culture

March 2022-Present

Currently serving in a part-time, paid position, as one of three pastors for this multicultural congregation embedded in the heart of the Mapleton-Fall Creek Neighborhood of Indianapolis for 150 years as of 2023. Responsibilities include worship planning, programmatic design, and implementation, preaching, and congregational care. Also serving as the Founding Director of the Center for Religion, Arts, and Culture, that seeks to cultivate creative self-actualization and freedom, while holding space for critical exploration of the ways religion, art, and culture shape our civic and communal pursuits.

Good to the SOUL (Indianapolis, IN)

Chief Executive Officer

September 2018- Present

Founded in 2016, following my transition from full-time ministry in 2018, I pivoted into full-time work as the CEO of this for-profit, social enterprise, registered in the State of Indiana as a domestic limited liability company. Since the inception of GTTS, I have supervised a team of SOUL Stirrers and together we prioritize social impact over revenue profit, while being in the business of meeting unmet communal and institutional needs with iterative, innovative, and customized approaches, providing culturally intuitive consultation to churches, nonprofits, institutions of higher education, and individuals who intersect these spaces.

Crossroads AME Church (Indianapolis, IN)

Associate Pastor, January 2021-March 2022

Ministerial Staff Member, September 2018-December 2020

Served as Associate Pastor, on paid staff in a supporting role for a newly merged congregation that, through its two campuses, serves the Crown Hill and Meridian Kessler neighborhoods of Indianapolis. Responsibilities included ministerial staff training and supervision, worship planning and programmatic design, grant project implementation and oversight, regular worship leading, preaching, bible study facilitation, leadership development and congregational care.

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (Indianapolis, IN)

Senior Pastor, November 2017- September 2018

Served as the “Class A” pastor of this local congregation in the historic Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood of Indianapolis, IN. Responsible for performing regular ministerial duties of a pastor as well as representing the congregation in civic duties with the Indianapolis Public Schools, National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), NAACP Branch #3053, and Families Against Violence and Injustice, Inc.

Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church (Marion, IN)

Senior Pastor, May 2013- November 2017

Served as the “Class A” pastor of this local congregation in the vicinity of Indiana Wesleyan University. Responsible for performing regular ministerial duties of a pastor as well as representing the congregation in civic duties with the Marion Community Schools, NAACP Branch #3059, and the Marion Christian Ministerial Association.

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Lafayette, IN)

Senior Pastor, November 2012- May 2013

Served as the “Class B” pastor of this local congregation in the vicinity of Purdue University. Responsible for performing regular ministerial duties of a pastor, most notably, responsible for assisting in the restructuring and stabilization of the Lafayette Pastors Alliance during my brief time of service.

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (Glencoe, IL)

Assistant to the Pastor, November 2010- November 2012

Served on paid staff at this historic African American congregation in the heart of Glencoe, IL. Responsibilities included programmatic design, implementation and oversight, regular worship leading, preaching, bible study facilitation, leadership development and congregational care.

St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church (Aurora, IL)

Senior Minister to Young Adults, November 2011- November 2012

Hired to provide spiritual and administrative direction for the Ministries to Young Adults. Facilitated weekly worship service, taught monthly Church School, served as the ministerial staff liaison to all ministries related to young adults.

Brown Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church (Washington, DC)

Senior Minister to Youth & Young Adults (Intern) August 2008- August 2010

Hired to provide spiritual and administrative direction for the Collective Ministries to Youth and Young Adults. Taught weekly Bible study and served as the ministerial staff liaison to all youth and young adult ministries. Spearheaded “Back to School Power Jam,” garnering sponsorship from three District of Columbia Councilpersons, provided school supplies and gifts to more than two hundred school-aged children in Ward 6 of the District of Columbia: the first of its kind in the one hundred- and twenty-seven-year history of the church.

Reid Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church (Glenn Dale, MD)

Assistant to the Executive Assistant, August 2007- August 2009

Commissioner of Youth and Young Adults, September 2004- August 2007

Appointed by the Pastor and responsible for administrative oversight of eight ministries engaging in services to and/or with the congregation’s youth and young adult membership population at that time of more than 2,800 individuals. Regularly preached, taught Bible classes, coordinated and led youth worker trainings and represented the church in regional youth ministry gatherings; trained as a Stephen Minister.