



# VINEYARD SCHOLARS CONFERENCE 2026

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vineyardusa

## Call for Papers

### *Rooted and Renewed: Theology, History, and the Spirit-Formed Church*

The 2026 Vineyard Scholars Conference is an interdisciplinary conference for Vineyard people, as well as friends of the Vineyard, who like to think theologically in community. Alongside a number of distinguished plenary speakers who will be announced in the coming weeks, you (yes, you!) are invited to propose work to be considered for presentation on the following theme.

In the Vineyard, as in many charismatic communities, we have received a precious gift: the experience of the Kingdom of God — already and not yet, with intimacy, immediacy, and power. We have known the love of God and the power of the Spirit in mystical, ineffable ways. We have seen healing and deliverance that bear witness to similar stories in the New Testament. We have experienced the presence of God in worship and in prayer, both individually and in the gathered community.

These encounters are not peripheral. In Spirit-forward churches like the Vineyard, they are central to our church practices and deeply formative at a personal level. Frankly, such experiences are a big reason that many people remain a part of charismatic churches.

But when experience and ministry are front and center, theology can sometimes remain in the background. It can be assumed rather than articulated, treated as secondary to practice, or even sidelined in the urgency to see results.

**The 2026 Vineyard Scholars conference will explore how theology and practice relate to one another in charismatic contexts, especially as they shape the kind of transformation we long to see in our communities.** As you consider what you might propose for presentation, keep the following questions in mind as a big-picture orientation to the kinds of conversations we will have:

- What does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit is forming the Church, rather than merely empowering it?
- What is the relationship of received theological dogmas, such as Nicene Trinitarianism or Chalcedonian Christology, to the identity and practice of “Spirit-forward” church movements like the Vineyard?
- How should our experience of the activity of the Holy Spirit affect the way we do ecclesiology?
- Why does history seem to show that renewal movements often reproduce the ecclesiological problems that they set out to solve – and what might we do differently?
- What authority does corporate spiritual experience carry in theological reasoning, and how is it tested?
- What is the relationship between spiritual experience and moral transformation, and why don’t “Spirit-forward” church movements tend to talk about this?

### **Papers and Panels at Vineyard Scholars Conference**

Anyone is welcome to attend without submitting a paper proposal, but attendees are encouraged to consider presenting. Taking the time to develop a presentation deepens engagement, increases formation, and gives people an opportunity to contribute to the communal dialogue. People tend to find the Vineyard Scholars Conference to be a helpful and congenial environment in which to develop their thinking and their work.

If you decide to submit a proposal, there are two types of panels on which you can present: *either* Broad Interdisciplinary Panels *or* Focused Seminar Discussions. Each of these is described in more detail below. Paper abstracts and panel proposals are both welcome. Panels may be submitted as a pre-formed group of 3–4 presenters or as a single presentation to be matched with others on a related theme/topic. Suggested themes are listed below.

If you would like to submit a proposal, please carefully follow these instructions listed in the “Proposal Submission Guidelines” section of this document. If you have any questions, reach out to [scholars@vineyardusa.org](mailto:scholars@vineyardusa.org).

## Interdisciplinary Panel Themes

1. **Vineyard Churches, Rooted and Renewed.** As an eschatologically-minded ecclesial movement that is invested in planting and renewing churches, it can be easy in the Vineyard to focus on what is new and future-oriented. At the same time, the Vineyard is a communion historically grounded in the practices and convictions of the early church, as well as a diverse assemblage of influences from the Radical Reformation, transatlantic Evangelicalism, American Pietism, the Jesus Movement, and the heritage of more than a century of Pentecostalism. This year, we encourage interdisciplinary panels and papers that specifically consider what it means to be *rooted* as a movement – theologically, practically, historically, and relationally – in a time when it is easier than ever to access new information and new influences from new places, in new ways.
2. **Theories of Transformation.** In the Vineyard, we know that the work of God can be fast and surprising. But we also know that most change in the life of a disciple comes through the slow work of God. As people called to wisely shepherd others into apprenticeship to Jesus, Christians must think about how people are formed to become what Paul calls “imitators” (*mimētai*). What are the practices, settings, decisions, and words that help us to guide our communities in the way of Jesus? This year, we invite papers that engage lessons emerging from church history, as well as how different disciplines and professions (sociology, psychology, business, history, life sciences, etc) help us to think well about creating formation pathways to encounter the love of God.
3. **The Value of Remembering in Leadership Transitions:** The Vineyard is in the midst of a season of major leadership transitions, particularly as first-generation pastors retire and new leaders step in to lead these established churches. These transitions are important, focused moments within the broader context of an intergenerational transfer of story, vision, and mission. What can we learn from church history, biblical narrative, the field of organizational leadership, and other disciplines about leadership transitions and what is important to attend to in the middle of them? This year, we encourage interdisciplinary panels and papers that wrestle with what wise leadership transitions look like. We are most interested in papers that pay attention to specific contexts – longstanding churches, newer plants, international missions, etc.
4. **Women in the Vineyard:** For two decades, Vineyard USA has clearly and fully affirmed the biblical doctrine that women are called by God to all levels of ministry. What are some of the practical and theological challenges that this has brought up? In what ways do we still need resourcing and renewal? What historical paradigms might help us be responsive in our time? We encourage interdisciplinary panels and papers that speak practically and theologically about the moment we are currently facing regarding the ongoing and deepening affirmation of women's call to ministry.

## Focused Seminars

1. **Placemaking as renewal work:** The history of the Church has featured any number of missionary journeys, the planting of new churches, and all kinds of sending. Scripture attests, too, to the power of an outsider or a stranger to interrupt normal life for good (or ill). At the same time, church history includes all kinds of monastic movements and endeavors oriented towards settling—remaining in a place for long-term renewal. We invite papers on the long-term work of placemaking as renewal work. We are particularly interested in papers describing and reflecting on the work of creating and maintaining actual places and communities over time.
2. **The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament: Intertextuality and the Imagination of Ancient Israel:** How do the New Testament accounts of Jesus’s life draw on the story, imagery, and expectations of the Hebrew Bible? What does it mean that the earliest followers of Jesus were reading, remembering, and rereading Israel's scriptures as they bore witness to him? We are particularly interested in papers that examine how elements of memory, typology, and anticipation in the Hebrew scriptures are taken up in the New Testament witness.
3. **Returning to the Sources:** Since the mid-twentieth century, a movement in the Catholic tradition called “ressourcement” (French for “return to the sources”) has worked to retrieve early church liturgies, writings of church fathers, and early scripture-reading practices as a way of finding a new way forward. This “return to the sources” has also found its way into the Protestant churches, and specifically, into the Vineyard. We invite papers from a variety of disciplinary perspectives discussing the ways Vineyard churches are employing pre-modern practices and writings in our own time.
4. **Models of Preaching in Vineyard Churches:** There are many traditions of Christian preaching. Besides the propensity to involve the work of the Spirit in preaching and the ministry time that often emerges from it, the Vineyard doesn’t have a standard model of preaching. We invite papers that reflect on the roots, aims, and expectations of the preaching traditions found within Vineyard churches.
5. **Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom:** When we preach, we work to communicate the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Must the preaching of the Good News be connected concretely to an account of bad news? How do we speak objectively of the Gospel, while also speaking particularly to the lives of the people who seek to be renewed by it? We invite papers to carefully engage with different preaching contexts and with various ways of articulating the Good News.

**Proposals are due August 7. See the Proposal Submissions Guidelines below, and If you have any questions, please reach out to [scholars@vineyardusa.org](mailto:scholars@vineyardusa.org).**

# Proposal Submission Guidelines

## **How do I submit a proposal for the Vineyard Scholars Conference?**

Proposals for short papers during the conference must be uploaded via [this form](#) by August 7, 2026. The VSC Committee will respond no later than August 17 regarding whether your paper has been accepted.

## **How do I submit a proposal for the Emerging Scholars gathering?**

Abstracts or developing work from Emerging Scholars to be workshopped prior to the conference should be uploaded via [this form](#) by August 31, 2026. Someone will be in contact shortly thereafter. In case you are wondering about what an “emerging scholar” is, the category is actually quite age diverse, and has more to do with the work a person does during and right after postgraduate studies. So, if you are in the middle of postgraduate studies or have recently completed that work—you are an emerging scholar!

## **Who Should Submit Work to VSC 2026?**

VSC highly values interdisciplinary approaches and seeks to gather theologically-reflective perspectives from a wide variety of fields in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences. We particularly welcome papers from women and non-white men—voices that have historically been underrepresented in theological dialogues to the detriment of the conversation as a whole. This is not in any way to discourage the participation of white men, but rather to encourage the full participation of all.

## **What Kind Of Paper Might You Present?**

Historically, the majority of papers presented have been explanations, expositions, or explorations of the original ideas of the presenter. The Program Committee is also open to other forms, such as: book reviews or review essays salient to conference themes; carefully-crafted expositional interviews with an expert, connecting their work to conference themes; and more. Be creative!

## **What Should A Paper Proposal Look Like?**

Unless otherwise noted, presentations are twenty minutes long, which usually translates into about ten double-spaced pages, excluding footnotes. If you have not presented a paper at a previous Vineyard Scholars Conference (formerly SVS) you must submit a complete draft of your paper by the application deadline, along with a 200-word abstract of your paper. If you have presented at a previous annual conference, you may submit only a 200-word abstract of your paper by the submission deadline. You may submit your abstract [here](#). Please include a 2-3 sentence biography with your proposal, along with your name and a title for your presentation.

### **How To Submit A Panel Proposal**

We'd love for you to submit a full panel/roundtable. However, if you'd like to submit for a panel but don't know with whom you would do so, let us know and we can work to pair you with people working on a similar topic.

If you are putting together a panel, the proposal should be submitted in full, by a single individual who represents the panel. Panels should consist of three papers, organized around a single theme that connects to the broader theme of the conference. A panel proposal will consist of a description of the panel, its purpose, and its connection to the conference theme, as well as papers or abstracts from each of the panelists. As with individual paper submissions, if a panelist has presented a paper at a previous Vineyard Scholars conference, they may submit a 200-word abstract in lieu of a paper. Otherwise, they should submit the paper in full by the deadline.