

I slid onto a pew
Next to a doctor
who was white
his two kids and his wife

and looking up happened to see
the back of Bernice's head
the glue in Bernice's hair

and wondered if he found

this empire

as troublesome
as I did

Gradually we see the philosophy
So many must live
side by side
but never touch

Why move the church
Into the inner city
most of the white people will leave

So convenient a thing it is to be
a reasonable Creature
wrote Benjamin Franklin

Bruce Alford's first collection, *Terminal Switching*, was published in 2007 (Elk River Review Press). He taught creative writing at the University of South Alabama from 2007–11. Before working in academia, he was an inner-city missionary and journalist. He currently lives in Hammond, LA.