

CENTRAL SEMINARY | SUMMER 2023

VOICÉ

THE



WITH SOIL



Dr. John Park, Director of Doctor of Ministry Program and Des Peres Associate Professor of Congregational Health, speaks to doctoral students during a class break in February 2023.

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A Word from the President

리더십의 중심 센트럴, 센트럴에서 리더십으로

Commencement week at Central Seminary was the best time of year! Our graduates and their families and friends gathered with our faculty and staff on May 19 for a time for “Blessing of the Graduates.” Members of our faculty and board participated in a service of affirmation and joy, celebrating the grand accomplishments of students who have worked hard, been persistent, and finished well. The next day we shared all the high moments—the diploma presentations, the hooding our Doctor of Ministry graduates, and the applauding of all our graduates. Together we gave thanks for God’s continued presence and guidance all along the way.

At this year’s Commencement, we also honored the deep commitment and long-time service of our Provost, Dr. Robert Johnson, who officially retired on July 31, 2023. His faithful and generous leadership are much appreciated and have left an indelible mark on the seminary.

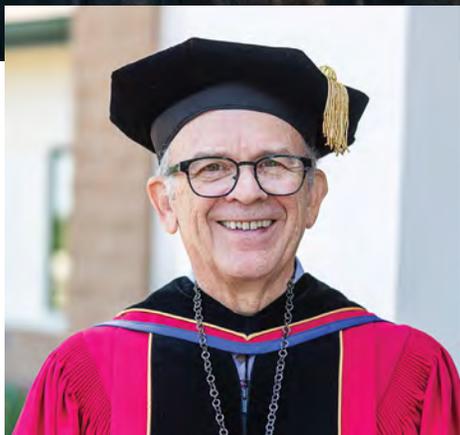
On July 24, Dr. Kathy Maxwell, our new Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, joined the Central community. Dr. Maxwell came to us from Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida, where she served as Associate Dean of the School of Ministry’s Traditional Undergraduate Programs, Chair of the Biblical Studies Department and Associate Professor of Biblical Studies. I am excited for this new season at Central and anticipate with eagerness Dr. Maxwell’s contributions to the continued health and well-being of our beloved seminary. ✨

센트럴 신학교의 졸업 주간은 일년 중 가장 의미있고 뜻 깊은 시간입니다! 졸업식 전날 금요일에는 우리 졸업생들, 그리고 그들의 가족과 친구들이 교수진 및 직원들과 함께 모여 “졸업생을 위한 축복” 시간을 가졌습니다. 교수진과 함께 이사회도 함께 참여하여 끈기를 가지고 열심히 노력하여 훌륭한 성과를 이룬 학생들의 수고를 축하하는 뜻 깊은 시간 이었습니다. 그 다음 날에는 졸업장 수여식, 목회학 박사과정 졸업생의 후드 수여, 그리고 모든 졸업생들의 훌륭한 성과를 축하하는 시간을 가졌고, 모두가 한 마음으로 하나님의 신실하신 도움과 인도에 감사를 드리며, 졸업주간을 마무리 하였습니다.

올해의 졸업식에서, 우리는 2023년 7월 31일에 공식적으로 은퇴한 로버트 존슨 학장님의 오랜 재직 기간 동안 보여주신 센트럴을 향한 깊은 헌신에 존경을 표했습니다. 그의 신실하고 너그러운 리더십은 센트럴 신학교에 절대 잊혀지지 않을 흔적을 남겼으며, 그로 인해 영향을 받은 수 많은 사람들로 인해 오랫동안 기억될 것입니다.

7월 24일, 우리의 새로운 교학 부총장 및 학장, 캐시 맥스웰 박사가 센트럴 커뮤니티에 합류했습니다. 맥스웰 박사는 플로리다주 웨스트 팜 비치에 위치한 팜 비치 애틀랜틱 대학에서 성서학 부교수 및 성서학과 의장으로 재직하였으며, 목회 대학원의 부학장으로도 일했습니다. 저는 센트럴이 맞이하고 있는 새로운 시즌으로 인해 설레이고, 우리 사랑하는 센트럴 신학교의 계속된 건강과 웰빙을 향한 맥스웰 박사의 기여를 기대합니다. ✨

Pam Durso



Congratulations, Class of 2023

Scripture was read, speeches were given, a musical blessing was provided, and degrees were conferred as part of Central's 121st annual commencement celebration. On May 20, 2023, 38 of our 74 graduates and their families gathered at Harvest Ridge Covenant Church for the culmination of their academic journey and many years of dedication and hard work.

Those gathered also heard from commencement speaker Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle. Graduates were challenged by McMickle as he said, "We need some bold speech in the face of all the things going on in our country, all the political divisions going on in our country, all the economic inequalities in our country, all the challenges facing the church in the 21st century, and in 2023 and going forward. Will you commit today to some bold speech?" He

quoted theologian Reinhold Niebuhr who wrote, "Many budding prophets become calm parish priests because people who did not like what they had to say silenced them." McMickle then posed the question, "What's the problem with being a calm parish priest at a time when the world is imploding and the planet is being destroyed? Which will it be [for you], a calm parish priest or a budding prophet?"

This ceremony also represented the final commencement for the Dr. Robert Johnson, Provost and Dean of the Faculty. After 25 years of service to the Central community, Dr. Johnson was granted the title of Provost Emeritus at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors on May 18, 2023. 🌿



Commencement also provided an opportunity to acknowledge student excellence through the presentation of the following awards:

PRESIDENTIAL AWARD

Jennifer Davis
 Lauren Ng
 Janet Pace
 Taylor Qualls
 Jung Ae Woo

PHILIP WENDELL CRANNELL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PREACHING

Debbie Giese
 Terrence Sims
 Jungkwon Son

HARVEY E. DANA AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN WRITING

Debbie Giese
 Sun Joong Jeong

C. R. MCBRIDE AND KATHERINE WILLARD EDDY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

Jennifer Davis
 Debbie Giese
 Taeyoung Hur
 Cory Seibel
 Hyo Jung Suh
 Brenda Watson-Hill



PEACE AND JUSTICE AWARD

Janet Pace

FRANKLIN LORENZO STREETER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Sang Eun Lee
 Toni Page
 Taylor Qualls

ROBERT G. TORBET AWARD IN HISTORY

Taylor Qualls

WHEELER-PROCTOR AWARD IN THEOLOGY

Toni Page

► Watch the ceremony at Central's YouTube channel: youtube.com/c/CentralSeminaryKS/videos



► Download ceremony and graduate photos: kdog.com/centralsemgrad23





“While studying at Central, I am learning to broaden my understanding of God’s knowledge through various perspectives.”

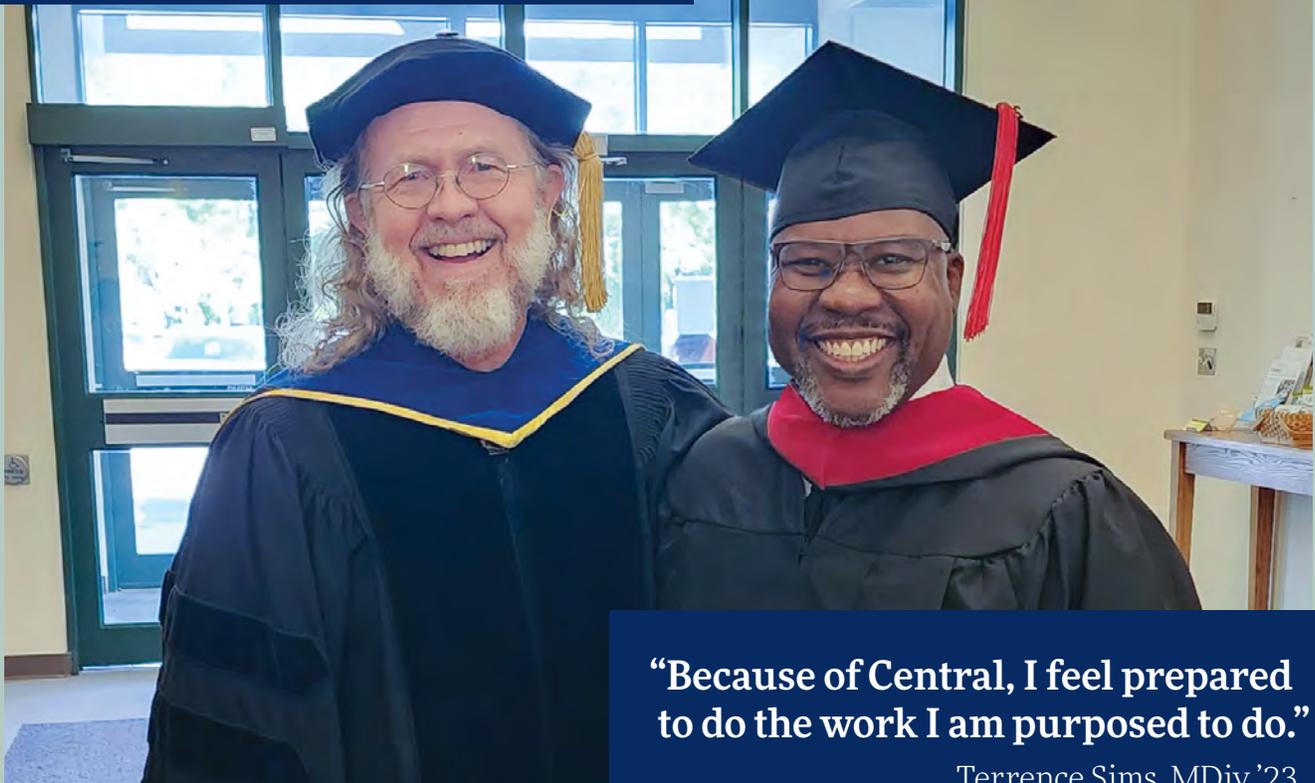
This is Central **Shin Hye Kang, Korean DMin Student**

Shin Hye Kang needed a change. She was facing exhaustion and burnout after having served a church for more than 7 years in youth ministry. Through a friend, she became aware of Central Seminary and was encouraged by her pastor to study for a doctorate in ministry. Central was the clear choice for the personal growth and theological education she desired.

“Central is a place of opportunity to meet God ... among the diversity of people from all over

the world, regardless of denominations,” Shin Hye Kang said. “Of course, there may be heated debates depending on the differences between denominations, but it is also an opportunity to learn how to follow the Holy Spirit. In fact, I began by [questioning some of what I learned at Central that was different than my known theology], but while studying at Central, I am learning to broaden my understanding of God’s knowledge through various perspectives.” 📖

**You help
empower & equip
inspiring leaders!**



“Because of Central, I feel prepared to do the work I am purposed to do.”

Terrence Sims, MDiv '23

Rev. Terrence D. Sims, MDiv '23, pastor of Bethel AME Church of Fontana, California, says, “Because of Central, I feel prepared to do the work I am purposed to do.” His learning experience at Central motivated him to move his church ministry online in order to expand its reach beyond its four walls. His church will soon be starting a residential assisted-living ministry, and they are planning monthly community empowerment workshops. Terrence’s passion for ministry has intensified, and he attributes this fresh fire to his time at Central.

This year, 67% of Central’s degree and certificate students received an institutional scholarship or other non-loan aid thanks to your continued support.

By giving today, you help future students like Terrence achieve their goals and live into their callings by providing critical scholarships and essential support services. ✨

**Classes begin
August 28, and the
need is great. Will
you give?**

Simply scan the QR code with your phone’s camera or mail your donation in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you
for giving
generously!





WITH SOIL

Burnout, exhaustion, depression, fatigue, insomnia, anxiety, stress, poor work-life balance, financial stress, lack of self-care, and loss of motivation. Who does this describe? If you are a pastor or ministry leader, it might describe many of the people in your pews. If you are a pastor or ministry leader, it might also describe you.

For ministry leaders, as is true for most people, some of these emotional and psychological struggles may be caused by work. Often, people find it hard to believe that a ministry leader could experience such things. Shouldn't ministers be different? How could following God's call lead to this? The reasons are complex and varied, but one answer may be found in thinking about the role we expect our ministry leaders to hold.

The following is an all-too-true list of unwritten candidate requirements for an imaginary ministry job. It was compiled, in-part, using a list of the burdens of ministry work that Matt Bloom describes in his book, *Flourishing in Ministry*.

Job: Pastor

Qualifications: We seek a candidate who can deal effectively with high-stakes work (nothing is more high stakes). This position is complex and requires immense cognitive effort. Your work is continuous. Your daily tasks are diverse and require quick changes in your way of thinking and in the skills you employ to complete those tasks. Unexpected events should be expected. You will receive no guidance on prioritization as all tasks are of equal importance. You will find yourself alone in this work more than with others as in-person communication is diminishing. And you will need to navigate rapidly changing external events of which you have no control but that will greatly impact your daily work. You must be comfortable reporting to a group of individuals who are unaware of what your position truly consists of. Finally, candidates must be empathic and emotionally available for all, whenever they need it, and for whatever they need.

The rewards of serving in ministry are immense and meaningful. But ministry is not and never has been easy. In 2023, it seems to be more difficult every day. The lack of mental health support for pastors and high expectations by congregations are clearly part of the problem.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website notes that mental illnesses are among

the most common health concerns of people in the United States, that more than 50% of the population will at some point be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder, and that 1 in 25 Americans live with a chronic mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. Given these statistics, half of all pastors may be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their life and ministry, and some of those pastors will also experience a chronic, serious mental illness or disorder.

An empathic profession, ministry is emotionally demanding, and burnout is prevalent. Bloom notes that clergy burnout does not happen in one day and is often the result of chronically low daily well-being. Burnout can be addressed, but left unattended, it can lead to severe dysfunction or even mental illness. The mental health issues of many ministers, however, often begin earlier in life.

David C. Wang, professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, an ordained minister, and a licensed psychologist who specializes in trauma and spiritual formation, spoke to Matt Huffman for a piece in *InTrust Magazine*. Wang said, "nearly half of the students enter into seminary with a traumatic, life-threatening event in their lifetime." His studies reveal that 33% of seminary students surveyed experienced "enough sufficiently significant trauma symptoms to potentially be considered for a full-blown diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)." Wang's conclusion is that seminaries need to assist students in dealing with that earlier trauma as well as preparing them for the trauma that they will most likely encounter in the future.

In a letter to the editor at *InTrust Magazine*, Jonathan Grenz, dean of the School of Ministry at Palm Beach Atlantic University, encourages theological schools to think beyond the mental health needs of their current students: "Pastors encounter trauma with individuals, in their churches, and in their communities. Few professions deal with such a spectrum of trauma. Since we cannot fully prepare students in the few years we have with them, how can we support our alumni?"

8 Self Care Tips for Ministry Professionals (and Anyone Else, Too)



Dr. Lindsay Bonebrake,
Director of the
Counseling Program
and Assistant Professor

- 1. Protect family, time, and resources:** If we are to lead others and shepherd a flock, we are called to first make sure that things in our households are managed well (1 Timothy 3:1-13).
- 2. Create and keep a Sabbath:** Take regular breaks and ensure that you make time for activities and experiences that help you recharge.
- 3. Give yourself the grace that you would extend to others:** Be kind and understanding with yourself, and practice self-compassion when facing challenges or setbacks.
- 4. Build support outside of your ministry:** Build a support network of colleagues, friends, and family members who can provide emotional support and encouragement when you need it.
- 5. Grow your faith:** You cannot pour from an empty pitcher. Nurture your spiritual life by spending time in prayer, worship, service, and study.
- 6. Set boundaries:** Learn to say no to requests or obligations that are beyond your capacity and create boundaries to protect your time and energy.
- 7. Seek professional help:** If you are experiencing symptoms of burnout, anxiety, or depression, consider seeking help from a mental health professional.
- 8. Take care of physical needs:** Exercise can help reduce stress, boost mood, and improve overall health.

The Interfaith Network on Mental Illness (INMI) website reports that “more than half of people who seek outside help when they are in crisis turn first to their clergy/faith leaders, before they seek help from psychiatrists, physicians or psychologists.” The INMI further notes that “there are many people who are living with a mental illness who are looking for a faith community that offers an inclusive welcome and provides spiritual support.”

These findings raise numerous questions for seminaries. How can seminaries address the mental health needs of their students and provide them with training and skills to serve individuals, congregations, and communities that are struggling to be emotionally and psychologically healthy? How can theological institutions help their alumni and other ministry leaders find well-being, make better personal and professional decisions, and increase their capacity for positive relationships? How can seminaries encourage congregations to create and implement mental health initiatives and consistently address well-being as a critical aspect of their ministry? At Central, these questions are not new, and the seminary has addressed these questions in several creative ways.

In 2018, Central received a Thriving in Ministry grant funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The grant’s purpose was to cultivate pastors’ capacity to nurture collegial friendships, mentoring relationships, and their own well-being and to help them thrive in congregational leadership and enhance the vitality of the congregations they serve. The goal of Central’s Thriving in Ministry program is to nurture ministers who are prepared for service, confident in their abilities, satisfied with their vocation, anticipate ministry longevity, establish a supportive community, and lead courageously. The program offers peer group communities of practice, one-to-one mentoring, and alumni peer communities. The program’s focus is on fostering individual thriving and cultivating supportive, collegial

relationships—at its core, it is about ministerial well-being.

Perhaps the most successful offering is the one-to-one matching of new and transitioning student ministers with an experienced ministry mentor. These mentoring relationships provide a safe place for reflection, discernment, and reforming or refining ministry direction and sense of call. In 2022, 15 students participated and were matched with a mentor. When asked about the benefits of having a mentor, students answered:

“My mentor provided me with a very important listening ear during the stressful days of seminary and many valuable words of encouragement and prayer. She also offered practical suggestions for how to manage time, rest, and how to advocate for what I needed in my own workspace.”

“Without my mentor, I would not have stayed in seminary. I know that sounds silly, an exaggeration, but without her advice, wit, strength, compassion, and listening skills, I would have remained a wreck without a focus on a brighter and more helpful future.”

“My mentor created an atmosphere which promoted a relaxed and trusting environment, so I felt comfortable sharing with her any issues that arose from one month to the next. I appreciated her compassionate listening skills and willingness to creatively brainstorm solutions for real-life issues.”

In 2020, Central initiated a new Master of Arts in Counseling (MACO) degree. This program is clinically based and focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. Many of those enrolled in the program are ministry professionals returning to seminary to add a new skill set and to widen their employment prospects. The MACO program is offered in English. In 2021, Central established a Master of Arts in Christian Care and Counseling degree offered in Korean. This program equips ministry

professionals with Christian counseling skills but is not clinically based. The creation of these two counseling programs amid a global pandemic was fortuitous. Both programs meet very real needs for mental health care in congregations and communities.

Since 2021, Central has also offered both credit and non-credit certificates in chaplaincy. While not addressing mental health issues directly in terms of diagnosis and treatment, chaplains serve as guides, spiritual caregivers, and resources for well-being in a variety of settings—hospitals, prisons, hospice, and the military.

During a recent conversation with Central faculty about our Thriving in Ministry program, one participant used the analogy of a seed on the sidewalk. That seed won't grow on the sidewalk, but when the wind blows the seed into a crack of the sidewalk where there might be some dirt, the seed finally has a chance to sprout. But for that seed to truly thrive and flourish, it will need more than a chance of dirt. It will need rich soil that offers lifegiving possibilities. If our students, current and future ministry leaders, are the seeds, more and more of them seem to find themselves on the sidewalks or in the cracks of ministry and life, and Central and other seminaries can no longer expect them to find their own soil. We need to continue providing rich soil for them so that they will not only survive but have the possibility of thriving and flourishing. 🌱

Reach out for help

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.



*"I never have
to wonder if Central
cares about me."*

Clara Osborne
Current MDiv and Chaplaincy Certificate student



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