

THE VOICE



Keith Ahn and others share why they give generously to Central Seminary

THE Love YOU Give

Doctoral student Joe Callahan addresses Central's Board of Directors about the beautiful diversity he experiences in his classes.



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Central Seminary



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A Word from the President

리더십의 중심 센트럴, 센트럴에서 리더십으로

Every May I take my Presidential Medallion out of its case, and I proudly wear it to Commencement. The medallion has the names of each of Central's presidents, beginning with President Phillip Crannell (1903-1926). The medallion also has two small round disks that read "FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH." Since its founding, Central has served the church.

In 2020, our seminary created ReShaping Church, a Lilly Endowment-funded program whose goal was to support congregations during the uncertainty and crisis of the pandemic. Over the last four years, 187 congregations have participated in various aspects of our ReShaping Church program, and we have witnessed many of these churches responding well to the multiple crises being experienced in our world. Central is grateful to have served congregations during such a turbulent season.

As we have moved past many of the pandemic's limitations, our ReShaping Church's director, Rev. Rhonda Hetzel, and I have set out to learn more about the current greatest needs of congregations. What we know is that 54% of churches are in decline,* small and rural churches are struggling to find new pastors, and some congregations depend heavily on lay members to plan and lead the church's ministries. In identifying and evaluating these needs, our initial conversation partners have been American Baptist regional ministers, primarily in the Midwest. With their help, our goal at Central is to continue listening deeply to congregations and to discern what programs and offerings will assist churches in thriving.

Our board-adopted strategic initiatives, "The Future is Central," set us on this path of exploring new programming, and given Central's consistent focus on resourcing the church, now is the right time to follow the Spirit into new ways of living out "FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH." Be sure to read the update on "The Future is Central" on page 6. ✨

매년 5월마다 나는 케이스에서 총장 메달을 꺼내 졸업식에 자랑스럽게 착용합니다. 메달에는 필립 크래넬 총장(1903-1926)을 시작으로 센트럴신학대학원의 각 총장의 이름이 새겨져 있습니다. 메달에는 또한 "그리스도와 교회를 위하여"라고 적힌 두 개의 작은 원형 디스크가 있는데, 이는 센트럴이 창립 이래로 교회를 섬겨 왔다는 것을 상기시켜 줍니다.

2020년에 우리 신학교는 팬데믹의 불확실성과 위기 속에서 교회를 지원하는 것을 목표로 하는 릴리 기부금 지원 프로그램인 리쉐이핑 처치(ReShaping Church)를 만들었습니다. 지난 4년 동안 187개의 교회가 리쉐이핑 처치(ReShaping Church) 프로그램의 다양한 방면에 참여했으며, 우리는 이들 교회 중 많은 교회가 우리가 세상에서 겪고 있는 다양한 위기에 잘 대처하는 것을 목격했습니다. 센트럴은 이렇게 격동의 시기에 회중을 잘 섬겨준 것에 감사하고 있습니다.

우리가 팬데믹의 많은 한계를 극복하면서, 저희 리쉐이핑 교회(ReShaping Church)의 책임자인 론다 헤첼(Rhonda Hetzel) 목사님과 저는 현재 회중의 가장 큰 필요 사항에 대해 더 많이 배우기 시작했습니다. 우리가 알고 있는 것은 54%의 교회가 쇠퇴하고* 소규모 시골 교회가 새로운 목회자를 찾는 데 어려움을 겪고 있으며, 일부 교회는 교회 사역을 계획하고 이끄는 데 평신도에게 크게 의존하고 있다는 것입니다. 이러한 필요 사항을 파악하고 평가하는 데 있어 우리의 초기 대화 파트너는 주로 중서부 지역의 미국 침례교 지역 사역자들이었습니다. 그들의 도움을 받아, 우리 센트럴 목표는 계속해서 회중의 말을 깊이 듣고 교회가 번창하는 데 어떤 프로그램과 헌물이 도움이 될지 식별하는 것입니다.

이사회가 채택한 전략적 이니셔티브인 "미래는 센트럴입니다.(The Future is Central)"에 따라 센트럴은 새로운 프로그램 탐사의 길로 발전 방향을 설정했으며 교회에 유용한 인력자원 양성이 우리 센트럴의 일관된 중점 교육 목표라는 점을 감안할 때 지금 이 시점이 이두가지 중점 목표를 융합하여 성령을 따라 "그리스도와 교회를 위하여" 새로운 방향으로 나아가야 할 적기입니다. 6페이지에 있는 "미래는 센트럴입니다.(The Future is Central)"에 대한 업데이트 내용을 꼭 읽어주시기 바랍니다. ✨

Pam Durso

*"Back to Normal? The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming Out of the Pandemic," Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, August 2023.

*"정상대로 돌아갈 수 있나? 팬데믹에서 나오는 회중 회복의 혼합된 메시지," 하트퍼드 국제종교평화대학교 하트퍼드 종교연구소, 2023년 8월.

THE Love YOU Give

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mother Teresa once said, “We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something.” Henri Nouwen expressed a similar sentiment in his book, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*: “Even a seemingly small act of generosity can grow into something far beyond what we could ever ask for or imagine—the creation of a community of love in this world, because wherever love grows, it is stronger than death.”

We all wonder if our giving matters, especially when we give to institutions or organizations that have multi-million-dollar operating budgets. How could our gift possibly make a dent in meeting their annual needs? Yet Mother Teresa and Henri Nouwen remind us that giving is not simply a transfer of resources from one person to another. Giving, regardless of the amount of money or the kind of service, is in its most pure form an act of love.

Central has been well-loved for more than 120 years. From the financial donations given to establish the seminary in 1901 to the dollars contributed in 2024 to support student

scholarships, each gift has been a significant piece of the puzzle that has allowed Central to not only survive, but to thrive.

Giving as an act of love allows individuals, families, and organizations to impact the causes they care most about. It opens opportunities to help transform the world, to create a personal legacy, and to influence the future. For many people, giving is also an expression of faith.

Today, financial gifts are crucial for all institutions of higher education. At Central, the generosity of our community helps us keep tuition affordable and allows many of our students to graduate without debt. We are deeply thankful for those who financially support Central, and we always love welcoming others into our generous community to give in whatever ways work best for them.

Recently, we asked some of our friends what they love about Central and why they have chosen to give so generously. Their deep care for everything from Central’s mission to the diversity of our students is certainly worth sharing.

Affirming God’s Call

Elisabeth Seymour, a current Master of Divinity and Chaplaincy Certificate student notes: “There are incredible people who are full of the love and life of God and who want to work in ministry, but because they don’t have what society says they need to have to practice ministry, they can’t do it. And often they can’t do it because of finances. What a sad thing for finances to be what holds someone

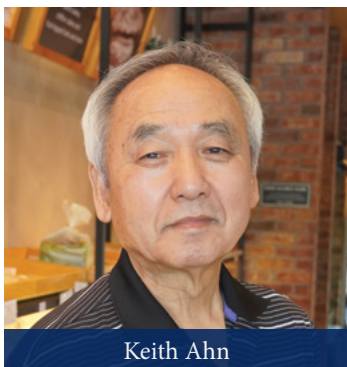
back. As someone who receives a scholarship, I see that financial assistance as an affirmation of who it is that God is asking me to be and what I am called toward. And to have strangers to come behind me and support me with their funds . . . all I can say is wow, what a humbling and beautiful experience. Their contributions go further than just helping me pay for seminary—they affirm what God is doing.”



Julie & Wayne Paulsen

**For the love of Central's MISSION AND HISTORY,
Julie and Wayne Paulsen give generously.**

The Paulsens are deeply connected to Central. Julie's parents attended the seminary and were married in May 1937 on the Kansas City, Kansas campus. All Julie's uncles attended Central in the 1930s. While she was never a student, Julie met and married a student, Wayne, and they lived on campus while he completed his degree. From 1974 to 2006, Julie served on Central's Board of Directors. Julie notes, "I can't think of anything we believe in more than the seminary—in preparing others to do God's work."



Keith Ahn

**For the love of INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS,
Keith Ahn gives generously.**

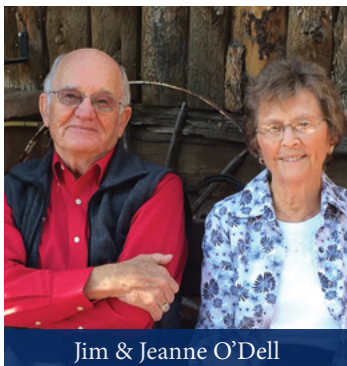
Keith Ahn is a long-time Kansas businessman. He currently owns and operates multiple restaurants and bakeries and is a leader in the Korean American Association of Greater Kansas City. Since 2019, his family foundation has been a generous financial supporter of Central. Mr. Ahn shared, "We provide gifts to Central because of their support of the Korean and Myanmar communities in Kansas City and in their home countries. Our gifts are for student scholarships because they help people to have an opportunity to start a new life."



Jim Cook

For the love of VOLUNTEER SERVICE, Jim Cook gives generously.

Rev. Jim Cook, the current chair of Central's Board of Directors, works as a Certified Financial Planner for the Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board. "Eight years ago, I was invited to consider serving on the board of Central. My own theological education was defining in my life, and my ongoing passion for the church and theological education made responding with a 'Yes' to the invitation easy. My time serving on Central's board—though not over yet—will be a highlight of my life. And it continually reminds me of what is truly important to me: I work to earn a living; I volunteer to create a life."



Jim & Jeanne O'Dell

**For the love of AFFORDABLE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION,
Jim and Jeanne O'Dell give generously.**

Kansas natives Jim and Jeanne O'Dell are retired bankers, now living in Colorado. They are long-time supporters of Central. "We like to contribute to Central Seminary because we believe our giving has the ability to train and graduate special people who will serve and love the Lord. Higher education today costs thousands of dollars, so by contributing to scholarship funds we hope to make a difference in the student's debt."



Patricia L. Griffen

**For the love of TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE,
Patricia L. Griffen gives generously.**

Dr. Patricia Griffen is a practicing therapist in Little Rock, Arkansas. She recently completed her tenure on Central's Board. "Through my service on Central's Board of Directors, I have witnessed the transformation of lives through various and diverse ministries throughout the world. It is therefore a privilege for me to give to Central as my contribution toward doing for others globally to create transformational changes in the world."

**For the love of the SEMINARY COMMUNITY,
Michael Vollbrecht gives generously.**

Rev. Michael Vollbrecht, MDiv '20, is a pastor, spiritual director, and Generosity Officer for the United Church of Christ. "I graduated from Central four years ago, but I haven't forgotten about the seminary's impact on my life. I choose to donate monthly because I want to give back to a school that nurtured me into ministry and because the people I met are forever imprinted on my heart."



Michael Vollbrecht

**For the love of the SHARING IN GOD'S WORK,
Nancy Wheeler gives generously.**

Rev. Nancy Wheeler dedicated much of her life to Christian education, mission work, and service as a chaplain. "I feel it's important to support Central with gifts, and especially with prayers, to help students who need additional financial assistance with their education. Investing in Central is an opportunity to share in the building of God's Kingdom through sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ at home and throughout the world."



Nancy Wheeler

**For the love of the CULTIVATING GLOBAL LEADERS,
Kevin Pranoto gives generously.**

Rev. Kevin Pranoto serves as pastor of social work at Second Baptist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas, and is a member of Central's Board. "I love that Central Seminary is an inclusive community for people across multiple demographics. I have witnessed firsthand how much this institution really cares about cultivating global leaders who will leave a positive impact on the future of the Church and society."



Kevin Pranoto

**For the love of NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE CHURCH,
Larry Graves gives generously.**

Rev. Larry Graves, MDiv '05, serves on Central's Board and is a retired pastor and former police officer. "I consider it my privilege and responsibility to invest into the new leadership for the church. I believe in the mission entrusted to Central to prepare and equip those leaders to be the very best that they can be in fulfilling God's call on their life." 🙏



Larry Graves

To learn about ways to give and the impact of the gifts we receive, call 913-667-5741 or visit www.cbts.edu/give-to-central/



PROGRESS TOWARD THE FUTURE



In 2023, Central Seminary announced, “The Future is Central,” three strategic initiatives designed to lead us into our next season and continue our commitment to deliver excellent theological education while also addressing the shifting ministry needs of our world. President Pam Durso, the administration, and the faculty have been working swiftly toward implementing these initiatives.

INITIATIVE #1: Embracing and Enhancing Virtual Learning as the Future of Theological Education at Central and Beyond

Update: On January 18, 2024, Central listed our Shawnee campus building with a commercial real estate firm. Within days, a local church showed interest and initiated a contract. After several months of due diligence on the part of the church, the sale was finalized on August 23. Central will remain in the building and lease administrative offices and classroom space from the church until our December move to our new location, 8620 W. 110th Street, Overland Park, Kansas.

As we move toward right-sizing our space, we have also addressed the need to right-size our print library. Since 2019, Central has made resources available to our students via the Digital Theological Library (DTL). In April, approximately 80% of our print books and journals were shipped to California to be digitized and added to the DTL. All students, regardless of physical proximity to campus, will now have access to our library plus the 1.5 million books and 61,000 journals available through DTL. From the print collection that remained, Central shared just over 700 books with sister schools: the Cambodian Bible Institute and The Chin College. When we move to our new location, Central will have a small library that includes frequently used reference materials.

In July, the Allen Organ, which was given to Central in 2011 by board member and longtime friend of the seminary Linda Roos and the Pillsbury Foundation, was gifted and relocated to William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri.

With the oversight of Dr. Priscilla Eppinger, executive director of the American Baptist

Historical Society (ABHS), Central staff and volunteers have worked hard to sort, organize, and inventory our archival records. On August 15, the records were shipped to the ABHS in Atlanta, Georgia, the oldest and largest Baptist historical library and archives in the United States, where they will be accessible to researchers and scholars from around the world.

INITIATIVE #2: Anticipating and Addressing the Evolving Needs of Students and Graduates

Update: In February 2024, the Leadership Team and Faculty Senate approved a comprehensive process by which to propose, evaluate, and create new academic and non-academic programs. A variety of ideas for new certificates and degree programs are currently being considered.

INITIATIVE #3: Resourcing Students Who Struggle to Afford Seminary

Update: On February 1, 2024, Central launched a “100 Scholarships in 100 Days Campaign,” as a first step in addressing the need of students who struggle to fund their theological education. A generous donor quickly stepped in and offered a 1:1 match for the first \$50,000 given. At the conclusion of the campaign, Central raised \$124,802 to fund student scholarships. 🌱

You can read the full “The Future is Central” plan here



◀ English

Korean ▶



Me, The Bible, and Teaching at Central

by Dr. David May



My vision for teaching the New Testament during my time at Central was simple but not simplistic; it was to help individuals, students, pastors, politicians, and all folks “know the Scriptures and the power of God.” Anyone who holds the Bible in their hands also needs to hold it responsibly in their minds and hearts.

The irresponsible use of Scripture is all too easy to see, hear, and find. Scripture is abused when used as a warrant for political, theological, or personal agendas. When teaching theological students, speaking to churches, or writing to the larger public, I saw my role as Professor of New Testament as a way to assist and encourage healthy engagement with Scriptures so that Scripture did not get rolled out and weaponized as a warrant for any type of scheme.

Rather than misusing the Bible, I hope I enable readers of the Bible to approach and understand Scripture as a witness—that is, a witness to our ancestors in faith who imperfectly and yet sincerely sensed the movement of God in their lives. Those women and men who populate the pages of the Bible lived God-moments in their own unique contexts. Often, they did this in failing and flailing ways, but Scripture is the tangible evidence of their attempt to capture God’s work with, through, around, and in them.

So, in the Scriptures, we have the working memories and experiences of our ancestors in faith as their lives

intersected with God and the very real complexities of their own specific social and cultural realities. When Scripture is a witness for us—when we know Scripture as Jesus wishes us to know Scripture—the experiences of our ancestors in faith can be woven into our experiences today, which does not mean the biblical stories and prescriptive mandates of the first century are applied literally to twenty-first century situations. This type of approach can only bring the ringing words of Jesus back to our ears: “You know neither Scripture nor the power of God.” Rather, we acknowledge that in Scripture we discern a map for guidance and discipleship into the complexities of our world.

In my study at home, I have a shelf of autographed books from many different authors: Jimmy Carter, Garrison Keillor, David McCullough, and Dale Carnegie, to name a few. I also have an autographed book from my theology professor, Dale Moody, from the last class he taught in 1983 at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In his book, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation*, he signed his name, but he also included this citation from 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [so] that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work. (NET)

This passage is a fitting summation of what I attempted in my teaching of the New Testament, because when one knows the Scriptures, he or she is equipped “for every good work.” And doing good work is a witness to “the power of God” in the world. 🌿



Dr. May retired at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year as professor of New Testament, Landreneau Guillory Chair of Biblical Studies, and director of the Master of Arts (Theological Studies) program. Read more about Dr. May’s thirty-year career at Central Seminary here. ►





Congratulations, Class of 2024

On Saturday, May 18, 2024, Central proudly granted certificates and degrees to 79 students from seven different programs. Nearly 40 of those graduates gathered with their families and friends at Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, to celebrate the culmination of their academic journey.

Our Commencement speaker, Rev. Dr. Wonhee Anne Joh, the Harry R. Kendall Professor of Christian Theology and Postcolonial Studies at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, offered these encouraging words to our graduates: “No matter how heavy the world becomes, do not lose heart. Do not let your heart harden, but persevere, and keep your heart soft to the world. Softness, tenderness, kindheartedness, generosity, and compassion without end are all revolutionary acts.”

Dr. David May, who served for many years as Commencement Marshal, led his final procession into the sanctuary. May was named Professor Emeritus by the Board of Directors on May 16, 2024 and retired on July 31, 2024, after 30 years of serving on Central’s faculty. 🌿

During the Commencement service, the following awards for excellence were presented:

FRANKLIN LORENZO STREETER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

William Allen Hill
Sung Jung Kim

PHILIP WENDELL CRANNELL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PREACHING

Seongyeoun Lim
Patrick Fitzgerald Roberts

HARVEY E. DANA AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN WRITING

Hui Jeong Chon
Sergio Carlos Moreno-Denton

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

James Ahn
Tanya L. Anderson
Kimberly S. Campbell
Derk Hanna
Marcus Lemar Jackson
Shallom Lee
Sergio Carlos Moreno-Denton
Julia Lane Riley
Htee Khu Shee
Kimberly J. Turner Zorn

PEACE AND JUSTICE AWARD

Hyojoong Lee
Julia Lane Riley

ROBERT G. TORBET AWARD IN HISTORY

Kacey Kyungchun Lee
Sergio Carlos Moreno-Denton

WHEELER-PROCTOR AWARD IN THEOLOGY

Pil Won Jeong
Sergio Carlos Moreno-Denton

LARRY CORNINE CLINICALLY DESCRIPTIVE, BIBLICALLY PRESCRIPTIVE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Julie Ann Avila

PRESIDENTIAL AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

William Allen Hill
Hui Jeong Chon
Hyungjung Kim
Sangcheol Kim

► Watch the ceremony at Central’s YouTube channel: youtube.com/@CentralSeminaryKS/streams



► Download ceremony and graduate photos: kdog.com/censemgrad24



New Faculty Join Central Seminary

Rev. Dr. Toya Richards



Rev. Dr. Toya Richards now serves as the Director of the Peace and Justice Ministry Certificate Program.

In addition to overseeing the program, Dr. Richards recruits students for the program, teaches classes, and helps in assessing the program for impact and effectiveness. Her goal is to prepare ministry leaders to serve the church and their communities through social change.

Dr. Richards earned a Doctor of Ministry degree with an emphasis in pastoral care from McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois; a Master of Divinity degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; and a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Dr. Richards' first day of service was January 1, 2024.

Rev. Dr. Seung Ho Bang



Rev. Dr. Seung Ho Bang has joined the faculty as the Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible and Contextualized Learning Director. Dr. Bang has served as a Supplement Assistant

Professor and Department Coordinator of Hebrew Bible in Central's Korean language programs since 2020.

In his new role, Dr. Bang oversees the seminary's contextual learning courses in both the English and Korean Master of Divinity programs. In addition, he will teach courses in master-level programs, advise

and mentor students, and guide the capstone process for students.

Dr. Bang earned a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Baylor University, Waco, Texas; a Master of Theology and a Master of Divinity from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; and a Bachelor of Theology from the Methodist Theological University in Seoul, Korea.

Dr. Bang's first day of service in this role was August 1, 2024.

Dr. Anna Wells



In cooperation with the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR), Central Seminary is pleased to welcome Anna Wells as a Visiting Fellow.

Dr. Wells teaches courses in Christian heritage, guides students in their thesis writing, and participates in the academic work of the seminary. She also benefits from intentional mentoring sessions designed for emerging scholars, including coaching on course and curriculum development, classroom management, setting and maintaining research and publication goals, and establishing healthy practices of self-care.

Dr. Wells is a native Texan and a lifelong Baptist. She has received two degrees from Baylor University, earning both a B.A. and M.A. in History. Dr. Wells graduated with her Ph.D. from the Baylor University Department of Religion with an emphasis in World Christianity, Medieval Christianity, Women and Gender on August 16, 2024.

Dr. Wells' first day of service at Central was August 1, 2024.



"My [Central Seminary] experience helped me grow as a human, taking on the mantra, 'Love God, Love neighbor.' My professors and cohort challenged me to think outside of my comfort zone, aiding my spiritual growth."

Tanya Anderson
Master of Divinity, 2024

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