

CENTRAL SEMINARY | WINTER 2025

THE VOICE



OUR
NEXT
CHAPTER



(From left) Dr. Kwangsup Shin, assistant director of doctor of ministry program and associate professor, Shinwon Park '22, board member, and Young Soo Ham '24, alumni representative to the board of directors, tour the new campus building during construction.

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CENTRAL SEMINARY

8620 W. 110th Street, Suite 200
Overland Park, KS 66210
(913) 667-5700 | (800) 677-2287
www.cbts.edu

EDITORIAL STAFF

Pamela R. Durso, President
pdurso@cbts.edu

Craig S. Doty, Senior Director of Brand Advancement
cdoty@cbts.edu

MAGAZINE DESIGN

Kathryn Gauer, Type A Creative LLC
kathryn.gauer@gmail.com



A Word from the President

리더십의 중심 센트럴, 센트럴에서 리더십으로

All Things New

If Central Seminary chose a verse in 2025 to serve as its theme, we would have to go with Isaiah 43:19: “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” God is indeed doing a new thing among us.

With our recent relocation from Shawnee to Overland Park, Kansas, we are now living in a new building, a smaller, right-sized building. We are also in conversations about new programs, new degrees, and new connections.

In this season of all things new, Isaiah 43 reminds us that the Israelites who received this message from the prophet were not expected to embrace God’s new thing in isolation. They had others with whom they pondered, dreamed, and imagined. They had companions for the journey of discovering the new that God had in store. So it is with us at Central. We do not walk alone. We do not discover alone. We do not experience the new of God alone.

I believe that seminary at its very best is for its students a place of discovery, a place of wonder, a place of dreaming—about the new things God is doing. At Central, our students have professors, mentors, advisors, administrators, and their fellow students who join them on the journey. As companions, they awakened each other’s imagination. They invite one another to behold the new thing God is doing. They encourage each other to be ready for what is to come and to open themselves to see more, to see farther.

As Central lives into its mission, my prayer is that we prepare as a community—students, alums, friends, faculty, staff, and leadership—so that we are ready and eager to be part of God’s next something new. ✨

모든것이 새롭게

센트럴 신학교가 2025년을 위한 말씀구절을 뽑는다면, 이사야 43장 19절이 가장 적절할것 같습니다. “보라, 내가 새 일을 행하리니 이제 나타낼 것이라 너희가 그것을 알지 못하겠느냐?” 하나님께서는 분명히 우리 가운데 새로운 일을 행하고 계시기 때문입니다.

최근 저희는 샐니에서 오버랜드 파크로 본교를 이전하여, 이전보다는 작지만, 우리에게 가장 적합한 크기의 새 건물에서 새해를 시작하고 있습니다. 그뿐만 아니라, 우리는 새로운 프로그램, 새로운 학위, 그리고 새로운 관계구축에 대한 대화를 나누고 있습니다.

이렇게 모든것이 새롭게 시작되는 이 때에, 이사야 43 장은 우리에게 중요한 메시지를 전해주고 있습니다. 선지자에게 주어졌던 이 말씀을 이스라엘 백성이 전달 받았을 때, 그들은 하나님께서 행하시는 새 일을 개개인 각자가 혼자서 받아들여야 한다는것이 아니었습니다. 그들에게는 함께 고민하고, 꿈꾸며, 미래를 상상할 수 있는 공동체가 있었습니다. 새로운 길을 발견하는 낯선 여정에서 그들은 결코 혼자가 아니었고, 공동체가 함께 있었습니다. 센트럴도 마찬가지입니다. 우리는 이 새로운 여정을 혼자 걷지도, 새길을 혼자 개척해나가지 않습니다. 우리는 하나님이 하고 계시는 이 새 일을 결코 혼자 경험하지 않습니다.

저는 신학교가 학생들에게 있어, 하나님께서 하시는 새 일을 발견하고 새로운 가능성을 만나고, 소망 가득한 꿈을 꾸는 장소여야 한다고 믿습니다. 센트럴에서는 교수진, 멘토들, 상담자들, 행정팀, 그리고 동료 학생들이 이 여정을 함께 걸어갑니다. 그들은 서로의 상상력을 깨우고, 하나님께서 하시는 새 일을 바라보도록 서로를 초대하며, 더 넓고 더 멀리 볼 수 시각을 가짐으로 다가올 미래의 일을 준비할수 있도록 서로 격려합니다.

센트럴이 올해 하나님이 주신 사명을 따라 살아갈때, 저는 우리 학생, 졸업생, 동역자, 교수진, 직원, 그리고 리더십이 공동체로 하나되며, 하나님께서 행하실 새로운 일에 우리 모두가 기쁨으로 참여할 수 있도록 기도하겠습니다. ✨

Pamela R. Durso



OUR NEXT CHAPTER

As the adage reminds us, “when one chapter ends, another begins.” Central Seminary has a long, storied history, full of new chapters and fresh starts. In 2023, when the need emerged to begin yet another new chapter, the Central community embraced the possibility with optimism and resilience, knowing that together we were writing the newest story of this sacred institution.

Our New Address

8620 West 110th Street, Suite 200
Overland Park, KS 66210



Open House

Saturday, March 15
2:00–4:00 pm (CT)

Join us to:

- Tour Central's new main campus
- Connect with staff and faculty
- Enjoy refreshments

RSVP by texting "RSVP"
to (913) 270-3062 for
a link to the form OR
scan the QR code



Our next chapter begins with Central Seminary's relocation to a new main campus in Overland Park, Kansas. In 2023, Central's Board of Directors voted to sell the Shawnee building and relocate to a right-sized space. This move was one of three strategic initiatives in our "The Future is Central" plan, created to lead the seminary into the future. After the sale of the Shawnee building and after months of intense preparation, a crew of movers arrived on December 18, 2024, and we said goodbye to our home for the last two decades—a space that served our community well. With the help of faculty and staff, just before Christmas, Central was fully relocated to our new home.



Central's Board of Directors on tour of the new campus building during construction.

Fast Facts

Our 9,000 square feet includes:

- Classrooms
- Boardroom
- Library
- Prayer and reflection space
- Faculty and staff offices
- Shared collaborative workspaces

Just as churches are not buildings but people, seminaries are also not buildings. They are students, faculty members, and staff. That truth is especially appropriate for Central. Since 1901, Central has lived in four locations, and for 124 years has been committed not to a space or building. Wherever Central has been housed and whatever the size of the campus, Central remains a seminary that seeks to live into its original purpose as stated in our first charter: “for the education and training of ministers of the gospel, missionaries and teachers.” 🌿

This is Central

Marcus Rhodes

Master of Arts (Theological Studies)

When Delbert Wagner arrived home after serving in World War I, his return as a student to Central Seminary was no longer an option. The world had changed, and Wagner was needed full-time on the family farm and part-time as preacher at his local church. While his enrollment as a Central student was short-lived, his life and his example began a family tradition that continues in 2025.

Wagner's son, Lesley Rhodes, was the first in the family to graduate from Central. He completed a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1958. In 1983, Wagner's grandson, Daniel Rhodes, earned a Master of Divinity degree. In 2024, more than a century after Wagner attended, his great-grandson, Marcus Rhodes, enrolled in Central's Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree program, becoming the fourth generation in his family to attend Central.

Times and circumstances have changed since Wagner attended in the early 20th century. Unlike his great-grandfather, Marcus did not have to make hard decisions and choose between seminary, the military, and supporting a family. A husband, father, and a full-time service member, Marcus is currently stationed in Overland Park as an Army National Guard recruiter. Earlier he served 16 years in the Navy. When Marcus was ready for seminary, he did not have to relocate or to step away from his career like his great-grandfather. He attends classes virtually from his living room.

The son of a theologically conservative preacher, Marcus was adamant and made it known that he had no interest in ever attending seminary. In 2023, that changed. He began sensing a call that started as a gentle nudge and turned into a full-blown nagging feeling, which he could not ignore. As hesitant as he was to admit it, he knew seminary was calling him. He also knew that eventually his military career would come to an end, and he wanted to be prepared for what was next.



After apprehensively telling his family that he thought he should attend seminary (Central, of course), he set out to face the barriers that were before him—time and money. When he realized that his courses would be completed virtually and largely on his schedule, and when Central staff offered him a generous scholarship, the barriers fell, and he knew it was time to enroll.

“Every person will draw different conclusions from theological reflection. None of them are wrong, and none are right, as long as Christ is at the center. With that, they can all help you grow.”

Marcus Rhodes

Currently in his first year, Marcus feels at home at Central, which to some extent, surprises him. He was not sure what to expect from a virtual learning environment, and he was uncertain if he would connect with other students who were more progressive theologically than he was. But to his surprise, he formed genuine relationships with his classmates and professors and began to see that listening to those with different theological understandings could inform his own faith journey and perspective. Marcus began to listen and “be open to everybody’s theological viewpoint, and he learned that “every person will draw different conclusions from theological reflection. None of them are wrong, and none are right, as long as Christ is at the center. With that, they can all help you grow.” ❁

Reflection on Ten Years with Central Students

By Sheryl L. Stewart

Throughout ten years of post-retirement-age employment with Central Seminary, I have been in awe of the circumstances that led to my work with so many insightful, strongly committed students. From a chance encounter with Dr. Heather Entrekin at lunch in a church fellowship hall, which led to consulting on curriculum and writing, my employment was formalized after conversations with Dr. Robert Johnson as we realized that my skills set and Central's need for writing assistance were well matched.

My approach to writing assistance for students: appreciate their ideas and help them express their thoughts most clearly and effectively. It is vulnerable to submit one's writing for appraisal, and I worked to let students know of my respect for their ideas. Effective education entails learning and change in both educator and student through the interaction between the prior knowledge and lived experience of both. I learned from students even as they learned from me, and with most papers I reviewed to give feedback, I also learned quite a bit of biblical interpretation, theology, and church history!

Central has become a friend to many Myanmar Christians for whom English is a generally a third or fourth language, after a primary tribal language, a specific sub-tribal dialect, and the country's Myanmar language. The desire to obtain education needed for effective ministry compels many Myanmar students to climb formidable language mountains to study in English. In response to the lengthy language acquisition journey, the students chip away at the mountain confronting them, through diligence, exposure, and the belief that they could do it with God's help, and sometimes mine. I think of several brilliant students with whom I spent many hours over reading assignments in which they had looked up every unfamiliar word and penciled in the meaning—and then perused meticulously with me to decipher the precise meaning of the passage sentences. The number of hours they spent in preparation was likely twice the number asked of me.

The endless vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and style mandates of English sometimes create anxiety among a variety of students who in their ministry contexts are creative and confident leaders. With these students, my job has been to sort through the draft that was presented to uncover and help with the articulation of

the ideas that were most important for the student to express. This process often meant feedback that began with, "Do you mean this (idea or word) or this (idea or word)?" Together, we would discover and formulate the expression that communicated their ideas best.



The nature of writing is often exploratory: Do I think this? Or that? It has been a life-giving delight to be witness to the garden of ideas and concerns that propel students who wish to be excellent in service to the world and to aid them in the cultivation of how best to let their passions, beliefs, and explorations grow those ideas into strategies and plans for effective ministry. 🌱

Sheryl Stewart retired from Central Seminary in December 2024. At the conclusion of the November 2024 Board of Directors meeting, a reception was held in her honor in which former students gathered in-person and over Zoom to express their thanks and share the impact that Sheryl's work had on them.

Central Receives Grant to Address Climate Change

Opportunities for All to Take Action

Central has been selected to participate in the Climate Science in Theological Education (CSTE) Grant Initiative of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER) program. The CSTE initiative provides grants to seminaries to engage the important issue of climate change in the context of theological education and ministry. The goal is to create an atmosphere in places of worship in which climate science is relevant, complementary, and important to faith/religious worldviews, which will ultimately promote faithful and meaningful action on climate change in broader society and produce a growing number of religious leaders equipped to help their congregants find answers to science-related questions.

At Central, this project will enable the seminary to build greater capacity among our students and faculty to address climate change. Dr. Ruth Rosell, director of the Buttry Center for Peace and Nonviolence at Central, will direct the CSTE grant program.

"I'm grateful Central Seminary was chosen to receive this Climate Science in Theological Education grant," said Dr. Rosell. "It will contribute toward fulfilling our mission of preparing leaders to seek God, shape church, and serve humanity and all creation by providing opportunities for students, faculty, staff, alumni, pastors, and people of faith to better understand and respond to the challenges of doing faithful ministry in our changing climate. It also will connect Central to other seminaries and those in the scientific community who are engaged in addressing the climate crisis." 🌿

Questions?

Contact Rev. Dr. Ruth Rosell at rrosell@cbts.edu



Students, alumni, and faith leaders are encouraged to attend the following events

Lunch and Learn with Dr. Leigh Stearns

April 7, 2025, 12:00–1:00 pm (CT)

This online opportunity will be with Dr. Leigh Stearns, professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Science at the University of Pennsylvania.

Continuing Education for Faith Leaders "Faith Leadership During Climate Change"

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 10:00–11:30 am (CT)

September–November 2025

This online continuing education offering will aim to equip faith leaders for the challenges of climate change. Topics for these six sessions will include climate science and solutions, theological perspectives, pastoral care with ecoanxiety and climate grief, worship leadership and preaching, communication, ministry opportunities in building resiliency, advocacy, and climate justice, mercy ministries for those suffering from climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions in buildings, and nurturing spirituality.

One-Day Ministry Conference "Faithful Responses to Climate Change"

Fall 2025

This in-person one-day ministry conference, with a livestreaming option, will be focused on equipping, inspiring, and connecting congregations and people of faith. Keynote speakers from both scientific and theological perspectives will address how to respond to climate change in effective and faithful ways that will have an impact. There will also be breakout sessions on relevant topics of practical importance.

Join the Mailing List to be notified of event details: Scan QR code or text **EARTH** to **(913) 270-3062** to receive a link to the submission form.



Central Seminary Speaker's Bureau

Central's new Speaker's Bureau can connect your group with engaging speakers and informative presentations on a variety of topics.

SAMPLE TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Biblical Storytelling Concerts and Workshops
- Church Leadership in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) World
- Conflict Transformation
- Faithful Responses to Climate Change
- Jesus and Nonviolence
- Monastic Spirituality
- Vocation Discernment



Don't see what you are looking for here?

Request a presenter on the topic of your choice!

Scan the QR code or email **marketing@cbts.edu**



Cultural Competency in Congregational Leadership: 3-Part Video Series

A resource for congregations who seek to shape their future in a multicultural world. As our communities and churches become more and more ethnically and racially diverse, cultural competence has become an increasingly important skill for all of us. Within our churches, the most effective congregational leaders, both lay and ordained, seek to recognize and respect the cultural differences present in their midst.

VIDEO 1: PREACHING

This video addresses the challenges of preaching across cultures and offers insight into building new skills in the creation and delivery of sermons.

VIDEO 2: PASTORAL CARE

This video focuses on the difficulties of offering culturally sensitive pastoral care to those from other cultural backgrounds and family systems.

VIDEO 3: HOSPITALITY & WELCOMING

This video explores the need to create a more hospitable and welcoming church experience for newcomers and visitors.



Scan to view a
video preview

WATCH AND LEARN WITH US

Join us on Wednesday March 12, 2025, 7:00 pm (CT) for a virtual video screening and discussion led by Central Seminary President Dr. Pam Durso.



RSVP here or email
marketing@cbts.edu

This project has generously been funded by



With questions or to request that Central Seminary host a screening and discussion your congregation, email marketing@cbts.edu

*"In my first chaplaincy class,
I was hooked. I knew this was
my calling. It filled every box
that God called me to fill.
I could work with those
that needed me the most."*

Kathy Heisler
Master of Divinity and
Certificate in Chaplaincy '24



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