



“Faith Leadership in the Context of Climate Change”
A Continuing Education Course for Faith Leaders
September 9 – November 25, 2025

Leigh Stearns



Dr. Leigh A. Stearns is a Professor in the Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also a Faculty Fellow at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Dr. Stearns completed her PhD at the University of Maine, her M.S. at The Ohio State University, and her B.A. at Carleton College. Before arriving at the University of Pennsylvania, she was a Professor at the University of Kansas from 2009-2024. She has authored 67 peer-reviewed articles and has been awarded 25 competitive grants from NASA, NOAA, NSF, DoD, and the Heising-Simons Foundation.

Dr. Stearns uses a combination of satellite remote sensing, field observations, numerical modeling, and machine learning techniques to understand the processes that drive glacier change. She is broadly interested in how a changing climate impacts the cryosphere, and the risks associated with those changes. Her current research focuses on ice sheet dynamics and sea level rise, shifts in iceberg and sea ice distributions in Arctic shipping lanes, and glacier loss and water availability at low latitudes. She is passionate about creating equitable, inclusive, and welcoming spaces in the geosciences and in climate education and literacy for all ages.

Dr. Leigh Stearns will lead a session on “Climate Change as Ministry's Context: Basic science of climate change, climate solutions, and urgency of action” on September 9.

Greg Hunt



The Rev. Dr. Greg Hunt is Research Professor and Supplemental Assistant Professor of Theology at Central Seminary. He also serves as president of Directions, Inc., a non-profit he and his wife Priscilla formed to serve people as they lead their organizations, relationships, and lives. Greg has authored two books, *Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night: What to Do When God Won't Answer* and *Leading Congregations through Crisis*. He has also authored and co-authored numerous articles related to theology, leadership, and couple relationships.

Greg has a B.A. in History from Baylor University, Waco, TX, and earned his M.Div. and Ph.D. (Theology) degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. He has served as pastor of churches in Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, and Oklahoma. More recently, he has supported congregations through service as an intentional interim minister.

Greg and Priscilla also continue to work actively in the marriage education movement. They have two married children and three granddaughters. Greg loves tennis, hiking, hanging out with family and friends, and spending as much time outdoors as possible.

Rev. Dr. Greg Hunt will lead a session on “Eco-theological Grounding: Biblical, theological, and ethical perspectives on climate change and creation care” on September 23.

Rachel Wheeler



Dr. Rachel Wheeler is Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon. She teaches courses on the Bible, Christian spirituality, ecospirituality, and spiritual

practices. She earned a PhD in Christian Spirituality from the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA) and her other degrees reflect interests in monastic studies, literature, and music.

She is particularly interested in the so-called desert Christians who lived in Egyptian, Palestinian, and Syrian deserts during late antiquity, and her first book, *Desert Daughters, Desert Sons: Rethinking the Christian Desert Tradition*, offers a feminist critique of these Christians' practices. She is also interested in how people interpret their pro-environmental behavior as spiritual. Recent books include *Ecospirituality: An Introduction* (Fortress Press, 2022) and *Radical Kinship: A Christian Ecospirituality* (Fortress, 2024).

An enthusiastic knitter and cyclist, she enjoys very much living in Portland, Oregon, with her spouse and two cats.

Dr. Rachel Wheeler will lead a session on “Ecospirituality: Nurturing spirituality and faith practices in the context of climate change” on October 14.

Rev. Dr. Leah Schade



The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade is Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship at Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky and served as President of the Academy of Homiletics in 2024. An ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America since 2000, Leah has served congregations in rural, urban, and suburban settings. She earned both her MDiv and PhD degrees from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary).

Her publications include: [*Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit*](#) (Chalice Press, 2015); [*Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*](#) (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019); and [*Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis*](#), co-edited with Margaret Bullitt-Jonas with essays from a cross section of faith leaders and activists offering their spiritual wisdom and energy for facing the difficult days ahead (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019). She has also written a Creation-centered Lenten devotional, [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#) (Chalice Press, 2020).

Leah has served as an anti-fracking and climate activist, community organizer, and advocate for environmental justice issues and is the “EcoPreacher” blogger for Patheos: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ecopreacher/>. In 2021, she launched a partnership

with the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development to create a monthly resource called [EcoPreacher 1-2-3](#) for busy pastors wanting to address environmental issues in their sermons. She is currently directing a \$1.25 million Lilly-funded grant project, Compelling Preaching for a Climate-Changed World.

The Rev. Dr. Leah Schade will lead a session on “Pastoral leadership in the context of climate change: Preaching, teaching, leading worship, talking about climate change, and dealing with conflict” on October 28.

Josh Richardson



Josh Richardson is the Executive Director of Brugmansia Ministries and the pastor of St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship. As a geologist, Josh has experience in geothermal energy production, chemical remediation, identifying urban environmental challenges, using nature-based solutions to mitigate urban challenges, and climate impacts on natural systems. With Brugmansia, Josh has been nationally recognized for his work across the United States with seminaries, congregations, denominations, and other nonprofits on how to better understand the impacts of climate change on local communities with justice-centered strategies for addressing those challenges. His writings have been published in Rock! Paper! Scissors!, Geez Magazine, United Methodist Insight, the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement, and the Geological Society of America.

Currently, Josh is running a year-long cohort with American Baptist Churches of Metro-Chicago to prepare communities in Northern Illinois for the challenges of climate change and climate-induced displacement and migration. In addition to his work at Brugmansia, Josh is a fellow with Invested Faith, a co-creator with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and he serves on the cabinet of the Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis and on the board of the Creation Justice Network.

Josh holds a Master of Science in Geological Sciences (aqueous geochemistry) from Ohio University and a Master of Public Ministry with a concentration in Ecological Regeneration from Garret-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Josh Richardson will lead a session on “Ministry opportunities in the context of climate change: Building church and community resiliency, advocacy, climate justice, and mercy ministries for those affected of climate change” on November 11.

Rev. Dr. Ruth Rosell



The Rev. Dr. Ruth Rosell is Director of the Buttry Center for Peace and Nonviolence and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology Emerita at Central Seminary, Overland Park, KS. Ruth served as a core faculty member at Central Seminary from 2004 – 2022, teaching in the areas of pastoral care and counseling and ministry practice. As Director of the Buttry Center, one of her primary focuses has been raising awareness about climate change and educating people of faith for creation care and climate action, along with other peace and justice issues.

For many years while teaching at Central Seminary, Ruth also served as an associate pastor at Prairie Baptist Church in Prairie Village, KS, with a focus on pastoral care and counseling. In shared ministry with her husband Tarris, she has served churches in upstate New York and Kansas in the areas of small church ministry, refugee resettlement, new church development, and small group ministry.

Ruth received her PhD in Religion and Personality from Vanderbilt University and her MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological School. She received training as a pastoral counselor and was a Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. She was a coauthor of the book *A Guide to Ministry Self-Care: Negotiating Today's Challenges with Resilience and Grace* (an Alban Institute Book, 2018).

Rev. Dr. Ruth Rosell will lead a session on “Pastoral care in the context of climate change: Caring for those experiencing anxiety, grief, guilt, and hopelessness related to climate change” on November 25.