



Contact: Susan Cusick, Director of Communications

Phone: 773.896.2435

Email: scusick@ctschicago.edu

CTS Receives Gift from Muslim Philanthropists to Build Bridges, Combat Islamophobia

CHICAGO, February 28, 2018 – Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) and its newly launched InterReligious Institute (IRI) are pleased to announce a 3-year, \$450,000 gift commitment from a family of Muslim philanthropists to fund interfaith initiatives to build bridges across faith communities.

Funding will allow CTS to develop workshops on combating Islamophobia and understanding Christian privilege for Christian churches and other organizations, and other educational initiatives to increase interfaith understanding, such as podcasts and videos.

“This tremendous gift allows us to deepen our work here at CTS and in the world, creating fresh approaches to challenge anti-Muslim bias and all forms of religious intolerance,” affirms Rev. Lisa Seiwert, project director of the IRI.

The gift provides scholarship funding for Muslim Studies students to help increase the religious diversity of students studying at CTS. A United Church of Christ (UCC) affiliated seminary, CTS currently has students from more than 40 faith traditions enrolled, including a number of Jewish and Muslim students.

The gift will also enable CTS to add a concentration in Muslim Studies to its curriculum, and to fund an affiliated professor in Muslim Studies. The Seminary first began offering courses in Muslim Studies with the appointment of Dr. Rami Nashashibi as visiting professor for Sociology of Religion and Muslim Studies from 2014–2017. CTS has been offering courses in Jewish Studies since 2009, under the direction of Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva, Rabbi Herman Schaalman Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies.

CTS hopes to leverage the initiatives launched with this gift to highlight fundraising efforts to fund an endowed chair in Muslim Studies. Through the IRI, CTS plans to increase its interfaith initiatives. The IRI will be hosting its biennial RIOTcon conference April 19–20 entitled, *Beloved is a Verb: Challenging Anti-Muslim Bias & Christian Privilege*. For more information about RIOTcon please visit ctschicago.edu/riotcon/2018.

ABOUT THE INTERRELIGIOUS INSTITUTE AT CTS: The InterReligious Institute at Chicago Theological Seminary is dedicated to interfaith engagement in our community through academia, theology, and public dialogue for a more just and pluralistic society.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago's Southside, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation at religious leadership...whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary of the United Church of Christ. Since its founding in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives, and denominations.

