



**Contact:** Susan Cusick, Director of Communications

**Phone:** 773.896.2435

**Email:** [scusick@ctschicago.edu](mailto:scusick@ctschicago.edu)

## Chicago Theological Seminary Announces 2018 Commencement Speaker, Honorary Degree Recipient

CHICAGO, April 16, 2018 – Chicago Theological Seminary’s 2018 Commencement will introduce a new cohort of dynamic religious scholars, activists, and community leaders. All are invited to attend the Commencement activities at 2pm on May 18 at Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago’s South Side. The ceremony will celebrate the achievements of the class of 2018 and will feature professor, theologian, author, writer, minister and CTS President **Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray, Jr.** as the speaker and will honor current CTS Board of Trustee Chairman **Norman J. Williams** with an Honorary Degree and **Rev. Barbara Lohrbach** (MDiv ’02) with the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Forty students are expected to receive a Certificate or a diploma in the degrees of Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Religious Leadership, Master of Divinity, Master of Sacred Theology, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy.

“Dr. Ray’s commitment to CTS, theological education and making the world a better place is the embodiment of CTS’s mission and we are proud to have him as our president,” said Ken Stone, Academic Dean and Professor of Bible, Culture & Hermeneutics. “We’re excited for Stephen to share his thoughts and wisdom at Commencement and grateful for his participation in this special moment in our graduates’ lives.”

**Norman J. Williams**, current CTS Board Chair, retired Illinois Service Federal Savings & Loan Association chairman and CEO, president of Unity Funeral Parlors, and moderator of the UCC’s General Synod, will be the Honorary Degree Recipient. He was first elected to chair the Board in 2013 after serving in roles as a Trustee. Williams currently serves as the President and Funeral Director for Unity Funeral Parlors in Chicago, which his family founded in 1937. He previously served as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Illinois-Service Federal Savings and Loan Association of Chicago, one of the last Black-owned banks in the city. Williams is a graduate of Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts and Worsham College of Mortuary Science in suburban Wheeling, Illinois.

“Norman’s work as Board Chair has enriched this institution in ways we will never be able to thank him for,” said Stephen G. Ray, Jr, CTS’s president. “His accomplishments reflect many of the ideals we emphasize in our teaching – justice, mercy and social justice, all of which help our students achieve success in the world of theology and beyond.”

**Rev. Barbara Lohrbach** (MDiv ’02) has been selected to receive 2018 Distinguished Alumni recipient. Since 2004, Lohrbach has served as the pastor of St. John United Church of Christ in Kankakee, IL. Lohrbach is noted by her colleagues and family as an individual of faith, service and extravagant love for her community.

“Rev. Lohrbach’s is leading a ministry of compassion, empowerment, and understanding,” said Chad R. Schwickerath, Manager of Alumni and Church Relations. “She is serious about bridge-building, faith formation, and the work of justice and mercy. She truly is a Leader for the Next!”

Members of this graduating class, who number approximately 40, will join the ranks of thousands of CTS graduates who’ve continue to transform the world everyday in the world of theology, religious studies, church relations, education and social justice.

-continued on next page-

## ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago's South Side, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation of 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.



[ctschicago.edu](http://ctschicago.edu)