

Challenge & Response

CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Academic Year 2022-2023



**Meet New CTS President
Dr. Brad R. Braxton!**

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A Care-Full Community

A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT DR. BRAD R. BRAXTON



Dear CTS Family,

I am honored to join CTS and appreciate your warm words of welcome and gracious hospitality. It will be a pleasure to journey with, and learn from, you as we continue to embrace the inspiring Mission and Commitments that unite us wherever we may find ourselves in this marvelously diverse world.

I am eager to meet you—whether in-person or online—and anticipate opportunities to receive your dreams and visions about the role of CTS in preparing courageous leaders committed to building the beloved community. The beloved community is not so much a place as it is an ongoing experiment of people transcending the barriers of culture, color, and creed in order to embody the highest ideals of mutuality and to transform the social world.

Dr. Lee Ramsey wrote an excellent book years ago bridging the disciplines of pastoral theology and homiletics titled, *Care-Full Preaching: From Sermon to Caring Community*. He intentionally added the hyphen and the extra “l” in the word care-full. By doing so, Dr. Ramsey invited readers to ponder how much more hospitable the world would be if we intentionally filled all our actions with care. While the book was published more than twenty years ago, its premise is as fresh and provocative as when I first encountered it. Yes, I want to be a person, a preacher, a professor, and a president whose fundamental mission is to foster at CTS a care-*full* community.

In these troubled times, we certainly need innovative education, prophetic proclamation, and progressive political mobilization. Yet the key to producing lasting social transformation might be *care*. Saint Teresa of Avila accentuated the transformative power of care when she

declared, “Kindness has converted more people than zeal, science, or eloquence.”

In my early days here, I might occasionally ask you questions about where to find a particular classroom or how to use more effectively some Zoom feature during a videoconference. Yet the most important questions I want to ask are these: **What do you need from me, and how can I be helpful to you as we continue to build a robust and care-full community at CTS?**

In case you are interested, I am a (decaf) coffee and tea drinker with a serious sweet tooth. (Carrot cake will be on the Welcome Table in heaven!) I also am a lover of music and a sports enthusiast with a slight competitive streak when it comes to racquetball and ping pong.

As an educator, orator, and community builder, I spend a fair amount of time talking in public. I, however, am even more committed to deep and active listening in public and in private to the perspectives and wisdom of others. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, an educational theorist, suggests that the silence of listening to others creates the vulnerability that is indispensable to building genuine community. Thus, if you want to know my real titles at CTS, they are “Chief Listening Officer” and “Care-Full Community Liaison.” If these difficult days leave you wondering who really cares, the answer is, *We do!*

Care-Fully,

Brad R. Braxton

Brad R. Braxton
President and Professor of Public Theology,
Chicago Theological Seminary

A photograph of a man and a woman standing together and smiling. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light pink shirt and glasses. The woman is on the right, wearing a red blazer over a black t-shirt with white text. She is holding a large bouquet of purple flowers wrapped in clear plastic. The background is a dark room with some electrical equipment visible on the left wall.

CREATIVE TENSION:

PREACHING AND

TEACHING WITH

HEAD AND HEART

By Brendan Diamond
Director of Communications

On July 1, 2022, Chicago Theological Seminary welcomed its 14th President, Dr. Brad R. Braxton. Dr. Braxton, who also holds a tenured full professorship in Public Theology at CTS, comes to our community from New York, where he served as Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer at St. Luke's School, a coeducational independent school. He is also the Founder and Senior Pastor of The Open Church of Maryland, a culturally inclusive congregation in Baltimore committed to courageous social justice activism and compassionate interfaith collaboration, and a Senior Program Advisor for the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

Dr. Braxton hails from Salem, Virginia, a small city of about 25,000 people nestled in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains near the larger city of Roanoke. He directly credits his upbringing by his beloved parents as what led him down his path. "There is no way to talk about who I am and who am trying to be," he explains, "without mentioning my father and my mother: the Reverend James A. Braxton, Sr., and Mrs. Louise Sledd Braxton. In my parents, you have the creative tension that is my ministry."

This "creative tension" comes from a father who was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in downtown Salem for 33 years and a mother who was a devoted kindergarten teacher for nearly 30 years. Dr. Braxton recalls his father as "a world-class pastor." Rev. Braxton knew how to relate to people from all segments of society, and his mentorship was so impactful that, at his funeral in 2004, more than 50 pastors whom he had mentored attended. When Dr. Braxton officiated his father's funeral, he joked, "If you can pastor black Baptists successfully for more than three decades, you automatically go to heaven, because we're an unruly lot."

Dr. Braxton's father was an activist, born during the Great Depression.

He witnessed appalling forms of discrimination and white terroristic violence in Tappahannock, Virginia, where he grew up. That is what propelled him to a public witness throughout his life. Despite the all-too-common scenes of violence against people who looked like him – or perhaps even because of it – Rev. Braxton focused his ministry on kindness. As Dr. Braxton notes, "My father would often say to me, 'Son, if you're going to err, err on the side of kindness. If you're going to make a mistake, make the mistake of being too kind.'" This is a lesson Dr. Braxton has taken with him into his own ministry and life.

Mrs. Braxton, who recently turned 80 years old, was the teaching equivalent of an artist. "My mother was a world-class kindergarten teacher," he reminisces. In recognition of her stellar teaching, she received in 1999 the coveted "Educator of the Year Award" for the entire Salem public school system. "I would always jokingly say [both] about her and to her, 'One of the reasons that I got a Ph.D. was that I saw a kindergarten teacher teach – and that's real teaching. I didn't want to work that hard.'" Thus, the tension between the passion of grassroots engagement with

congregations and the precision of the academic classroom—which served as an incubator for Dr. Braxton's future academic and spiritual work – was born.

In addition to his parents' influence, Dr. Braxton recalls that religion and the Baptist church for him were places of love. What he recalls of his earliest experiences with religion are "the sights and sounds and... the remembrance of the tactile experience of the elders in my home church loving me and encouraging me." Dr. Braxton says that the religion that raised him was "warm, earthy, and committed to goodness and justice – and it had an ethic of humility."

Despite being the son of a preacher and being enmeshed in a religious community of love and support, Dr. Braxton's initial inclination was to go into law. When he was around 14, he was determined to become a lawyer, partially driven by a love of watching the black-and-white cable TV reruns of Perry Mason. He admired the fictitious lawyer's artful use of words, as well as his dapper suits.

This persisted for a few years. But in between his junior and senior years of high school, he began to feel a call to ministry. "I refer to it as a kind of constant gnawing at my soul and spirit," Dr. Braxton recalls. "I shared my call to ministry with my parents, and they cultivated and nourished the dream." But his father cautioned him, saying, "Son, I cannot call you into ministry. This is not a family business. This is something between you and God. But if you are called, everything that we have as a family and as a community will be available to you to place wind in your sails."

Dr. Braxton attended the University of Virginia, where he was a Jefferson Scholar and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, earning a B.A. in Religious Studies in 1991. He went on to become a Rhodes Scholar and earn an M.Phil. in Theology from the University of Oxford in 1993; and to be a Woodruff Fellow at Emory University, from which he was

awarded a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies in 1999.

But Dr. Braxton's religious study and growth didn't end inside the Baptist church, or even Christianity. Instead, he journeyed into the world to learn more about how others practiced their own religions, often influencing his own religion. "When I made my first pilgrimage to the African continent – I went to the Gambia – and in the Gambia in 1992, I had my first visitation with the African ancestors. So, I think about religion, and the preparation of religious leaders, in pluralistic ways. In Africa, I began to imagine religion as a kind of African music—a complex, polyphonic performance of intertwining voices giving witness to all that is sacred. Christianity, for me, is an important voice, but for a long time now it has not been the only voice. Since my initial rendezvous with the African ancestors, the solo has been chorus. I have had to even rethink who I believe Jesus was and is in terms of my profound commitment to religious pluralism. So, the religion that shaped me then gave rise to the religions that are shaping me."

After completing his master's degree, Dr. Braxton was called to be the Senior Pastor of Douglas Memorial

Community Church in Baltimore, and he wrote his Emory Ph.D. dissertation while pastoring this vibrant downtown congregation. He later served as the Senior Minister of the Riverside Church in New York City, and he is now the Senior Pastor of The Open Church of Maryland, which he founded in 2011. Chicago played a consequential role in the establishment of The Open Church.

Dr. Braxton and his family moved to Chicago in 2009 for a yearlong sabbatical (the Braxtons lived in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood). They chose Chicago because of their longstanding relationship with one of Chicago's well-known pastors and social activists, Rev. B. Herbert Martin, Sr., who served for more than three decades as the Pastor of Progressive Community Church in Bronzeville—the congregation where Chicago's former Mayor Harold Washington was a parishioner. Dr. Braxton first met Pastor Martin in 1995, and from 1998-2006, Dr. Braxton preached at the annual, five-night Holy Week revival at Progressive Community Church. Consequently, Dr. Braxton is no "stranger" or "newcomer" to Chicago.

In 2010, Dr. Cynthia Campbell, who at the time was the President of McCormick Theological Seminary,

invited Dr. Braxton to "extend" his sabbatical, and McCormick Theological Seminary called him to serve as Distinguished Visiting Scholar from 2010-2012, where he taught classes, collaborated with McCormick faculty, staff and students, and pursued research and writing projects. The knowledge that Dr. Braxton gained about Chicago and theological institutions in CTS's neighborhood strengthened his candidacy for CTS's presidency earlier this year.

During a conversation in 2011 with Dr. David Daniels, Professor of Church History at McCormick, Dr. Braxton was lamenting all that was wrong with church – church is not this, and church could do that better. Dr. Daniels replied to Dr. Braxton's complaints in a marvelously straightforward manner, "I cannot listen to you complain one more moment about the church. Go build the alternative."

And build the alternative is precisely what Dr. Braxton set out to do. He wrote the 10-page vision paper for The Open Church while still in Chicago, and later in 2011, he and 55 founding members of The Open Church planted this new congregation in Baltimore. Dr. Braxton considers The Open Church as an experiment – both theologically and in terms of democratic sharing of power. As Dr. Braxton established The Open Church, he realized that the hierarchical structure of many churches alienates people from God and from one another. His goal with The Open Church is to tear down those walls and build up congregants' capacity to serve as "ministers" as they define that term.

As it celebrates its 11th anniversary later this year, The Open Church has an empowered team of leaders who administer the congregation's day-to-day work, and Dr. Braxton continues to provide visionary oversight. As a testimony to his belief in shared leadership, Dr. Braxton proudly states that he now only preaches at The Open Church 4 to 6 Sundays a year. "We have raised up a cadre of excellent



preachers, and they, along with preachers from outside the community, do the majority of the preaching now. The Open Church is the people's church, and our pulpit is the people's pulpit."

A devoted family man, Dr. Braxton is splitting his time between Chicago and New York City for his first year as his daughter Karis, whom he calls a brilliant "disturber of the universe" (quoting author Madeleine L'Engle), finishes high school. His wife, Lazetta Rainey Braxton, is a nationally recognized Certified Financial Planner and Co-Founder and Co-CEO of 2050 Wealth Partners, a firm that provides wealth management and comprehensive financial planning. They met through Lazetta's cousin Karen, with whom Dr. Braxton had become friends. One evening in 1996, Dr. Braxton had what he describes as "a terrible date." He called Karen, who told him, "You should meet my cousin Lazetta." The next day, Karen brought Lazetta to Douglas Memorial Community Church, where Dr. Braxton was serving as pastor, and "when Lazetta walked in, I thought, *That's the one I'm going to spend my life with.*"

As we look to the future with a new president, CTS is poised to engage and serve a changing world. Gone are the days when freestanding seminaries could cater to a single denomination or even religion. That's why Dr. Braxton is enthusiastic about CTS's groundbreaking partnership with Bayan



Islamic Graduate School, and he hopes to expand these opportunities. "In addition to collaborating with diverse religious communities, Dr. Braxton explains, "I am also interested in CTS exploring creative partnerships with educational institutions that nurture early childhood and adolescent young people. At CTS, we often say we are educating 'leaders for the next.' Accordingly, we should build sturdy bridges now with elementary, middle school, and high students because they are future seminary students and 'leaders for the next' who in some cases are already 'leaders right now.'"

Dr. Braxton is also deeply committed to leadership practices and philosophies that promote equity and social justice. "In a world pulsating with plurality, CTS should be committed to fostering values-centered leadership that is curious, compassionate, and courageous. We must continue to

equip well educated leaders who not only know good theology but also know how to build and nurture good communities." His goal is to ensure that CTS's progressive Mission and Commitments permeate every dimension of our communal life—from students in the classroom to trustees in the boardroom. "Now more than ever" Dr. Braxton declared enthusiastically, "We need 'shepherds for the public square' whose skillsets and experiences will enable them to serve in practical ways as catalysts for social healing and transformation in diverse cultural and organizational contexts."

My interview with Dr. Braxton began with the theme of creative tension, and it came full circle as he ended on that theme: "The privilege to serve as President of CTS—a distinguished institution preparing intellectually astute and socially conscious leaders—is enabling me to synthesize the creative tension between precision and passion, head and heart. Howard Thurman, the renowned theologian and a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., once insisted, 'Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.' As CTS's President, I have come alive in a magnificent new way, and I am brimming with joy as we, in the words of CTS's commitments, work together 'to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.'"

"I am also interested in CTS exploring creative partnerships with educational institutions that nurture early childhood and adolescent young people. At CTS, we often say we are educating 'leaders for the next.' Accordingly, we should build sturdy bridges now with elementary, middle school, and high students because they are future seminary students and 'leaders for the next' who in some cases are already 'leaders right now.'"

Dean's Desk



Adjunct Faculty:

- **Aaron Higashi** will be teaching *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible I* in the fall while Ken Stone, who normally teaches this course, is on sabbatical. Dr. Higashi finished his PhD at CTS last year, and his dissertation was titled, "Reading the Rain: The Ethics of Everyday Resistance in Ezra 10."
- **Craig Mousin** will teach *The Bible, Borders, and Immigration Law* during the 2023 J-Term, a course he has taught previously at CTS. Rev. Mousin is a CTS Life Trustee and works as DePaul University's Ombudsperson. He has a JD from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and an MDiv from CTS; he founded the Midwest Immigrant Rights Center, which provided legal assistance to refugees, and is now the National Immigrant Justice Center.
- **Heike Peckruhn** will teach *Disability and/in Theology: Multiple Religious Imaginations* in the summer term of 2023. Dr. Peckruhn is Chair and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Daemen University in Amherst, NY, and received a PhD from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology. Dr. Peckruhn is co-chair of the Religion and Disability Studies Unit for the American Academy of Religion.
- **Dr. Sharon Jacob** will teach *Disability Studies and the New Testament* in January Intensive 2023. Dr. Jacob is Visiting Professor at Claremont School of Theology.
- **Mr. Quincy James Rineheart** will teach *Bayard Rustin and Pauli Murray: Queer Activism* in Summer 2023. Mr. Rineheart is a CTS PhD candidate and Associate Campus Minister at Morehouse College

Affiliated faculty:

- **Teresa Hornsby** – teaching two courses this fall, *LGBTQ Issues and Biblical Interpretation* and *Interpreting the Gospels*
- **Cynthia Stewart** – is teaching *History of Christian Thought* this fall

Multiple Course Modalities

COVID has transformed the way students take classes. With all courses online for a portion of the pandemic, new and creative ideas have emerged for how to best accommodate all students. CTS will now be offering a wider variety of course modalities to best serve students in multiple ways. We will have the following types of courses available this year:

- face-to-face: in-person at CTS with some Canvas support
- online: synchronous courses meet face-to-face with real time online component
- online: asynchronous sessions employing Canvas and Zoom with some synchronous sessions
- hybrid: online with required face-to-face sessions
- flex: online with some optional face-to-face sessions

It is hoped that this robust and flexible array of modalities will help students find the format that works best for their schedule and life situation.

New Appointments/Titles

Dr. Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad joined CTS last year as a Visiting Assistant Professor. CTS is excited to announce that Dr. Mu'Min Rashad has joined the full-time faculty as Assistant Professor of Psychology and Muslim Studies.

Rev. Dr. Zachary Moon has served as an Assistant and Associate Professor at CTS since 2016. CTS is pleased to announce that Professor Moon has been promoted to full Professor of Theology and Psychology.

Rev. Dr. JoAnne Marie Terrell has been appointed the Kenneth B. Smith, Sr. Professor of Public Ministry, which she takes on in addition to the role of Associate Professor of Theology, Ethics, and the Arts.

Dr. Ken Stone has been appointed Distinguished Service Professor. He is currently Professor of Bible, Culture, and Hermeneutics.

RESILIENCE IN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The Resilience in Leadership Initiative (ReLI, pronounced rely) at Chicago Theological Seminary continues to cultivate mentoring and peer-to-peer relationships for seminary graduates from or serving historically disenfranchised communities. In July of 2022, ReLI was personally invited to submit a \$500,000 continuation grant application for the continuation of the program.

While it remains completely committed to supporting ministers from or serving alongside historically disenfranchised communities, ReLI has been completely revamped to face the ongoing

challenges of COVID. ReLI was first imagined to meet the needs of a pre-pandemic world and ministry. Now it is being reformed to meet the unique needs of its participants today.

The ReLI fellowship consists mainly of seasoned ministry mentors who are paired with program mentees, called fellows. Rather than cultivating a list of mentors to match with our mentees, we have chosen instead to invite participants to choose their own mentors based on their existing relationships. Studies show that when mentees choose their own mentors, better relationships follow. Instead

of meeting mostly in person for regional meetings, moreover, the program has been redesigned to align with the strengths of CTS' online theological education.

In partnership with the Center for the Study of Black Faith and Life at CTS, ReLI continues to partner with the Annual Rooks Lecture and Conference. During the same timeframe as Rooks, ReLI program mentors and mentees meet for our Annual Gathering Retreat conference, which will take place in person or online depending on the pandemic.



New Staff Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new staff to the CTS family:



DR. BRAD R. BRAXTON

President and Professor of Public Theology

Dr. Braxton (see article on p. 4) comes to CTS from St. Luke's School, a coeducational independent school in New York City, where he served as Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. He serves as the Senior Program Advisor for *Creative Encounters: Living Religions in the United States*, the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on religious diversity. An ordained Baptist minister, Dr. Braxton is also the Founding Senior Pastor of The Open Church, an inclusive congregation in Baltimore, Maryland committed to social activism, LGBTQ+ equality, and interfaith collaboration.



DR. KAMEELAH MU'MIN RASHAD

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Muslim Studies

Dr. Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad is the Founder and President of Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healing and emotional well-being in the American Muslim community through dialogue, education and training. Through Muslim Wellness Foundation, Dr. Rashad has established the annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference and the Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders (DREL) Fellowship for Black Muslim young adults. Dr. Mu'Min Rashad is also the founding co-Director of the National Black Muslim COVID Coalition.



MR. BRENDAN DIAMOND

Director of Communications

Brendan joins CTS from Marian Catholic High School, where he served as Director of Alumni Engagement. A higher education veteran, he also held positions at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Northern Wyoming Community College District in Gillette, Wyoming; and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He additionally serves as Junior Warden at Grace Episcopal Church in New Lenox, Illinois.



MR. DARNELL PAYNE

Director of Information Technology

Prior to joining CTS as Director of Information Technology, Darnell spent eight years as the Director of Information Technology at Catholic Theological Union. He has also served as an Adjunct Instructor of Information Technology at Prairie State College and was the owner of Osineo Network Services from 2000-2011.



REV. DR. DAWN PIRANI BRUMFIELD

Director of Field Education

Following her Master of Divinity studies at Vanderbilt University, Dr. Brumfield served as Worship Pastor at Urban Village Church Hyde Park-Woodlawn. She later earned her Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Studies/Counseling from CTS in 2015. Dr. Brumfield has worked as the Executive and Development Director at Urban CPE, Program Supervisor at The Night Ministry, Associate Pastor at Lighthouse Church, and Counseling Resident at Atlanta Medical Center and Metro Women's Prison. Most recently, she served as a clinical psychotherapist at LifeWorks Psychotherapy Center.



DR. JOHN DECHANT

Writing Center Coordinator

Dr. Dechant joins CTS after several years as an academic instructor, during which he designed the syllabus for courses such as Islamic History and Society in the Near East, c. 600-1250, War in the Middle East, and Saints of the Silk Road, at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, and Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana. Most recently, John served as a shipping manager for Kahn's Fine Wine and Spirits, independently running shipping operations for one of the country's largest wine and liquor stores.



MR. RUY DEMAGALHAES-ORTEGANO

Financial Aid Manager

Ruy comes to CTS from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he spent nearly two years, first as Financial Aid Assistant and, later, as Senior Financial Aid Coordinator. He also served as an IT Specialist at St. Thomas Community Health Center in New Orleans. He holds a Master of Public Administration from Tulane.



HALEY HUDLER

Manager of Donor Engagement

Haley Hudler joins CTS as Manager of Donor Engagement. She previously served in student assistant roles in Advancement and Communications during her time in the CTS MA in Religious Studies program. Haley earned her Bachelor of Arts in Religion/Religious Studies from Heidelberg University, where she served as Student Assistant to Chaplain Paul Stark.

“

**10 years ago, CTS
led all progressive
seminaries with
the first completely
online MDiv degree.
And now were doing
it again for the DMin.**

”

CTS is excited to announce that we will begin offering an online Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree in Fall 2023. This DMin degree is a three-year, thirty-credit advanced program focusing on public ministry. As with all our other programs, our Mission and Commitments will provide this program's philosophical and pedagogical framework. The DMin curriculum will equip leaders for serious engagement with significant public issues from the perspective of diverse religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions.

Students in the DMin program will benefit from CTS's pioneering work in Interreligious Engagement, the Study of Black Faith and Life, LGBTQ Religious Studies, and Chaplaincy Studies. Additionally, CTS's innovative partnership with Bayan Islamic Graduate School, which provides the opportunity for co-study at both institutions with CTS as the degree-conferring entity, will allow students to pursue a degree at CTS that prepares them for interreligious leadership. The DMin collaboration between CTS and Bayan will add to the Master of Divinity in Islamic Chaplaincy and the Master of Arts in Islamic Leadership currently offered.

"We are excited to launch the online Doctor of Ministry degree and partner with diverse leaders seeking to further their education in public ministry," said Dr. Brad Braxton, CTS's new President and Professor of Public Theology. "CTS is well-known for balancing rigorous academic work with relevant, real-world experience. The creative tension between rigor and relevance

will characterize this new degree as well. If you are searching for a doctoral program that moves seamlessly between the seminary and the street, come to CTS."

During the DMin admissions process, CTS will assign a faculty advisor who will work closely with each student to identify appropriate advanced courses and research questions that bring the school's distinctive emphases to bear on specific issues in religious leadership. Such issues might involve traditional practices of ministry such as preaching, worship, pastoral care, or more specialized ministries such as those associated with social service agencies, community activism, or specific types of chaplaincy.

Since the DMin is solely online, students can matriculate without being in residence in Chicago, thereby furthering CTS's longstanding dedication to online learning, which includes Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, and Master of Sacred Theology degrees that can be completed completely online.

"The DMin in Public Ministry is another opportunity for CTS to showcase its prowess in online education, while preparing leaders to courageously engage the public square," said Dr. Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean.

CTS will be releasing information about the application process soon. In the meantime, inquiries can be addressed to Mr. Jason Frey, Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Services, at jason.frey@ctschicago.edu.

By Brendan Diamond
Director of Communications



BLACK FAITH & LIFE



By Rev. Brian Smith

In the past two years, the CTS based Black Faith Leader Collective has evolved from an emergency support grant program into a growing coalition of interfaith trailblazers. The group has been extremely active in a variety of community based efforts including partnering with Interfaith America and the Illinois Department of health to host multiple Covid-19 vaccine clinics and providing health education resources to combat the spread of the virus.

The Black Faith Leader Collective has also mobilized community members in partnership with the Discover Corporation providing assistance in business development opportunities for women and minority contractors to help with the construction of their new south-side campus in the Chatham community. Matt Johansen, Senior Vice President of Social Impact and Chief GOC officer credits the Collective with providing meaningful connections enabling Discover to reach and exceed its goals for supplier impact with over 80% MWBE participation and 25% of construction spending going towards Black contractors in the area for the new facility. Johansen also credits the Black Faith Leader Collective members with building trust linkages between the corporation and the surrounding community. The effort of Discover and the Black Faith Leader Collective provide an excellent blue print for other business organizations aiming to spur social impact in other communities.

The work of the Collective has also attracted the attention of Eric Freedman, president of Congregation Ahavas Shalom located in Newark, New Jersey. After viewing a video presentation, Mr. Freedman invited

Collective member Rabbi Capers Funnye and Rev. Brian E. Smith to a meeting and made it known that his congregation wanted to financially support the Collective. The New Jersey synagogue proceeded to make a significant financial contribution to CTS.

The Black Faith Leader Collective is also working in partnership with the Oikos Institute, social impact teaching organization which is led in part by Collective member and professor Rev. Dr. Reginald Blount. There is a thirteen member cohort engaged in a two year series of education designed to help congregations reimagine their purpose and mission while building capacity for innovative ministry initiatives. The work with Oikos allows CTS to develop modular education initiatives and support for continuing education at the seminary. Rev. Smith says, "The future is bright for both CTS and the Collective as we continue to develop innovative ways to provide theological education to a wider audience. Congregations and all faith institutions must be challenged to reorient themselves to search outside of their walls of comfort and enter into the hearts and minds of members of their respective communities."



The “Chicago Interfaith Trolley Tour” Celebrated the Historic Holy Month of April

By Kim Schultz

This April, for the first time in 30 years, a number of religions’ holy days converged. Many Muslims, Jews, Christians, Baha’i, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and others simultaneously observed their holy days. At CTS, we saw this as an opportunity for deep interfaith learning...and fun!

Enter the trolley!

In partnership with *A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice at Lutheran School of Theology, American Islamic College, The Parliament of the World’s Religions, and the Hyde Park Kenwood Interfaith Council*, CTS sponsored the CHICAGO INTERFAITH TROLLEY TOUR and Iftar on April 24, 2022.

And what an experience it was. It proved to be an incredible opportunity to come together to educate our communities and shape the public narrative about what it means to live well together amidst our rich religious

and cultural diversity, all while onboard a trolley.

With over 60 people onboard, we explored five sacred spaces in the Hyde Park/ Kenwood neighborhoods of Chicago, learning about the April holy days, as well as the collaborative interfaith work happening in the community. Trolley riders heard from and visited many different faith-based organizations, hearing from speakers of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and Baha’i traditions. Stops included: Rockefeller Chapel, Ebenezer Baptist Church, KAM Isaiah Israel Synagogue, Claret Meditation Center and Masjid Al-Taqwa.

Trolley participant and CTS PhD student Rebecca Blackburn said: “I cherished hearing individuals’ descriptions of their faith communities and of the most recent holiday their religious community was celebrating. There were of course many moments of, “oh, that sounds

similar to something I’m familiar with!” But perhaps more meaningful were the moments where unique particularities of practice, belief, and history were illuminated. These particularities unfolded like invitations for me, reminding me to stay curious and to keep learning from the many people and traditions that make up my community.”

The day ended with an interfaith Iftar dinner at sunset, hosted at Chicago Theological Seminary – our first public gathering since the pandemic started. It was a rather magical evening with friends, new and old, breaking our fast together, engaging in real conversations and finding new ways of connecting in a world bent on dividing us. Perhaps we’re not as different as we think. (are told)

Special thanks to our partners, hosts, guests and all who made the Chicago Interfaith Trolley Tour a success!



Student Awards

C. SHELBY ROOKS

2021 C. Shelby Rooks Scholar Award **Adrienne Philpart**

The C. Shelby Rooks Scholar Award acknowledges the outstanding work of a particular CTS student who carries C. Shelby Rooks' legacy in their commitment to community and uses the lessons from the past to guide the future. C. Shelby Rooks was the first African American president of a predominately white theological school and was one of the founders of the Society for the Study of Black Religion.

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

2022 G. Campbell Morgan Preaching Award **Jacqui Skinner**

The G. Campbell Morgan Award in preaching is awarded to a current Chicago Theological Seminary Master of Divinity student who excels at the work of preaching. The award is in honor of The Rev. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan (DD 1902) who was voted one of the ten greatest preachers of the twentieth century. He was a genius of expository preaching, unfolding the biblical text with rigor, compassion, imagination, and art.

CASTAÑEDA

2022 Gilberto Castañeda Scholar Award **Leika Lewis-Cornwell**

The Gilberto Castañeda Scholarship was established in 1994 in memory of Gilberto Castañeda, the adopted son of Dr. Theodore Jennings and Rev. Ronna Case. This award honors outstanding, openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students at Chicago Theological Seminary. It is an expression of the seminary's commitment to transform congregations from places of hostility and alienation to communities of hospitality and empowerment.

RABBI HERMAN E. SCHAALMAN INTERRELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

2022 Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman InterReligious Leadership Award **Leo Wolters Tejera**

The Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman Interreligious Award is presented to a student who designs a particular program that promotes interreligious cooperation and understanding. Students are invited to offer a two-part paper identifying a specific issue or gap within a particular context that could be addressed through an interreligious event/initiative and setting forth a plan for implementing that event/initiative.

JUDITH PARKS SANDERSON WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

2022 Sanderson Award for Women in Leadership **Emily Vogt**

The Sanderson Award for Women in Leadership was established in 2006 in memory of Judith Parks Sanderson who died in 2004 after a courageous battle with Ovarian Cancer. Judith Parks Sanderson had an outstanding career as an educational development manager with leadership roles at William & Mary College, Princeton University and University of Chicago during a time when women in managerial roles were rare as "the glass ceiling" limited opportunity. She planned to assist startup not for profits in their development efforts and wanted to mentor younger women who showed management promise. This annual award is given to an outstanding woman candidate to assist in furthering her career.

Grants & Funded Projects

E. Rhodes and Leona B.
CARPENTER FOUNDATION



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

New Theological Education Models

(funded by E. Rhodes and
Leona B. Carpenter Foundation)
(AY2020-2022)

CTS approaches theological education with an understanding that systems and structures exist and have always existed to prevent marginalized people and communities from flourishing. Support from the Carpenter Foundation allowed CTS to consider the pedagogical, financial, and student life implications of transitioning out of a semester-based academic calendar. As a result of this two-year initiative, CTS has moved into a Tri Term model allowing for year-round courses, beginning Fall 2022. CTS also explored and reconsidered the Doctor of Ministry degree program, which led to the development of an Online DMin degree starting in Fall 2023.

IFYC Faith in the Vaccine

In the fall of 2021 and winter of 2022, CTS hosted and supported local religious communities to host vaccine clinics in areas with high rates of vaccine hesitancy.

IFYC Intersections of Anti-Asian, Anti-Muslim, & Anti-Black Violence

(Dec, 2021 – Feb, 2022)

CTS brought together cohorts and scholars from the Asian, Muslim, and Black communities for dialogue and critical engagement about the ways in which each community is uniquely impacted by violence and the ways in which the violence intersects.

Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions

(funded by the National Endowment
for the Humanities) (AY2022-2023)

The archives contain more than simply the history and institutional memory of the Seminary. They house significant documents, sermons, and personal papers from prominent thought leaders and social activists as noted below. Unfortunately, the materials are endangered. They are stored in an unfavorable environment, have limited intellectual access, and are not organized and cataloged in a user-friendly format; furthermore, there are no Seminary policies and procedures guiding the collections' stewardship and future acquisitions. This grant will support the identification and organization of materials with an aim to allow for community access. Specifically, CTS will be looking at materials related to: CTS and Social Activism in Chicago (The Civil Rights Movement and Black Leadership), The Anton T. Boisen Collection, and The Rev. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan Collection.

First Analysis

Abrahamic Transformations Project

(with support from the First Analysis Institute) (AY 2023)

This project brings together a cohort of 15 graduate theological students: 5 from Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 5 from Bayan Islamic Institute, and 5 from Chicago Theological Seminary, led by a Jewish, a Christian, and a Muslim scholar. The cohort begins with an opening retreat and will be a year-long learning experience where students will build skills and relationships for inter/intrafaith and inter/intraracial dialogue, solidarity, well-being, and advocacy.



Walking the Talk

(funded by Wabash Center for Teaching & Learning) (AY2023)

Recognizing the disparity between our pedagogy and our praxis, this project draws our various stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, board, alumni, and community partners) together in study, conversation, and

transformative action. We want to examine our pedagogy and use it to reflect on institutional policies, communication, personnel, and culture. In complementary fashion, we want to use CTS more centrally as the learning laboratory to explore the real-world implications, barriers, and possibilities of pedagogy.



An Oral History of Rev. Jesse Jackson's Civil Rights Work in Chicago

(funded by Donnelley Foundation) (AY2023)

One of CTS' notable alumni, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. was a student during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1965, Jackson launched Operation Breadbasket (later renamed Operation PUSH) while still a CTS student. To capture this rich history, CTS has identified key folks who helped Operation PUSH become one of the most important social justice organizations in the United States, with roots based in activism on Chicago's South Side. CTS will record the oral histories of Rev. Dr. Jesse Jackson, Sr., and other pioneering individuals who changed the course of history. The oral histories will be shared publicly and incorporated into Season 3 of the CTS podcast, *Our 7 Neighbors*.



ASPIRE: A Spiritual Engagement in Anti-Racism Education and Activism

(funded by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)) (AY2023)

We believe that engaging our spiritual traditions more deeply, recognizing both their complicity in systemic racism and their resources for transformation, can expand anti-racism work into new spaces in the public square. We propose to contribute an interactive education and networking website that recognizes the profound intersections of race and religion, cultivates anti-racism as a spiritual practice, fosters interreligious literacy and engagement, and mobilizes concrete action. This project will take the form of a website/online resource that can be used for basic anti-racism training, cultivating anti-racism as a spiritual practice, for connecting with activists, and more--with attention to the profound intersections of race, religion, and the possibilities of true democracy.

Tri-Term Brings Added Flexibility to CTS



Tri-Term is Chicago Theological Seminary's innovative and exciting new way of learning. Beginning in Fall 2022, these three full terms will offer an enormous amount of flexibility for the modern seminary student. It will give the options of speeding up (or slowing down) the time it takes to get a degree.

This is a wonderful opportunity for those who want to get their degree faster. With the move to Tri-Term, students can earn their MDiv in as little as two years. That is a huge bonus for those who want to get out into the world of ministry. This was CTS's main motivation in going to this format.

In addition, Tri-Term works into your schedule. That means that if you need to take time off, it won't be as hard to catch back up — you'll have three terms to choose from rather than two. Because Tri-Term is also great for the student who needs to take a class or two at a time — the student with kids; the student supporting themselves (and others) with a full-time job; the student who cares for an elderly loved one. It fits in with a busy or unpredictable schedule.

And for those who want to go the traditional Fall/Spring route, Tri-Term changes nothing! Students can still attend in Fall and Spring and be considered "full-time," getting Summers off.

The terms will run in the Fall (14 weeks), Spring (14 weeks), and Summer (12 weeks), with the J-Term (January) and May intensive courses interspersed therein. Fall and Spring terms will include Reading Weeks, while Summer will not. There will be breaks after each extended (12- or 14-week) term.

In the new Summer term, required courses and electives will be offered, with core and adjunct/affiliated faculty. Modalities may include online, synchronous, hybrid, or flex — everything except a weekly on-campus course.

CTS will continue to have rolling admissions, including a recommended deadline for entry in the Summer term.

Important dates are as follows:

February 1: PhD & DMin Application Deadline

February 15: Priority Admission & Merit Scholarships (Summer & Fall) Deadline

March 15: Need-based Scholarship Deadline

April 1: Recommended Deadline for Summer

May 1: Recommended Deadline for Fall

December 1: Recommended Deadline for Spring

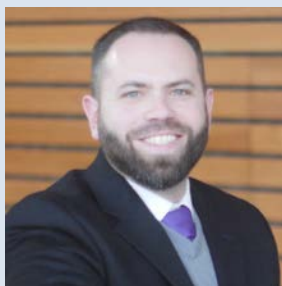
Tri-Term is designed to help students get their degree at a pace that's right for them. It fits almost any lifestyle, perfect both for the student who wants to get done faster and the one who needs to go slow and steady. It's all part of our mission to make theological education as accessible as possible.



Book Publications

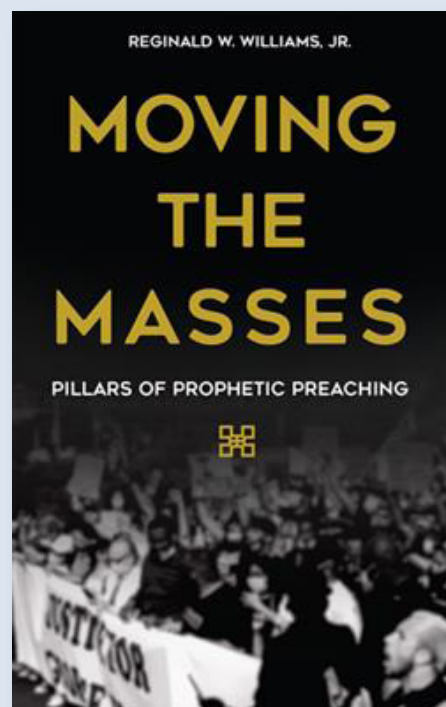
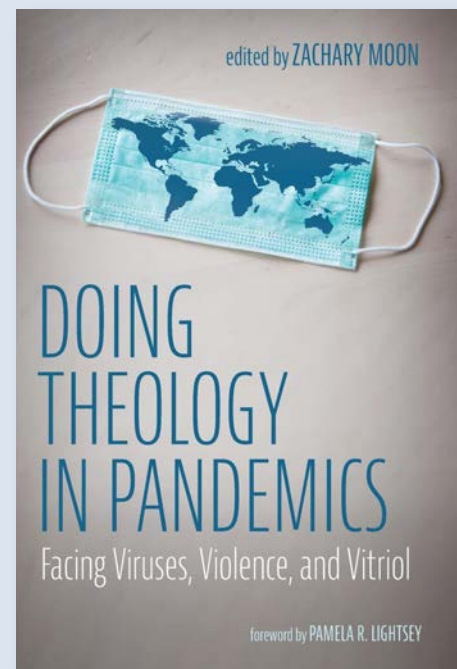
Doing Theology in Pandemics: Facing Viruses, Violence, and Vitriol (Pickwick, 2022)

Edited by Dr. Zachary Moon



The COVID-19 era will be remembered not only for the tragic global public health crisis, but also for the continued police violence against persons of color, the courageous activism that continues to rise up to confront racialized violence in all its forms, and the perpetuation of white nationalist rhetoric from the highest government elected offices. Everywhere we look, we find trauma and pain, and we find resilience and resolve. This volume, featuring leading theological

scholars and religious leaders, is rich in analysis of the plagues we are facing and equally rich in the resources, practices, and inspirations that will carry our efforts to build a more just world.



Moving the Masses: Pillars of Prophetic Preaching (Judson Press)

By Reginald W. Williams, Jr.

Reginald Williams understands and hears the divine calling of prophetic preaching as a connection of what happens between the internal preacher and the delivery that moves people to take action. In this book, Williams methodically lays out a definition of prophetic preaching and compliments his discussion on prophetic preaching with various methods of delivery. Read and discover the 3 M's of Prophetic Preaching and how you can add power to your preaching and engage people to make a difference through God's Word.



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Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis MDiv '88 & PhD '06

Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis has been a dedicated alum since the 80s, earning two degrees - Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy from Chicago Theological Seminary.

She had a long career serving people in various settings, including working for the Chicago police, then later being a police chaplain. She served as an adjunct professor at several seminaries and pastored at the South Shore Community Church, the People's Church of Chicago. She co-founded a ministry called God Can Ministries UCC in Ford Heights, IL.

Being raised in the Pentecostal tradition, Ellis Davis did not understand what it meant to be a Black Christian, as her childhood church focused on individual salvation and being Christlike. "There wasn't a lot of conversation around issues of justice, and I don't even know if I was looking for that... so I did not have a sense of what it meant to be Black and Christian until I joined a church that named it. It changed my trajectory of how I was called and what I was called to."

Ellis Davis thinks about CTS's tagline *Justice Lives Here*, and from her perspective, that means "CTS is committed [to doing justice]. CTS is not perfect; I'm not perfect. There are many things that we have to learn and grow into, and as someone said years ago, we might just be wrong. So, with humility, I love CTS's commitment to justice because there we can grow, we can fight, and still come out OK."

Now in her retirement, or as she refers to it, "her *next*," she has published the book "The Trauma of Sexual and Domestic Violence: Navigating My Way through Individuals, Religion, Policing, and the Courts."

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Rev. Troy C. Underwood, MDiv '11

Rev. Troy C. Underwood, MDiv '11, was first resistant to his call to God, like many, but attended CTS because our tagline at the time, "transformation for the real world," resonated with his faith journey.

Troy currently serves as Associate Pastor at Covenant United Church of Christ in South Holland, IL, under Rev. Dr. Patrick L. Damon. Also, he is Executive Director of Covenant UCC's affiliate community-based organization, the Barbara Westbrook Smith Family Life Center.

While pursuing his Master of Divinity, his initial goal was to find ways to bridge the Pulpit and the Pew, focusing on the faith community. But over time, he found himself working more with the community. "...which is why I'm doing this community-based work now, [knowing] that foundationally Jesus taught in the synagogues and went out into the field. [This] has really been my guiding principle for ministry."

From the various lessons learned at CTS, He will never forget Dr. Lee Butler, who entered his Pastoral Care class with an African mask with a red inside mark. He spoke about being your authentic self. "[Dr. Butler said] you can't be behind the mask of who you are in a pastoral presence because it will show." That was a critical message for Troy; he carries this with him today. "You have to be authentic at all times [because] you cannot become someone else [to] help [others]."

As an alum of CTS, he gives back and believes that to receive a quality education anywhere, alumni need to support and give back. "It is a privilege to be a blessing to others."

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In Memoriam

Spotlight: Robinson Gardner “Robb” Lapp



Robinson Gardner “Robb” Lapp was born on March 27, 1933 in Buffalo, New York. In his 89 years on Earth, Robb strove to make the world a better place.

Robb graduated from CTS in 1956 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, awarded to him at the same ceremony at which CTS bestowed an honorary degree on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was ordained as a minister but spent most of his ministry seeking social justice and racial equality. Robb moved to Arvada, Colorado in 1962 to start and build the First United Church of Christ of Arvada; five years later, he became Executive Director of the Metro Denver Fair Housing Center. In 1973, he moved his family to Texas to help create the new town of The Woodlands. As Vice President for Community Development, he was responsible for government affairs and was instrumental in creating the structure of local governance and community services that exist in the community today.

In 1982, he returned to Colorado where he built a passive solar house in the foothills between Boulder and Golden. Robb and his wife Jan lived in the house on the mountain until 2006, when Robb’s doctor suggested that he should move to sea level due to a heart condition. They moved all the way down the mountain to Arvada, which was close enough to sea level for Robb.

In 1995, Robb co-founded a faith-based non-profit affiliated with the United Church of Christ to provide service-enriched affordable housing for low-to-moderate

income families in the Denver Metro region and Colorado Springs. Today, Archway Communities has 10 rental housing communities and provides integrated housing and supportive services to more than 1,500 residents. Robb was serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors at the time of his death.

Robb returned to CTS at the age of 84. He earned a Master of Sacred Theology degree sixty years after earning his first degree, becoming the oldest graduate in CTS history. His thesis, “Hitting the Streets with Jesus – A Spiritual Journey,” addressed the non-traditional ministry that was the foundation of his life’s work. He later wrote a memoir, *Listening for the Holy*, in which he contemplated his life and his relationship with God. Through it all, his generosity of time always shone through.

“Robb was extremely generous with his time,” said Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, Director of Lapp Learning Commons, which was made possible through Robb’s gift to CTS. “He didn’t just give money; he wanted to be involved. He graciously welcomed me when I first started my position as director of the Lapp Learning Commons, and we have shared many wonderfully warm conversations over the years. He always paid attention to what was going on in the Learning Commons and reached out to give words of support whenever new services were introduced or the website was revamped.”

Robb was recruited for the CTS Board of Trustees by then-President Rev. Dr. Susan B. Thistlethwaite. Robb was, she said, always intimately involved at CTS, as shown by his response to Susan telling him there was a leak in the ceiling at McGifford Hall, where CTS was then located. “My secretary says, ‘Robb’s on campus; he’s in McGifford.’ Little did I know he was actually in McGifford, inside the ceiling looking for the leak.” Robb had flown from Colorado to Chicago when he heard there was an issue with the building.”

Robb is survived by his children Robyn Lapp, Stuart (Eve) Lapp, and Karen (Joel) Ronzheimer, his grandchildren Brittany (Jay) Thornton, Cornelia Cifelli, Chelsea Gregg, Nellaine Nall, and his great-grandchildren Aubrey Gurkin, Erin Mulkey, Trinity Gurkin, and Everly Cifelli.

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