

CTS announces initiative for Frank A. and Joyce S. Thomas Endowed Chair in African American Preaching & Sacred Rhetoric

CTS announces \$3M fundraising initiative to establish Frank A. and Joyce S. Thomas Endowed Chair in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, UNITED STATES, October 10, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Christian Theological Seminary](https://www.einpresswire.com/Christian-Theological-Seminary)

announces a \$3M fundraising effort to honor the inimitable work of Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas by establishing the Frank A. and Joyce S. Thomas Endowed Chair in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric. Over a career that spans more than 45 years, Dr. Thomas has left an indelible mark on

preaching, pastoral ministry, and the Academy. His work embodies the beauty and significance of African American preaching, giving living testimony to the ways sacred rhetoric has shaped and continues to revive our world with positive change, awakening people to God's call for justice and equity while also teaching them the tools to mobilize for action.

The endowed chair will publicly acknowledge, celebrate, and resource Thomas' commitment to developing practitioner-scholars and advancing scholarship on the beauty, depth, creativity, and power of African American preaching. "The establishment of this chair solidifies the Seminary's commitment to the ministry and contributions of the African American church," shares CTS President Dr. David M. Mellott. "With this declaration, we will be ensuring that the generations of students, preachers, and communities that follow us will continue to be blessed by African American preaching and sacred rhetoric."

Dr. Thomas served as the founding and inaugural Director of the historic PhD Program in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric at Christian Theological Seminary. Established in 2017, the PhD Program was the world's first ever doctoral program of the sort, founded on the belief that African American preaching is worthy in all its dimensions and expressions of being studied at the highest levels of academic inquiry. Currently, there are 23 doctoral students in three cohorts progressing toward their PhDs in various aspects of African American preaching. The



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program celebrated its first four graduates in May 2024. Several initiatives have already grown out of the PhD Program, including the Mixed Methods Preaching Conference, the Compelling Preaching Initiative, and the African American Legacy Preaching Series.

When asked what this effort means to him, Dr. Thomas shared, "I believe that legacy is our fingerprint on the next generation. It is important, not only to understand our legacy, but to discern the highest and best use of it. I am grateful for my partnership with CTS and for their commitment to the PhD program and the Endowed Chair effort. To reach our goal we are leveraging 40 years of

relationships and mobilizing for a cause that is bigger than me and one that I could not do alone. It is a wonderful and marvelous gift that will bless generations with the beauty, the power, and the depth of African American preaching."

The fundraising initiative launched publicly in Chicago, IL with a series of events on September 19-20. These events featured an interview on the subject of legacy with Michael Eric Dyson and a music performance by group therAPy in a free concert at Governors State University followed by a gala celebration the following evening. To date, nearly \$1M has been raised toward the \$3M goal.

"It is fitting to announce this effort as one of our primary fundraising initiatives this year as we celebrate CTS' 100th anniversary, lifting up the forward thinking of CTS' past and recommitting ourselves to a future where the scholarship and impact of African American preaching is lifted up, celebrated, and advanced," said Kristin Champa, Vice President for Advancement at CTS. "Dr. Thomas has established an incredible legacy through his pastoral work, scholarship, teaching, preaching, and mentoring. This Endowed Chair will ensure the sustained viability and continued impact of that legacy for generations to come."

Dr. Thomas currently serves as the Nettie Sweeney and Hugh Th. Miller Professor of Homiletics and Director of the Compelling Preaching Initiative at Christian Theological Seminary.

For more information about supporting the Frank A. and Joyce S. Thomas Endowed Chair please contact Dr. Kristin Champa, VP for Advancement, at kchampa@cts.edu.

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Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) – a fully-accredited ecumenical graduate school open to all with historic roots in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – celebrates its 100th anniversary during the 2024-2025 academic year. CTS offers masters' and doctoral degree programs through

its School of Theology and School of Counseling, accessible mental health services through the Counseling Center, and collaboration to address systemic social justice issues through the Faith & Action Project. Throughout the last century, CTS has dedicated itself to theological and counseling education, social justice, and community leadership. Through four centennial events this year, CTS will continue to bear witness to God's liberative, restorative, and life-affirming message.

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