

# Christian Theological Seminary Celebrates 100th Anniversary and Honors Distinguished Leaders at 2025 Commencement

*Christian Theological Seminary commemorates its 100th Anniversary and proudly announces honorary degree recipients for 2025 Commencement.*

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, UNITED STATES, March 27, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As [Christian Theological Seminary](#) (CTS) commemorates its 100th Anniversary, the institution proudly announces the honorary degree recipients for its 2025 Commencement. This milestone celebration not only honors the achievements of the graduating class but also recognizes three distinguished individuals whose work and leadership exemplify CTS's core values: advancing scholarship and formation, embracing diversity, working toward justice for all, affirming God-given human dignity, and promoting healing and wholeness throughout creation.

## HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale – Doctor of Divinity

A trailblazing pastor, mentor, and justice advocate, Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale is the founding and senior pastor of Ray of Hope Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Decatur, Georgia. With more than four decades of ministry, Dr. Hale has shaped theological education and pastoral leadership through her commitment to mentoring clergy, fostering inclusive ministry spaces, and advocating for social justice.

Dr. Hale's life work has challenged systemic barriers to leadership within the church, especially for Black women in ministry. Her pastoral mentoring organization, ELAH Pastoral Ministries, and the Women in Ministry Conference have equipped countless clergy for effective and transformative service. In addition to her local and national leadership, Dr. Hale's voice has been instrumental in shaping discourse around justice and faith. As a preacher, author, and advocate, she embodies the CTS mission to embrace diversity and promote healing and wholeness in the church and society.

Dr. Hale will receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree and deliver the Commencement Address.

Mark A. Miller – Doctor of Divinity

A renowned composer, worship leader, and advocate for justice through music, Mark A. Miller has been a driving force for inclusivity within church music. A lifelong United Methodist, Miller's

compositions have deeply influenced the musical landscape of congregations across denominations, offering a prophetic voice for justice and equity.

His hymns and sacred music, known for their powerful messages of inclusion, challenge communities to embrace the dignity of all people. His career spans roles as a professor, musician, and worship leader, consistently using his platform to elevate marginalized voices within the church. Through his work, he exemplifies the CTS commitment to fostering spaces of belonging and transformation.

Miller will receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree and preach the message at Baccalaureate Chapel. A new hymn specially commissioned by CTS and composed by Miller will make its debut at the service.

Rev. Rob Fuquay – Doctor of Divinity

Rev. Rob Fuquay is the senior pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, one of the largest United Methodist congregations in the United States. A visionary leader, Rev. Fuquay has championed LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the church, actively working to dismantle barriers that have historically excluded individuals from full participation in faith communities.

Under his leadership, St. Luke's has become a national model for progressive and inclusive ministry. His advocacy for racial justice, commitment to community outreach, and emphasis on biblically grounded preaching make him a transformative leader within the United Methodist Church and beyond. Rev. Fuquay's work aligns closely with CTS's mission to form leaders who bring about healing and justice in the world.

Rev. Fuquay will receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Don E. Knebel, Esq. – Presidential Award of Excellence

CTS is proud to honor longtime supporter and current trustee Don E. Knebel with the 2025 Presidential Award of Excellence. This award is presented to an alumnus or friend of the Seminary whose life and accomplishments have earned the respect of their industry, profession, or community.

Don Knebel earned a degree in electrical engineering from Purdue University and a law degree from Harvard. He retired from Barnes & Thornburg LLP at the end of 2013 after 39 years as an intellectual property litigator.

Active in civic and charitable organizations, Don serves on the CTS Board of Trustees and the CTS Faith & Action Project Advisory Board. He is a member of the board of directors of Christel House International, where he serves as vice-chair and secretary and is currently serves as the inaugural president of ReCenter Indiana.

Don has traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, seeking a better

understanding of the world's religions and cultures. He is a frequent speaker on religious and political history, comparative religion, politics, and the First Amendment. He now publishes a travel blog on his website, donknebel.com. In 2019, Don was named Indiana Philanthropist of the Year by the Indiana Association of Fundraising Professionals.

#### A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF FAITH AND JUSTICE

"As CTS marks its 100th anniversary, it is a time to celebrate both our rich history and our vision for the future," said CTS President Dr. David M. Mellott. "Rev. Dr. Hale, Mark Miller, and Rev. Fuquay, and Don Knebel each embody the values that have guided CTS for a century—courageous faith, transformative leadership, and a relentless pursuit of justice. We are honored to recognize their contributions to the church and the world."

The 2025 Commencement will take place on May 18 in Shelton Auditorium where the CTS community will gather to honor its graduates and these remarkable honorees. As the seminary looks ahead to its next century, it remains committed to equipping leaders who will continue to shape the church and society with wisdom, compassion, and justice.

#### ABOUT CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) is a fully-accredited ecumenical graduate school open to all with historic roots in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). CTS offers master and doctoral degree programs through its School of Theology and School of Counseling, accessible mental health services through the Counseling Center, and collaboration to mitigate poverty and address systemic social justice issues through the Faith & Action Project.

Stephanie Seeger

Christian Theological Seminary

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