

the hearth

URBANA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Volume: 30 Issue: 1 Summer 2025

From the President's Pen

We have so much to be grateful for! On May thirtieth, Urbana Seminary observed Commencement 2025. Once again, the celebration was deeply personal and special for all three graduates (shown in the pictures). Charlotte Blissit received her Master of Divinity degree, culminating her journey of study and deepening, while pastoring a congregation in Champaign. Kezhen Zhang attained the Master of Arts in Religion degree; she has a unique ministry of making Chinese-language Christian library materials available to international students at the University of Illinois. Sam Farrugia, who joined us for graduation from Montreal in Canada, also received his Master of Arts in Religion.

Summer Sessions are well underway, with our second largest summer enrollment ever engaging in creative courses that model listening to God's Word and learning from people and life.

And Fall is right around the corner—the semester launches on August twenty-fifth, with more unique opportunities as well as some traditional standard classes. We are also grateful for the increase in people applying for degree programs in 2025.

Pray for us to keep listening for God's leading as we seek to strengthen his church in the very best way for the mid-21st Century.

Ken

Ken Cuffey
President

Pray for God's Work through the Seminary!

We covet your prayers. What we do is a ministry for God's glory, involving clear teaching, intense discipleship and mentoring, and support for the Body of Christ. Please join us in praying for:

- ◆ Fruitful completion of Summer Sessions—students and teachers, growth and diligence.
- ◆ A wonderful Fall Semester to come.
- ◆ Growth of our Seminary Circle of friends. Continued increase in enrollments in programs, as well as individual classes. More concerted prayer for what we do. Increase in the number of donors who will stand with this ministry and make it impactful and accessible for students.

Congratulations 2025 Graduates!

Kezhen Zhang M.A.R. Charlotte Blissit M.Div. Samuel Farrugia M.A.R.



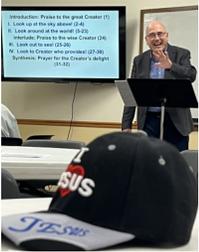
Our Calendar in Pictures

January



A great way to ward off Winter's chill! Our Back-to-School Chili Cook-Off!

February



**Urbana Seminary
YouTube Channel**

Check out our YouTube channel where we share talks from past events, as well as other informative videos. Subscribe by visiting youtube.com/@urbanaseminary7804

Taste of Seminary with Ken Cuffey, Melody Green, Pearce Durst, and Luke Herche.

March



Provision for Pastors' Preaching Forum with Dr. Scott Gibson "Big Idea Preaching."

May



Celebrating our 2025 Graduates!

June



Ancient Israel in Chicago Tour of the I.S.A.A.C. Museum led by Dr. Cuffey.

"99 percent of my best moments at Audiofeed this year happened at the Urbana Theological Seminary tent. And I know I am not the only person who feels that way." — Amanda Larsen, AudioFeed participant



The Seminary Tent at AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival.

Training through Travel

Biblical Turkey:

PETER, PAUL, & MARY (OH! & JOHN TOO!)

March 8 — 20, 2026

Did you know that there are so many Bible-related sites in Turkey that the country is often referred to as the 'second Holy Land'? Urbana Seminary's *Training through Travel* is delighted to offer a new trip to see Biblical sites in Turkey—including some our trips have not been to before, March 8—20, 2026! Like all of our trips to the lands of the Bible, this trip is designed to deepen your ability to read the Bible better to hear from God—it is a life-changing discipleship trip, giving you tools for envisioning the world of the Bible and understanding what God was doing.

Biblical Turkey 2026 will give you a panoramic view of the growth of the early church in the period of AD 50-100!

Come with us—to Antioch, Seleucia Pieria, Tarsus, Antalya (Attalia & Perga), Pisidian Antioch, Konya (Iconium), Laodicea/Hierapolis/Colossae, Miletus, Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Pergamum, Troas, Istanbul, and so much more!

For further information or to register, contact Dee Hoiem, Trip Coordinator, at travel@urbanatheologicalseminary.org.

There is still time to sign up! Reserve your space with an initial deposit of \$200 due by December 15th (we can flex with you if you need longer.) Deposits in by December 15th will help to allow Tutku Travel to keep the airline rates secure. Full cost of trip including roundtrip airfare from Chicago is \$4,590 per person, double occupancy. Balance is due February 3, 2026.



Visit us at <https://urbanatheologicalseminary.org/event/biblical-turkey/> use the QR Code to download a brochure or fill out an application.



Special Opportunity!

This fall, Dr. Ken Cuffey's *Living the New Testament: Life in the 1st Century AD* has a unique opportunity! On Saturday, September 6 the class will be taking a road trip to the St. Louis Science Center to see an exhibit of items from Pompeii. Since Pompeii was destroyed in 79 AD, it is like a time capsule that shows us what homes in the Roman Empire at the time of Peter, Paul and the other earliest church leaders were like. This class will explore the life lived by those who first heard the gospel. Thursdays, 6:00-8:15 PM.

Pascal Study Center

At Pascal Study Center, Dr. Wenneborg walks alongside University of Illinois students



When people ask me about the work of Pascal Study Center, Urbana Seminary's outreach to the University of Illinois, I usually emphasize our programming: guest speakers, dinner discussions, and book studies.

But there is another, more hidden aspect of this ministry. Throughout the semester, I frequently meet with individual students to help them think about how to connect their faith with their callings as university students. These meetings give me a chance to learn more about their classes or their campus ministry, to ask a senior about his plans for work or further study after graduation, or to ask a graduate student about her research, teaching, or upcoming exams.

Here are a handful of examples from this most recent semester. One student asked to hear my thoughts on blending faith, family, and an academic career—a topic I am only too happy to talk about! Another wanted to talk about sharing the Gospel with her classmates. And a third student, who is a leader in his campus ministry, shared with me his plans for the upcoming semester's Bible study. I helped him figure out how to reframe the study to emphasize God's grace, rather than our own moral efforts.

As these students share with me about their lives and concerns, I discover better ways for Pascal Study Center to serve the Christian community at the University of Illinois. I pray that my conversations with these students help them grow in confidence that the Lord is with them in their university studies. Please join me in praying for the students who are involved with PSC to be faithful throughout their time at the University of Illinois.

2025 Fall Courses



BIBLICAL STUDIES

Inductive Bible Study — Dr. Kenneth Cuffey

Ruth: The Subtle Sovereignty of God — Dr. Kenneth Cuffey

Living the New Testament: Life in the First Century — Dr. Kenneth Cuffey

CHRISTIAN HISTORY & THOUGHT

History of World Christianity I: Early and Medieval — Dr. Joseph Thomas

Theology I — Dr. Todd Daly

Christian Ethics — Dr. Todd Daly

G. K. Chesterton: An Introduction — Dr. Melody Green

GRADUATE RESEARCH

Theological Writing for Graduate School — Dr. Pearce Durst

For more information, contact Dr. Green at mgreen@urbanatheologicalseminary.org or to register, please visit us at urbanatheologicalseminary.org or use the QR code right.

Register here!



July 4 "Mel Gibson's *The Passion After 20 Years*," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL.

July 6 "Shadows of the Savior: Discovering Christ-Figures in Cinema," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL.

Melody Green

Feb 18 "George MacDonald's influence on C.S. Lewis," Taste of Seminary, Champaign, IL

Feb 21-22 "From Apologetics to Story: How Story Serves Faith with Chesterton and MacDonald," "Past Watchful Dragons: Narnia as Apologetic," "Tolkien's Eucatastrophe: The Gospel as Fairy Tale," Jesus People USA, Chicago, IL

March 15: "Screwtape Letters Talkback," Fellowship for the Performing Arts, St. Louis, MO

May 10: "Refracted Light: The Relationship between George MacDonald's and J. R. R. Tolkien's Theories of Fantasy," Westmoot 2025, Kansas City, MO

June 22 Preached on Luke 8: 26-39, Hessel Park Christian Reformed Church, Champaign, IL

July 4 "Screwtape Letters, a Closer Look," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

July 6 "Madeleine L'Engle: The Writer We Need for Today," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Marji Larson

July 4 "Will the Real Mary Magdalene Please Stand Up?" AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Joe Thomas

March 1 Joe Thomas and Jonathan King, Book launch of "*Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer*" at the Life Together House, Urbana IL

Jan27-Feb10 Taught the Letter to the Ephesians to the Gap Year program at CU Church

April 3 "Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer," Book talk Savoy Rotary

June 8-Aug 3 "Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer," Book study Intervarsity Graduate Christian Fellowship

June 12 "Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer," Book talk Windsor of Savoy

July 4 "Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer," Book talk AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

July 6 "Panel: Why Go to Church?" AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Emily Wenneborg

July 5 "Pascal's *Pensées* for Today," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Faculty and Staff Speaking Engagements

Ken Cuffey

Feb 25 "A Different Case for Creation Care " Taste of Seminary, Champaign, IL

June 1 Sunday Sermon, Covenant Fellowship Church Champaign-IL

June 14 *Ancient Israel in Chicago* Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Tour Chicago, IL

June 15 Sunday Sermon, Temple Baptist Church Champaign, IL

July 4 "A New (Old) Christian Case for Creation Care: Psalm 104 AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

July 6 "Panel: Why Go to Church?" AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

July 6 Psalm 2 Church Service for AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Todd Daly

May 29 "What is Bioethics?" University of Illinois, Genomics Forum, Champaign, IL

July 5 "Non-Violent Atonement," AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

July 6 "Panel: Why Go to Church?" AudioFeed Music and Arts Festival, Urbana, IL

Pearce Durst

Feb 16 "The Transfiguration of Jesus: Matthew 17:1-13" Cornerstone Fellowship, Urbana, IL.

March 11 "*The Passion of the Christ*: Two Decades of Controversy & Cultural Impact" Taste of Seminary, Champaign, IL

March 30 "Awake in the Garden: Surrendering to the Father's Will: Matthew 26:36-46" Cornerstone Fellowship, Urbana, IL.

May 25 "God's Remnant: Removal and Restoration: Micah 5:7-15" Cornerstone Fellowship, Urbana, IL.

June 12 "The Holy Spirit & The Day of the Lord: Joel 2:28-32" Cornerstone Fellowship, Urbana, IL.

Faculty and Staff Publications

February, 2025 - Joe Thomas and Jonathan King "*Wayfinding with Dietrich Bonhoeffer*" podcast is published on the Christian History Institute website. Here is the website link: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/podcasts/wayfinding-dietrich-bonhoeffer>

Mark your calendar!

✓ **Saturday, August 23 Back to School Picnic, 5:00 PM, Burwash Park Savoy, IL**

✓ **Monday, August 25 UTS Community Prayer online and in person (tech classroom) 12 Noon–1 PM. For link or details contact Dr. Pearce Durst at pdurst@urbanatheologicalseminary.org**

✓ **And keep your eyes open for information about the fall Taste of Seminary lecture series, as well as our inaugural Ministry Forum!**