



Abundance & Grace: A Blueprint for Flourishing in Faith and Hope
Mission – Vision - Core Values
2023-2027

Columbia Theological Seminary is an educational institution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in service to Christ and the Church. We are a regional, national, and globally recognized leader in higher theological education, with numerous indicators of our positive impact on our students and the world. The Seminary is now poised to build on these strengths by taking the bold steps needed to respond to a post-pandemic and endemic era while remaining true to our history and identity, which is constantly being molded and reformed.

Abundance & Grace: A Blueprint for Flourishing in Faith & Hope is an incremental plan for the Seminary's next chapter of excellence based on extensive consultation with Seminary partners, including students, faculty, trustees, administrative staff, and alums. The Blueprint highlights strategic directions and prioritized goals focused on our vision statement in four areas of institutional life: *Academic Pedagogy, Campus Culture, Administration, and Governance*. Our strategic directions and prioritized goals will guide and organize the Seminary's efforts to build upon our strengths, create opportunities for growth, and support student flourishing as expressions of our Core Values and commitment to forming pastors and servant-leaders who will impact the Church and the public square.

This Strategic Blueprint is written broadly to provide guidance, not constraint! As expressed in our vision prayer, we subscribe to the leading and surprise of God's Spirit in our deliberations and implementation of the tactics and tasks. This Blueprint is intended to provide a framework for all seminary departments and units to unleash their creativity and identify ways they may help move the seminary toward our collective vision. Each department and unit, depending on its specific purposes, strengths, and contexts, may at different times undertake initiatives that emphasize some Core Values and Strategic Directions more than others. Yet, the whole work will exemplify all of them. Each student organization, administrative office, faculty department, and trustee committee is charged to align its plan with *Abundance & Grace: A Blueprint for Flourishing in Faith & Hope* to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of its contributions to student, employee, alumni, and partner flourishing.

Columbia Theological Seminary
Statement of Mission

Columbia Theological Seminary exists to educate and nurture faithful, imaginative, and effective leaders for the sake of the Church and the world.

Vision

(excerpted from the Vision Statement:
A Prayer for Vision in Columbia's Bicentennial Season)¹

We offer these vision prayers as a statement of our collective intention as we follow where the Spirit leads in our *strategic directions*;

- We pray that Columbia's students will be educated, equipped, and nurtured to become a new generation of pastoral leaders for the Church and the world.
- We pray that Columbia's community will embody the welcome, hospitality, justice, and belonging of the reign of God.
- We pray that Columbia's partnerships will bring vibrant spiritual, cultural, and academic exchange, with opportunities to generate new ideas and knowledge, create connections, and engage in experiential learning.
- We pray that Columbia will join boldly in the new thing God is doing among us and the world, enabling us to learn, teach, serve, and live joyfully in God's holy house of prayer and in God's good creation.

Columbia Theological Seminary's Core Values

The Mission, Vision, and Core Values express the identity and purpose of Columbia Theological Seminary. These brief statements cannot fully represent the many dimensions of Columbia's rich history, meaningful experiences, and bold aspirations. Instead, they are intended to be a mirror and a window, both an honest reflection of Columbia's purpose and a portal to see how Columbia moves in the Southeast, the country, and across the globe.

Gratitude - *Our response to the abundance and grace of God and the Church of Jesus Christ is, first, gratitude. Abiding gratitude for gifts freely given equips our mission, advances our vision, prompts wise stewardship, engenders joy and repentance, and makes the path of call clearer for our students and alums.*

Mutual Respect – *Columbia Theological Seminary promotes an environment of mutual respect grounded in recognizing that all people are formed in God's image. Mutual respect moves us to understand the gifts and unique contributions of every person in the Seminary community and to value diverse perspectives. Mutual respect gives us the ability to realize the greater good in our actions and programs and challenges us to look at our work and ourselves holistically and as one united with others across the region and the globe.*

Excellence – *Columbia Theological Seminary provides a collegial environment where excellence commits us to challenge ourselves to utilize our God-given gifts -- intellectual, social, physical, spiritual, and ethical. Striving for excellence touches all aspects of the Seminary's life,*

¹ See *A Prayer for Vision in Columbia's Bicentennial Season*

from academic degrees to Lifelong Learning, student formation to campus culture, vocational outreach to publications, research to daily worship and praxis.

Compassion² - *Exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus, compassion compels us to stand with and embrace others in their suffering so that we may experience God's liberating and healing presence together. Members of the Columbia Seminary community stand with their colleagues in times of personal crisis or grief and express compassion through multiple endeavors that respond to the needs and lament of others within and beyond the Seminary.*

Innovation – *Columbia Theological Seminary actively promotes accessibility and affordability as it seeks new and more effective approaches to education, exercising creativity to chart inventive paths forward into the future. This includes a bold willingness to risk following the Spirit's leading, the humility to learn from failure, and the courage to try a new path.*

Hospitality – *Colombia Theological Seminary embodies attitudes of embrace and hospitality and draws us to do our daily work with a spirit of graciousness that welcomes new ideas and people of all backgrounds and beliefs. The value of hospitality means making space for an unexpected visitor, a surprising idea, a fresh insight, or even a disturbing question or challenging opportunity. Welcoming another may not result in an agreement, but such hospitality does require attentive listening and a readiness to reconsider one's position.*

Inclusive Community – *As an educational institution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Columbia Theological Seminary subscribes to the Reformed Tradition³, which seeks, welcomes, and advances gifted individuals from diverse backgrounds. Columbia Seminary strives to create and maintain safe learning spaces; fosters a climate that is open and welcoming to diverse people, ideas, and perspectives; promotes a constructive discourse on the nature of diversity and equity; and engages faculty, staff, and students in activities that promote Columbia Seminary's core values. Intimidation, retaliation, rejection, and judgment will not be tolerated.*

Belonging & Becoming – *Rooted in the Reformed understanding of the Spirit's work of sanctification, Columbia Seminary's commitment to honor the life stories of all our constituents is expressed in the synergy and creative tension between belonging and becoming. Columbia Theological Seminary community members work collaboratively to ensure the flourishing of the Seminary. They are dedicated to participating in shared governance, building on prior accomplishments, and improving continuously. All people are embraced, welcomed, and valued as they are and invited to grow, stretch, and be transformed by the Spirit.*

Communal Engagement – *The call of Christ demands reaching beyond ourselves to become engaged in the life of the world around us. Columbia Theological Seminary seeks to be a good neighbor to Decatur, Atlanta, and our global community, using our voices and resources to participate in the upbuilding of God's kin-dom⁴.*

² "We believe...that God revealed Godself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people; that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged; that God calls the church to follow him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry" – *Belhar Confession*, section 4.

³ The priesthood of all believers is a Reformed doctrine that holds that every believer has a Christian vocation of equal importance. We assert that there are different gifts and that each is important to the whole.

⁴ Kin-dom became the language Ada María Isasi-Díaz used to describe God's *libertad*, the liberation of God at work among people, and the good news for those who suffer at the hands of kings.