

# TRANSFORM

THE MAGAZINE OF WESTERN SEMINARY | *Fall 2020*

## A LEGACY OF FAITHFULNESS

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Q&A WITH OUTGOING  
PRESIDENT RANDY ROBERTS

DAN KIMBALL LAUNCHES BAY AREA COHORT

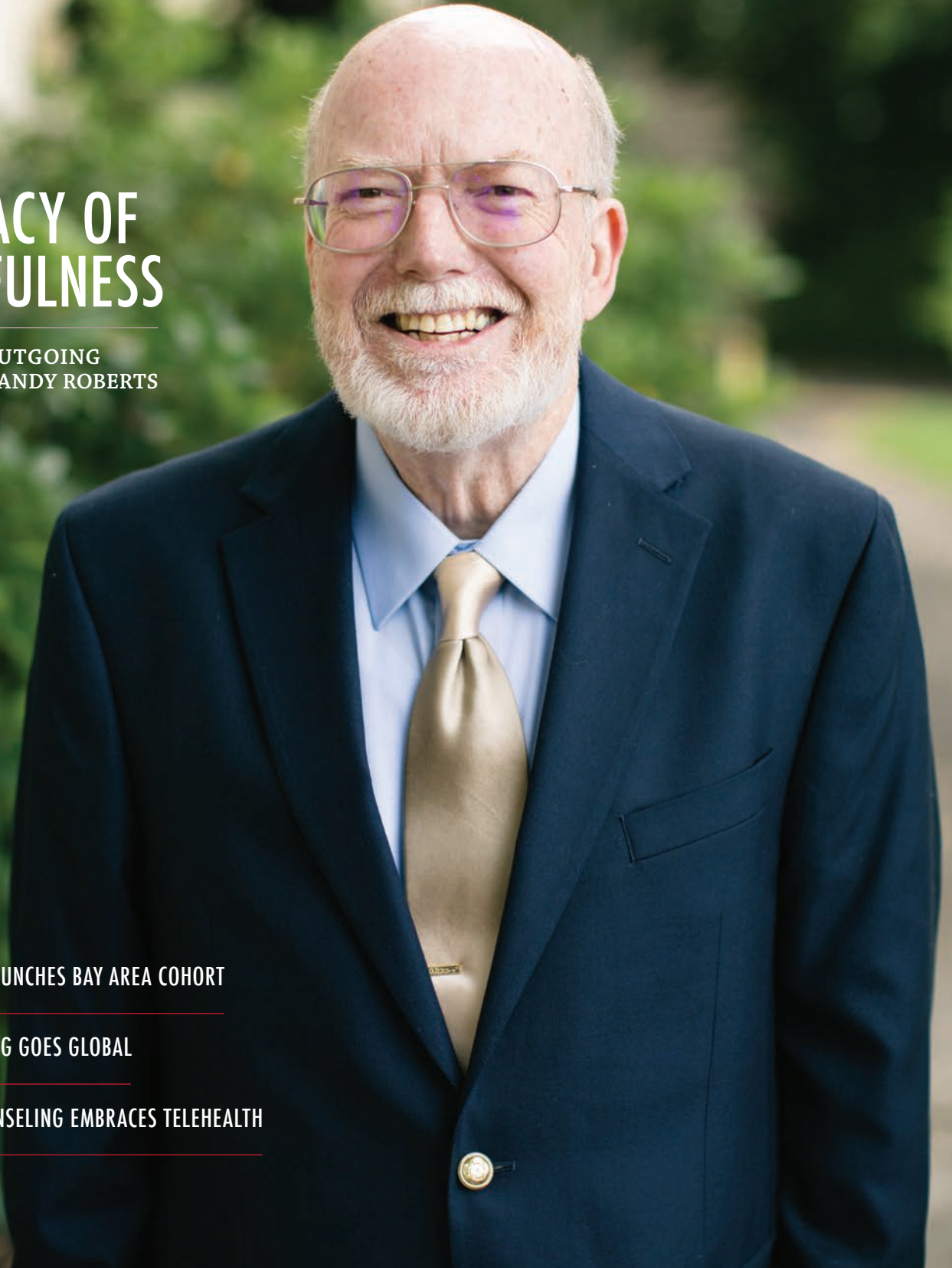
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ONLINE LEARNING GOES GLOBAL

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A NEW DAY COUNSELING EMBRACES TELEHEALTH

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## Looking Back While Moving Forward



**Gary Combs** serves as the current board chair for Western Seminary's Board of Trustees. He is also the managing director and vice-chairman for Campbell Global in Portland, Oregon.

“Randy has furthered Western’s mission of gospel-centered transformation in undeniable ways.”

As many of you already know, Randy Roberts informed the board in February that he would be concluding his time as president in early 2021. There were many factors that led Randy to this decision, and I encourage you to read his candid and insightful interview on page 6. The Board of Trustees is very appreciative of Randy’s faithful service and though we know that replacing him will be no easy task we unanimously support Randy’s decision.

Randy has faithfully and humbly served Western Seminary for almost 40 years in various capacities. As one of the longest-serving presidents of an evangelical seminary in North America, he’s already served twice the national average. More impressive than this longevity is the way that Randy has continued to display a servant’s heart in his role as president. He possesses a thoughtful, grace-filled leadership style that stands in stark contrast to so many leaders in the world around us.

Randy has furthered Western’s mission of gospel-centered transformation in undeniable ways. The seminary has now seen nearly a hundred years of gospel fidelity. We are coming off a series of solid financial years. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact, we are grateful to report a record enrollment for the fall semester. The future is, indeed, bright, due in large part to Randy’s competent and distinguished service.

In the spring, the board formed a presidential search committee led by board member Mark Moosa. The search committee, with the approval of the board, selected The Dingman Company,

one of the nation’s leading professional recruiting firms, to assist in the search for our next president. The committee has spent extended time in prayer seeking God’s will for Western and has a remarkable group of finalists.

While the list of qualifications for our next president is long, here are a few of the most essential:

- Demonstrates a strong, personal, and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Is a person of unquestioned integrity possessing a high view of the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.
- Articulates a clear sense of divine calling to Western Seminary’s mission.
- Is in full agreement with the institution’s theological convictions, championing these in both precept and example.

The board is committed to ensuring that Western remains committed to the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this issue, we simultaneously look back with gratitude on Randy’s time as president while highlighting the strategic ways that Western is carrying out its mission of gospel-centered transformation. We pray that you will join the board in prayer as we continue to seek the Lord’s will during the search and selection process. We look forward with anticipation to what our God has in store for Western Seminary.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Combs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

### TRANSFORM Magazine

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We care about what you think. If interested in sharing what thoughts, ideas, comments, or questions came to mind when reading this issue of the magazine, please reach out to us!

Opinions should be a maximum of 250 words and include full name, city and state, and class year (if applicable). They may be featured in future magazine issues.

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Curious what's been going on lately at Western Seminary?  
These exciting snippets provide just a few snapshots of how the seminary  
is making a difference in and around our communities.

## FOOD TRUCKS IN BABYLON GEARS UP FOR SEASON 2

Faculty Ryan Lister Joins Todd Miles as Podcast Co-host

What do spiritual warfare, marijuana, suicide and models of the atonement all have in common? They were some of the topics covered in the first season of Food Trucks in Babylon, a podcast started by Western Seminary faculty back in January.

Production for season two is already underway, with faculty Ryan Lister, PhD, teaming up with Todd Miles, PhD, as co-hosts. While the next season will explore new topics, the podcast theme remains the same: helping Christians live well in a post-Christian world.

“Our hope is that season two builds on the good work of the first season,” says Lister. “We want to help our audience think hard about what it means to be a Christian disciple in a world that struggles with both Christianity and with the idea of discipleship.”

Food Trucks in Babylon is the first podcast ever produced by Western faculty. By all measures, it has been a tremendous success thus far. The podcast has been downloaded nearly 90,000 times from listeners in 133 countries. The first 28 episodes covered a wide range of topics, all hosted by Miles and Patrick Schreiner, PhD. Special guests included Western faculty Gerry Breshears, Kay Bruce and Josh Mathews, as well as John Mark Comer, Tim Mackie and Jon Collins of the Bible Project, Josh White, and James K. Smith.

After Schreiner moved on to teach at Midwestern Seminary this summer, Lister agreed to step in to help fill the void. Miles is excited for the new things they already have planned for season two.

“Ryan is perhaps the most creative teacher that I know, not to mention being super fun to hang with,” Miles admits. “His ideas for the podcast will be evident. What won't change is the biblically faithful conversation that characterized last season.”

Lister notes that although their conversations on theology and culture would be happening with or without a microphone, “I am glad we get to think out loud together and I am excited to see how God works through this podcast and how it will bring Him glory.”

Catch up on all Food Trucks in Babylon episodes at [podcast.westernseminary.edu](https://podcast.westernseminary.edu).



## WESTERN SEES RECORD ENROLLMENT FOR THE FALL SEMESTER

In the midst of such turbulent times, Western Seminary is grateful to report a record high enrollment for the fall semester – 833 students. This includes 203 brand new students and 33 international students from all over the globe. While a handful of Flex courses at our Portland campus feature an in-person option this fall, most of our students are continuing their degrees in a remote format until we are able to open up our campuses to more in-person classes. Until then, we are working hard to ensure that our students continue to receive the rigorous, practical training that they have come to expect from us.



## CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (CLD) OFFERS GROUP TRAINING FOR LOCAL CHURCHES



For pastor and Western Seminary student Chris Warner, the opportunity for his church to learn from the same Western Seminary faculty that have impacted his own life was just too good to pass up. That's why his church, Cove Church in Anaheim, Calif., partnered with Western's Center for Leadership Development (CLD) for group training. The church

is currently working together through the Bible Foundations Certificate, which includes courses such as Biblical Theology and How to Study Your Bible.

"I have people in our church telling me 'I can't believe how much this has helped me understand the Bible,'" says Warner. "I could not be more blessed as the pastor of a church because it reinforces what I am already learning at Western as a student."

Cove Church is one of many local churches, organizations and groups leveraging group training from the CLD so that its members can grow and learn together. The cohort format offers both cost benefits and a more meaningful learning experience compared to taking courses independently.

"I highly encourage pastors to use this for group training or just point people to CLD to study on their own. It is changing lives at our church."

To find out more about group training, visit [cldwestern.com](http://cldwestern.com).

### CHECK OUT THESE NEW COURSES FROM THE CLD

**Theology of Church Planting by Dr. Sean Benesh:** Study the biblical and systematic theological foundations of church planting, then learn how to apply this in your own context.

**Orphan Care by Dr. Todd Chipman:** Explore both the biblical foundation for foster care and adoption, as well as discuss practical ways for the local church to create foster care and adoption ministries within congregations.

**What is the Gospel? by Dr. Gerry Breshears:** These days, different groups and theological camps within Christianity would answer the question "What is the gospel?" very differently. Study the rich portrait of the gospel message and the implications for believers today.



## WOMEN'S CENTER FOR MINISTRY CARRYING OUT ITS MISSION VIRTUALLY

In the midst of an unprecedented year of challenges, the Women's Center for Ministry (WCM) at Western Seminary is sounding the call to persevere.

"Our team is shepherding the women of our city during these uncertain days when stress, fear, isolation, and constant change have assaulted us," says WCM Director Phyllis Bennett.

The WCM has pivoted to make resources and encouragement available virtually. Women from throughout Portland and Vancouver recently attended the REVIVE Conference on Nov. 13. The online event was built around the theme "A Call to Persevere," and included live-streamed worship, insights from keynote speaker Pam Lau, small group fellowship, and seven inspiring breakout sessions.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry's annual IGNITE conference in the spring has been postponed to 2022, to ensure women are able to attend in person. Author Kari Patterson will be featured along with 20 exciting breakout sessions.

The WCM is also offering two Women's Transformational Leadership courses remotely beginning in January:

- WL501 – "Pastoral Understanding of Women" with Bethany Allen, Western alum and pastor of spiritual formation & leadership at Bridgetown Church.
- WL507 – "Develop Life-Changing Bible Study Curriculum" with WCM Director Phyllis Bennett.

**For more information about these courses and other WCM resources, visit [wcm.westernseminary.edu](http://wcm.westernseminary.edu).**



# A Legacy of Faithfulness

A CONVERSATION WITH OUTGOING PRESIDENT RANDY ROBERTS

After 12 years of faithful service as Western Seminary's president, Randy Roberts made the decision to step down at the end of 2020. He reflects back on the joys and challenges of his tenure, and discusses what lies ahead for the seminary.

**Q:** Why did you decide that now is the right time to step down?

**A:** It was a combination of four factors, each essentially equal in influence. First, the inevitable wear-and-tear of presidential leadership has taken a toll physically, and I've been advised that I should lower stress levels to optimize the chance of keeping my prostate cancer in check (I've also dealt with melanoma and a heart attack in recent years). I've watched some schools where the president tried to lead while facing serious health issues, and that didn't seem to work out well for any of the principal parties involved. Second, I feel that wear-and-tear mentally as well, especially in terms of "decision fatigue" and increased difficulty in fully "recharging my battery." Third, while Western is thankfully in good shape overall, higher education in general is in a highly volatile and vulnerable position. So I think Western would be best served by a new president who brings fresh energy and perspective to help it navigate prudently and faithfully through what very well might be some challenging waters ahead. A final factor is the recognition that presidents don't come with a clear "sell by" stamp, and that it's normally better to risk leaving a bit too early than a bit too late.

**Q: You have been one of the longest serving presidents of any evangelical seminary in North America. How do you explain this longevity?**

**A:** I suspect it has been the combination of being surrounded by a good team, having learned how to pace myself, and an abiding sense of the importance of Western's mission that in turn helps to fuel resilience.

**Q: Reflecting on your time as president, in what ways have you seen God's gracious provision?**

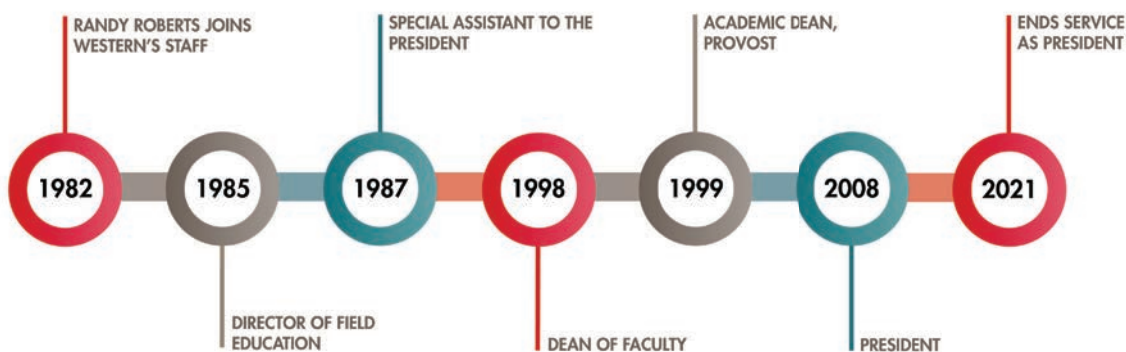
**A:** It has really been a corporate experience of Matt 6:33; we seek by His grace to be faithful to Him, and He in turn provides for our needs so we can continue to do so. He uses an amazing group of faithful donors as key instruments in so doing. The committed and competent team that He provides are also grace gifts. We have also been able to deepen and broaden our redemptive impact, which is also an expression of His grace.

**Q: What have been some of the biggest challenges during your tenure?**

**A:** Western has historically operated with very slim margins and a modest savings account, so seeking wise and sustainable ways to address longstanding infrastructure needs without over-extending the school financially or making education unaffordable for students has in many ways been the greatest challenge. Changing social mores has also made evangelical ministry and education both more challenging and more needed. And of course 2020 has so far been an especially and uniquely challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and political tensions, and regional fires – yet we are currently experiencing a record-high enrollment. So we are very grateful for this unexpected blessing.

**Q: How has theological education changed over the past decade? How has it stayed the same?**

**A:** The biggest changes are in how technology has impacted educational practices and in student demographics. Technology has created both challenges and opportunities with respect to distance education, self-paced learning, Bible study software, and the like. With respect to students, it wasn't that long ago that the typical seminary student was a Caucasian male in his 20s who was pursuing a M.Div. degree so he could become a pastor, likely in the



*Q & A continued  
on next page ▶*



denomination to which he currently belonged. While we still have a good number of students that fit that profile, recent decades have seen a major shift by way of ethnicity, gender, age, anticipated role, degree sought, and church affiliation. That diversity has become so prominent that I'm not even sure one can talk about a "typical" seminary student any more as the audience and appetite for sound theological education have broadened considerably.

**Q: Is going to seminary really necessary for someone preparing for ministry?**

**A:** I would say that, for the overwhelming majority of people, some sort of carefully-structured and monitored training program would be essential. Formal education seeks to provide that sort of experience, with the opportunity to be personally trained by faculty who normally would not be as accessible in a non-formal setting. There are always occasional exceptions, but I'm intrigued by how many of those exceptions (such as Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones, etc.) themselves started or envisioned formal training programs. That suggests that they didn't see their situation as either being normative or optimal.

**Q: How does Western ensure that it continues to serve the church?**

**A:** We made sure that the phrase "with and for the church" described the training that is at the heart of our mission statement to serve as a constant reminder of this commitment. We also make sure that our board always has a good number of congregational leaders on it. Plus, our screening criteria for prospective faculty includes an assessment of their commitment and contribution to a local congregation. Those are just some of the ways by which we have sought to internalize this ongoing sense of responsibility and accountability to the local church constituency.

**Q: How has Western responded to widespread unrest over racial injustice and how can it continue to work towards unity and reconciliation in our communities?**

**A:** This issue is in one sense relatively simple, but in another sense very complicated. Racism and the discrimination that accompanies it is obviously inconsistent with biblical ethics. Yet nowadays many others are protesting





its ongoing manifestation prompted by worldviews that themselves wouldn't be fully shared by evangelicals. This gave rise to the term "co-belligerents" during the culture wars, where Christians might join others in being against something but for very different and distinctive reasons. Without wanting to sound simplistic, the entire quest for pursuing greater justice in a fallen world must be shaped and informed by an authentically biblical worldview that results in goals, methods, expectations, priorities, etc. that are consistent with it.

**Q: In the midst of transition, how can the seminary ensure it stays committed to gospel-centered transformation?**

**A:** While I was academic dean, I studied what caused Christian schools to drift "left-ward" by way of mission and theological commitments, so Western could tack in the opposite direction. Our focus on gospel-centered transformation is a key component of that strategy (as is maintaining a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and to other key biblical and historical commitments in our guiding documents, personnel selection, etc.). We have unpacked that vision for gospel-centered transformation in our Classic Strategy for Evangelical Renewal document, which in turn increasingly shapes our curricular outcomes and other missional priorities. So we've worked hard not to let it be a slogan but rather a crisp articulation of an overarching commitment that we take very seriously.

**Q: What does a smooth presidential transition look like?**

**A:** In broad terms, it would consist of an essentially seamless hand-off of presidential leadership from me

to my successor without creating any unnecessary loss of momentum. Aiming for that is why I'm more than happy staying in place until the new president is not only named but also ready to assume the role (as opposed to an interim, for example). That is also why I have tried to give the board plenty of time to find that person without feeling at all rushed to do so. While there will always be a learning curve (even if an "insider" is chosen), I know the search committee is also giving attention to a personalized "onboarding" plan to help with that transition.

**Q: What are your future plans?**

**A:** That really depends upon the desires of my successor. I would be more than happy to help out in a part-time role at Western by doing additional teaching, working on special projects, etc. if that was consistent with the new president's wishes. But I obviously need to be careful to give the new president plenty of room both to get off to a good start and not to feel at all constrained by how I did things.

**Q: What makes you hopeful for the future ministry impact of Western Seminary in the world?**

**A:** We have a very strong team in place at every level of the organization, substantial positive momentum to build on, an ever-increasing number of strategic partnerships that build additional synergies, and confidence that by seeking to do God's work in God's way we will not lack God's provision (to paraphrase Hudson Taylor).

# Words of Appreciation

FOR PRESIDENT RANDY ROBERTS

## GERRY BRESHEARS

Professor of Systematic Theology



If servanthood can be a vice, then Randy Roberts is chief of sinners! From his days as top student in my classes some forty years ago, his obvious competence, incisive

intellect, and quick wit were coupled with his eagerness to serve. While he was on part time staff at Lents Baptist Church, I got to see the marvelous marriage he and Susan enjoy and how they served each other.

When he joined the Western team, serving as part time assistant in our Guided Field Education department, his qualities marked him and soon Dr. Radmacher asked him to be special assistant to the president. Randy functioned wisely and humbly as de facto president on many occasions in the tumultuous decade of instability in the president's office which finally ended when Bert Downs assumed that office. He continued as a wise directional leader for Western from the office of Academic Vice President.

When Bert retired, Randy was the obvious choice to become president. He continued his servant leadership, using the power that comes with the presidency to build an outstanding team to grow the seminary with multiplied partnerships and innovative educational methodologies. I still treasure the "Toward a More Perfect Gerry" document he gave me many years ago to help in a stressful season in my life.

## KAY BRUCE

Professor of Counseling



The presidential legacy of Dr. Randy Roberts will be his fixed focus in keeping the mission of our school central. Gospel-centered

transformation have become words that administration, faculty, and staff live by. The passion to equip the church comes through clearly in his "Toward a Classic Strategy for Evangelical Renewal" document that explicates the difference between reformation, revival, and renewal. He is so intelligent and articulate that I have considered his annual speeches to students to be my own mental status exam dependent upon whether I can keep up with what he is communicating.

Power often corrupts, but not in the case of Dr. Roberts. He has remained a humble servant leader with an open door to all who seek him. His effort, conviction, strength, and talent in serving Western is given in full measure, often even at the cost of personal well-being. He never waivers, despite intense administrative pressure and cultural divide.

To love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves should be the fruit of gospel-centered transformation. Dr. Roberts has led us faithfully in this pursuit. May his leadership be an example for generations to come!

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## RUTH RADMACHER

Wife of former president, Earl Radmacher

My husband, Dr. Earl Radmacher, served Western Seminary for 35 years and I remember the many joys that accompany leading the seminary. There is wonderful satisfaction found in seeing a school flourish and seeing its graduates go around the world to advance the name of Christ. There are also many external and internal challenges that face a president daily. Randy has faced them too and

faithfully led the school forward during his tenure as president. He has worked hard to protect the school from drifting in its mission and has faithfully fostered a commitment to keeping the gospel central in student's lives. I wish him the very best in this next chapter of his life and look forward to seeing Western Seminary flourish for another generation of students, in the next chapter of its life.

## KEANE COLLINS

### Director of Advising



Leaders are usually praised for their skill in speaking, and Randy is an outstanding speaker. But leaders are rarely praised for their skill in listening. Whenever I have asked to speak

with Randy about an idea or concern that I have, I have always been impressed by how carefully he has listened to me. The result is a special quality of leadership found in Randy, in that he gives us the grace to approach him, he gives us dignity by respecting our thoughts, he gives us peace in taking our concerns and letting them rest on his trustworthy shoulders, and he builds ownership among us because we know he has carefully considered all the input we have provided. Thank you, Randy, for listening so well.

## BONNIE BRUECHERT

### Wife of former board member

I remember our amazement years ago, when Bob and I first met Randy on staff at Western and noticed his speed-typing with two fingers!! We smiled at his determination and creativity. As a board member, Bob soon learned to know and admire the capable, intelligent and godly man he was. He has proved to be all of that in his teaching and administrative roles at Western through the years and has given of himself whole-heartedly to serve the Lord as a wise teacher and leader.

We were fortunate to have Randy and Sue attend New Life Church West Linn and sit under his Sunday school teaching and several unforgettable sermons. Now that Bob is in heaven and I am alone, I have appreciated Randy's thoughtfulness and attention to me and my family as a friend. Randy, thank you for your invaluable help with the dedication of the Trustee Board Room in Bob's memory and for your kind words at the ceremony.

In spite of the pressures and stress of your responsibilities in leadership, thank you for allowing God to use you in such a significant way to train those who will go out from Western to serve in ministry. I am glad you have Sue by your side and I pray God's blessing on both of you in your future endeavors.

## From His Students

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Randy has continued to teach Christian Spirituality courses throughout his time as president. Here are some comments from past class evaluations that highlight his impact as a professor:

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“This course caused me to examine my spiritual life in Christ and to address anything that is holding me back in my relationship with Christ, and to better understand my priorities in life.”

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“Dr. Roberts has ability to clearly synthesize and summarize tons of content into helpful categories. He is great and employing real-world examples to illustrate the concepts.”

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“This course helped me grasp my need for a heart change, rather than just a lifestyle change.”

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“Dr. Roberts is amazing. I wish I could carry him around in my backpack and ask his advice on everything!”

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“Randy caused me to think about the power and danger of habit and how I could leverage that to my advantage. It caused me to develop a relationship of accountability in my small group.”

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“It was a pleasure to sit under Randy's teaching and to know that he cares so much about each one of us and to also see that he is so competent about the topics he teaches. I think this was one of my favorite courses here at Western so far.”



# Portland Campus Gets Much-Needed Facelift

## THANKS TO GENEROUS FINANCIAL GIFTS

Since 1944, Western Seminary has been training students for ministry at its historic, five-acre campus in Southeast Portland. Thanks to the generosity of Western friends, many of the campus buildings have been significantly renovated in 2020 to ensure that this ministry can continue for decades to come.

Significant gifts from Ray & Marietta Roy, the Board of Trustees, the Simonsen Foundation, and The Pamplin Christian Foundation helped make possible the following improvements:

- New paint, dry rot repair and gutter fixes on Armstrong Hall
- A complete renovation of the Security House inside and out

- A new roof, paint, gutters and wheelchair lift for Bueerman Hall
- The addition of four offices and a new recording studio in the basement of Milliken Hall
- The remodeling of the chapel restrooms

Most of the work was completed between February and October, thanks in large part to the hard work of Physical Plant Director Cliff Stein and his team.

“I’m grateful for the financial commitment to this project that will make a lasting impact on the future of Western,” says Stein.

Pictured to the right: Ray and Marietta Roy paint the final board on Armstrong Hall.



# Online Learning Goes Global



## WESTERN'S GLOBAL CAMPUS NOW OFFERS FULLY ONLINE OPTION

For nearly 40 years, Western has been offering remote learning options to students who are not within close proximity to our physical campus locations. What was once a correspondence “experiment” involving the mailing of recorded videos has blossomed into a full-fledged online program which now serves roughly 40 percent of Western’s total student body. While the technology has evolved over the years, the mission behind online programming has stayed the same.

“We desire to equip students around the world for gospel-centered transformation, wherever Jesus has already sent them,” says Andrew Pack, Western’s new Director of Online Learning.

To more clearly reflect its mission, the online campus recently updated its name to the Global Campus. According to Pack, this new name puts more focus on who the campus serves, rather than how the training is delivered. “It helps us move forward with a global vision.”

The name change also coincides with the addition of a fully online degree option, as an alternative pathway to the requirement to attend week-long “threshold” classes in person. Until now, these on-campus intensives have been required at both the start and end to each student’s degree program.

“The goal of the in-person requirement had been for students to know and connect with Western and its professors, emphasizing the importance of spiritual transformation,” says Pack. “But new methodology allows this connection to happen in ways that were not previously possible with remote learning.”

One of the opportunities for greater connection is a new class format called “Online LIVE,” which launched this fall. These

classes are held in real-time, with teachers and students interacting through a video conferencing platform, such as Zoom. With even more Online LIVE classes scheduled for the spring, Global Campus students will have the option of enrolling in a certain number of these synchronous classes as an alternative to an in-person requirement.

“The residency requirement was a real impediment for many students desiring to attend Western, especially for our many international students located around the world,” says Pack. “The changes to the Global Campus mean that all of our students can receive their theological training in whatever context that God has called them to without traveling to Portland.”

He notes that it will soon be possible for an M.Div student in the Global Campus to finish a fully online degree in three years taking only Online LIVE classes in real time. And students who live outside of the U.S. will not be required to navigate the cost and logistical challenges that come with international travel.

The Online Live classes are one of several new ways that the Global Campus is leveraging emerging digital technology in the classroom. More instructional and advising support is available than ever before, and the Global Campus will continue looking for new ways to be innovative. But as Pack says, the driving focus remains the students, not the technology.

“Our aim is to get the technology of the interface out of the way. The point of what we are doing is to connect students to our world-class faculty and each other as they undertake the journey of theological education, that they might grow in their union with Jesus, their life with His Church, and as ambassadors to the lost.”

Check out our faculty updates on page 22 to hear more from our director of online learning.





From left to right: Cohort Host Dan Kimball. Western student Megan Ryan works with students at Trinity Christian High School in Monterey, California.

# Theological Training for the Next Generation

## DAN KIMBALL LAUNCHES NEW COHORT AT SAN JOSE CAMPUS

Dan Kimball is troubled by the rise of “theological deconstruction” stories in the church as more young people are questioning their previously held beliefs and abandoning faith. At a ReGeneration Forum a few years ago, he decided to host an informal lunch discussion on the topic of theology and ministry to new generations. Hoping for a handful of youth pastors to show up, Kimball was surprised to find the room packed with youth pastors, young adult pastors and worship leaders—all hungry for answers to the difficult questions they were facing in their churches.

More than ever before, Kimball realized the urgent need for theological training for the next generation of leaders in the Bay Area.

“These young leaders are on the forefront right now of all the cultural questions being raised about pluralism, sexuality, the afterlife and the validity of the Bible,” says Kimball, Director of the ReGeneration Project, a gospel-centered ministry of Western Seminary that exists to help church leaders respond to difficult questions about theology and the Bible. “But the problem is that often these leaders aren’t trained. They’ve been brought onto staff at churches because of their skills and abilities, but they usually

don’t have the theological background to provide credible answers to these difficult theological questions.”

When the conference was over, Kimball began to develop a plan for how Western might be able to meet the unique needs in the Bay Area. He realized that there were very few formal training opportunities available to young leaders at regional churches, but he also knew that time and cost were significant barriers to seminary training.

“The vision is to have Western be the go-to option for theological training in this region. But because of logistical challenges, it has to be practical and affordable,” says Kimball.

With this in mind, Western launched the Bay Area Cohort this fall for students to get their MA in Ministry and Leadership. The cohort is offered in a condensed format that meets all day, once a month, allowing a group of up to 20 students to journey together for three years towards their degree.

The all-day intensive is a unique aspect of the cohort that fosters deep relationships between students. “They get to have lunch



together and really get to know each other, while sharing the specific ways how what they are learning in Bay Area specific ministries, which is the really fun part,” says Kimball. “I didn’t experience that kind of friendship or interaction when I was at seminary because I was always coming and going without much connection.”

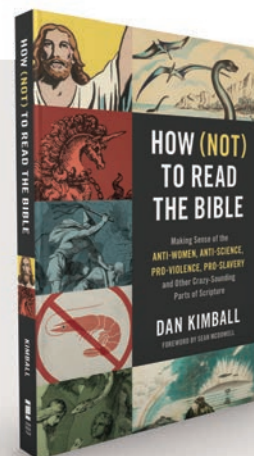
Another important aspect of the cohort is that it is offered at half the cost of a typical master’s degree program, thanks in part to a partnership with the local churches and ministries that the students serve in. Each student works with a mentor from their church or ministry as part of the requirement for the ministry classes. This leverages their real-time ministry experience in the field to be incorporated into their ministry classes, while the classroom time is focused around Bible and theology content.

Kimball believes that Bay Area churches will see the need and really get behind the idea of providing theological training to their young leaders.

“These leaders are getting bombarded with so many theological questions and yet many don’t have answers,” he notes. “If they can offer young believers and non-believers reasonable answers to the hard questions, it can make a huge difference at such a crucial moment of faith in the lives of so many here.”

With the COVID-19 pandemic making it impossible to meet in person, the cohort began to meet this fall on Zoom, allowing the students to start remotely. Kimball is looking forward to meeting in person and growing the program to more students in the future.

“Our current students come from some of the most thriving churches in the Bay Area, and I could easily see having 80 or more students in four years, if we can get the churches to really invest in their younger staff.”



## Book highlight:

**HOW (NOT) TO READ THE BIBLE:**  
Making Sense of the Anti-women,  
Anti-science, Pro-violence, Pro-slavery and  
Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture

Author: Dan Kimball

Publisher: Zondervan

Release date: Dec. 1, 2020

For centuries, the Bible was called “the Good Book,” a moral and religious text that guides us into a relationship with God and shows us the right way to live. Today, however, some people argue the Bible is outdated and harmful, with many Christians unaware of some of the odd and disturbing things the Bible says.

Whether you are a Christian, a doubter, or someone exploring the Bible for the first time, bestselling author Dan Kimball guides you step-by-step in how to make sense of these difficult and disturbing Bible passages. Filled with stories, visual illustrations, and memes reflecting popular cultural objections, *How (Not) to Read the Bible* is a lifeline for individuals who are confused or discouraged with questions about the Bible. It also works great as a small-group study or sermon series.

*-Description taken from back cover*

## Blake Zimmerman

### COHORT STUDENT BRINGS BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION TO LOCAL CHURCH



**Current City:** Tulsa, Oklahoma

**Degree:** MABL/MDiv concurrently

Blake Zimmerman joined the staff of Church on the Move (COTM) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during a season of transition. Several of the pastors found the small group ministry at the church was helpful for connecting church members to a community, but incomplete for the spiritual formation of their congregation.

“We had noticed when looking at discipleship at our church, small groups weren’t enough to shape people into the image of Jesus the way that Scripture describes,” Zimmerman says, “We felt like we were missing a piece of the discipleship engine.”

In response, Zimmerman and his fellow pastors created a Bible study curriculum and a theological institute program for their church, inspired by a similar model at The Village Church in Dallas, Texas.

“We sat in on some of The Village Church’s classes and thought, ‘Our people need this. This stuff is too good to stay in seminaries,’ he recalls.

In 2019, the COTM pastors developed a Bible study workbook on the Gospel of John, and taught through it to see what impact it might have. Zimmerman was blown away by the responses.

“It wasn’t that people would come up to us and say thanks. They would come up and say, ‘I’ve never read my Bible like this in my life.’”

During this time, Stephen Posey, another pastor on staff at COTM, began attending Western Seminary. Posey

eventually recruited five other staff members from COTM, including Zimmerman, and the cohort launched in the fall of 2019. The cohort now contains 20 full-time ministry leaders from a wide range of churches.

“I can’t overstate how important the cohort has been in both the timing of launching our ministry initiatives, but also in the formation of me as person and pastor—in how I approach Scripture and theology. It’s been life-changing.”

Another way the cohort has been helpful to Zimmerman is through connecting him to other pastors outside of his church and tradition.

“Hearing from the other people in the cohort—their church experiences, their stories, their interpretation of Scripture – it’s been invaluable to walk with people from other geographical locations and church backgrounds,” says Zimmerman.

“All of the professors at Western are unconcerned with theoretical theology or (only) cool Bible knowledge. They care about people on the ground.”

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, COTM has continued to expand its institute, offering an Old Testament and New Testament book study each semester, as well as launching a new year-long discipleship formation class this year.

As Zimmerman looks back on how the cohort has changed his approach to ministry, he credits Western faculty and cohort host Gerry Breshears for helping him see the difference that theological education can make in the local church.

“Before the cohort, I knew that the Bible and theology were integral to ministry,” admits Zimmerman. “But now I’ve witnessed someone in Gerry who actually believes it and lives it out. It reinforces for me that theology belongs in the local church.”



## Joy Roberts

### CO-FOUNDER OF NON-PROFIT PROMOTES SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF SCRIPTURE

Joy Roberts co-founded a non-profit called Joy of It in 2014 with a vision to create spaces where people from different cultures and backgrounds could build unity. The idea being that the gospel is best lived out when the church is united together.

“We are designed and hardwired for community, not separation and isolation,” says Roberts, president of the Portland-based organization.

As Joy of It has grown over the years, it continues to find new ways to extend that mission. One example is a program called Friendly, a social and emotional learning curriculum designed for students kindergarten through 8th grade.

“Teaching friendship skills supports students in managing their emotions, improving the ability to set and achieve positive goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions,” says Roberts. “This is God’s design for healthy relationships and communities.”

In running a non-profit, Roberts has the opportunity to hear varying perspectives. She wanted to make sure she was grounded in a solid biblical understanding so that she could navigate those spaces with integrity. That desire led her to enroll at Western Seminary, where she could build that theological foundation.

Flexible class options have made it possible for Roberts to continue her full-time job as president of Joy of It while earning her degree. Married and the mother of two boys ages 19 and 21, Roberts is also involved in ministry at Beaverton Foursquare Church and East Hill. She appreciates the flexibility to take intensives and online courses as she balances her many priorities.

“Western has done a great job in making seminary training accessible,” she says. “At the same time, it has been a safe place to be challenged and to unpack theology from different vantage points.”

For two years, Roberts participated in a cohort training model at Western’s Portland campus, where she was able to connect with other thought leaders and pastors



**Current City:** Lake Oswego, Oregon

**Degree:** MA (Biblical and Theological Studies)

in intensives. She appreciated the opportunity to build friendships and community while hearing from those with different theological perspectives on certain issues. She admits that while the differences produced some tension at times, “that tension grows and strengthens us.”

While Roberts hopes to finish her degree next year, she is excited how she is already incorporating theology into the curriculum at Friendly. She sees the core competencies of social and emotional learning all across the pages of Scripture. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the need for authentic connection.

“This challenging time has given us a massive opportunity. With so much physical distancing, schools and parents are recognizing social and emotional learning is more vital than ever. Friendly offers resources that can help meet this need”



# COUNSELING DURING A PANDEMIC

## A NEW DAY COUNSELING CENTER EMBRACES TELEHEALTH TO CONNECT WITH CLIENTS

When the COVID-19 outbreak began shuttering businesses back in March, A New Day Counseling Center had no choice but to move all appointments to a virtual format. At the time, the world of telehealth was somewhat unfamiliar territory for the clinic, which is located at Western Seminary's Portland campus.

"A few counselors had some experience with virtual appointments, but overall we had no idea how to run a telehealth clinic with all of our counselors working from home," admits Debbie Woo, LPC, Director of A New Day and Western Seminary graduate. "There was uncertainty about how it would survive without an in-person option."

The transition was a bit clunky at first, as the clinic staff had to quickly adjust to new technology and makeshift workspaces from their homes. But they quickly rallied together to ensure that they could continue supporting their clients in the midst of the pandemic. Within a month, the clinic was providing the same number of counseling sessions as before the pandemic hit.

"I was so grateful to God for his provision, not only for the clinic, but also for our clients who have been able to receive uninterrupted support during such difficult times," says Woo. "There is so much suffering in our world right now. Anxiety, depression and suicide are on the rise. People are struggling to know where God is in all of this, and a counselor is someone who can help you find a way back to hope."

As of October, A New Day has been averaging more clients than ever before, thanks in part to the added convenience that accompanies telehealth. Going virtual has expanded the clinic's reach to all of Oregon, and also to a number of international clients. What's more, some of the typical barriers to in-person appointments, like sickness, childcare and transportation, are no longer factors.

Woo acknowledges that telehealth isn't for everyone, though. Some clients have had a difficult time adjusting to virtual appointments, and the human connection can sometimes get lost across a computer screen.



“I had a client the other day who really needed that in-person connection. So I suggested that we social distance while walking around the Western campus, which worked in that specific situation.”

The clinic has begun meeting with a small number of clients in the office as well (with social distancing, masks, and other safety measures in place). However, the majority of visits are still virtual, and Woo expects that the move to telehealth will be a permanent change on some level, even after the pandemic is over.

“There are just so many benefits to being able to provide telehealth sessions, and we have been able to expand our services in so many ways.”

A New Day was launched at Western’s Portland campus in 2012 to be an arm of Western’s counseling program, where students can train under the supervision of faculty. Having an on-campus clinic helps meet the requirements for CACREP accreditation, which gives graduates the ability to obtain licensure in many other states with minimal additional work. Students also get the benefit of learning

while doing alongside licensed professional counselors with years of clinical experience. Some students have even come back as employees while they work on their licensure hours and eventually establish their practices as licensed counselors at A New Day.

A New Day is currently staffed by eight licensed counselors, one clinical psychologist, five registered interns and 2-4 practicum students. The wide array of staff and counseling services allows the clinic to personalize the care dependent on a client’s financial situation and specific mental health needs. Most of the referrals to the clinic come from someone who is connected to Western in some way. Woo hopes that A New Day will continue to be a vital resource for local churches in the community.

“The pandemic leaves a lot of people feeling powerless, which stirs up a lot of stuff that has gone unhealed,” says Woo. “As Christian counselors, we want to help with that healing.”

## GET TO KNOW DEBBIE WOO, LPC

**Hometown:** Portland, Oregon

**Position:** Director - A New Day Counseling

**Degree and Certifications:**

MA in Counseling from Western Seminary (2011); Licensed Professional Counselor in Oregon

**Why did you become a counselor?**

I was always the kid who wondered why there was someone on the street corner begging for money. I have always had a sensitivity to know other people’s stories and wanted to help. But before I could help others I needed to get help for the pain in my own life. My brother’s mental illness and suicide fueled a passion for me for hurting people to be able to have access to mental health care. It’s been a winding road and now I get to help people walk that same path to hope.

**How did Western prepare you for your current role?**

Western prepared me to ask the hard questions about pain and suffering, how to sit with clients through deep grief and loss, and how to help clients change. Also because of excellent internships, I had 400 client contact hours under my belt before I even graduated. That doesn’t seem like a lot now but I appreciated the model of learning that incorporates practice and not just theory.

**A NEW DAY COUNSELING CENTER**  
5511 SE Hawthorne Blvd.,  
Portland, OR 97215  
anewdaycounseling.org  
503.517.1895



**TRAVIS CUNNINGHAM** (MDIV, 2017)  
LEAD PASTOR, STORY CHURCH

Having grown up in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., Travis Cunningham had a dream to plant a gospel-centered church in his hometown. Story Church launched in fall 2019, and continues to thrive despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Their vision is to be “a church that reaches our community, trains leaders, and plants more churches across the Inland Empire of California.”

Cunningham shares, “My training at Western Seminary has given me many of the tools necessary to plant and pastor a church. The average church planter has many duties from preaching, equipping, counseling, praying, evangelizing, discipleship, and more. Western Seminary has laid a foundation in my life centered on the gospel, rooted in the Scriptures, and dependent upon our Triune God. As our church has grown and my responsibilities with it, I don’t know how I would do it without the training and faculty at Western.”

The church plant baptized 25 new believers in its first year and has begun to reopen in-person services as state guidelines allow.



**SOLOMON REXIUS** (MDIV, 2012)  
COLLEGE PASTOR, CORNERSTONE CHURCH  
AND DIRECTOR OF THE SALT NETWORK

Solomon Rexus is the director of one of the largest student ministries in America. The Salt Company is the college ministry of Cornerstone Church of Ames, reaching students at Iowa State University. What started off as a small Bible study for college students in the 1980s has grown to be a network that plants multi-generational local churches in university centers in order to reach the next generation.

Sharing about his time at Western Seminary, Rexus pointed to the relationships he built with his professors and classmates: “First and foremost, I was shown the primacy of walking with Jesus. I developed several life-long friends and ministry partners. I still get advice from the friends and professors from my Greek, Bible, and preaching classes.”

Rexus speaks regularly at The Salt Company’s weekly gatherings of over 1,200 college students. He credits his professors for equipping him to do “the thing that matters most in my job right now: expository preaching.”

Cornerstone Church of Ames and The Salt Company work together to plant churches throughout the Midwest. They currently have 19 network churches, each with their own Salt Company reaching college students at local universities.

**LISA RAMSEY (MA IN COUNSELING, 2006)**  
COUNSELOR WITH CAMA IN KOSOVO

Lisa Ramsey runs a counseling center in Gjilan, Kosovo, where she has been serving with her husband Ron for 13 years. The Ramseys answered God’s call to missions in 2007, partnering with CAMA—the international relief and development arm of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Whether meeting individually with clients or supervising young Kosovar psychologists, Lisa is passionate about providing mental health services in a country still recovering from the effects of the devastating Kosovo War in 1998-99.

“Only recently have we begun seeing women who are ready to talk about what happened during the war,” says Ramsey. “There wasn’t a lot of openness at first, but now in the last few years we are really beginning to see some healing take place.”

Ramsey points out that they have had to overcome a lot of stigma associated with mental health in the region. The word “counselor” doesn’t exist in Albanian, so the counselors there are all referred to as psychologists. But when the country was under communism, psychologists were often used by the government to reinforce its ideology.

“A lot of women never told their families about the horrible things that had happened to them during the war. The real change began to come when Christian women here began to see that they could counsel each other.”

Ramsey now provides the structure for Kosovar counselors to get the training they need to minister to their own people. At the Bridge Community Center in Gjilan, there are classrooms dedicated for training opportunities and counseling sessions. Ramsey is also developing similar training programs in other neighboring countries like Ukraine.

When she isn’t ministering to the Kosovar people, Ramsey provides counseling services to other Alliance staff spread out around the world. Her work is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream to serve in missions.

“I was called to missions as a child and I knew I would serve overseas somewhere. I just didn’t know it would take me as long as it did.”

Ramsey began her career as a teacher, but soon transitioned into school counseling because of her desire to help kids. After trying to help families in her school deal with a fatal bus accident, it became clear to her that she needed more training to help people deal with trauma. That desire led her to enroll in the counseling program at Western Seminary.



Lisa Ramsey (middle) with fellow counselors in Kosovo.

“I came to Western asking a lot of questions about suffering and grief,” says Ramsey. “What you end up learning is that you aren’t the one who gives all the answers to people in pain. Instead, you walk with them and let Jesus do the transformation.”

Not long after graduating from Western in 2005, Ramsey and her husband left the states to serve with CAMA in Kosovo, where they have been long-term missionaries ever since. They are supported by a network of churches across Portland and Vancouver, including Mosaic Church in Portland.

Counseling in Eastern Europe hasn’t always been easy. Learning Albanian was a daunting task, and Ramsey at one point doubted she would ever be fluent enough to counsel Kosovar women in their native language. It took a plane ride next to an older Peruvian woman to change her mind.

“The Lord set me next to this little old lady one day who could barely speak English. But she listened and ministered to me in such an encouraging way. After the plane ride, God showed me that I don’t need to speak perfectly to touch people’s hearts.”

From then on, Ramsey was determined to counsel in Albanian, and God has blessed her efforts.

Many of the competencies she gained at Western have been directly applied to her counseling practice. One specific example is sand tray therapy, a technique she learned at Western which has been especially helpful in her cross-cultural context. She has also furthered her studies in counseling, going on to earn a PhD at Regent University.

As she looks across the missions landscape, Ramsey is encouraged by the many people God is calling to serve the mental health needs in places like Kosovo. It just one of the many ways she says believers can “be the hands and feet of Jesus.”



**ANDREW PACK, THM, EDD (CANDIDATE)**  
DIRECTOR OF ONLINE LEARNING

**Hometown:** Bellingham, Washington, is home. However, I spent most of my adult life and ministry career in Seattle proper.

**Family:** I am married to Tanya and we have six wonderful kids and one boxer.

**Do you have a favorite class or one you're especially looking forward to teaching?**

I love teaching anything where our theology informs the practical outworking of our life and ministry practice. I'm teaching Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology for the Bay Area Cohort and we have experienced a lot of praxis in that learning community. I am a huge fan of teaching Christian spirituality and biblical theology type classes because at their core these courses are about understanding what Jesus is doing in history and what it means to live in His reality.

**What do you do outside of work (hobbies, interests)?**

My family and I love getting outside in the Northwest. We mill our own wheat and grow a number of fermented foods on our countertop (e.g., sourdough, kombucha, yogurt, sauerkraut). I play experimental electric guitar.

**What's your church involvement / ministry experience?**

I have been in ministry in the Pacific Northwest for almost 15 years. I have primarily served in preaching/teaching, discipleship, missiology, and church planting ministries. I have both planted churches and lead church planting ministries. Training church planters has been one of the great joys of my ministry life.

**What are you most excited for at Western?**

I am thrilled to give access to theological education focused on gospel-centered transformation to people around the Northwest and the world. As the Director of Online Learning, I love thinking through creative ways to connect students to their faculty and to each other. I love coming alongside students where Jesus has already sent them and help them grow on their ministry journey.



**DANIEL K. ENG, DMIN, PHD (CANDIDATE)**  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**Hometown:** Brooklyn, New York (but I've called Boston, Los Angeles, Austin, and Cambridge home)

**Family:** I am married to Sanjung and we have three girls: Joanna (9), Josie (7) and Jessica (5).

**Do you have a favorite class or one you're especially looking forward to teaching?**

I'm excited to be teaching Greek Grammar, which gives us the building blocks to read the New Testament and interact with the literature that relates to it.

**What do you do outside of work (hobbies, interests)?**

We enjoy connecting with people over a board game or card game. Recent favorites are Splendor, 7 Wonders, and Jaipur. I also collect autographs through the mail, especially from professional athletes. My favorite successes are Mariano Rivera and Jeremy Lin.

**What's your church involvement / ministry experience?**

I've been in pastoral ministry for over a decade in different locations, ministry models, and church sizes. Along with teaching, preaching, administration, and discipleship, I've been involved in youth ministry, children's ministry, sports ministry, and hospitality ministries. I'm also on the editorial board of The SOLA Network, developing gospel-centered and biblical content for today's generation.

**What are you most excited for at Western?**

Seminary was very formative for me, both as a follower of Christ and a minister of his word. It taught me how to think and apply the Scriptures soundly and faithfully. Now I'm excited to be part of that formative process for others.



**PALI GILL, PHD**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COUNSELING (CALIFORNIA)

**Hometown:** Elk Grove, California

**Family:** I have 2 German Shepherds.

**Do you have a favorite class or one you're especially looking forward to teaching?**

I deeply enjoy any practicum or internship process class.

**What's your church involvement and/or ministry experience?**

I converted to Christianity from a different religion in 2011 after a near-death experience. I quickly grew in my Christian faith and I started having small worship groups in my home. Since then, I have started attending Bible studies at both Sun Grove Church and Creekside Church.

**What do you do outside of work (hobbies, interests)?**

I love to travel, go on hikes, spend quality time with friends and family, and I enjoy long walks with my dogs. I also love to cook, bake, and make soaps.

**What are you most excited for at Western?**

I am most excited about being able to pray with students and to bring my faith into the classroom. I no longer have to compartmentalize God from my work when assisting, advising, and teaching students.



**RACHEL HEFFIELD, PHD**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COUNSELING (PORTLAND)

**Hometown:** Orlando, Florida

**Family:** I have a hilarious, cuddly, energetic, furry K9 sidekick named Penny.

**Do you have a favorite class or one you're especially looking forward to teaching?**

Multicultural engagement, understanding, and competency are important to me after living in Beijing and other diverse cities. I think empathy and curiosity are important practices for counselors and reflect an important part of our identity and values as Christians. So, I am excited to teach Multicultural Counseling in the summer.

**What do you do outside of work (hobbies, interests)?**

I love to be outdoors exploring, hiking, on the water, running, or just enjoying beauty and peaceful places. I love to travel, especially internationally. I enjoy cooking and trying new recipes and having people over to hang out and share my cooking experiments with.

**What's your church involvement/ministry experience?**

I currently attend Orlando Grace Church where I am involved in the nursery (pre-COVID), Christianity Explored outreach, and women's gatherings. I have served as associate youth pastor and community builder for an international church, Sunday school teacher, hospitality, and other areas as needed. I served in East Asia in various roles, equipping local lay counselors, providing counseling for other foreigners, and beginning a faith integrated non-profit counseling center. It was a great privilege to partner with a serve people from many different backgrounds both in the context of the international church, in outreach, and in equipping and counseling.

**What are you most excited for at Western?**

I have felt an incredibly warm welcome from the staff and faculty at Western and am so excited to be a part of this body as we seek to live out, teach, and inspire others towards gospel-centered transformation.

## YOUR GIFTS MAKE A KINGDOM IMPACT



“Western Seminary has laid a foundation in my life centered on the gospel, rooted in the Scriptures, and dependent upon our Triune God. As our church has grown and my responsibilities with it, I don’t know how I would do it without the training and faculty at Western.”

– Travis Cunningham (MDIV, 2017)