



## Lessons and Carols as (Counter)formation

1 message

Consortium of Christian Study Centers <comm@cscmovement.org>

Mon, Dec 1, 2025 at 4:59 AM

Reply-To: comm@cscmovement.org

To: "Karlee Rene Bowlby" <comm@cscmovement.org>



## Consortium of Christian Study Centers

# PERISCOPE

### December 2025 Newsletter

Dear Karlee,

When people ask me about the changes I've seen in the study center movement over the years, one of the observations I mention is the newfound emphasis on formation. And not just "spiritual formation" within the Christian tradition, but the broader understanding that we are, always and everywhere, being shaped and formed by the cultural currents in which we swim (or drift, as the case may be).

Enter the concept of counter-formation – the idea that Christian practices do not operate in isolation from countervailing forces conspiring to distract or even de-form us, but rather provide an alternative to those pressures. Christian practice as a resistance movement – or resistance training, if you will. If university life offers up the "secular liturgies" of football, fall break, and fraternity parties, what alternatives do we have to offer?

There might not be an app for that, but there are ancient practices, and none more obvious than the church calendar. As students round the bend of Thanksgiving break into the homestretch of their semester, it's fair to say that the season of Advent is not foremost in their minds. Even as Advent invites us to slow down and wait with hope for God's arrival, finals week bears down upon campus communities. The calendars are in conflict, one recommending the accelerator and the other the brake pedal.

For this reason I am grateful to see many of our member centers leaning into Advent, and inviting their respective campus communities to take the long view of What Matters Most. For example:

- The first of several Lessons & Carols events offered in the coming weeks throughout study center land will take place this evening in William & Mary's historic Wren Chapel, hosted by [Cambridge House](#).
- [The Christian Study Center](#) in Gainesville, FL will offer an "Advent Pop-Up & Concert" – a discussion of Tish Harrison Warren's *Advent: The Season of Hope*, followed by a concert.
- Anselm House will host "[Cocoa & Carols](#)" on a university lawn ("We will bless the University of Minnesota, inviting passersby to join in"), followed by "[Lessons & Carols](#)" at their center a week later.

- And the Michigan Christian Study Center will hold a [concert](#) featuring students and a reception following.

I don't know about you, but I find it deeply encouraging to learn about these "counter-formational" liturgical services taking place at colleges and universities around the country in the coming weeks. May these acts of faithfulness amidst intense and swirling pressures round about our students and scholars remind us to hold them close in prayer during this season of Advent.

In Christ,



Karl E. Johnson  
Executive Director

PS: Actually, I think I do know about you – because you already subscribe to Periscope, I suspect you also find all this encouraging. Do you know someone else who would as well? We invite you to forward this email newsletter (perhaps you have two such friends?) and help us spread the word about the study center movement. Thank you very much for helping us with this work.

## This Month's Highlights

- Save the date for next year's Annual Meeting and find details about the Consortium's Internship Program to pass along to a college senior you know!
- Check out lectures, book launches, and convivia that study centers are putting on in December
- Learn more about partner organization online events, as well as interesting conferences and programs with approaching application deadlines
- Read recently published articles by writers connected to the study center movement and listen to a partner organization's lecture recording
- Take a look at the jobs available at several of our study centers and partners

## CCSC News & Events



Now Recruiting Our 2026-27 Cohort

The Consortium is currently recruiting our Internship Program's 2026-27 cohort. If you know soon-to-be or recent graduates who might be interested in working for a Christian Study Center after college, **please share this opportunity** with them! Click below for more information or to get in touch with our Internship Program Director.

[Learn more](#)



### Save the Date for the 2026 Annual Meeting!

The Consortium's next Annual Meeting will be hosted by The SL Brown Foundation at Upper House in Madison, WI from **July 27-29 2026**. More details to come!

## Study Center Events



**Engaging the World like the Early Church**  
*Stephen O. Presley*  
December 2 at 7pm  
Lexington, KY

[Learn more](#)



**What Does It Mean to Be Catholic? (With a Brief History of Advent)**  
*Father Tom Yehl*  
December 3 at 7pm  
Blacksburg, VA

[Learn more](#)



**The "Wrong" Gap: Winter Faculty Convivium**  
*Alison Immormino*  
December 4 at 5pm  
Pittsburgh, PA

[Learn more](#)



**Racial Justice for the Long Haul**  
*Book Launch with Christine Jeske*  
December 4 at 6:30pm  
Madison, WI

[Learn more](#)



**Nicaea Speaks to Pittsburgh**  
*Winter Salon*  
December 11 at 6:30pm  
Pittsburgh, PA

[Learn more](#)



**Forgiveness in a World of Hostility**  
*Timothy Norman*  
December 12 at 6:30pm  
Columbus, OH

[Learn more](#)

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## Partner Organization Events



### Genesis & Creation Webinar: What the Bible Really Says

*Online: Thursday, December 11, 7:30pm ET*

This two-hour event with **John Walton** will delve into biblical hermeneutics, particularly with regard to the ancient Near Eastern context of the Genesis account. It will discuss how Genesis functions primarily as a theological text revealing *who* God is as Creator and *why* He created, rather than a scientific manual detailing *how*. The question of what constitutes a "literal" interpretation will be discussed and a reading that features a contextually literal interpretation will be presented. A case will also be made that evolutionary creation (i.e. theistic evolution) is compatible with the biblical text.

Register

### Online Winter Symposium: The Science of Forgiveness

*Online: Saturday, January 24, 1pm ET*

"The Science of Forgiveness: Intersections with Christian Worship and Life" with **Charlotte and John Witvliet**. During this talk Charlotte will reflect on findings and insights learned from a quarter of century of forgiveness research. John will reflect on how non-scientists can most helpfully glean wisdom from his literature, exploring implications for both Christian worship and peacemaking initiatives. This free 75-minute virtual symposium is open to ASA members and the general public alike. It includes key elements of the ASA approach – an opening talk on a vital science-faith issue of the day followed by Q&A. If you are interested in organizing a watch party, email Dana at [dana@asa3.org](mailto:dana@asa3.org). Funding is available for refreshments as well and Dana can provide the details.

Learn more



## THE CICERONIAN SOCIETY

### Annual Ciceronian Society Conference

*March 12-14, 2026  
Omaha, NE*

The Ciceronian Society's core themes are tradition, place, and "things divine," but this year's conference also focuses on the 250th Anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and includes reflections on American religious history and (in the spirit of Russell Kirk's *Roots of American Order*) the way in which the classical and Christian traditions influenced the formation of America and the Founding Generation.

Register



## Veritas Scholars Summit & Graduate Conference

*June 16-18, 2026: Park City, UT*  
*June 29 - July 2, 2026: South Bend, IN*

The Veritas Forum is excited to announce that applications are now open for the Summer 2026 Veritas Scholars Summit (for early-career faculty & postdocs) and Veritas Graduate Conference (for PhD students). With the successful launch of their Graduate Conference this past summer, they are now offering national, discipline-based mentoring for Christian scholars at each stage of their career development. Applications for the summit and conference are due in January. Click below to apply or nominate someone you know.

[Learn more and apply](#)



## WYCLIFFE HALL

### Wycliffe Hall Residential Opportunities in Oxford

*June 14-19 & 21-26, 2026*  
*Oxford, UK*

Wycliffe is a Christian academic community that is part of the University of Oxford. They offer several residential opportunities including two different week-long summer programs and a year-long certificate-awarding program. Click below to learn more about each.

[Study Week](#)

[Theologos Programme](#)

[Summer School](#)

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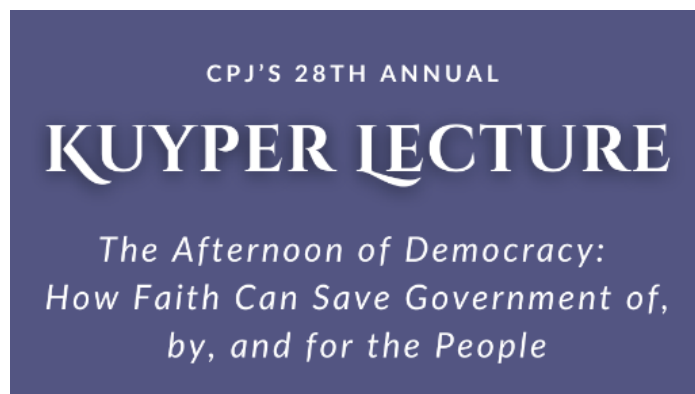
**Recommendations**



## The Raised Hand: Why AI Can Never Replace Human Educators

In this third essay in TRH's series addressing the question: "What is the role of human educators in the age of artificial intelligence?", **Christina Bieber Lake** discusses the importance of educators and of the difficult nature of writing. You can also listen to The Raised Hand's new "Audio Edition" with the authors of the first two essays in the series [here](#).

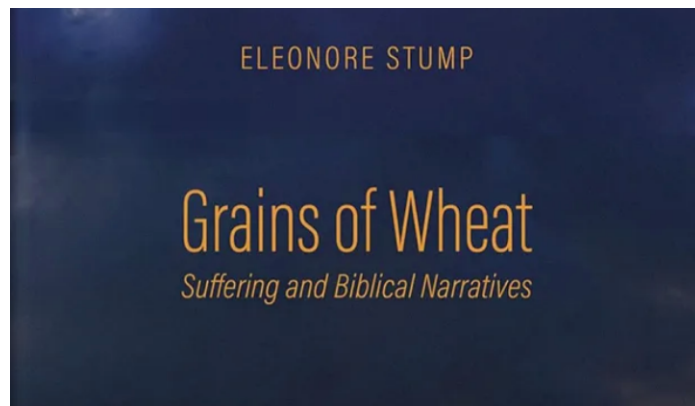
Read now



## Watch CPJ's Annual Kuyper Lecture

The Center for Public Justice (CPJ) hosted the 28th Annual Kuyper Lecture in October 2025. This year's lecture was delivered by **Gert-Jan Segers**, who served in the Dutch Parliament from 2012 to 2023. In this Kuyper Lecture, Segers argued that while the defense of democracy requires a commitment to a set of political rules and regular free elections, it also calls for a rediscovery that: 1) democracy is rooted in deep beliefs and faith, and 2) democracy is meant for high purposes such as justice and truth. This lecture outlined a path for faith in democracy and offer hope for a new morning in our free societies. Click below to watch the recording.

Watch now



## Christianity Today Book Review

**Justin R. Hawkins** is the Consortium's Intern Program Mentor as well as a postdoctoral researcher in bioethics at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. In this article published by Christianity Today, Justin explores the distinct nature of suffering and of theodicy as he reviews **Eleonore Stump's** new book *Grains of Wheat: Suffering and Biblical Narratives*.

[Read now](#)

## Job Openings



RIVENDELL  
INSTITUTE

Part-Time Administrative Assistant

[Apply here](#)



CHESTERTON HOUSE  
A Center for Christian Studies at Cornell

Post-Doctoral Academic Associate

[Apply here](#)



Event Technology and Media Editor

Resident Fellow in Theology, The Lumen Center

Associate Fellow, New College Madison

Apply here



Have you seen the Consortium's video about the study center movement yet?  
View and share the video [here](#).

*As always, keep sending your events our way so that we may distribute them to all who have expressed interest in the good work of the Consortium's members and partners.*

*Did someone forward this newsletter to you?*

Sign Up

Support the Movement



## *Cultivating Thoughtful Christian Presence*

### **Our Contact Information**

Consortium of Christian Study Centers  
PO Box 6555  
Charlottesville, VA 22906  
434-296-3333  
<http://www.cscmovement.org>

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