

FROM THE DIRECTOR

FROM THE DIRECTOR, cont.



Course of Study School of Ohio

<https://cosohio.org/>

Term	Class Dates	Registration Deadline	Dorm Availability
2025 Summer	July 11-12 & Aug. 1-2	5/13/25	Online term
2025 Fall (Hybrid)	Sept. 12-13 & Oct. 10-11	7/15/25	Available (1 weekend in-person)
2026 Winter	Feb. 13-14 & Mar 13-14	12/16/25	Online term
2026 Spring	Apr. 17-18 & May 8-9	2/17/26	Online term

Let me welcome all of you, including six new students and five graduates, to the 2025 Spring Term of the Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)!

Lent is a season of self-examination and renewal, and often associated with “the desert.” Our spiritual forbears found the desert to be a place of search for and contemplation on the presence and beauty of God. In the biblical narratives, it was often in the desert place that God encountered, formed, and transformed God’s people. The desert fathers and mothers went out to wilderness for deeper communion with God.

As David Rensberger wrote, the gift of the desert is “solitude, the chance to be alone before God.” Standing alone in the presence of God, we are invited and compelled “to strip off all that is nonessential about ourselves.” It is in the solitude of the desert that we get “to know God through the loss of all that is false about ourselves and all that stands between us and our Creator.”

We ministers are tempted to desire and pursue in ministry things that do not matter. We become distracted by and compulsive about things nonessential. What we need is to come to live in, and not away from, the desert. It is in the desert that we learn to “remain attentive to God [and] stay utterly dependent on God” (“Deserted Spaces” in *Weavings* 16/3 [2001]).

As Henri Nouwen stated in his book *The Way of the Heart*, “we are responsible for our [own] solitude”—that is, for intentionally creating a place where we can retreat for vigilant communion and contemplation. I hope that, through your theological education at COSSO, you would seek to enter and remain in the desert so as to find your true, authentic self in Christ and grow in the knowledge and service of him.

Highly valuing the on-campus experience, COSSO continues to offer courses in a hybrid format in the fall term, with students coming to campus one weekend either in September or in October. I would like to invite you to consider taking some hybrid classes during your COS program for in-person learning experience. You would appreciate the opportunity to engage face-to-face with your instructors and colleagues in the classroom, chapel, and dining hall.

All of us on the COSSO staff look forward to journeying with you this term, and pray for God’s continued guidance and blessings on your studies and ministry.

Peace,

Joon-Sik Park

Dr. Joon-Sik Park
Director of the Course of Study School of Ohio
E. Stanley Jones Professor of World Evangelism at MTSO



2024 FALL GRADUATES—
CONGRATULATIONS!



Graduates L-R: Carl “Bo” Terrell Sr (West Virginia), Keith Smallenbarger (West Ohio), Matt Whisenhunt (East Ohio), Beth Taylor (Susquehanna), Tricia Williams (Indiana), Bob Demyanovich (Michigan), Carol Freeland (Michigan), Tim Auer (Western Pennsylvania), Fred Higgins (East Ohio), Floyd Barnhart (Western Pennsylvania), Joe Carney (East Ohio), Dr. Joon-Sik Park, Phillip Nunley (Kentucky)

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Rev. Dr. Steve Trefz

COS 124: Transformational Leadership

Dr. Trefz received his M.Div. and D.Min. from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. An ordained elder in the Dakotas Conference, he is Professor of Practical Theology and Director of the Wesley House of Study at Kairos University in Sioux Falls.

Rev. Dr. Paul Kim

COS 221: Bible II: Torah & Israel's History

Dr. Kim received his M.Div. and Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and his Ph.D. from the Claremont School of Theology. A Presbyterian elder, he is Professor of Hebrew Bible at MTSO.



Rev. Dr. Reggie Abraham

COS 323: Congregational Care

Dr. Abraham received his M.Div., Th.M., and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. An ordained Pentecostal minister, he is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy at United Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Sarah Werner

COS 424: Ethics

Dr. Werner received her M.Div. from Candler School of Theology at Emory University and her Ph.D. from University of Florida. A Mennonite pastor, she is Communications coordinator for Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA and a facilitator in the PATHWAYS Theological Education program.



Rev. Dr. Mark Powell

COS 521: Bible V: Acts, Epistles, & Revelation

Dr. Powell received his M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary and his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He is retired Professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

HOLY LENT, HOLY SUFFERING

Here we are in the middle of Lent, on our journey through the wilderness. Many of the scripture readings for Lent remind us of Jesus' suffering, so it is easy to forget the holiness and only focus on the suffering during this holy season. Even in the dryness of the desert, transformation comes. There is water just below the surface that will make desert flowers blossom and give drink to thirsty pilgrims. Easter is on the horizon reminding us there is hope in our Lenten suffering, goodness will overcome evil and love will stand against hate. According to Joan Chittister, "[Lent] is about being willing to suffer for something worth suffering for, as Jesus did, without allowing ourselves to be destroyed by it." (Cry Justice, Cry Hope, Lent 2025).

So, here's a question for the Lenten journey, why would anyone voluntarily take on suffering as a Lenten discipline? What is there to be learned, to be gained? Well, we know that suffering is part of our human condition, but we dread it and avoid it at all cost. And yet, if we look below the surface, we see there is holiness in Jesus' suffering, when he challenged leaders and ate with sinners. Some things are worth suffering for, like truth and justice, eating with outsiders and helping strangers. We are living in a time in our nation's history that will continue to challenge us and cause more suffering but, thanks be to God, we have a great cloud of witnesses who have shown us a way through holy suffering, people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Oscar Romero, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Alice Paul, Rosa Parks, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, John Lewis, and all those who were and are living witnesses to justice and truth, and the greatest of these is love.

With Easter on the horizon, our Lenten challenge is not what we will do that is worth suffering for, but are we willing to live the way Jesus lived—for the sake of the sick, the poor, those carrying heavy burdens, for sinners (insiders and outsiders) who do not pretend to be stronger than they are. Yes, we have much to learn, but Jesus' life and death show us that there is a difference between suffering for a better world and inflicting suffering to rule the world. Love is the key that paves the road to the cross, and love will lead us from Good Friday to the light of Easter morning.

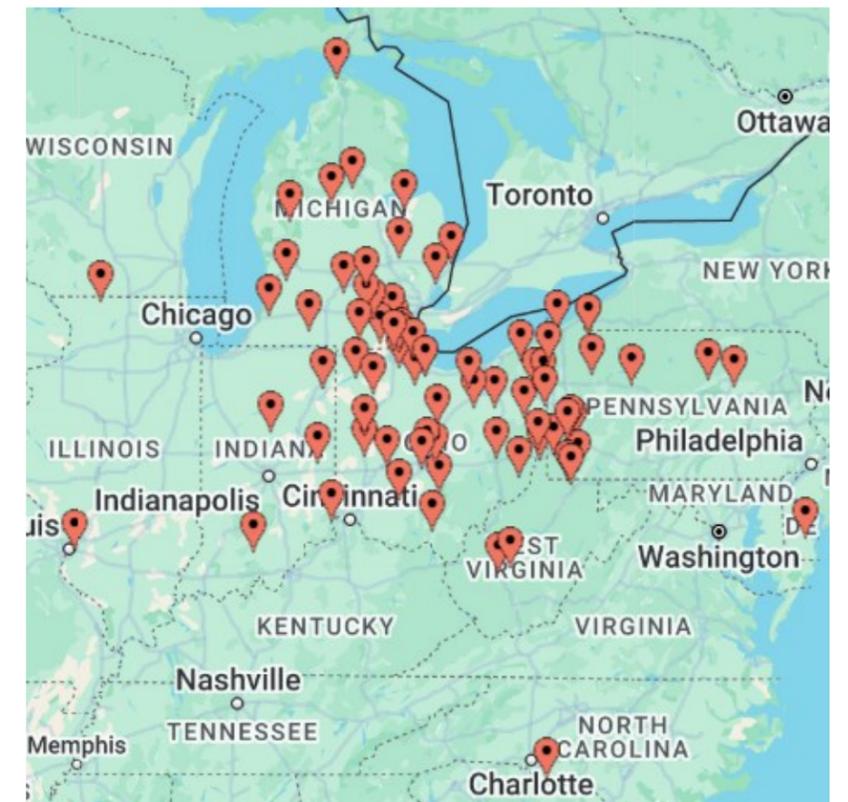


Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples
Spiritual Formation Director

FROM THE COORDINATOR

- Registration for 2026 COSSO classes opened on 3/25/25.
- Note for 2025 Fall classes: COS 123, 224, and 321 are scheduled to meet in-person the September weekend (9/12-13) and COS 422 and 523 are scheduled to meet in-person the October weekend (10/10-11).

Students from 11 Annual Conferences are taking classes in the 2025 Spring term:



Grace Wallace
Coordinator