

2025-2026

WITTENBERG SERIES

Enlightening Campus and Community

Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation

"The Light We Find, The Light We Carry"

Christopher E. Thompson '94

Executive Advisor and Leadership Coach

Monday, January 19, 2026

11 a.m. Weaver Chapel

**Hosted by the President's Council on
Mission and Values and the Diversity
Advisory Committee**



Christopher E. Thompson '94

EXECUTIVE ADVISOR AND LEADERSHIP COACH

Christopher E. Thompson '94 is an executive advisor, keynote speaker, author, and leadership coach who equips leaders to strengthen the core of who they are so their impact lasts. He is the founder of CORE Inclusive Consulting, a leadership and development firm that helps organizations build cultures where people grow, teams thrive, and leaders operate with clarity, courage, and confidence.

Thompson's upcoming book, *Strong Core: The Inner Work That Grows Lasting Leaders*, introduces a leadership practice that blends story, strategy, and soul. It challenges leaders to shift from performing leadership to becoming leaders whose presence carries weight and whose impact sustains.

With an accomplished background that includes senior leadership roles at JPMorgan Chase, Thompson led enterprise programs that advanced talent development, strengthened organizational culture, and expanded inclusive leadership practices across business units. His experience spans talent acquisition, executive coaching, strategic culture initiatives, and large-scale leadership development, giving him the ability to connect strategy to people and people to purpose.

At Pacific Coast Banking School (PCBS), Thompson teaches a core class titled Culture, Community and Connection along with an elective called Living in the AND. Both courses equip graduate-level banking leaders to navigate complexity, build relational influence, and lead culture with intention. Thompson is known for creating transformative learning experiences. Leaders do not simply attend his sessions. They evolve through them. Certified by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) along with multiple assessments and leadership programs, Thompson helps leaders move from self-awareness to meaningful action. His mission is clear. Build strong leaders who build strong cultures.

In today's keynote, Thompson reflects on the light he discovered on this campus and the way that light continues to shape leaders, communities, and culture. Drawing from his own journey as a student, athlete, and campus leader, he explores how Dr. King's legacy calls us to do the inner work of becoming people who illuminate possibility, create connection, and carry that light into a world that still needs courage, compassion, and clarity. This message invites students, faculty, and the entire Wittenberg community to consider not only the light they find here, but the responsibility to carry it forward.

PROGRAM

PROCESSIONAL

"We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace"

David Weimer, Organist

WELCOME

Christian M. M. Brady, DPhil (Oxon.)

President

READING

"Rivers of Wind"

Written and Read by Marjory Wentworth

Director of the Writing Center and Oral Communication Center

Former Poet Laureate of South Carolina

INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER

Janet E. Jackson '75

ADDRESS

Christopher E. Thompson '94

"The Light We Find, The Light We Carry"

CLOSING REMARKS

Christian M. M. Brady, DPhil (Oxon.)

HYMN

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Led by Antwan Terrell, Class of 2026, and Kristina Bryant Reed,

Director of Student Conduct

Lyrics can be found on program insert. Please stand and remain standing at your seat for the recessional and until the faculty and platform party have left the chapel.

RECESSIONAL

"We Shall Overcome"

D. Byron Arneson, arr.

David Weimer, Organist

Today's banners are carried by students from the McClain Center, Concerned Black Students, and Mi Gente.

Everyone is invited to attend the MLK Day Service Event with the Springfield Promise Neighborhood at 2 p.m. in Geil Lounge, Benham-Pence Student Center.

HYMN

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Lift ev'ry voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun
Of our new day begun,
Let us march on, till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet, with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our parents sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by thy might
Led us into the light;
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee;
Shadowed beneath thy hand
May we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON MISSION AND VALUES

The President's Council on Mission and Values seeks to strengthen Wittenberg's commitment to its mission and values by providing a platform for council representatives to identify needs and challenges to executing commitment to mission and values. The council will serve as an advisory body providing input to the Office of the President and formulating coordinated actions and initiatives to address topics related to our mission and values within all areas of the campus community. Council chair is Joi Garrett Scales, vice president and dean of student engagement.

DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The DAC focuses on advocating for diversity and equity initiatives, recommending policy changes, and fostering inclusivity through collaboration with various campus groups. Key responsibilities include planning faculty development workshops on inclusive practices, advising campus constituencies to enhance diversity, and coordinating significant observances such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day while periodically analyzing curriculum for diversity-related content. Theresa Wilson, Ph.D., professor of practice in computer science, serves as committee chair.

PAST MLK CONVOCATION SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

2024-2025

Nic Stone,
Racial and Social Justice
Advocate and Author

2023-2024

Karlos L. Marshall, Ed.D., and
Moses B. Mbeseha,
Co-Founders of The Conscious
Connect

2020-2021

Ericka Huggins, Human Rights
Activist, Poet, and Educator
(virtual due to COVID-19)

2019-2020

Freeman A. Hrabowski III,
UMBC President and STEM Expert

2018-2019

Adam Foss,
Criminal Justice Reform Advocate

2017-2018

Bernadette Evans '89,
Community Activist and Author

2016-2017

Dorothy Tillman,
Civil Rights Activist

2015-2016

Joyce Ladner, Ph.D.,
Civil Rights Activist

2014-2015

The Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian,
Civil Rights Leader

2013-2014

Maya Wiley, Activist

2012-2013

Peniel Joseph, Ph.D.,
Civil Rights Activist and Author

2011-2012

The Rev. James Lawson,
Theoretician

2010-2011

Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr.,
Civil Rights Activist

2009-2010

Elizabeth Alexander, Poet

2008-2009

Mary Frances Berry,
Historian, Law Professor, and
Civil Rights Authority

2007-2008

Lani Guinier, Law Professor

2006-2007

Michael Eric Dyson,
Scholar and Author

2005-2006

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Journalist

2004-2005

Robert Graetz,
Civil Rights Advocate

2003-2004

Kevin Powell,
Political Activist, Writer, and
Hip-Hop Historian

2002-2003

Julian Bond,
NAACP Chair and Civil Rights
Activist

2001-2002

The Hon. Charles Stith,
Former Ambassador to Tanzania

2000-2001

The Hon. Janet E. Jackson '75