



October 2024

*Words and Ideas*

*Thanks to our modern media, we are made aware today as never before of the power of words, of the force of ideas --*

*To fascinate as well as frighten...to push and shove complacencies...to ignite imaginations and inflame passions...to expose the shallow and acclaim the great...to propel causes and pamper public opinion -*

*'It is ideas, not vested interests,' economist John Maynard Keynes wrote, 'which are dangerous for good or evil.'*

*A healthy respect for the verbal exchange of ideas lies behind "As I See It Today..."*

*As a lively center for theology, Union Seminary thrives on the free and frank appraisal of exciting ideas, as they reveal God, reshape the Church, and motivate [people.]*

*Each month we wish to look with you at some of the contemporary ideas of faculty. Alumni, and friends. I invite you to respond, letting us know your own ideas, putting in your words how you see it today."*

*Fred Rogers Stair, Jr.*

*President, Union Theological Seminary, 1967-1981*

These are the opening words of explanation provided by President Stair in the first "As I See It Today..." published in October 1970. This short publication spanned thirty years and addressed such topics as racism in the south, the women's liberation movement, and arts and the church. While what was considered modern media fifty-four years ago seems limited today, words and ideas with the intent

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is as relevant and necessary now as it was then. The Church and the world are radically different than they were at the genesis of this idea, but the need and the impetus is not.

It seems fitting that in October 2024, with the launch of the new website for the Center for Excellence in Christian Education, we revive and expand the "As I See It" tradition and provide a place where we can

- think together about the theory, theology, and practice of forming faith,

- ruminate on that which is life-giving in the field, both the discipline and the contexts, of Christian Education for the Church, the world, and God's new creation
- imagine what might be possible
- put ideas into words and share them with fellow sojourners.

Howard Thurman, educator, theologian, mystic, and activist, invited Spellman College graduates in his May 4, 1980, commencement address to listen –

*The sound of the genuine is flowing through you. Don't be deceived and thrown off by all the noises that are a part even of your dreams, your ambitions, so that you don't hear the sound of the genuine in you, because that is the only true guide that you will ever have, and if you don't have that you don't have a thing... There is something in you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in other people. And if you can't hear it, then you are reduced by that much... There is in every person, that which waits, waits, waits, and listens for the sound of the genuine in himself [themselves.] There is in every person that waits, and waits, and listens for the sound of the genuine in other people. And when the two sounds come together, this is music God heard when [God] said, let us make [humans] in our image.*

*(Full speech <https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/838>)*

What is the sound of the genuine for Christian Education that comes from the genuine within each of us? Let's listen together, to one another, with the intent of Elijah listening for the still small voice. And having listened, let us put ideas and thoughts into words so that we can share how we see it and invite others into the possibilities.

Rebecca Davis

Sarah Belk Gambrell Professor of Christian Education

Director of the Master of Arts in Christian Education program

Director of the Center for Excellence in Christian Education

Union Presbyterian Seminary