

Cornish Rogers, professor of ecumenism and former *Century* editor, dies at 86

by the Claremont School of Theology and [Christian Century staff](#) in the [March 16, 2016](#) issue



Photo courtesy of the [Claremont School of Theology](#)

Cornish R. Rogers, a professor and a former editor of the *Christian Century*, died February 5 at age 86.

Rogers became [a professor at the Claremont School of Theology](#) in 1980, teaching pastoral care and theology, ecumenism, and mission, as well as serving as a dean. He retired in 1998.

Rogers worked as the *Century's* news editor from 1970 to 1974. He continued to be an editor at large and to write for the magazine, covering national and global gatherings, and commenting on race, class, politics, and culture. He also contributed to both religious and secular publications, including the *Los Angeles Times*.

Rogers studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and was a classmate of Martin Luther King Jr. at the Boston University School of Theology.

In a 1974 *Century* article, "Why we must remember King," Rogers noted how King's leadership appealed to both lower-income and middle-class people.

“There are not many, if any, other instances in history in which an essentially Christian movement for the liberation of oppressed people was led by one of the oppressed and joined by many who were not oppressed,” Rogers wrote.

Rogers also addressed King’s emphasis on nonviolence for situations in which political and church leaders are determining whether to endorse the use of force.

“Remembering King cautions us against violence in our righteous crusades and forces us to remember that there may be another way—a way that does not seek to destroy but to convert, a way that paves the road to reconciliation even before the liberation is won,” Rogers wrote.

Reporting on an event on Christian responses to scarcity and hunger, Rogers critiqued “a tendency to bypass those in need and to indulge in psychological and spiritual navel gazing” as part of promoting a “new monasticism” in response to world poverty.

“The Christian church habitually returns to the self as the locus of all problems,” he wrote in the *Century* in 1974. “Instead of using the rich young ruler as the prototype of Christ’s call for us to change our life style in order to save ourselves as well as others, it might be better to follow Jesus’ command to share our loaves and fishes with the multitudes.”

An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, Rogers served churches in Boston, New York City, Los Angeles, and several other locations in California beginning in 1954.

“I remember him as an excellent teacher, a person who had great concern for students,” said Joe Hough, a retired Claremont professor and dean. “Cornish was easy to love.”

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