

Stepping down

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [January 6, 2016](#) issue



I have appreciated the *Christian Century* ever since a fellow divinity school student put a copy in my hand years ago. There it all was: news from the world of religion, book and movie reviews, and sharp and provocative commentary on the issues of the day. The civil rights movement was dominating the news, and the *Century* provided faithful advocacy for a cause that was becoming the moral issue of the time. I read Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in the *Christian Century* and later learned that he was a contributing editor. *Century* editors were among the first to recognize the letter's importance and publish it. I squeezed out the money for a subscription and haven't missed an issue since.

As I step down I'm aware, more than ever, of the importance of the *Christian Century*. In the midst of lethal violence from extremists, climate change, seemingly intractable conflict in the Middle East, an unsustainable gap between the very wealthy and the rest of the U.S. population, and toxic voices from the religious right, there's nothing more important than a steady voice thinking critically and faithfully.

The *Century* has been doing that for more than a century. Readership has hovered around 30,000, which is about where it is today. It continues to be a source of spiritual and intellectual stimulation. Like the proverbial mustard seed, it's a small

but influential—and I'd say essential—part of American culture.

My heart is full of gratitude: for the privilege of being associated with this journal, for all those who've sustained the magazine over the years with their wise, insightful, and lively faith, and for my colleagues during the past 17 years—editors and staff who are devoted to the journal's mission. And I'm supremely grateful for you readers, and for everyone who submitted an article or wrote a letter to the editor or made a contribution to sustain this magazine and the mission it represents. Because of you the *Christian Century* will continue to shape a vital conversation about the challenges that face faith communities, the culture, and the world.