

Thoughtful, independent, progressive

What's behind the *Century's* new tagline?

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [September 2022](#) issue



Regular readers will notice a new tagline gracing the cover of this first-ever monthly edition of the *Christian Century*. These three words hardly replace the significance of previous taglines that have guided the magazine's editorial direction for the past 122 years. But new language helps situate the *Century* in today's world. So let's take a closer look.

Thoughtful. Imagine a graveyard where only magazines get laid to rest—magazines that once had a following before they ran into trouble, closed up shop, and died. Then envision a local regulation permitting only one-word epitaphs on tombstones. Now, we at the *Century* intend to serve up religious journalism for generations to come, so we don't need to pick an epitaph just yet. But if someone were to press us to select a word to describe this magazine's legacy, I'd offer the word *thoughtful*.

Thoughtfulness is not only one of the finest fruits of life, it's at the heart of all good writing. At the *Century*, we prize reflective writing that's clear, considerate, and intellectually rigorous. We value a commitment to engaging the truth in ways that help readers understand the communities they live in. Courage and humility remind us that convincing others of what they should believe and think is not our mission.

Independent. Whenever people ask what institution or organization this magazine is affiliated with, we're quick to respond: none. We're proud of the *Century's* long independence. In the November 1, 1923, issue, the magazine's editors summarized our identity in this way: "This journal [is] under obligation to . . . no society, no denomination, and, therefore, is in a position to speak its convictions concerning events or personalities or doctrines or institutions without let or hindrance from any established interest whatsoever."

The editors went on to anchor the work of the *Century* in the broader church: "The [*Century*] has not spoken as a detached and irresponsible outsider, but as a sympathetic and loyal insider, from the bosom of the church itself. . . . It's a journal that is free without being a free lance, loyal without being servile." Laced into those 99-year-old sentences is a spirit that is both rooted and independent, a spirit that still resonates with our mission today.

Progressive. Although for many people this word denotes a political label, at the *Century* it represents a kind of Christianity we take to be broad-minded and forward-looking. Our journalistic center of gravity is grounded in theological commitments that are open and expansive, not closed and exclusive. We care about the common good, the shape of human community, and the role that good journalism plays in helping create a more just society. While multiple theological streams influence our work, we're less interested in defining ourselves over and against others and more interested in giving voice to those who yearn for a world where everyone has a seat at the table.

I hope you enjoy the reading experience of this redesigned print magazine. Dan Richardson, the *Century's* art director, brought his phenomenal talent and discerning eye to every step of the project. Managing editor Steve Thorngate kept the *Century* team on task throughout. And the creative folks at graphic design studio Point Five made it all happen. Their collective labors create our mutual delight. So enjoy! And thanks for your faithful support, which is what will keep this magazine from having to purchase a burial plot for a long time to come.