

# COVENANT

THE MAGAZINE OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

VOL. 28 NO. 2

## Finding Common Ground in a Divisive World

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OUR INTERVIEW  
with FSI Director  
Mark Ryan

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**CONTENDING  
FOR THE FAITH**  
with Civility and  
Charity

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**DISABILITY  
MINISTRY**  
and the local  
church

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**TECHNOLOGY**  
Good, Bad, or  
Neutral?

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COVENANT  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**09****FINDING COMMON GROUND IN A DIVISIVE WORLD**

FSI Director Mark Ryan offers help in navigating the cross-currents of religion and culture as we engage our pluralistic world with the claims of Christianity.

**15****CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH WITH CIVILITY AND CHARITY**

Dr. Stephen Estock offers hope for the future of the PCA by encouraging honest and respectful dialogue between those with a variety of perspectives.

**19****DISABILITY MINISTRY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH**

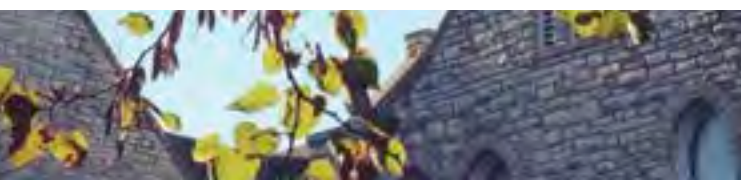
Every person bears the image of God, but heart idols can keep us from embracing people of varying abilities. Reordering our church priorities to include disability ministries helps us experience and exemplify the beauty of the body of Christ.

**23****NAVIGATING SACRED TERRAIN**

A pediatric chaplain finds that when it comes to providing pastoral care in a hospital, understanding people's stories is critical.

**33****TECHNOLOGY: GOOD, BAD, OR NEUTRAL?**

In our technology-driven culture, we often enjoy mindlessly the ease and entertainment our devices provide. How can we as Christians think biblically about the technology we use?





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**ON THE COVER**  
 Travelers await the next train in Kandoka's moody "Old Trains/ New Perspective."

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*Covenant* is published by Covenant Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

The purpose of Covenant Seminary is to glorify the triune God by training his servants to walk in God's grace, minister God's Word, and equip God's people—all for God's mission.

## THE THISTLE

### NEWS 4

City Ministry Initiative Expansion and Ministry Partnership in St. Louis City

Recently Published

Farewells to Friends

Faculty and Staff Updates

Introducing—The New *Covenant* Magazine!

Shop on Amazon—Support Covenant

Professors Lead Israel Study Tour

Making Our MDiv Stronger

## THE THISTLE

### EVENTS 7

Celebrating Our Founders Scholars

Watch Interviews with Farmer and Food Advocate Joel Salatin and Others

### REVIEW 8

*Resilient Ministry* reviewed by Ed Dunnington

"The Thistle" is your all-around resource for news and information about Covenant Seminary. Read updates here in each issue of *Covenant* magazine, or check out "The Thistle" online for the most recent posts at [www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/).

## PEOPLE

### ALUMNI PROFILE 28

Graduates Duane Otto and Phillip Jensen find that the life of faith and ministry is deeply connected to the land God created.

### STUDENT PROFILE 36

Camden St. Claire uses her art to glorify God and challenge others to think about the world around them.

### PROFS WEIGH IN 39

Our faculty respond to alumni questions about current ministry issues.

### ALUMNI UPDATES 41

### DONOR PROFILE 45

Successful businessman Jim Lauerman retired to St. Louis to help future pastors and others apply gospel principles in all of life.



For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

— Jeremiah 29:11

In May 2013, I had the great honor of transitioning to the presidency of Covenant Seminary after serving as interim president for the previous year. Though challenging and at times overwhelming, this is a calling of amazing privilege and delight; my wife, Beth, and I are grateful for God’s providence in bringing about the convergence of this season of our lives with this moment in the Seminary’s long and rich history.

Over the last year, I have frequently spoken of our task here as “preparing pastors and other ministry leaders for the church of 2025 and beyond.” Too often, it seems, seminaries are turning out leaders who are equipped for the church of 15 years ago. We want the needs of the church of the next few decades to inform and influence the training we do here and the way we shape and shepherd the students God sends to us. We want to see our graduates take the Great Commission forward geographically, generationally, and into all of life. Thus, some key initiatives currently in development include:

- The revitalization of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute and its activities.
- The expansion of our City Ministry Initiative and strategic ministry partnerships.
- The revision of our MDiv curriculum to more fully integrate classroom learning and formational mentored ministry experiences.

- The renovation of our Community Center to better express and enhance our grace-centered, relationally based community life.

The Seminary’s core values (Christ-Centered Ministry, Biblical Authority, Grace Foundation, Relational Emphasis, Pastoral Training, Church Leadership, and Kingdom Perspective) as well as our clear purpose (to glorify the triune God by training his servants to walk in God’s grace, minister God’s Word, and equip God’s people—all for God’s mission) provide a solid foundation for the work our Lord has called us to do. And our firm commitment to the truth and inerrancy of Scripture, and to our Reformed heritage, continues to guide and direct our efforts.

Please pray with us and for us as we seek to be centered in the gospel of God’s redeeming and transforming grace, and as we work to equip followers of Jesus who can lead with conviction, shepherd with compassion, and nurture with care the many gifted people of God around them.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

**Dr. Mark Dalbey**  
*President*

## City Ministry Initiative Expansion and Ministry Partnership in St. Louis City

This year we embarked on a new ministry partnership that will bring the Seminary’s grace-centered theological teaching to local minority and international populations through a sustainable, high quality educational outreach and vocational discipleship ministry in the city of St. Louis. This ministry will also offer additional educational opportunities for local church leaders who may not be able to commit to a full degree program—and it will provide additional field education opportunities for our residential students.

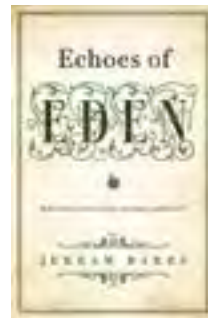
- + **Vocational Discipleship Ministry.** One goal of the new ministry is to help people understand the God-given value in our work and how that work helps to advance the Kingdom, even if it is not “Christian ministry” in the strict sense of that term.
- + **Reaching the Nations in Our Own Backyard.** St. Louis has recently emerged as home to some of the largest immigrant and refugee communities in the nation. The proximity of the “nations” in our own backyard provides an opportunity to explore the possibilities of cross-cultural theological education right here in our city—and thus to prepare for the development of similar educational partnerships in other cities and countries. We have thus entered into a partnership with Engage St. Louis, a ministry cooperative between several local churches, to rent space in the city that will enable us to offer a variety of classes to the community, in turn providing expanded opportunities for outreach and discipleship. The ministry builds on work already being done by our own City Ministry Initiative (CMI), led by Dr. Greg Perry, which has held several classes—on such topics as Diaconal Ministry for the Missional Church, Cross-Cultural Educational Ministry, and others—in different urban venues.
- + **Expanded Field Education Opportunities.** Having a physical presence in the city will create additional field education and internship opportunities for students seeking ministry experience in multiethnic, multicultural contexts, and provide additional avenues for continuing education/ongoing training for pastors and other church leaders serving “in the field.”

Learn more: [www.byfaithonline.com/learning-from-the-st-louis-laboratory](http://www.byfaithonline.com/learning-from-the-st-louis-laboratory)



Dr. Greg Perry, director of the City Ministry Initiative, is spearheading the Seminary’s effort to bring gospel-centered teaching and vocational discipleship ministry to the city of St. Louis through a new partnership with Engage St. Louis and South City Church.

## Recently Published



*Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts*, by Jerram Barrs (Crossway, 2013)

Art is all around us. Yet few of us can effectively explain why certain movies, books, plays, and songs resonate so profoundly within us—and more importantly—how they attest to God’s character. Professor Barrs looks at some of the world’s most influential authors and shares tools for evaluating great art.



*Fallen: A Theology of Sin*, edited by Robert A. Peterson and Christopher W. Morgan (Crossway, 2013)

This latest addition to the Theology in Community series explores the biblical doctrine of sin from a variety of angles. A team of top-notch scholars address topics such as the contemporary significance of sin, and sin from Paul’s vantage point. This comprehensive overview of an oft-neglected theme helps readers learn to live more biblically in a sinful world.



## Farewells to Friends

This year we said bittersweet goodbyes to some dear friends and long-time supporters of Covenant Seminary.

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**Warren Keinath Jr.**, Advisory Board member from 2004 to 2010, went to be with the Lord in March. He had also served on our Endowment Committee. Warren and Paula, his beloved wife of 55 years, have given generously of their time, finances, and prayers to support the work of the Seminary. He will be missed.

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**Jean Lehmkuhl**, the controller at Covenant Seminary for 15 years, went home to the Lord in May. Jean was a great colleague and tremendous friend, as well as a valued advisor who was known for her keen sense of humor. We continue to mourn our loss but rejoice in her eternal gain.

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**Edith Schaeffer** joined her late husband Francis Schaeffer in the presence of the Lord in March at age 98. We are deeply grateful for their lives and legacy, which have done so much to influence the culture and community of Covenant Seminary.

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**John Spencer** went to be with the Lord in November 2012 at the age of 92. He served more than 20 years on our Board of Trustees. John's wisdom and talents benefited the Board's Executive Committee and the Seminary's Advisory Board for several years as well. We will dearly miss this man who made sacrificial love for others his life's greatest joy.

## Faculty and Staff Updates

**Suzanne Bates** (MAC '99) joined our Student Life team in July as associate dean of students with a special focus on female students. She is working alongside fellow associate dean Mark McElmurry, whose focus is on male students. Suzanne also serves as adjunct professor of practical theology (counseling) and has been a full-time staff counselor at New City Fellowship in St. Louis for 11 years.

Chancellor **Dr. Bryan Chapell** transitioned back into pastoral ministry in April and now serves as senior pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Peoria, Illinois. In honor of his many years of dedicated service to the Seminary, he was named president emeritus. He will also serve as an adjunct professor with the Seminary's homiletics teaching team.

**Dr. Dan Doriani**, senior pastor at Central Presbyterian Church in St. Louis for the last ten years, will return to Covenant Seminary as vice president of strategic academic projects and professor of theology, in October. In his new role, Dr. Doriani will teach several MDiv courses and speak on behalf of the Seminary in areas related to recruitment, alumni, and church events. He will also assist in fundraising and special projects as directed by the president. Doriani previously served at the seminary from 1991–2003 in various academic roles.

**Dr. Mike Honeycutt**, associate professor of historical and practical theology, accepted a call to succeed the longtime senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rock Hill, South Carolina, in July. The same pastoral heart and calling that have benefited the Seminary for five years have led him back into pastoral ministry in the local church. We send Dr. Honeycutt off with great hope for the progress of the gospel in his life and the lives of those he will serve.

**Israel Valenzuela** joined our staff in January as associate dean of online education. Israel came from Greenville College in Greenville, Illinois, where he served as instructional designer for online learning and an instructor of learning technologies. Israel holds an MA in educational technology from Pepperdine University.

## Introducing—The New *Covenant* Magazine!



We hope you enjoy the newly redesigned *Covenant* magazine, now featuring more from our professors, extended news items, and feature articles informed by our graduates in the field—all intended to help you stay connected and better equip you for ministry.

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If you have comments, ideas, or suggestions for improvement, please send them to us at [editor@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:editor@covenantseminary.edu).

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## Professors Lead Israel Study Tour

In January 2013, Covenant professors Dr. David Chapman (top) and Dr. Brian Aucker (bottom), along with professors Dr. Tasha Chapman and Dr. Brad Matthews, led a team of students and Seminary friends on a study tour of historic sites in Israel. See more online at [on.fb.me/Y3TdES](https://on.fb.me/Y3TdES).



PHOTOS BY BRAD MATTHEWS

## Making Our MDiv Stronger

As an educational institution, we are constantly looking for ways to strengthen our programs so that our students will be better prepared to face the challenges of ministry in today's rapidly changing world. The new revision of our Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree program is the result of a process begun several years ago. It grew out of a desire to make the degree as formative as possible for our students. In considering how best to restructure the program, we sought input from seasoned pastors, church leaders, and other ministry practitioners—which included many Covenant Seminary alumni—whose knowledge and experience of ministry "in the field" were invaluable. We also benefited greatly from the insights of many current students through their participation in special focus groups. We were guided in the entire process by four main principles:

**Continue a solid foundation in biblical and theological training.** The revised MDiv, like its predecessor, demonstrates Covenant's commitment to:

- + The study of the original languages of the Bible (Greek and Hebrew).
- + In-depth training in biblical interpretation.
- + Biblical studies courses covering all of the Scriptures.
- + Extensive coursework in systematic, biblical, and historical theology.

**Fit the degree to the types of activities our graduates will actually be doing.** In the revised curriculum, we have:

- + Added a one-credit-hour counseling practicum to give students more opportunities to develop this skill.
- + Added two ministry practicums in the middle year for engaging in supervised ministry settings.
- + Arranged course schedules so that MDiv and MA students can study together in as many classes as possible to broaden relational interaction.

**Increase intentional integration of what students are learning, rather than leaving the work of integration up to students.** Some courses will better combine and integrate elements previously taught in separate courses, and some new elements—such as more extensive use of cohort groups and an MDiv capstone course—have been added to further unite theology and practice.

**Enable more students to finish their degree in three years,** thus reducing student debt and enabling graduates to enter sooner into the callings God has for them. We have shortened the program from 103 credit hours to 93, with most of the cuts coming from the number of elective hours.

We are convinced that the revised MDiv degree will better equip our graduates to fulfill their calling to lead and shepherd God's people well. We are blessed to be part of the process of shaping such future church leaders as we seek to fulfill our own gospel training mission, and we are excited to see what King Jesus will do in and through us and our students in the days and years ahead. —DR. JAY SKLAR

For a more in-depth look our new MDiv, visit us online: [www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/making-our-mdiv-stronger/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/making-our-mdiv-stronger/).

## Celebrating Our Founders Scholars

As part of the Seminary's April Board meeting, the Development Department hosted a dinner to celebrate the 2012–13 Founders Scholarship Award recipients and the Lord's work in their lives. The event also honored and thanked the donors who generously support the Founders Scholars program.

The Founders Scholarship Award is a full-tuition scholarship given to select MDiv students in their final year of ministry training who are committed to serving in a pastoral role upon graduation. Since its inception in 2005, the program has graduated 63 men who are serving the church in various capacities.

The event featured a multi-course dinner by noted St. Louis chef and Covenant alumnus John Perkins (MDiv '09) and a video presentation from several previous Founders Scholars reflecting on their ministries and the significance that receiving the scholarship had on their lives. Three of the 2012-13 recipients also discussed their plans for ministry after graduation. —JACKIE FOGAS

To learn more about how you can support this scholarship program or other aspects of our mission, contact John Ranheim, senior director of development, at [john.ranheim@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:john.ranheim@covenantseminary.edu).



*Founders Scholars, donors, and Board members enjoyed an evening of food and fellowship.*



*Chef John Perkins (MDiv '09) speaks on theology and food while introducing one of the courses at the Founders Scholars dinner.*

## Watch Interviews with Farmer and Food Advocate Joel Salatin and Others

In May, we had an opportunity to talk with popular farmer, lecturer, and author Joel Salatin, who was in town to speak at a home educators' conference. Joel and his "family-owned, multi-generational, pasture-based, beyond organic, local-market farm," Polyface, in Virginia, gained widespread recognition through author Michael Pollan's 2006 book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and the documentary films *Food, Inc.* and *Fresh*. Salatin, a thoughtful and innovative farmer, discussed with us how bearing God's image in God's world impacts the way we grow, buy, and eat food.

We were grateful as well for the hospitality of St. Louis restaurateur Jimmy Fiala (owner of Acero and The Crossing), who hosted a breakfast for Salatin and other friends of the Seminary. Guests included Covenant graduates chef John Perkins (MDiv '09) and Garrett Adkins (MDiv '13), a server at The Crossing; and others influenced by Salatin. Fiala, Perkins, and Adkins shared their thoughts in video interviews that are now available online. —JACKIE FOGAS

Watch these insightful interviews at [www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/salatin-food-interviews/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/salatin-food-interviews/).



*Farmer and food advocate Joel Salatin (left) spoke with Seminary friends at a breakfast hosted by restaurateur Jimmy Fiala (right).*



**BOOK**

*Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (IVP, 2013)

**AUTHORS**

Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie

**REVIEWER**

Ed Dunnington (MDiv '98)  
Senior Pastor  
Christ the King Presbyterian Church  
Roanoke, Virginia

Most people in our church have a life that is like a stool with three legs. They've got their spiritual life, their professional life, and their family life. If one of these legs wobbles, they've got two others they can lean on. For us, those three things can merge into one leg. You're sitting on a one-legged stool, and it takes a lot more concentration and energy. It's a lot more exhausting.

— Pastors Summit participant

Pastors are leaving the ministry at an alarming rate. Though statistics vary depending on which study you read, it is an observable fact that large numbers of church leaders tend to leave the ministry during their first five years, and of those who stay beyond that, many will not remain until retirement age. Why is there such a crisis in and of church leadership? In *Resilient Ministry*, Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie have provided the church with a thorough and reflective analysis of this crisis.

Based on seven years of work with the Pastors Summit, a research study funded by the Lilly Endowment and conducted by the Center for Ministry Leadership at Covenant Seminary, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie led multi-day retreats with veteran pastors and their spouses over the course of two years, facilitating heartfelt discussions about their lives and ministries. The authors sought to understand what sustained these pastors, what drained them, and what drove them in their Kingdom work. *Resilient Ministry* is the summary and analysis of those conversations. If you know people in church leadership, aspire to serve in church leadership, or currently serve in church leadership, this is a significant book to read—and work through.

In *Resilient Ministry* the authors identify **five key areas** or themes that work in concert in the pastor's life to **lead toward either flourishing or shipwreck in ministry**. The themes are: (1) **spiritual formation**, (2) **self-care**, (3) **emotional and cultural intelligence**, (4) **family and marriage**, and (5) **leadership and management**. The book is designed with questions for reflection throughout in order to help apply what has been read. Alert to the reader: read the last chapter of this book first! The authors encourage this, and I found it very helpful.

Though it is impossible for any one book to "fix" the crisis facing the church in America today, *Resilient Ministry* does an excellent job proposing healthy changes that will profoundly help the church at large. In the introduction the authors write, "Unlike other vocations, ministry work has no formal arrangement for ongoing learning and development and no requirements for continuing education. So how do pastoral couples receive mentoring and pastoral care? How do pastors stay current in our rapidly changing world?" (p. 8). One proposed answer is to create pastoral care groups or cohorts. **One appendix lays out the best practices for forming these peer cohorts. This in itself is worth the price of the book.**

After my first reading, I have since gone back to work through several sections, both personally and with my wife. As a result of reading *Resilient Ministry* I am seeking to have more money put into our church's budget—and those of the other churches of our presbytery—for pastoral continuing education.

A quote that captures the thrust of the authors' work is from Christian psychologist Diane Langberg, who said to Pastor's Summit participants, "Before you [as a pastor] were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb" (p. 21). For all those lambs who have been called to serve as undershepherds, this book will help you rest in your Great Shepherd. For all those who make up the flocks these undershepherds serve, this book will help you know what your Great Shepherd has done for you as you better understand what your particular undershepherd experiences as he seeks to minister the gospel to you.

# Finding Common Ground in a Divisive World

OUR INTERVIEW  
WITH FSI DIRECTOR  
MARK RYAN



**EARLIER THIS YEAR**, Mark Ryan joined Covenant Seminary as director of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI) and adjunct professor of religion and culture. Having served as a part-time adjunct professor since 2010, Ryan was already a familiar face on our campus. His previous experience with FSI (as an intern during his student days), his work with L'Abri Fellowship (in both Massachusetts and Canada), his pastoral leadership at congregations in the US and Australia (his native land), and his passion for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly and compassionately, make him an excellent choice to lead FSI into a new era of expansion and revitalization. Ryan recently talked with us about the challenges of communicating the gospel in our pluralistic world.

▶ **Q.** Christians today face many challenges in communicating the truth of the gospel in a culture that is increasingly less open and sometimes downright hostile to the Bible and anything to do with Christianity. Some of those challenges are of our own making as we struggle with the lingering effects of bad impressions and other baggage left by Christians who have sometimes been overly strident or less than charitable in their encounters with nonbelievers. How can we get past some of those impressions to even begin the process of apologetics? And once we do begin, how should we approach that process?

**A.** When looking to engage others honestly with the gospel, we must not let ourselves validate the common stereotypes. There are enough other barriers to the gospel already; we don't need to add to them by behaving in

ways that play into the negative or restrictive images many people have of what they think Christians are like. Also, we have to learn to approach people not as evangelistic projects, but as fellow human beings—made in the image of God even though fallen and imperfect—and so give to them the same consideration and attention that we would like and expect for ourselves.

In terms of approaching apologetics as a process—as a regular practice—I think we do well to acknowledge that one of the chief difficulties we face is that most believers are quite afraid of it. We know we're called to "be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you," as 1 Peter 3:15 says, but we tend to think we have to be a particular type of person to do it, that we have to have a PhD in philosophy or theology to be effective. So we opt out and say, "I'm not trained

for this. I can't do it. That's not for me." If we manage to get past that fear, we often fall into the trap of thinking, "If I am going to do this, I have to get it exactly right." We ask, "What must I say? Which argument do I deploy?" Again, we can feel overwhelmed, so we opt out. It seems to me there is an over-burdening that takes place, a difficulty shared with much evangelism.

My emphasis is to help people reframe apologetics and get them to see that it's not so much a discipline to be mastered as it is an orientation of the heart. Are we willing to live openly, to engage the questions that come our way? Are we willing to engage in conversations, offer clarifications, share our own testimonies in transparent ways? I want to frame apologetics in this broader, more personal sense.

But apologetics is also a cultural endeavor. I want people to know that there is no one answer that is good for all times and places and people. I may have a developed answer for the problem of evil, but given the particular context in which I find myself and the particular person with whom I'm talking at the time, it may be the wrong answer for that moment. For example, I heard of a pastor who was called upon by a parishioner who had accidentally run over his own daughter in the driveway. This man was a great dad, and he was heartbroken by this. In that situation, you can't give the man philosophical arguments for the problem of evil. He needed a shoulder to cry on, he needed practical support for his grief and pain. That said, someone else might actually benefit from engaging in philosophical debate or from receiving biblical clarification. It depends on the situation and the person and this demands that we give some thought to how what we are saying sounds in the ears of another.

My goal is to make apologetics doable, to make it less frightening. So instead of promoting some specific step-by-step method, I tend to focus more on general principles, and I try to give those principles concrete form through examples from my own (or others') experience.

**Q. What are some of these general principles? Where do we begin?**

▶ **A.** We have to start with identifying the real problem. Many Christians assume that the basic problem we encounter in apologetics is ignorance. Much of the literature on evangelism seems to make this same assumption. That is, people just don't know the gospel so we need to give them more information. But my experience is that it's not that simple. The problem is not people's ignorance; rather, it's *confusion*. In much of North America, people hear about the gospel all the time, but they hear it in sound bites and in other very fragmented ways. Despite the decline of biblical Christianity, our culture is saturated with Christian imagery and allusions. We see Bible verses on placards at sports events and references to Jesus on billboards or late-night TV; we see very Christian things in

movies, hear them in music, and read them in literature all the time. And yet, these are often presented in playful or superficial or negative ways.

So the problem is not that people haven't heard the gospel. It's that they've only been given shards of it out of context. They often receive the pointy edges of the gospel without any of its comfort or encouragement. They are confused because what they do know, if they know anything at all, is that God is supposed to be love, the church is supposed to be a family, and the Bible is supposed to be true. But some Christians seem only to emphasize the judgmental aspects of God; the church is obviously very fragmented and full of people who don't always represent Christ well; and the Bible is not easy to understand in some respects. So the question becomes: How can we take the non-Christian by the hand and acknowledge that, yes, this is tough and confusing? We can't assume that people are dumb and just don't get it. We need a posture of empathy. Being gentle and patient is every bit as crucial as is readiness to reply.

Interestingly, the Bible doesn't diagnose our problem as ignorance but as willful rebellion against God. When we are reminded about God and our sinfulness, we tend to push back, to create idols, to live in and use the world in a way that suits *us*—and, of course, that gets us into trouble. Our own efforts at trying to live apart from God hurt us. This can confuse matters further. And yet this is the canvas against which we have to enter into apologetic dialogue. We start not with, "Let me fill in your lack of information," but rather, "Yes, this is messy, and we're all a part of the mess—those of us in the church and those who are not—as sinners before God." This makes apologetics more of a clarifying enterprise, helping the person to make sense of all those things they've heard but have never quite put together.

**Q. Once we've established that the underlying problem is sin and that people are not simply ignorant of the gospel but confused about it, where do we go from there?**

▶ **A.** A second principle or area of emphasis is, wherever possible, to frame people's objections to Christianity with the gospel, to retell their stories in the light of the gospel story itself. This isn't just realizing that we have no good advice to give someone apart from the gospel or that the essence of apologetics is not philosophy or rhetoric. Rather, it's an attempt to be make the gospel clear and tangible so that everything we talk about can be traced back or thought about in relation to that primary story. Much of apologetics can become quite abstract quite quickly, and although there may be a place for that, most people really need help obtaining clarity. I frequently find people are looking for both a broader depiction of the Christian faith—so they want to know: Is this true? How do I know it's true? Does it work? What does it mean for me given that I've already broken all of the Ten Commandments,

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

— 1 PETER 3:15

or that I haven't ever been to church, or that I've left the church?—and yet for some level of specificity as to how the gospel addresses *them*. Bringing their particular objections and questions back to the gospel is the first aspect of this emphasis.

The second aspect relates not to the gospel itself, but to their perception of it and of us. I find that a lot of apologetics or evangelism techniques basically say to the unbeliever, "You're wrong. I disagree with you. You've got no clue." That may be the case on some occasions—particularly where there is a real ignorance at play—but certainly not always. In general, people don't respond especially well to being told they're wrong or that they have no clue what they're talking about. Frankly, I don't respond well to that, either. When the non-Christian or the atheist says that to me, I am prone to dig in my heels or to want to push back harder than I have warrant for.

I think a more fruitful approach is to listen well and try to get some perception not only of what the other person believes, but also *why* they believe it, *how* it is meaningful to them, and to *what degree it functions* to explain

their experience, generate hope, or counter fear. Then I can speak back to them in light of those things. I can say, "I understand why you would think that way. Let me shift your focus so you can see where I'm coming from and perhaps even why I think the way I do." I can begin to tell the gospel story in a way that makes sense of what they value but puts that into its proper place or context. That's a bit more work and it makes the conversation slower, but now they're not getting just a sound bite anymore.

I believe that's what I see Jesus and Paul doing in their encounters with unbelievers. They don't just blast people for their disobedience or dump out truth and leave them to sort it; they actually make the gospel attractive and take time to apply it with wisdom. Other great apologists in the history of the church have followed the same pattern. I think of Augustine in his work *City of God*, and Aquinas in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*—both of which understand, articulate, and respond to significant challenges by way of the gospel. In our own time we can point to men like Francis Schaeffer, whose work has had such an influence, especially here at Covenant Seminary. »

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Find out more about FSI online at [www.covenantseminary.edu/academics/method/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/academics/method/).

Learn about FSI events at [www.covenantseminary.edu/category/the-francis-schaeffer-institute/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/category/the-francis-schaeffer-institute/).

**Q. So we acknowledge the points at which the unbeliever's story intersects with the truth and then try to put their story in the larger context of the gospel story. At some point, though, don't we have to challenge them on the aspects of their story that are out of accord with what we know to be the truth? How can we speak the gospel with compassion while also speaking it boldly, both of which we are called to do?**

▶ **A.** Indeed, the Word of God does call us to say no to ungodliness, to point out error, and to counteract false teaching. So we must offer a word of challenge where it is needed. Yet I strive to make sure that when I do say no to something the other person practices or believes, that they understand why, and that they appreciate that I'm not saying no to him or her as a human being. They must know that we're not casting them off because we disagree with them but that our "no" comes from a place of deep concern for them. We do well to offer some rationale for our response.

As for boldness, I think that's something we are prone to misunderstand. Often, when we hear that word, we do so with all sorts of unhelpful baggage attached to it. For some, boldness means speaking at a higher volume; for others boldness is equated with particularly blunt speech; for others still it implies not caring what people think, how they feel, or how they might process what we're saying. But clearly boldness in the biblical sense cannot mean being offensive or unconcerned for how the message will be received. When Peter talks about apologetics in 1 Peter 3:15 he explicitly adds, "with gentleness and respect." Paul, whom I think of as the poster-child for biblical boldness, talks in Colossians 4:6 about letting our speech be seasoned with salt and in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 of quite willingly being all things to all men so that he might win some. So boldness cannot be the opposite of gentleness, and it ought not entail a lack of regard for how the gospel is received.

I think boldness rather is something along the lines of plain speech born of personal confidence. Boldness is my

willingness to press home or apply the gospel based on the confidence that I have in its being true. In this light, I'm being bold not when I raise my voice and not when I trample over your thoughts and feelings. Rather, I'm bold when I speak to you out of my conviction that the grace and favor of God are bound up in Jesus Christ and that repentance and faith in Christ are not only necessary to find peace with God, but also essential to undoing confusion and to making your way in this world (and in the world to come).

To take that one step further, I'm bold when, based on the relationship I have with you, I know that what I'm going to say will cause some measure of conflict within you and perhaps within our relationship—and yet, for the sake of the gospel, I'm compelled to go there. You may push back, you may even be upset, but it won't be because I've been loud or rude or thoughtless; it will be because I've said something that hits home or because I have, in the Spirit's power, presented the gospel to you with a particular resonance. I think that's boldness. And it is compassionate! (Incidentally, Acts 4:13 connects boldness with having been with Jesus. Perhaps this factor ought be more prominent when we think about bold speech and challenging others).

**Q. Are there other principles we need to keep in mind as we seek to present and apply the gospel with both compassion and courage?**

▶ **A.** I consider it important that we remember to engage others as whole people. Communication theorists tell us that only a small percentage of what we communicate is verbal and by far the largest percentage comes through facial expression, gesture, body posture, and other non-verbal cues. A bevy of current thinkers draw our attention to the ways in which we are shaped by our milieu, the environment we are located within, and the practices to which we give ourselves. I think we need to grasp more fully what that means for us. Content remains important, but in what ways might the physical space I am in, the acts

of service I can render, the shared experiences in which we participate, support (or stifle) our gospel conversations?

Stated a little differently, when I talk with a person who is raising an objection or asking a question about some issue he or she is struggling with, yes, it's important that I have something meaningful to say to them. But I dare not think of them simply as "brains on a stick." While not desiring to undervalue human rationality, surely it's not the whole story. As complex, embodied beings, we do have an intellect, but we also have an emotional life and a physical deportment and an aesthetic appetite, and many other dimensions we do well to pay attention to. The question the unbeliever raises with us may well be an intellectual one deserving of an intellectual answer; but even that must be offered in a way that speaks to the heart and the imagination so that it has some emotional resonance.

Sometimes what people really need is not for me to talk at them, but just to listen or to serve, or to share life with them. If I'm to be heard, if the contrary position of God's Word is to be received and embraced, it has to be held out in a way that the person can receive. My appeal here is simply to recognize the need to be creative and practical and relational as well as rigorous and intellectual.

**Q. How might you sum up our discussion of apologetics? What are some of the takeaways for someone who doesn't think he or she can really do this?**

- ▶ **A.** In terms of takeaways, I'd say, don't be afraid. Despite what we sometimes imagine, apologetics does not demand advanced or specialized training, neither does it dictate loyalty to specific "steps" or to a specific school of thought. I'd also say, be in prayer and walk with the Spirit, because, of course, none of us can answer well under our own power. If we allow ourselves to think of apologetics less as a discipline to be mastered and more as an orientation of the heart, then I think we can approach apologetics like any other aspect of our Christian discipleship—as something Christ by his Spirit delights to aid us with and is committed to growing us in.

And in terms of a summary, let's remember that apologetics is not about having the exact right words to say; it's about trying to discern what aspect of God's truth needs to be conveyed in a particular encounter. As a Reformed apologist, I am helped and humbled by the fact God knows what each person needs to hear; that *he* does the convicting and converting, not me. My focus in apologetics is not results. I'm simply trying to listen well so as to frame the concern in light of the gospel. I'm looking for that aspect of the gospel that seems most fitting in this particular context for this particular person—that one thing I can leave with him or her that the Spirit seems likely to take up and use to point that person to Christ when I'm gone from the situation. For my money, *that's* apologetics.

Read more from Mark Ryan, including details of particular apologetics encounters [and a list of other helpful resources], online at [covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/common-ground](http://covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/common-ground).

Rick Matt is associate director of print communications for Covenant Seminary.



### Recommended Resources for Gospel Engagement

FSI Director Mark Ryan offers the following resources that have profoundly shaped his thinking about evangelism and apologetics. Other significant influences include the works of Francis Schaeffer, C. S. Lewis, Lesslie Newbigin, Cornelius Van Til, Os Guinness, and William Edgar.

- ▶ **Dick Keyes, *Chameleon Christianity: Moving Beyond Safety and Conformity* (Baker, 1999)**

I have turned to this slim volume so many times that it is hard to separate myself from it. Keyes's critique and the place he affords to apologetics in the formation of vital Christian communities are both compelling and practically helpful.

- ▶ **Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Crossway, 2001)**

If Keyes opened my eyes to the need for cultural apologetics, then Barrs opened my heart and taught me how to engage people in a truly Christlike way. Here principles of communication trump strategy and technique, and we learn that evangelism is first and foremost a giving of ourselves for the lost, just as Jesus did.

- ▶ **Curtis Chang, *Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine and Aquinas* (IVP, 2000)**

Although I seldom see this volume referenced, I have found it extremely helpful. Reading it not only make us students at the feet of two apologetic titans, but it also puts their wisdom into our hands in a way most congenial to the needs of our own century.

- ▶ **Harvie M. Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Zondervan, 1982)**

Now more than 30 years old, this little book continues to command rereading. In solidarity with God's working in this world and with an awareness of the world of our audience, Conn deftly wedds listening and serving with proclaiming and depending upon the Holy Spirit.

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# Contending for the Faith with Civility and Charity: A Choice for the Future of the PCA

By Dr. Stephen Estock

» » In my youth I was quickly past my fundamentals and was running into a multitude of controversies... but the elder I grew the smaller the stress I laid upon those controversies and curiosities. « «

Richard Baxter, *Select Practical Writings (1831)*, quoted in J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits* (Christian Focus, 2012), 164.

These words from the seventeenth-century Puritan Richard Baxter remind me of an ordination exam in which I participated years ago. As a young pastor who was a member of the Credentials Committee, I saw myself as a guardian of orthodoxy, and I was concerned about a candidate coming before us. He was an older gentleman whose views of theology and ministry practice (different from my own) caused me to question whether he should be a member of the presbytery. I worried that his views would be divisive. Though I don't remember the question I asked, I do remember his intriguing answer; essentially he said:

*I have a deep love for Reformed theology. Yet, I view theology—and particularly theological distinctions—like I view the plumbing in my house. Plumbing is essential in that you don't want to live in a home without it. However, it is not the first thing you show someone who comes to visit. You don't welcome someone by saying, "Come, let me show you my really nice sink and toilet."*

The unexpected analogy disarmed me. I, a young pastor, entered the exam expecting to do battle with a man who had much more life experience than I had. His answer moved me to seek understanding. As he explained further, he emphasized what I believe to be a most crucial issue for Bible-believing Christians seeking to influence the culture for the glory of God: progress in the pursuit of truth is best

achieved in the context of relationships. God's servants must defend the faith, but do so with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). Respect includes a pursuit of understanding rather than a push to victory.

## » Seeking Brotherly Understanding—Without Scoring Theological Points

A search for understanding is what the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) needs today. In our zeal to pursue what is right (i.e., righteous), we often draw lines in the sand and cultivate an "us versus them" mentality within our own denomination; we seek victory over people whom we view to be theological opponents rather than seeking understanding with those whom we consider to be brothers in Christ. Using a variety of means—blogs, news articles, specious judicial processes, private conversations, etc.—we bite and devour one another, thereby hindering a united effort to address the errors of a fallen world and obey the Great Commission. To paraphrase the book of James, "Brothers, this should not be" (James 3:10).

Our fears of what might happen in the future make us zealously reactive to the challenges of the present. Gentleness, patience, and respect are put aside—and sometimes even mocked—in order to "win" the battle before all is lost. Like little children on the playground who threaten to leave with their toys when they don't get their



own way, some of us vow to “leave the denomination” because those who disagree with our views seem to be gaining too much influence. We threaten departure with a veneer of proof-text righteousness, claiming to uphold biblical truth even as we blatantly disregard the command to “love one another” (John 13:34). At the very least, that love requires that we strive to understand each other and maintain the relationship forged by our common ordination vows. Departure from the relationship may eventually happen—as it has so often in Presbyterian history—but such a break should truly be a grief-filled last resort rather than a bitter attempt at protest and manipulation.

As a young assistant pastor, I was once tempted to abandon my call due to what I perceived to be the intransigence of some of the people (and especially some of the leaders) in the congregation. I was anxious to see transformation in the lives and ministry of the congregation but was frustrated as a commitment to tradition (“We’ve always done it this way!”) and fears of change (including financial risk) led the session to reject proposals that I was convinced were necessary for growth. The day after a particularly disappointing meeting, I sat in the senior pastor’s office wallowing in self-pity, anger, and despair. I vented my frustration and sense of hopelessness. More than 30 years of pastoral experience enabled this man to listen carefully before giving me a gentle exhortation that addressed my overly developed sense of self-righteousness. With pastoral tenderness he advised, “Stephen, you are zealous for a good thing. Don’t lose your zeal. But let God sanctify your zeal.”

His words were a call to maturity in my love for God’s people—even when I was convinced those people were wrong and ultimately harm-

ing the church. My love for a good thing (the sanctification of God’s people) had to be joined with a love for another good thing (the people who professed the same faith I did). I rightly desired their sanctification but had failed to see my need to grow in holy patience and gentleness. Listening to my opponents would enable me to understand them fully and build the relational trust necessary to persuade them to embrace what I was convinced was best for their growth in Christ.

In a similar way, the diverse groups of the PCA must unite a love for good doctrine and practice with a patient love for the people with whom we share much, but not everything, in common. Cooperation, rather than competition, must characterize our relationships if we are to move forward with true biblical integrity.

» Proclaiming Biblical Theology—Without Sacrificing Biblical Relationships

Cooperation in the midst of diversity is a sign of spiritual maturity—the maturity Richard Baxter spoke of as he reflected on his life as a reformed pastor. The apostle Paul calls for such spiritual growth in his first letter to the Corinthian church. As I think about the real and perceived tensions in the PCA today, I believe we must submit ourselves to what God commands his people to do through Paul’s words to the troubled church in Corinth. It is ironic that in some of the recent debates in the PCA, elders (on all sides of the issues) are boldly confident in proclaiming the meaning and authorial intent of 1 Corinthians 11; yet, we seem to disregard the call to humility in earlier chapters of the letter: “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1); “though I am



Progress in the pursuit of truth is best achieved in the context of relationships. God’s servants must defend the faith, but do so with gentleness and respect.



free from all, I have made myself a servant to all” (1 Cor. 9:19); “let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Later, in chapter 12, Paul clearly defines a spiritually mature church as one that recognizes differences in a body that has many members. In fact, he seems to indicate that our pursuit of unity begins when a person



proclaims, “Jesus is Lord,” since that profession is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Moreover, we must be vigilant not to disregard those whom we believe are weaker in their understanding or contribution to the church (1 Cor. 12:21–26). Yet, despite Paul’s exhortations, as we in the PCA engage in our valid pursuit of theologically sound beliefs, we often betray an immaturity in pursuing theologically sound relationships with others who claim to serve the same Lord and Savior.

After explaining how God’s people are to view the distinctions and diversity within the body of Christ, Paul continues by describing “a still more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31) of relating to one another—the way of love. In the middle of defining how the Corinthians were to work through the differences that were dividing them, Paul gives his famous excursus on love the in **1 Corinthians 13**.

The flow of his argument is this: “**Love is patient**,” which means I must be willing to persevere—even when the other person seems obstinate to me. “**Love is kind**,” which means I must refrain from ad hominem arguments or biting sarcasm when I respond to those with whom I disagree. “**Love is not arrogant or rude**,” which means I must humbly listen in order to understand better rather than trying to increase the number, volume, and intensity of my arguments. Love does not compromise a commitment to the truth because it does not rejoice in wrongdoing. Yet, “**love bears all things**,” which means I must be willing to put up with my opponent, even when he acts wrongly. “**Love believes all things**,” which means I must assume the best about the one with whom I disagree rather than cynically attributing false or impure motives to his actions. At the very least, “believes all things” requires

that I must assume that my opponent shares my love of the truth. When I think he is straying into error, I will diligently seek to ensure that my understanding of his arguments accurately reflects what he truly believes. Such an understanding demands that I speak with him personally (if at all possible) before I boldly tell others what I think he believes. “**Love hopes all things and endures all things**,” which means that I must eagerly desire unity over division, even when the other person wrongs me. “**Love never ends**,” which means that the other person may decide to abandon our relationship, but I will be loath to give it up.

I am convinced that many elders in the PCA have essentially ignored 1 Corinthians 13 in the struggle to pursue their own vision of what the denomination can and should be. Being faithful to the Scriptures and true to the Reformed faith requires that our relationships in the PCA be an obvious expression of what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13. If we are able to demonstrate mature Christian love—even while disagreeing over vastly different ideas about the specifics of ministry—then the denomination will continue to be an effective gospel instrument as God continues his work of redemption. If we fail to mature in our behavior with one another, then for the sake of God’s work of redemption, the PCA may well be relegated to the long list of churches and individuals who have served the Kingdom well for a time but no longer faithfully live out the truth of God’s Word. The message we proclaim may not have changed in the 40 years of our denominational history, but our behavior often fails to demonstrate the work of the Spirit among us. **To apply Paul’s words to the PCA and our present situation, we can have everything theologically**

**precise and pragmatically correct, but if we hold our convictions without love, our efforts are in vain** (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

### » *Speaking the Truth Together in Christian Love and Maturity*

In April 2013, I spoke with a pastor whom many view as a leader in the PCA. Though others would place the two of us in different camps within the denomination regarding certain issues, I find that our differences are inconsequential. His insight has always challenged me, particularly because I have seen him demonstrate great forbearance (i.e., love) with those who hold vastly different views than he does. His demeanor compels me to listen to him and consider his arguments.

On this occasion, our conversation turned to the future of the PCA and how God might use the denomination for his glory. Whereas some believe that the PCA has little influence beyond its denominational borders, this pastor listed a number of examples of how PCA members provide leadership and theological integrity for movements that define and guide biblical evangelicalism.

His words renewed my hope, as I was then struggling with the cynicism of some PCA authors and elders. He helped me to see that God has placed many PCA leaders in positions of great influence, and some of the younger leaders have great energy and ability to continue the work of the Kingdom. The challenge, however, is whether the different camps within the denomination can demonstrate the mature love that is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ.

The younger generation will mature as they see the older generation of PCA leaders demonstrating the beauty of cooperation in the midst

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The diverse groups of the PCA must unite a love for good doctrine and practice with a patient love for the people with whom we share much, but not everything, in common. Cooperation, rather than competition, must characterize our relationships if we are to move forward with true biblical integrity.”

»

— Stephen Estock

of differences. The ten committees and agencies of the PCA (Administrative Committee, Christian Education and Publications, Covenant College, Covenant Theological Seminary, Mission to North America, Mission to the World, PCA Foundation, PCA Retirement and Benefits, Reformed University Ministries, and Ridge Haven Conference/Retreat Center) must join together in cooperative ministry to address the needs of the local church. Unfortunately, the narrative of our shared past includes a story of committee competition and a perceived disregard for others, thus creating a situation where some leaders feel abandoned and are tempted to fall into a fear-filled survival mentality.

As a former member of a permanent committee and now a coordinator of one of the agencies, I well understand this temptation. Yet, “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7). Therefore, we must put aside our differences and perceived affronts in order to work together. As the broader church witnesses the mature love and mutual respect of our leaders seeking to serve the needs of the local church, the Spirit will do great things within the PCA.

#### » Ministering Together in Christ for the Sake of Kingdom Growth

Over the last two years, my sons have participated in the FIRST Robotics Competition. One of the fundamental principles of the competition is what the organizers refer to as “coopertition”<sup>®</sup> (a word trademarked by FIRST that combines “cooperation” and “competition”). This principle calls for participants to actively seek ways to help members of other teams build the best robot possible. Team members roam the preparation area seeking those who need tools, parts, advice, or encouragement. Sometimes helping an opponent is hard because of their different equipment, strategy, or philosophy of competition. Moreover, there is a chance that the team you help will defeat you in a future match. The reason to pursue “coopertition” lies in everyone’s commitment to the FIRST principles. The program provides a great opportunity for high school students to demonstrate mature relationships in the midst of competing priorities.

If a secular robotics competition can lead to students putting self-interest aside for a common good, how much more can the members

of the body of Christ—as expressed through the PCA and empowered by the Spirit of God—join together to build the eternal Kingdom of God. Though tensions may exist, we must not give up. We must lovingly speak the truth to each other and be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

I have great hope for the PCA, because God is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 34:6). He has given us his truth, a rich theological heritage, and the promise that he will never forsake those who seek him. As we live by his redemptive grace and for the glory of his name, the Presbyterian Church in America will continue to be a beacon of his truth—not only in what we preach and teach, but also in the way we love one another.

*“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”*

— Psalm 133:1

Dr. Stephen Estock (MDiv '95) serves as coordinator of Christian Education and Publications (CEP), the publishing arm of the PCA, and adjunct professor of practical theology at Covenant Seminary. Stephen and his wife, Susan, have three children.

## Disability Ministry and the Local Church: Hard Experiences, Gospel Opportunities

By Stephanie O. Hubach

**M**y family lives in a small town in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the type of place that has a Main Street where old-fashioned barber-shop poles still turn, signifying that their places are open for business. One day, our younger son Timmy—who has Down syndrome—was at the barbershop receiving a trim. Only seven at the time, Timmy was hypersensitive to the feeling of dry hair touching his neck during a haircut. On this particular day, Timmy wiggled unexpectedly, and huge chunk of his hair flew off onto the floor. After an awkward pause, the barber furrowed his brow, shrugged his shoulders, leaned Timmy's head forward and proceeded to give him a crew cut. That's when the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" started as Timmy began to wail. Sensing the barber's frustration when the ordeal was over, I paid the bill apologetically and quickly ushered Timmy out to the car.

Apparently, the barber's trauma was far worse than Timmy's. After a month had elapsed, I called to schedule another appointment. When the barber answered the phone and heard my request, he quickly said, "Oh. I'm very, very sick, and I don't know if I'll be cutting hair—*ever again*." Shocked at this sudden turn of events, my boys and I stood around the phone together and prayed for the barber's recovery, which ultimately turned out to be, frankly, *miraculous*. In fact, each day as I drove down Main Street, I could see the pole in front of his barbershop turning. So, curiosity getting the best of me, one day I decided to stop in and see how sick the barber really was. After I parked my car, I peered through the window to see him laughing and gesturing with a customer as he cut the man's hair. My heart sank as I realized the truth. He had never been sick—he just didn't want to cut Timmy's hair. Though I couldn't know the motives of his heart, I suspected that he closed the door of his shop to us because Timmy's disabilities had caused him to feel incompetent.

Sometimes, our church congregations behave more like that barber than like disciples in Jesus's Kingdom. Instead of saying, "I'm very, very sick, and I don't know if I'll be cutting hair—*ever again*," we respond to opportunities to minister alongside people touched by disability by

suggesting, "Oh, but church XYZ is much, much more able to handle your situation—down the street." Either way, the underlying message is the same: The door to our church is shut. In essence, the barbershop pole of the church is turning, signifying that we are open for Kingdom business, but not really open for everyone.

One of the biggest barriers to churches embracing people with disabilities is the congregation's fear of feeling inadequate. Even congregations that express an interest in outreach often wring their hands and say, "Just show us what to *do*!" But before that can happen, there is a process of realizing, repenting, and reordering that needs to take place in our churches.

### Realizing Thinking Biblically about Disability and Ourselves

All of us carry a perspective on disability that is formed by our worldview. What is yours? Most of us, unconsciously, possess at least vestiges of a modernist view of disability that says, "Disability is an *abnormal* part of life in an otherwise *normal* world." It focuses almost exclusively on the functional aspects of disability—the "impairment," or the ways in which a part of the body doesn't work as we expect it to. For centuries, people with disabilities have, understandably, resented being labeled as "aberrations."

As a result, with the advent of postmodernism, disability advocates began to promote an alternative view that focuses almost exclusively on the social aspects of disability—the *ways in which attitudes can disable others further (often much further) than the impairment itself*. This view promotes the corrective idea that "disability is a *normal* part of life in a *normal* world." A disability is often described as merely a "difference" that is not unlike having a different hair color. But this view is inherently dishonest. It diminishes the realities of the difficulties associated with an impairment and truncates the grieving process that occurs with the onset of disability. Even worse, it actually absolves others of any responsibility to neighbors who deal with disability. If a disability is indeed a difference that makes no

difference, then what does that require of you or of me?

Only a biblical perspective on disability addresses both the functional aspect (the impairment itself) and the social aspect (the attitudes that disable further) in a way that resonates with reality. Disability, from a Christian vantage point, is a “normal part of life in an abnormal world.” It is a result of living in a fallen world where nothing is as it was originally intended to be—not the bodies we live in or the attitudes we possess. It is just a more noticeable form of the brokenness common to the human experience. In other words, *disability opens up to us a gospel picture that mirrors the universal human condition back to us as individuals*. For, if we don’t recognize that it was our Triune God’s compassion for our profound spiritual disabilities that caused Jesus to lay down his life in order to provide access to the Father on our behalf, then we don’t really understand the gospel. And if Jesus can do that for us, how can we not do the same for our neighbors?

### Repenting

#### Turning Away From the Idols of Our Hearts

The reason we often don’t do the same for our neighbors is because of the idols of our hearts. In the opening portion of the Beatitudes, Jesus describes the posture of a Kingdom disciple: poverty of spirit, mourning over sin, and meekness (see Matt. 5:3–5). But, in our fallen state, those are hardly our natural qualities. Indeed, those characteristics are oppositional to our heart idols of self-reliance, self-protection, and self-promotion. An experience with disability, whether our own or someone else’s, brings us face-to-face with these false saviors that actually serve as barriers to loving interaction.

**Self-reliance** insists that we can do things ourselves. This includes fixing what is broken or difficult. But, as a good friend of mine says, “Disability is not like cancer—you can’t get to the other side of it.” There is a relentlessness to disability that defies fixing. There is also a need for the assistance of others that defies autonomy. So we run. We run from the endlessness of it, and we run from the interdependence of it. Except, of course, we can’t. Ultimately we *must* live with the endlessness and the interdependence of it.

**Self-protection** wants to hide from pain. There is a lot of pain in this world, and we find countless ways to avoid being emotionally exposed to it. In addition, we want to hide from the reality that every one of us is only one breath away from, or one car accident away from, or one bad delivery room experience away from a life-changing disability. Avoiding people with disabilities and their families allows us to perpetuate the illusion that we are in control.

**Self-promotion** also helps perpetuates the illusion that we are in control. We bolster ourselves by saying, “This is *my* life: I can direct it as I choose. This is *my* family: I can plan it as I choose. This is *our* church: We are free to invite

and to include whom we choose.” But are any of those thoughts really true?

### Reordering

#### Setting Priorities that Reflect Christ’s Own

Instead, Jesus offers us a wonderful gospel opportunity through our encounters with disability. As he so aptly pointed out to his disciples regarding the man born blind in John 9, disability is an opportunity to see “the works of God displayed” in our lives. By realizing that disability is a picture of the gospel story—our story—and repenting of all the ways in which we don’t reflect the posture of Kingdom disciples, we can seek God’s grace and power to reorder our lives and our congregations according to *Jesus’s* priorities. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus admonished the Pharisees by saying,

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*

Justice. Mercy. Faithfulness. These qualities reflect the character of Jesus, who is the image of God.

**Justice** is the appropriate use of power to do what is right and fair. It is the restorative power of the gospel—the coming of the Kingdom—applied to the *social dimension* of disability. It is the healing of attitudes that disable further than the impairment itself. But often *injustice* is at work in our congregations. The most common type is passive injustice, the holding down of another through what is *not* done: the access ramp that isn’t there, the Sunday school class that doesn’t adapt for special needs, the youth leader who doesn’t move toward the teenager with autism.

**Mercy** is the restorative power of the gospel applied to the *functional aspect* of disability. It enters into a situation by choice, engages with intentionality, and addresses the difficulty. St. Gregory of Nyssa once said, “Mercy is a voluntary sorrow which enjoins itself to the suffering of another.” Mercy provides respite care to the tired parents of a child with autism. Mercy offers transportation to the man with Down syndrome who cannot drive. Mercy mourns with the person who has been diagnosed with the degenerative condition of multiple sclerosis (MS).

**Faithfulness** brings the restorative power of the gospel to the *relentless difficulty* of disability. God’s love for you and for me is a relentless love. It is faithful for the duration. Faithfulness does more than deliver a casserole for a day; it walks alongside someone for the journey. Faithfulness walks beside the family of a child with developmental disabilities over the span of a lifetime—from diagnosis, to early intervention, to schooling, to the transition to adult



living, to the aging of the parents, to the passing of the caregiver baton to the extended family, and eventually to the death of the individual with special needs. Faithfulness intentionally stays with the family whose wage earner has become a quadriplegic—through rehabilitation, through home renovation, and through the relentless “daily-ness” of all the irreversible changes that such dramatic loss of function brings to every member of the family.

### Special Needs Ministries

Helping Churches Bring the Gospel to All

Most churches have people on their rolls who have special needs but are living on the fringes of congregational life. In every neighborhood in every town in every state in the country, there are people with disabilities. These people live largely outside the influence of the gospel. One of our goals as Christians should be to reach them with that message of hope in whatever ways we can.

I serve with MNA Special Needs Ministries, an outreach ministry of the PCA’s Mission to North America. Our purpose is “making the gospel—the good news of the coming of the Kingdom—accessible to all in word and deed.” We offer a variety of resources and training opportunities to help local congregations fulfill that purpose as well. Disability ministry isn’t a program. It’s a relationship—one that makes the gospel accessible to another human being who needs it just as much as you and I do. If your church needs assistance in this vital area of Kingdom life, please contact us. Together, we can help to share the gift of God’s redeeming grace with everyone. »

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Stephanie O. Hubach is director of MNA Special Needs Ministries. She serves on the Lancaster Christian Council on Disability (LCCD), is on the Advisory Board for Chosen Families, and is a visiting instructor of practical theology at Covenant Seminary. She lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with her husband, Fred, and youngest son, Tim. Their oldest son, Fred, lives in Falls Church, Virginia, with his wife, Cecelia.

## Resources on Special Needs Ministry

MNA Special Needs Ministries plays an important role in providing access to resources, training, consultative services for congregations, and networking facilitation for PCA churches. The organization works with a group of skilled facilitators, all of whom have experienced a personal/familial encounter with disability and share a common vision for constructive change.

Visit [www.pcamna.org/specialneeds](http://www.pcamna.org/specialneeds) to learn more and find links to related articles, publications, and newsletters.

## Resources by Stephanie O. Hubach

- *All Things Possible: Calling Your Church Leaders to Embrace Disability Ministry* (Joni and Friends, 2007).
- Disability Ministry, a special weekend course; audio online at [covenantseminary.edu/resources/courses/disability-ministry](http://covenantseminary.edu/resources/courses/disability-ministry).
- *Same Lake, Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability* (P&R Publishing, 2006).
- *Same Lake, Different Boat*, Christian Education DVD.

## Other Resources on Disability Ministry

- *Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace*, by Michael S. Beates (Crossway, 2012)
- *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregations*, by Erik W. Carter (Paul H. Brookes Publishing, 2007)
- *Joni and Friends Ministries*, [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org).
- *The Special Needs Ministry Handbook: A Church’s Guide to Reaching Children with Disabilities and Their Families*, by Amy Rapada (BookSurge, 2007)
- *Special Needs Smart Pages: Advice, Answers, and Articles about Teaching Children with Special Needs*, by Joni and Friends Ministries (Gospel Light, 2009)

For more helpful resources on this and other topics, visit [www.covenantseminary.edu/resources](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/resources).

# The Challenge—and the Gift— of Living with a Disability

By Tom Hoffman

Self-reliance, self-protection, and self-promotion are American virtues—those traits that make us independent and rugged individualists. But in the Beatitudes, Jesus honors poverty of spirit, mourning over sin, and meekness, making these other traits idols that keep us from discerning and doing his will. I, for one, cannot claim any great spiritual success at dethroning these idols in my heart. Instead, God has blessed me with an affliction that has helped me combat these idols in ways I never would have expected.

I have Dystonia, a movement disorder that affects the same part of the brain as Parkinson's disease, though by God's grace, dystonia is not terminal. For some, it is localized in the hands, face, neck, or on one side of the body. For others—like me—it can be generalized, or involve the entire body. My arms shake uncontrollably. My head jerks violently from side to side as if I am disagreeing with someone emphatically. Sometimes my mouth refuses to speak the words that are in my mind, or I get stuck on a word or sound and repeat myself. My eyes clamp closed and won't open. I double over at the waist without warning. And I sometimes walk with the shuffling steps of a 100-year-old man. I call it my Romans 7 affliction; it causes my body to do things I do not want it to do, and I often cannot get my body to do those things that I do want it to do.

My condition is easily misunderstood. Upon first meeting people, as I loll my head and grunt because the words won't come, I am often mistaken for having an intellectual disability or cerebral palsy. It is humbling, to say the least.

Under such circumstances, it is difficult for me to maintain a stubborn sense of self-reliance. I cannot control the simplest of my own movements; how can I control my life? As a simple example, I do not drive. So I cannot navigate my way through suburban American society without begging for rides like a teenage kid asking his mom to take him to the mall. This dependence could demoralize me or leave me bitter. But Christ would have it teach me my poverty of spirit that I might inherit his Kingdom. I am as dependent upon the Lord for simple transportation as I am for salvation from sin. Praise him that he provides both!

I also fail at self-protection. I did not see Dystonia coming. It struck me out of the blue when I was 36 years old. And as I deal with its effects on a daily basis, I still cannot

protect myself. My condition is aggravated by stress, so when I most need to speak up and defend myself, I cannot. Neither can I protect those I love. When I saw my four-year-old daughter, who was just learning to ride a bike, race down a hill out of control, my feet remained frozen to the ground. At such times I might despair. Or I can mourn my loss and weakness as I mourn my sin and receive the comfort of Christ.

Of course, self-promotion is impossible, too. By appearances, I don't have much to recommend myself. Those who do not wonder at my mental capacity wonder about my physical limitations. And with my condition exacerbated by stress, the environment of a job interview, for example, would guarantee that I am at my worst when I need to be at my best. Even in the church, I have been told I am incapable. One man once argued that it would be best if I ministered quietly, out of sight, rather than in any visible role because my grimacing and twitching might put off visitors. Fortunately, my elders stood up for me because I am in no position to promote myself. But while the self-promoters are told to sit elsewhere when Christ arrives, the meek in his Kingdom not only get a better seat, but they also inherit the Earth.

I struggle with my condition daily, but in the end I can only be grateful to a God who loved me enough to break me rather than let me rely on myself. If I rely on myself, protect myself, promote myself, in the end all I am left with is . . . myself. And that is a pretty hollow victory. But in Christ's economy, poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness bring the Kingdom of heaven, comfort, the world—and Christ himself—as an inheritance.

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Tom Hoffman (M.Div. '95) was diagnosed with Generalized Dystonia in 2004. Since that time he has adapted to his changing roles in ministry, contributing to devotionals and promise books and home-schooling his three children. He and his wife, Rachel, live with their children in Cane Ridge, Tennessee.

To read more of Tom's story and how his disability has taught him the depths of God's truth, visit "The Thistle" online at: [www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/challenge-of-disability/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/challenge-of-disability/)

# Navigating Sacred Terrain

## Pastoral Care Led by God's Unfolding Story

By Michael Fogas

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH DORIANI

**S**tories are important. Stories really matter. I have always believed this.

Through my twenties, I accumulated a lot of good stories and loved to tell them. So as a new Christian in 2001, opening the Bible for the first time as an adult, I should not have been surprised to find that this "obscure" and controversial book was filled with stories—not just a list of rules to follow as I had expected. The idea that the Bible is a collection of teachings rooted in a story had not been communicated to me. More significantly, I had never heard that

achieve, everything was meaningless" (Eccl. 2:11 NIV). I immediately made a connection and felt, "This book has something to teach me!"

Twelve years later, by the grace of God, I find myself in the privileged position of being an eyewitness to the unfolding of God's story in some of the most profound moments in people's lives. In my role as a chaplain at St. Louis Children's Hospital, I spend the majority of my time hearing people's stories. Central to chaplaincy ministry is not just hearing people's stories but rather includes the privilege of entering into them with people.

tening." But on this particular evening, my prayer was simply that the Lord might use me to offer some small bit of comfort and hope.

But what was I supposed to *do*? What is any pastor supposed to do when navigating the sacred terrain of grief and loss that is likely to shape the rest of a parent's life? Hearing people's stories in the midst of tragedy and understanding more clearly what they believe and why helps answer the "what to do" and "what to say" questions. Before we can speak into another's story, we must understand the life narrative that informs his or her beliefs

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What is any pastor supposed to do when navigating the sacred terrain of grief and loss that is likely to shape the rest of a parent's life? Hearing people's stories in the midst of tragedy and understanding more clearly what they believe and why helps answer the "what to do" and "what to say" questions.

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parts of this story—eyewitness testimony from real people about actual experiences and events—form the basis for Christian belief and action. I am now certain that it was no accident that the first time I came to the Bible as a seeker of truth, the pages fell open to Ecclesiastes. The author's story spoke clearly into my own: "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to

Early this spring, as the trees and flowers started showing their first signs of life, I found myself standing with a mother and father in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at the bedside of another devastated child—of whom I see all too many—who had died from an incurable illness. In the medical record, my time with these parents is documented as "provided pastoral presence" and "offered empathetic lis-

in the present. In my context at a top-ranked children's hospital connected to a top-ranked medical school, science and narrative work together to provide direction for ethical care.

### Stories Are Foundational to Who We Are

There is a great deal wrapped up in loving a child. For better or worse,



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With this in mind, we can return to the question of how best to care for those in crisis. I propose that the best way to proceed is to listen to and really hear people's hearts. In difficult times, when an intensity of emotion blows fog into the midst of what someone believes, it is easy to lose track of where they have been. Like being lost in the woods, we sometimes have to return to a familiar place to regain our bearings.

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our children become central to who we understand ourselves to be and to what possibilities the future may hold. The people we love can teach us about and help us make sense of our own lives. Those we love can also be foundational to our understanding of who God is. In a much more complex way than I understood when I first became a parent, I see the blessing of children; they are little lives crammed full of significance through which the Holy Spirit works to expose sin and bring about sanctification and godliness—both for them and for their parents.

When something so rightly central to the identity and purpose of parents and families is taken away, it can and does disrupt the beliefs and stories that make up the foundation for who they have become. When the fabric of a worldview is torn—or, more precisely, when our foundational stories or narratives are undermined—it takes time to put the pieces back together and to make sense of life again. There are times when the foundation has to be rebuilt from nothing, and many families and parents struggle with this. Some never make it. Healing is a very long process. I have learned that it can do more damage than good to try to rush this process.

In my experience, regardless of a family's religious beliefs, ethnic or cultural backgrounds, socio-economic circumstances, level of education, or the many other factors that shape the diversity of our society today, it is the stories from people's lives that inform the way that they cope with crisis. All those other factors may influence them to some degree, but if you are going to understand people, you must listen to the stories they tell.

### Stories Help Us Cope With the Tragedies of Life

In "The Stories That Bind Us," a recent *New York Times* article, author Bruce

Feiler examines the results from psychological studies about what helps children cope with stress. These studies confirmed that children who were the most resilient were those who knew more about their family histories—those whose family narratives included real stories about parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles. In other words, the children most capable of coping were the ones who had an "intergenerational self"; they knew that they belonged to something bigger than themselves.

So it should come as no surprise that when we find ourselves in the midst of suffering—whether our own or someone else's—the questions we ask and the statements we make often betray our underlying beliefs. *How could God let this happen? What did I do to deserve this? There is no way I can go on. This was just an innocent child!* Sadly, over the past four years, I've become accustomed to hearing words like these.

For many of us—myself included—our initial reaction in such situations is a strong desire to defend our own beliefs or an impulse to fix thinking we know to be flawed. But we need to remember at these moments that healing is a process; asserting our own beliefs at this point can produce more harm than good.

### Stories Help Remind Us of What We Believe

Questions then become, "What is the best way to care for others when they are in the midst of a crisis of profound loss and grief? What can I say or do to help and not harm?"

One approach to these questions that is gaining ground in today's healthcare community is known as "narrative ethics." Central to the use of narrative inquiry in the field of bioethics is the principle that every life has a story and that the particulars of this story matter when considering how to best care for people who are suffering either physically

## Narrative Ethics: Basic Tools of Inquiry

The essence of narrative ethics is using some familiar tools of inquiry to help us hear people's stories.

- + Consider the characters and the plot of the story.
- + Examine the background history of their story.
- + Examine the foreground of their story.
- + Examine the rising action and the climax of current events.
- + Identify themes from the story.
- + Identify the genre of the story.
- + Consider the symbolic language of the story.

Once we know the story—or the story behind the story—we are better able to minister to people where they are.

or emotionally. To know "the right thing to do," we must know people's past experiences. To understand the meaning of questions or statements made by another person (as opposed to assuming a shared meaning or understanding), one has to trace these statements back to the foundational beliefs revealed in the present circumstances.

Every story has a backstory, including the experiences that comprise a narrative description of one's life events. Experiences form perceptions, and those perceptions are shaped into understanding. Finally, that understanding is codified in



Rev. Michael Fogas (MDiv '09; center) is joined at his chaplaincy commissioning service at St. Louis Children's hospital by Rev. Ron Lutjens (MDiv '81; right), his pastoral mentor, and Justin McLaury (left), an assistant pastor at the church Michael attends.

meaning or belief. New experiences, especially difficult experiences, place pressure on the foundations—the meaning and belief structure—one has built on experience.

With this in mind, we can return to the question of how best to care for those in crisis. I propose that the best way to proceed is to listen to and really hear people's hearts. In difficult times, when an intensity of emotion blows fog into the midst of what someone believes, it is easy to lose track of where they have been. Like being lost in the woods, we sometimes have to return to a familiar place to regain our bearings. My goal as a pastoral care provider is to gently search with people through the stories of their lives, helping them find their way back to something solid and true so that they can find their own answers to their questions—answers rooted in *their* narrative, not in mine.

### Stories Are a Pathway Into Sacred Terrain

Another recent experience I had involved the family of a teenage boy diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), a rapidly advancing form of cancer most common in children. I met this family late in the child's fight with this disease and had to build rapport with them quickly. The second time I met with the

patient's mother, she communicated concerns regarding how the family was coping and how she personally was managing. Most significantly, she claimed responsibility for what was happening to her child. "I know this is my fault," she said. "God is punishing me for things that have happened in my past."

My first thought—possibly as an occupational safeguard, but also informed by my faith in God and my understanding of him as a good Father—was that this simply could not be the case. I wanted to say, "That's not true. God does not punish his children in this way. These things happen and we just don't know why. It is not your fault." But, in a moment of sudden clarity, I stopped. Instead of speaking, I listened—both for something more to be communicated and for the Holy Spirit to guide my interactions. At such moments, listening is not enough; we must be prepared to hear what is said in the midst of competing thoughts and ideas connected to our own stories. My next steps were slow and cautious, but I felt compelled to ask, "What do you think God is punishing you for?"

What ensued was a long narrative description of past events, personal failings, bad decisions made, and more. It was the story of a sinner's life. A theme was revealed in this

mother's story. She felt that God had not and would not offer forgiveness. This opened the door for a substantial conversation that was much more healing than any affirmation of my own beliefs could ever have been. Through a presentation of the gospel, this parent was reminded of what she believes, and she received a fresh anointing of God's grace at a time when she was desperately in need.

Using basic tools of inquiry and the narrative ethics approach to learn people's stories (see sidebar on p. 25) exposes opportunities to know exactly what people are struggling with spiritually. My utmost goal is faithful participation with the Holy Spirit when being invited into the core of someone's identity. Narrative ethics with a Christ-centered emphasis is first about believing that everyone has a story, that these stories are not random, and that God the Father is at work through them. The ability to respond to crisis and profound grief in an ethical manner happens by prayerfully discerning where God is at work, pushing aside our own agendas, and thoughtfully and sensitively entering into those stories.

Crisis is an opportunity for God to work powerfully to expose hearts that are stuck in misunderstandings and lies so that the gospel may be proclaimed in new and fresh ways. This helps solidify for the sufferer the One True Story that gives us all that we need to cope with the pain of living in this broken world.

When hard questions have been asked and those questions (or the questions behind the questions) have found resolution, it reveals the solid foundation for building a life of faith.

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Michael Fogas (MDiv '09) serves as the chaplain for the Pediatric and Cardiac Intensive Care Units at St. Louis Children's Hospital in Missouri; he also serves as an ethics educator. He and his wife, Jackie, enjoy learning about urban sustainability; they and their two young children recently planted a straw bale garden.

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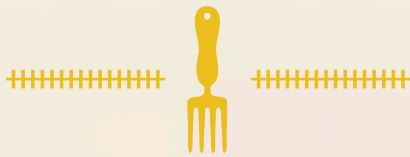
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# ROOTED

IN THE SOIL OF  
GOD'S REDEEMING

# GRACE





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hat does it mean to live as part of a beautiful but broken creation?

What is our relationship to the earth and to each other? Do the cycles and seasons of the natural world have any significance for us in this fast-paced, urbanized, technological age? What implications—if any—does the gospel have for all this? These are just a few of the many questions that Covenant Seminary alumni Duane Otto (MDiv/MAC '98) and Phillip Jensen (MATS '08) are seeking to answer—and help others to answer—through two similar yet wholly distinct farm-based ministries. Born and bred in the Midwest—Otto grew up in Illinois and Jensen in several states, including Minnesota, Indiana, and Iowa—both men feel a strong connection to the land, and though they each came by this connection in different ways, it exerts a similarly powerful influence on their lives, thinking, and ministries. Its roots run deep.

### Faithfully Sowing the Seeds of Hope

*Trust in the Lord, and do good;  
dwell in the land and befriend  
faithfulness.*

*Delight yourself in the Lord, and  
he will give you the desires of  
your heart.*

— Psalm 37:3–4

Duane Otto grew up on the family farm in Gridley, Illinois, where, in addition to a strong Christian faith nurtured by his parents, his pastor, and the Lutheran catechism, he also developed an appreciation for the natural world around him. “In private moments on the farm,” he says, “the outdoors became a grand cathedral creating awe and wonder in my impressionable soul. I would spend hours sitting in a cottonwood or pine tree taking in the grandeur and glory that were shimmering and beckoning all around me.”

Otto’s faith and his love of the land fueled creative interests in landscape art and helped him survive some difficult years in high school. Later, he earned a degree in agricultural economics from the University of Illinois and spent a few years working as a manager for an agricultural supply cooperative. During this time, he says, “My knowledge and love for Christ began to grow exponentially.” One evening, feeling weighed down with sorrow for the sin of the world and his own soul, he could no longer dismiss a growing weight of another sort: the Lord’s call to vocational ministry. “I got on my knees and surrendered my life and career plans in agriculture and embraced the call to become a shepherd of God’s flock.”

A few weeks later, an encounter

with a book he found on a coffee table introduced Otto to the life and work of pastor and apologist Francis Schaeffer. Intrigued, he sought the counsel of a local PCA pastor and began to investigate the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI) at Covenant Seminary. Thus began a decade-long journey that would lead Otto to study at Covenant; to serve at the English branch of Schaeffer’s L’Abri Fellowship; to minister in associate pastorates in Louisiana and Georgia; to read the agrarian writings of essayist and novelist Wendell Berry; and, eventually, to envision a L’Abri-like ministry centered around the rhythms and revelations of life on a farm in rural Illinois. That ministry, now known as Ithaca Fellowship, has in a very real sense brought Otto full circle—Ithaca is based on the family farm where he grew up, and where he, his wife Julie, and their six children now live in the newly renovated house built by Duane’s great-grandparents in 1910. Here, they share their lives and their love of the land with people seeking answers to life’s difficult questions.

Named for the home of the wandering adventurer Odysseus in Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey*, Ithaca is a nonprofit agrarian study center aimed at helping visitors understand and appropriate the full depth and breadth of the reconcilia-

*Clockwise from top left: Duane and Julie Otto (children not pictured). Iconic images of a silo ladder and a curious goat at the Otto farm. Phillip and Missy Jensen and their children Evan, Anabel, and Brooks. Colorful produce from the Jensen farm.*

tory work of Jesus Christ. “Through occasional teaching forums, life-on-life discipleship, and a biblical understanding of God in creation, culture, and conscience, we seek to inform, educate, and help people experience the redemptive interrelationship between Christ, man, and the created world,” says Otto. “We don’t currently have the capacity to house long-term students, but we do welcome short-term visitors in need of spiritual retreat or who are trying to sort through particular issues and need guidance in doing so.”

Visitors are free to use Ithaka’s library and classroom, and they often share meals and other activities with the Otto family. Depending on the season and the length of stay, guests might help with chores or projects around the farm so they can experience the Lord’s presence in a communal setting. Otto also uses a spiritual formation curriculum that addresses core issues of the heart, and he treats these tutorials rather like informal counseling sessions.

“Our goal in all of this,” Otto explains, “is to help visitors know God in all his glory and to take more seriously the revelation of his common grace in both the wonders of culture and the wonders of creation. We want people to see the multifaceted ways that we as fallen image-bearers express our soulful longings for order, security, beauty, meaning, and freedom, and to experience however briefly a place where friendships are cherished and maintained for the long term, where families relish the support of relatives, and where life is lived humbly with a trust in the Lord. Sometimes the best way to do that is to slow down, listen, and let the biblical truths open our hearts to the glory of God around us.”

Ithaka’s logo depicts a great tree firmly rooted in the ground and

flourishing abundantly. For Otto, this is not only the symbol of a mature, wise, blessed person—as illustrated in Psalm 1—but also of the complex interpersonal root systems of life that run deep within our souls and connect us to one another and to God. Though the seed of Ithaka is taking root and growing, progress has been slow. Fundraising can be a challenge, forums and other community events are more sporadic than Otto would like, and the fickleness of the weather often makes the farming aspect of the Otto family’s life difficult. “It’s a lesson in patience, a ministry of hidden work, and an all-consuming quest to live in harmony with the land, others, and Christ,” Otto notes. “Still, we are seeing meaningful growth, the kind that has less to do with harvesting and more to do with planting, watering, and nurturing that which is weak and vulnerable. We pray that in time the Lord will grow our ministry in significant ways, but if not, we’ll still be grateful; we’re content with the daily manna that sustains us in the moment and inspires greater acts of faith for tomorrow.”

### Meeting God in the “Liturgy of the Wilderness”

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*

— Psalm 19:1–2

Meanwhile, in a little town called Ida Grove, Iowa, Phillip Jensen, his wife Missy, and their three children bring a similarly holistic view of life, work, creation, and the gospel to others through a work they call Prairie Whole Ministry. Overseen by the

board of the Earthen Institute, an incorporated nonprofit, Prairie Whole Ministry is, in Jensen’s words, “mainly a ministry to troubled teenaged boys, mostly from our local area. Our farm work becomes a deliberate pedagogical tool to engage them with a purposeful apologetic of creation.”

Jensen’s road to a ministry through farming took a different route than Otto’s. His family moved around a lot when he was young, and though his parents always chose solid, Bible-believing churches to attend, the denominational affiliations were quite diverse. “Probably the most shaping Christian ethos of my home and childhood was that of L’Abri,” Jensen says. “No matter what church we were in, my parents always gave a certain L’Abri shape to





PHOTO BY PHILLIP JENSEN



PHOTO BY PHILLIP JENSEN

life and ministry. They emphasized hospitality, giving honest answers to honest questions, and the lordship of Christ over all creation, while also recognizing the brokenness that runs through all spheres of life.”

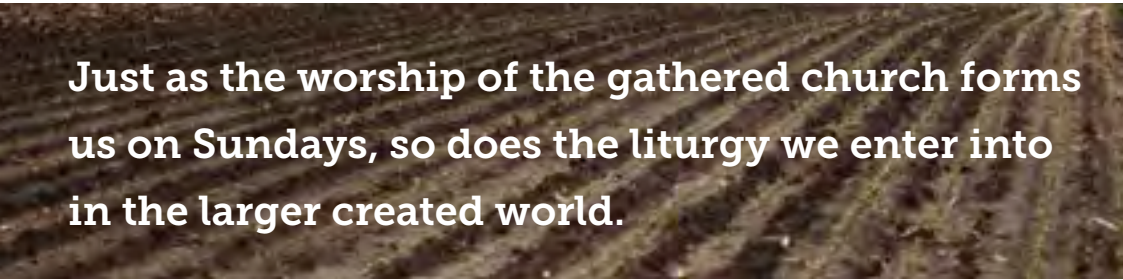
After difficult periods of depression in his first two years of college, as well as too much of what he calls “hypocritical, packaged, and un-earthly Christianity,” Jensen dropped out of school and went to live in a remote cabin in the far north of Minnesota, where he worked as a canoe guide and lodge keeper. “Perhaps it was because life slowed down during that time, but the Lord became very real to me in ways that I had never experienced before,” he recalls. “Everything became more deliberate, and I could consciously experience the Lord’s care for us in creation. I’ve

in my soul, and I saw this as profoundly subversive to the prevailing culture and the packaged Christianity I had known. So I began to pursue ministry in that vein.” This led to his return to college and the formation of a hospitality ministry at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. This served as a seedbed for the further development of the ministry ideas Jensen had envisioned in the wilderness. From there, he pursued studies at Covenant Seminary, largely because of the school’s connections with Francis Schaeffer and L’Abri, and eventually returned to Iowa to begin what is now Prairie Whole Ministry.

Jensen sees farm work as a way of introducing others to the “liturgy of the wilderness” he discovered in Minnesota; through it he hopes to shape the hearts and lives of the

large, home-cooked meals, and sometimes the boys help with that. We talk and enjoy each other’s company. We reflect on the work we’ve done together. We talk about the boys’ families, schools, and futures. We pray together. We include our three young children in this dynamic, and after dinner often becomes a time for everyone to play with the kids. I sometimes feel that this is the most important part of our ministry.” A nearby farmhouse called Cherry Creek Farm serves as an additional ministry home where families in need of shelter or a place of refuge are often cared for.

Jensen’s hope is that all of this makes the gospel more personal—and therefore more believable. “What we’re trying to do is invite the boys, the families at Cherry Creek Farm,



**Just as the worship of the gathered church forms us on Sundays, so does the liturgy we enter into in the larger created world.**



come to think of this as the ‘liturgy of the wilderness.’ Just as the worship of the gathered church forms us on Sundays, so does the liturgy we enter into in the larger created world. This doesn’t diminish or replace the primacy of the ministry of the Word, gathered worship, the sacraments, the centrality of Christ, the message of the gospel, or any of the means of grace, but all these things take place in a purposefully created world that is constantly singing its Creator’s praises. Sometimes it just takes a wilderness experience to help us fully appreciate the gifts and grace of God.”

It was out of this milieu that Jensen eventually discerned a call to “the pedagogical nature of a certain path in ministry.” He explains, “I had experienced something that per-formed a deeply winsome apologetic

troubled teens who visit his farm. “Most of the boys we get here are at the margins of family, school, society, and church,” Jensen says. “We want to involve them in creation and give them the gift of good work—away from TV or video games or just hanging out. We work several times a week through the school year and more often during the summer. The number of boys varies depending on the season, their schedules, and the work that needs to be done. I figure that, because the ministry began about two and a half years ago, we’ve had close to 30 boys work at our place.”

Meals with the Jensen family and deliberate engagement in their home and family life go hand in hand with the boys’ work on the farm. “We invite them into our house and to our table,” Jensen says. “Missy makes

our church family, and our supportive community to inhabit an alternative plausibility structure. We certainly do all sorts of things poorly and may be misguided on some, but we are trying to demonstrate a little picture of a holistic gospel that fits contextually within this little corner of creation. Though we haven’t seen any fireworks—or even a pillar of fire—many boys who come here have changed for the better in one way or another. God is at work here.”

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Rick Matt is associate director of print communications at Covenant Seminary and serves as a ruling elder at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (PCA) in South St. Louis County. He and his wife, Rebekah, have four children and live in Crestwood, Missouri.



# technology

**Good, Bad, or Neutral?** A Biblical Approach to Thinking about the Tools We Use

by jason walch

The story goes like this: At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, a man named Ned Ludd destroyed two stocking frames. These were part of the new mechanical knitting machines that replaced skilled laborers with less skilled workers whose job was simply to mind the machinery. Ludd became emblematic of the plight of skilled laborers lashing out against their obsolescence as industry replaced guildcraft. Soon Ned's name became the catchall phrase for those wary of recent technologies; even today, we point out someone's insistence on using older technologies by referring to that person as a "Luddite."

Though the context of textile work is lost in our culture, many share the assessment of Luddites when considering technology: Technology is not to be trusted, it does violence to people's lives, and its adoption will be more costly than the methods of the status quo. In short, technology is bad news.

I approach this subject as a confessed "early adopter" who had a first-run iPod and a first-run iPhone. As I write, I watch these words form on a display that has roughly twice the resolution of last year's model. The potential of technology excites me. Every year (or less), there are newer and better tools to help me in

my work at church, at school, and at home. My perspective, in short, is that technology is good news.

Am I right? Is my rhetorical Luddite right? Is technology good? Is technology bad? Or is it merely neutral and subject to the intentions of the user? Such questions could send us down a winding path of philosophical conundrums, but we will try to avoid either "technological determinism" or "instrumentality" in our response. A more important question to ask is: What does the Bible say about all this? We must look for technology in the narratives of God's revelation, seek out the themes emphasized, and hopefully form criteria for how we

ought to interact with technology. First, though, we need a few definitions.

Technology, according to Merriam-Webster, is “the practical application of knowledge, especially in a particular area.” This definition will help give us a way to think about technology in the Bible, as the word itself is unlikely to appear. Three other words to focus on are: *practical*, *application*, and *knowledge*.

**Practical** has to do with practice; we can think of technology as a doable process or a useable tool in a process.

**Application** summons the intention of the user and/or developer; we can think of certain tools as being designed for use in accomplishing certain ends or hoped-for outcomes.

**Knowledge** usually refers to the information we require, but that understanding is a bit too simple to help us here. Knowing involves both information and relationship, as we build a wealth of experience that enriches our knowing. Example: Studying the plans for making a chair and actually making a chair could both be summarized as, “I know how to make a chair.” Yet the second activity involves a deeper understanding of what it means to make a chair than does the first. For this discussion, we will use *knowledge* in this second sense.

Now we can begin our conversation with Scripture about technology.

## Technology Ought to Be Good



In the beginning, God created everything, and his refrain after the work was complete was that it was very good. I propose that there is evidence for the existence of technology before Adam and Eve rebelled and brought the curse to all of creation. God said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. . .” (Gen. 1:28). This commands procreation, stewardship, and the cultivation of culture. The ability to fulfill this cultural mandate implies the possibility of technology. As humankind increases and develops, people will need to apply knowledge in practical forms. Thus, the potential for technology is there. But what actual evidence of it do we see? Genesis 2:19b says, “And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” Adam gave names to the creatures. The act of naming is itself a practical application of knowledge. Thus, the first technology was the process of zoology. And this happened before the rebellion and curse.

Early in our conversation with Scripture, then, our perspective on technology is already being transformed. The question of whether technology is “good” or “bad”

implies that we have two equal but opposite options; yet Scripture reminds us that all of creation is good—including the potential and actual technologies that existed in the perfect *shalom* of humanity’s innocence. When things are the way they are supposed to be, technology, along with everything else, is good. (See Cornelius Plantinga’s *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* for a helpful discussion of *shalom*.)

## Technology Is Not Necessarily Good



The *shalom* of creation is shattered with the rebellion of our first parents, bringing complications to all manner of work; and the rapidly increasing wickedness of humankind brings the Great Flood. Although there are technologies to speak of in the account of Noah (ark building, for example), our focus turns here to the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). In arrogance, the peoples of Babel seek to use a new technology—“fired” bricks, significantly stronger than merely sunbaked bricks—to build a monument to their self-sufficiency and defiance of God’s commands. Fired-brick technology is their knowledge of brick applied to the practice of godless tower-to-heaven building. This is not good.

At this point in our conversation with Scripture, I must humbly admit that I live in a house with bricks on the façade. I serve at a church that is clad with brick. Is my house bad? Is my church bad? But then I remember that technology, like all of creation, is good. But because of sin’s pervasive influence, the good can be bent toward evil. I am content again with the brick on my house, and I have learned a bit more about technology—that it can be developed with bad intent.

I also see in the Babel story a reason to hope. The Lord confused the languages of people—a curse we still struggle to overcome today—in order to restrain sin. God first gives a nod to the potential of technology, noting that “nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them” (Gen. 11:6), then he hobbles this potential and disperses the people through judgment. This is a real curse with real complications for our lives, and I for one am thankful for it. It keeps us safer than we would be without it.

## Technology Can Be Good



Bricks may seem insignificant given that the question of technology’s moral alignment encompasses so many more devastating options. Weapons of mass destruction, for example, seem to defy any attempt to reflect goodness. This brings us to the next piece of technology to consider in our conversation with Scripture: crucifixion. The Ro-

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What do we want from the technology we employ? . . . We want [it] to help us overcome friction in doing what we do. . . . But **we must pray for wisdom and discernment** in order to apply our knowledge to wholesome practice.

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man practice of crucifixion was the supreme achievement in the empire's technologies of torture, execution, and public shaming. It was a trifecta of technical solutions that combined severe punishment, execution, and deterrent display. How can this technology be at all good when it was meant only for pain, death, and humiliation?

As Christians, we know that this technology, though born out of the most bent and dark places of human imagination and cruelty, is the instrument through which our debt of sin was paid by Christ. Our perception of technology is again transformed as we are reminded that the God who made everything good bends back to good that which man has bent toward evil. Even the despicable cross is rendered beautiful in God's sovereign grace.

### Technology Shall Be Good



Ultimately, we will be free of the sin that pollutes every aspect of our lives. Jesus will return to set all things right. Our conversation now brings us to Isaiah's vision of the world to come in the second chapter of his book. Isaiah describes the rise of Zion in the world and the nations streaming to the holy mountain; the Lord brings perfect justice to all, and the people respond: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isa. 2:4). This is the restoration of technology to *shalom*. The instruments whose primary use

was destruction are transformed into instruments of cultivation. This is technology that will be—ploughs and pruning hooks—technology that will serve the consistent flourishing of everyone in the restored creation.

Our conversation with Scripture has now given us a better frame of reference for considering technology. We can see technology less as one element of a binary set of good or evil. We also do not have a third option—a morally neutral position. We can now see technology as another product of human culture linked to human activity. Technology's moral status is thus analogous to that of people and therefore bound to the redemptive story in Scripture. We ought to be good (creation); we are not good (rebellion); we can be good (redemption); we shall be good (restoration). It is the same with technology.

Our changed perspective does not give us a pithy answer for our questions, but where we've landed seems more solid than either my rhetorical Luddite's fear or my own technological fascination. This perspective puts the credit for things going well where it belongs—with God alone. It also puts the responsibility for our actions where it belongs—with us.

What do we want from the technology we employ? Think of this in terms of a lever or a set of wheels: We want technology to help us overcome friction in doing what we do. We want it to decrease the resistance imposed by the consequences of sin. But we must pray for wisdom and discernment in order to apply our knowledge to wholesome practice.

A personal example: While in college, I loved the convenience of processed foods and would often eat packaged foodstuffs that merely required heating. This certainly reduced resistance in my life. The burrito-sandwich hybrid sprang from the microwave fully formed and ready to eat in two minutes. But the lifestyle of depending on those foods conspired with certain aspects of my heredity to give me the cholesterol levels of a man twice my age. Now, with a changed perspective, I can appreciate the time it takes to chop vegetables and eat the salads that are far healthier for me, even as this process produces more resistance to my simple desire to eat.

Technology can and has done much good, but it can and has also produced terrible things; we cannot tell ourselves or others that it is "nothing to be afraid of." In conversation with the Scriptures, however, we find that the greater fear we should be concerned about is the fear of the Lord. Only he can shape us—and the technology we employ—into the good for which he made us and which he promises will ultimately be ours.

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Jason Walch (M.Div. '00) is the children's ministry pastor at Chesterfield Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri, adjunct professor of educational ministries at Covenant Seminary, and an admitted techno-geek. He is pursuing a PhD at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He and his wife, Nina, have two sons, Elliot (14) and Stone (12). Jason collects Legos, makes his own ministry puppets, and prefers playing pop songs on a ukulele.

**Portrait in Grace:  
Honoring God  
Through the Gift  
of Art**

Camden St. Claire uses her art to glorify God and challenge others to think about the world around them.





Camden sees her art as “my way of inviting people to thoughtful introspection, my way of encouraging and challenging them in a loving way. . . and doing it for the glory of God.”

**A**rt is in Camden St. Claire’s blood. That’s understandable, given that her parents are both artists and her siblings—she’s the oldest of four, with a brother and two sisters—are all creative in various ways. So, it was no surprise that she would pursue art studies in college (Savannah College of Art and Design). And given her love of teaching and working with children, it seemed a natural extension of her artistic bent and her interest in art therapy to seek a master of arts in counseling (MAC) at Covenant Seminary.

“Art is a way of engaging with the world; it keeps me sane,” Camden says. “It can be lonely and isolating at times, but I love doing it. I also love people and love to see them change and grow creatively through art. Helping other people helps keep me focused on real life. That’s one of the reasons I wanted to pursue a counseling degree.”

She notes, however, that the personal and creative challenges of doing art can sometimes be draining. When she first came to Covenant two years ago, Camden was burned out on art and frustrated by the feeling that she didn’t really know what to “say” through her work. “When I got here I was planning on not doing any art for a while,” she notes. “But after about six months, I found myself

saying, ‘I have to *paint!*’ Many of my classes have helped me see that art is what I do; it’s part of who I am, who God has made me to be. The longer I’ve been here, the more I believe that and the more I’ve received confirmation of that.”

Being in seminary has helped in other ways too. Camden says, “My studies here have given me the language to talk about my art in ways I couldn’t before. They’ve helped me see the world and myself more fully. I’m not a preacher, but I’ve come to see that art is my way of inviting people to thoughtful introspection, my way of encouraging, and challenging them in a loving way when necessary—regardless of their faith background—and doing it for the glory of God. Art is my way of living out and communicating the gospel in this particular sphere of the world. Being in seminary has given me a new and deeper purpose for my art.”

In spring 2013, Camden had the first public showing of her works since college at The Chapel, an arts and entertainment venue sponsored by and housed at Memorial Presbyterian Church near Clayton, Missouri. Titled “Interiors,” the exhibit presented images depicting a variety physical and internal/emotional spaces; the focus was on the ways in which people do or do not engage with one

another, and on attempting to understand the contradictions in the inner worlds in which we all live. A second exhibit took place over the summer at the Tavern of Fine Arts near Forest Park in St. Louis, and another is scheduled for the fall at the St. Louis Artists’ Guild and Galleries. Camden has also created original works specifically for some of the themed quarterly restaurants of Covenant Seminary alumnus and celebrated chef John Perkins (MDiv ’09).

In addition to her painting, Camden also teaches art classes for children at St. Louis’s Center of Creative Arts (COCA). Prior to coming to seminary, she worked as a teacher in Asheville, North Carolina; while in seminary she did an internship in a local elementary school. These opportunities have strengthened her desire to pursue a career in art therapy with children after she graduates. “Kids are so fun and curious,” Camden says. “I love working with them and watching them grow. Doing art with them brings joy to them—and to me!”

A special aspect of Camden’s time at Covenant has been the presence of her younger brother, Gerin (MDiv ’13), who actually came to the Seminary a year before Camden. The two overlapped in their studies for the past two years, often hav-

ing classes together. "It's been great having Gerin here," Camden notes. "I have close relationships with several female friends, and we've been through a lot together. They've taught me a lot about relationships in general and how to love one another in and through struggles. But Gerin and I are especially close. He's been my main person here to talk through my experiences. He lets me say what I need to say and isn't afraid to speak the truth to me. His steadiness and male perspective help to balance me out."

Gerin also has found having his sister on campus to be a great asset. He says, "I think God gave people the sibling relationship for a good reason.



*Siblings Camden (left) and Gerin (right) St. Claire are grateful that their time at Covenant Seminary overlapped.*

Having family so close takes away the ability to hide from one another. Your siblings know who you really are; you can't pretend with them—and that helps you realize that you don't have to pretend with other people, either. Camden has been a great person to process stuff with, and it's fun just to hang out together. I don't know that it's possible for men and women to have a truly platonic relationship, but with siblings, you don't have the same issues; you can care about each other honestly without any frustrating gender complications."

Things will change a bit for the St. Claires in the coming year. Gerin graduated in spring 2013 and at the time of this writing was planning to move to Dallas, Texas, where his other two sisters and his brother-in-law

live. He plans on becoming involved with an Acts 29 church there, with the eventual goal of planting a new church in two or three years. Camden will remain in St. Louis to finish up the final year of her MAC studies; she expects to graduate in spring 2014.

The St. Claires are used to such comings and goings, however. When the siblings were younger their family moved a lot, living mostly in small towns all around the United States. Their father worked as a sign designer for many years, an occupation that was often affected by local economies. When the work ended in one town, the family would move on to another. "We didn't just go down

the road to the next town," Camden notes. "We'd head off for another cool place. Wherever seemed interesting at the time." Though the four St. Claire children were home-schooled, the flexibility of which fit nicely with their frequent moves, finding a good church to attend could sometimes be a challenge. "We mostly went to Presbyterian churches, but sometimes there wouldn't be one in the town. We'd try to find the most sound church wherever we were. That often meant we had to drive pretty far. But faith was a big part of our family life. We talked about it all the time. Our parents were always honest with us about their own faith struggles. That helped us come to a deeper, richer understanding of the gospel of grace."

God worked through those years to draw all the St. Claire siblings closer together, and to draw Camden and Gerin toward seminary studies. Both feel that their time at Covenant has changed them in ways that will make them better able to minister to others in their respective callings. For Gerin, "Being in seminary has really sharpened my thinking and my theology. The whole experience has been transformative in many ways. The relationships I've developed here have been especially important. They've helped me understand myself better than I did before, and I'm now part of a great group of people who can support each other through the challenges of ministry. It's a blessing to have all those different perspectives to rely on."

For Camden, the relationships formed in seminary are central too, but she also has been amazed at how the Lord continually provides opportunities—whether she desires them or not—to put into practice what she has been learning. "I have gotten so much out of the life, work, and relationships of seminary—as much or more than I've gotten from the classes themselves. There have been so many times when God has presented me with situations in which I had to apply what I've learned, even when I didn't want to. He just keeps making that happen. Hard as that can be sometimes, it's definitely worth it. He gives me the courage to do it, and to continue pursuing my art. This is the work God made me to do. It's part of how I can love people. If I'm not doing that, then I'm not honoring him with the gifts he gave me."

See samples of Camden's art at [www.camdenstclaire.com](http://www.camdenstclaire.com).

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*Rick Matt is associate director of print communications at Covenant Seminary and serves as a ruling elder at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (PCA) in St. Louis. He and his wife, Rebekah, have four children and live in Crestwood, Missouri.*



In this periodic feature, members of our faculty offer thoughtful, biblical responses to questions about life and ministry issues raised by Covenant Seminary graduates serving as pastors and ministry leaders in a variety of contexts. If you have a question you would like to be considered, please e-mail Joel Hathaway, director of alumni and placement services, at [joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu).

QUESTION

How can a young pastor in a small town with no other Reformed churches find a godly pastoral mentor?

Carey Hammett (MDiv '09) // Pastor // Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

ANSWER

Dear Carey,

I appreciate the difficulty of your situation, which is more common among pastors than many would like to think. Even under the best of conditions the ministry can be emotionally and spiritually demanding, and anyone who tries to face these challenges alone will soon find himself struggling. Finding a mentor you can trust is essential for nurturing a healthy pastoral ministry. Yet, while many pastors serve in cities or regions that offer a wealth of Reformed churches or other resources, others find themselves in more far-flung areas or, like you, in small towns where this is not the case at all.

One suggestion I have is to seek the friendship and counsel of peers or professors from your seminary days. Many graduates have told us that the relationships forged in seminary have been a powerful support for their ministries. Of course, some of these relationships may have to be maintained long-distance, but these days, with all the advanced communication technologies at our disposal, this is not nearly as challenging as it used to be. I would also suggest cultivating as much as possible relationships with others in your presbytery and at General Assembly, if you are able to attend. The many seasoned pastors and ruling elders who serve the Lord's church in this way are a wealth of knowledge and experience for younger men seeking guidance. Though one must always be sensitive to the demands of their busy lives and ministries, I am sure that with care and diligence you could connect with one or more of these men who would be willing to share his

time and insights with you. You might also want to seek out other pastors in your area who, though not perhaps Reformed, are nonetheless faithful servants of a branch of Christ's church and could offer helpful advice.

In my own case, I once drove 1 hour and 45 minutes each way to meet for about two hours once a month over the course of a year with a pastor who was a great blessing to me. I would come each time with a list of questions for him, and he would also suggest things for us to talk about. Currently, I am mentoring someone several states away by phone, though we sometimes use Skype and Google Hangout as well, and we try to meet up with each other at General Assembly when possible for fellowship and to talk.

This whole process and your entire ministry should, of course, be bathed in prayer, as the best Counselor and Guide for any of us is the Holy Spirit himself working within us. I know nothing I've said here is terribly original or profound, but I hope it provides a helpful starting point for addressing what is, indeed, a real concern for many pastors. I pray that the Lord will soon provide the godly mentor you seek.



God's blessing to you,

**Dr. Mike Honeycutt**  
Associate Professor of Historical and Practical Theology

See "Faculty/Staff Updates" on page 5 for news about Dr. Honeycutt's transition back to pastoral ministry.

QUESTION

I am a church planter in one of the most socially progressive parts of the nation. Our city is home to a late-term abortion provider. Many of the non-Christians who check out our services are very secular and pro-choice in their thinking. It takes years of building trust with non-Christians before they will attend one worship service. But, when they hear that, for example, we are participating in a pro-life prayer vigil, they perceive us to be a conservative political institution. How can you take a biblical public stand against abortion without alienating pro-choice seekers? How are other Covenant Seminary graduates addressing the abortion issue? How do we speak for those who are silent without alienating the people we are trying to reach?

Matt Roberts (MDiv '05) // Church Planter // Germantown, Maryland

ANSWER

Dear Matt,

Thanks for your question. As you and I, together with most others who read this, already know, the opposition between “pro-choice” and “pro-life” advocates seems intractable and fierce. This makes your request for wisdom important and my responding in such a short space fraught with danger! Nonetheless, if I pay attention to your situation (your proximity to a late-term abortion provider), and to your core question (how do you take a biblical public stand against abortion without alienating pro-choice seekers who also need to be reached with the gospel?), then the following comes to mind.

**First, model to all sides the grace in which you stand.** In light of our guilt having been discharged and our now being upheld by the favor of God, so we are to model the grace of God in Jesus Christ to all we meet and with whom we have the opportunity to speak. Whether consoling those whose hearts are broken by the practice of abortion or challenging those who would defend “a woman’s right to choose” for whatever reason, your calling is to point to Christ and to his grace that abounds over sin.

**Second, preach and teach a biblical view of human life.** From the pulpit and from home to home, instruct your members in the Christian view of the value, dignity, and equality of human persons, and in how to make a biblical case for life. Equip your congregation to both “show and tell.” That is, encourage and enable not simply the right words to share, but also a manner of living and relating that showcases our pro-life commitments.

**Third, pray for wisdom, for confidence, and for the Spirit’s drawing power in your midst.** Confronting abortion is difficult, but what you have to say is not simply some inconvenient truth. On the contrary, our message of life is a central truth and increasingly one that distinguishes biblical Christianity from the naturalism and secularism of our age. Knowing that you have some pro-choice seekers visit on Sundays, remember to look to God’s Spirit in prayer to accompany the Word you declare.

**Fourth, build relationships where you can.** Although this is easier said than done, nonetheless, minds will not be changed and hearts will not be won at a distance nor where misunderstanding and disrespect continue. Both Jesus’s command to love and his example of entering into unlikely friendships encourage us toward relationship, even where there is so much that would keep us from being open to one another.

While I cannot with any degree of familiarity or specificity speak to what other Covenant Seminary graduates in socially progressive contexts are doing, I am confident that those who are engaged are practicing some variation of what I have just shared with you.



Grace to you and peace,  
**Prof. Mark Ryan**  
 Director, Francis A. Schaeffer Institute  
 Adjunct Professor of Religion and Culture

FROM THE

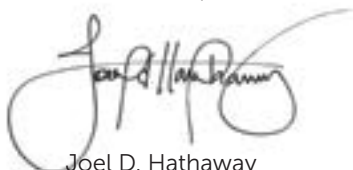
DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AND PLACEMENT SERVICES



Expectations provide an interpretive frame for our experiences. Two of us can experience the same circumstances, one with joy and thankfulness, the other with sorrow and grief. I believe that is why the command to “remember” is so often repeated in Scripture. Our remembrance of what is true about God and his eternal promises for those who love him are to frame our experiences.

In the alumni updates in these pages, you will find joy and thankfulness alongside sorrow and grief. We hope you will rejoice with those who rejoice, pray for those in grief, and above all remember the promise of God: that he has placed all things under the feet of our Savior. May the stories of our common human experiences bind us, even as the assurances of Scripture translate the value of our every experience.

Your servant,



Joel D. Hathaway  
Director of Alumni and Placement Services

Let us know how we can serve you through this publication. E-mail your suggestions for *Covenant* magazine to [joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu) or [editor@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:editor@covenantseminary.edu).

# Connecting

Join us for some events this fall!

SEPT.  
**13–14**

**Lifetime of Ministry Weekend Course**  
Development and Discipleship of Emerging Generations  
Instructor: Eric Larsen, adjunct professor of educational ministries

SEPT.  
**20–21**

**Lifetime of Ministry Weekend Course**  
Gospel-Centered Sexuality  
Instructor: Scotty Smith, adjunct professor of practical theology

SEPT.  
**26–27**

**Dr. Mark Dalbey Inauguration Weekend**  
See page 14 of this issue, or find more details online at [www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/presidential-inauguration-2013](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/presidential-inauguration-2013).

OCT.  
**4–5**

**Lifetime of Ministry Weekend Course**  
Intercultural Worship  
Instructor: Michelle Higgins, visiting instructor of educational ministries

OCT.  
**25**

**Fall 2013 Francis A. Schaeffer Lecture Series**  
“Heaven in a Nightclub” with Dr. William Edgar, professor of apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary

## WAYS FOR ALUMNI TO CONNECT TO COVENANT SEMINARY



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**Ordinations, Installations, and Transitions**

**Stephen Baldwin** (MDiv '82, DMin '12) to spiritual director and director of development for the Genesis Project, Inc., in Denver, CO.

**Ellen Barnett** (MATS '07) back to the US for home ministry assignment after 37 years in Acapulco, Mexico.

**Jake Bennett** (MDiv '11, MAC '12) ordained and installed as a civilian chaplain at Friendship Village, Chesterfield, MO.

**Mike Bobell** (MDiv '08) to pastor of Emmaus Christian Fellowship (RCA), Langley, British Columbia.

**Wes Brown** (MDiv '08) ordained Nov. 3, 2012, at Holy Cross Anglican Church, Loganville, GA.

**Tim Butler** (MDiv '06) as university chaplain at Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO.

**Tim Carroll** (MDiv '11) ordained on Feb. 17, 2013, as assistant pastor of Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Manassas, VA.

**Chris Curtis** (MDiv '04) to senior pastor, New Covenant (EPC), New Castle, PA.

**Eric Dalbey** (MAWM '11) appointed as adjunct professor of music and worship, Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, MO.

**John Dowlen** (MDiv '12), ordained and installed June 9, 2013, as assistant pastor of youth and families, Christ the King (PCA), Roanoke, VA.

**Stephen Estock** (MDiv '95) to coordinator for the PCA's

Christian Education and Publications (CEP), Lawrenceville, GA.

**Brett Eubank** (MDiv '02) to Jackson, MS, to serve as accountant after the close of church plant Grace Hill Church (EPC), Nixa, MO.

**Chris Gensheer** (MDiv '10) ordained as assistant pastor of Christ Church, Santa Fe, NM, on Oct. 28, 2012.

**James Hahs** (DMin '06) to directing pastor of Main Street United Methodist Church, Alton, IL.

**Michael Hall** (MDiv '00) to pastor for students at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA.

**Zane Hart** (MDiv '09) to assistant pastor of youth and families, Covenant Life Church (PCA), Sarasota, FL.

**Shawn Honey** (MDiv '08) ordained as deacon in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh, Aug. 26, 2012.

**Hayden Howell** (MAEM '10) to junior high assistant director at Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, TN.

**Ryan Hughs** (MDiv '05) to RUF campus minister at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.

**Don Hulsey** (MDiv '99) to pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge, LA.

**John M. Irwin** (MDiv '99) to pastor of Reformed Presbyterian, Lemmon, SD, on Oct. 9, 2012.

**Duff James** (MDiv '00, MAC '02) to church planter of City Church (ARP), Asheville, NC.



PHOTOS BY ALLISON DOWLEN

**General Assembly 2013 – Alumni Gathering**

More than 200 Covenant Seminary alumni, spouses, and their families joined with staff and faculty (current and past) at the 2013 General Assembly Alumni Gathering in Greenville, South Carolina. Newly named Seminary President Dr. Mark Dalbey (in photo at left with glasses) joined the group for food and fellowship and to pray with and for alumni and their lives and ministries. Seminary alumni also featured prominently among General Assembly seminar speakers on topics ranging from soul-care to gospel-centered conversations. The alumni dinner is a popular GA highlight for faculty, staff, and graduates of the Seminary, providing an evening marked by encouragement and fellowship through reconnecting with friends.



**Sam Joyner** (MDiv '86) to senior pastor of Grace Coastal Church in Okatie, SC.

**Greg Lex** (MATS '06) to campus pastor of Eagle Church at Avon, Avon, IN.

**Dave Lindberg** (MDiv '10) ordained as pastor of outreach and home groups at ChristChurch Presbyterian, Atlanta, GA.

**Jamie MacGregor** (MDiv '98) to associate pastor of spiritual formation at Redeemer Presbyterian, Indianapolis, IN.

**Dagan Mayfield** (MDiv '12) ordained Feb. 3, 2013, as director of youth activities, Cornerstone Presbyterian, Lexington Park, MD.

**Elliott S. W. Pinegar** (MDiv '12) ordained as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Bad Axe, MI, Oct. 21, 2012.

**Paul Ranheim** (MDiv '11) ordained as pastor of worship arts at Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) Santa Barbara, CA, June 30, 2013.

**Randy Rhea** (MATS '05) to assistant pastor at Madison Heights Church, Corinth, MS.

**Jeff Rickett** (MDiv '97) to biblical counselor of Heart Song Counseling, Washington, DC.

**Ben Ritz** (MATS '08) to pastor of church transformation at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Granite City, IL.

**Amy Roebke** (MAEM '09) to Children's Ministry Specialist, Redeemer Presbyterian—

Downtown Campus, New York City, NY.

**Ed Rogland** (MDiv '12) ordained as an evangelist with the Missouri National Guard, Oct. 27, 2012.

**Blythe Sizemore** (MAEM, MATS '09) to director of children's ministries, Central Presbyterian (EPC), Clayton, MO.

**Dan M. Smith** (MDiv '12) ordained on Oct. 14, 2012, as the RUF campus minister, University of Texas at Tyler.

**Nathan Snyder** (MDiv '11) ordained as associate pastor at Exeter Presbyterian, Exeter, NH, Feb. 24, 2013.

**Jason Tucker** (MDiv '08) to church planting pastor of Bluff Park Community Church, Hoover, AL.

**Wes Vander Lugt** (MDiv '07) to pastor of Warehouse 242 (EPC), Charlotte, NC.

**Paula and Don Wagner** (MATS '08) on their acceptance as members with ReachGlobal (EFCA).

**Shane Waldron** (MDiv '11) to associate pastor of Faith Covenant Church, Kalispell, MT.

**Brad Wos** (MATS '05) as vice president of international ministry for The Sports Outreach Group (Charlotte, NC). Brad and his wife are setting up a SOG office in St. Louis, MO.

**Jesse York** (MDiv '11) ordained Jan. 27, 2013, as pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church, Wildwood, MO.

## Family Updates

**James Amos** (MDiv '11) married Kristin Kambarian, Aug. 11, 2012.

**Katie and Jon Bonker** (MDiv '07) welcome Hannah Noel, Dec. 13, 2012.

**Ali and Josh Brumbaugh** (MDiv '06) welcome Micah Joel, May 14, 2013.

**Jason** (MDiv, MAC '11) and **Conner (Anderson) Cochran** (MATS '09) welcome Winston King, Nov. 15, 2012.

**Sara and Ben Dodd** (MATS '09) welcome Lucy Madeline, Feb. 11, 2013.

**Lucas Dourado** (MDiv '11) married Maggie Carnes, March 10, 2012.

**Mary Beth and David Ely** (MDiv '12) welcome Anna Helen, Jan. 22, 2013.

**Rebecca and Brandon Farquhar** (MDiv '09) welcome Aiden John, Jan. 17, 2013.

**Meg and Rob Fossett** (MDiv '02, ThM '04) welcome Henry James, Aug. 2, 2012.

**Bill Grall** (MDiv, MAC '06) married Tara Cochran, Nov. 11, 2011.

**Beverly and John Gullett** (MDiv '02) welcome Elizabeth Ann "Lizzie," July 24, 2012.

**Natalie and Jonathan "J." Hager** (MDiv '08) welcome Esther Grace, Nov. 8, 2012.

**Sarah and David Illman** (MDiv '05) welcome Leo Emmanuel, Jan. 2013.

**Jennifer and Brent Jennings** (MDiv '08) welcome William Grant, Jan. 17, 2013.

**Mandy (Brown) and Mike McBride** (MDiv '09) welcome Henry Fletcher, Sept. 4, 2012.

**Margaret and Curtis McDaniel** (MDiv '09) welcome Anna Hope, Feb. 23, 2013.

**Christe and Jason Mirikitani** (MATS '09) welcome Tobias James, Nov. 26, 2012.

**Jenna and Brady Nelson** (MDiv '09) welcome Eli James, Jan. 26, 2013.

**Rachel and Michael Novak** (MDiv '10) welcome Katherine Jane, Nov. 7, 2012.

**Emmalee (Bragg) and Tim Padgett** (MDiv '07) welcome Colum David, May 3, 2013.

**Grace and Mike Park** (MDiv '09) welcome Daniel Emit, Feb. 24, 2013.

**Annie and John Patton** (MDiv '10) welcome Lucas Ridley, Oct. 1, 2012.

**Christine (Dow)** (MAEM, MAC '09) and **Tom Rubino** (MDiv, MAC '10) welcome Mercy Marlene, Dec. 22, 2012.

**Lindsey and Jason Schubert** (MDiv '09) welcome Beckett Tillman, Aug. 21, 2012.

**Kara and Ben Sinnard** (MDiv '11) welcome Reid Benjamin, Oct. 19, 2012.

**Christy and Will Spink** (MDiv '08) welcome Lily Carroll, Sept. 18, 2012.

Aubrey and Jeff Tell (MDiv '03) welcome Naomi Ruth, Dec. 18, 2012.

Suzy (Norcliffe) (MAC '05) and Nathaniel Thompson (MDiv '10) welcome Adelaide Elise, July 14, 2012.

Beth and Barrett Turner (MDiv '10) welcome Louis Benedict, June 14, 2012.

Stephanie and Eric Whitley (MDiv '11) welcome Callan Jacob, Oct. 25, 2012.

Amy and Andy Wood (MDiv '07) welcome Benjamin Sutton, May 28, 2013.

Rob Wootton (MDiv '08) married Robin Jester, Dec. 29, 2012.

Sarah (Viggiano) (MDiv, MAC '12) and Lee Wright (MDiv, MAC '12) welcome Matilda Claire, Jan. 4, 2013.

Drew (MDiv, MAC '11) and Lindsey Wilkins (MATS/ MAC '11) welcome Anna Catherine, Feb. 22, 2013.

## Celebrations

Steve Benson (MAC '09) became an LPC (licensed professional counselor) in North Carolina.

David Bush (MDiv '02) on his recent certification as a field traumatologist. He was certified by Green Cross Academy of Traumatology.

Jose Chay (ThM '03) continues to serve with church renewal in the Presbyterian Church in the cities of Seye and Sanahcat, Mexico.

Zack Eswine (MDiv '95) on the publication of *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being* (Crossway, 2012).

Ross Graham (MDiv '72) on being honored at the 2012 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for decade-long service as general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

Matthew Heckel (MDiv '98) on his contribution to the *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology* (T&T Clark, 2012).

Jim Payne (MDiv '07), on recording of *Songs for the Bride of Christ* available at [www.jimpaynemusic.com](http://www.jimpaynemusic.com).

Cordell Patrick Schulten (MATS '05) on serving as associate professor of US law on the faculty of Handong Global University, Pohang, South Korea.

Shayne Wheeler (MDiv '97) on the publication of *The Briarpatch Gospel: Fearlessly Following Jesus into the Thorny Places* (Tyndale, 2013).

## Condolences

Condolences to the family of Dre Alexander (MATS '10) on the death of his father, Arthur Alexander, May 8, 2013.

Condolences to Karen Mirabella, wife of Tom Mirabella (MDiv '05), on the death of her father, Joseph Wu, in May 2013.

## 2013 Covenant Seminary Graduation

Congratulations to the class of 2013! This year's class of 171 students earned 178 degrees or certificates. They included:

- Master of Divinity: 77
- Master of Arts in Counseling: 34
- Master of Theology: 3
- Doctor of Ministry: 23
- Master of Arts in Educational Ministries: 11
- Master of Arts in Religion and Cultures: 3
- Master of Arts (Theological Studies): 22
- Master of Arts in Worship and Music: 3
- Graduate Certificate: 2



*This year's graduates included our largest DMin class thus far! We are grateful for how the Lord has grown this program to further equip so many experienced ministry practitioners.*



*It is a blessing and honor for us to serve the church by training all of the men and women in our degree programs for service in a variety of ministry roles.*



## **Glorifying God in Business—and All of Life**

During a 35-year career, **Jim Lauer** has owned an aviation flight school and served in leadership roles in the aviation insurance industry, including as executive vice president, then president, of Avemco, the nation's only direct insurer of privately owned aircraft. Jim retired in 2012, and he and his wife, Wanda, returned from the company's base in Frederick, Maryland, to their roots in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. He left behind a company significantly changed by the application of biblical business principles and came home to take up a new challenge: volunteering his time to help students at Covenant Seminary and others in the community make their lives and workplaces stronger, more fruitful, and more honoring to the Lord. Jim recently shared some of his story with us. [»](#)



Seminary friend and supporter Jim Lauerman (above, center), a life-long aviation enthusiast and licensed small aircraft pilot, recently visited Spirit of St. Louis Airport in Chesterfield, Missouri, where he chatted with Seminary Board Chairman Bill French (above, left; wearing hat) and enjoyed checking out the cockpit of French's own small plane.

**Q. You mention in talks at the Seminary that you became a Christian later in life. Can you elaborate a bit for us on how that came about?**

**A.** When I was young, my parents took me to Sunday school at a United Church of Christ church, but I considered it all pretty much a joke. I wasn't a complete atheist, but I really wasn't interested in Christ at all. Basically existence just seemed absurd to me. Later, after a failed marriage, a failed business, and problems with alcohol, I found myself asking all the "Why?" questions about life and wondering, "What's the point?" If there wasn't any, then I should just kill myself—but I didn't have the guts for that. I was searching for something.

Then, at a college class reunion—the only one I ever went to!—I met up with an old fraternity brother. He was bright, full of life; there was something very different about him. He visited me after my divorce from my first wife and tried to share Christ with me, but I still wasn't very open to that. He suggested that I read the book of Ecclesiastes—which I did, and found myself saying, "This is true!" It started me thinking.

My conversion actually took place as a result of watching *The 700 Club* on television. As a former political science major, I was drawn in by a discussion they had one day about the Middle East, and I kept watching. Then they had a chapel service at a prison and the preacher was talking about being free from the prison of sin. That really

resonated with me. I prayed to Christ that day and soon after started attending an Assemblies of God church in Troy, Illinois—which is where I eventually met my wife, Wanda.

But something was still missing. We were both hungry for the Lord and felt that Christianity had to be more than just a ticket to heaven. It had to be about all of life or it was about nothing. I had heard of a man named Francis Schaeffer—on *The 700 Club* again!—and read his *Complete Works*. What he said, his whole-life approach to Christianity, just rang so true to me. By this time we were at a non-denominational church in St. Louis County, Missouri, and I asked my pastor about Schaeffer. He mentioned the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary and suggested I check it out. So I did. I took a class on Christianity and Contemporary Culture—with Professor Jerram Barrs—which fleshed out what I had read in Schaeffer's works in amazingly practical ways. I told Wanda, "We need to be here!" So we both took some classes, and I ended up working on what was then called a Master of Arts in General Theological Studies (MAGTS). This was in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We've been of a Reformed mindset ever since.

**Q. How did your interest in aviation and your career in aviation insurance come about?**

**A.** Well, planes are just cool! I grew up near Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, so I'd always had an interest in the drama of flying. In college my goal was to become a constitutional



*With a desire to serve and be involved in the life of Covenant Seminary, Jim and Wanda Lauerman (above, right; top photo) returned to their roots in the Midwest when Jim retired in 2012. They now reside in St. Charles, Missouri, with their beloved schnauzer Gracie (bottom).*

lawyer, but I ended up in the Navy as a result of the draft lottery. I wanted to pursue aviation—flying jets and such—but they told me that after 18 months of officer candidate and preflight training that I’d end up flying missions in Vietnam. That was a very unpopular war; there wasn’t any real support for it. So I ended up joining as an enlisted anti-submarine warfare operator instead. I spent more than 1,000 hours in P2s and P3s flying over the ocean looking for Russian submarines. I obtained my private pilot’s license at a civilian flight school while in the Navy.

As for the rest, I eventually bought a small flight school based in Alton, Illinois. It never really was profitable. I loved flying and teaching people to fly, but I loved eating more, so after eight years I sold it. Around that time there happened to be an opening with Avemco, insuring light aircraft. That looked like a good opportunity to help people and have a steady job, so I took it. I liked it and did well at it. I enjoyed being a leader.

In 1997, Avemco was acquired by HCC Insurance Holdings, Inc. I was given the option of moving to Maryland or losing my job—so Wanda and I went to Maryland, which meant I never finished the degree I was working on at Covenant. But the Lord’s hand was in this, because when I got to Maryland, the company was in a bit of a mess and the top folks asked me for my thoughts on how things should be run. I gave them my ideas but didn’t hear anything back for a while. Then they gave me a major promotion to executive vice president and the huge task of

basically rebuilding the company from the ground up.

**Q. And this is where you were able to apply some of the biblical principles and Schaefferian ideas you had been learning about at Covenant?**

**A.** Yes. One of the last classes I had before moving to Maryland was called A Biblical View of Work, Poverty, and Welfare. It was taught by Dr. David Jones and was, I believe, only offered that one time. One of our guest speakers was the now late Ben Edwards III, who was the CEO of then A. G. Edwards & Sons and well known for his Christian beliefs and business practices. One thing he said stuck with me and became a prime motivator for me. He said that people generally don’t link Sunday with the rest of the week; they leave their faith at church and don’t see the larger vision of how God’s redemptive purpose applies to all of life. He noted that most people—including, unfortunately, most pastors—don’t have a clue about how to approach this. That’s one reason why after I retired I wanted to come back here and be involved with the Seminary again—to help get this message across in some way. That class greatly affected my thinking about all of this.

As for applying these ideas at Avemco, I had to be careful in how I went about it. In most companies these days, you can’t talk openly about Christianity. So I tried to emphasize Christian principles without being too overt. One way I did this was to give a Christmas message in

which I referred to 1 Corinthians 12. There, Paul speaks about the church as being one body with many members—but I applied that idea to the company by trying to get folks to see it as an organism with many vital parts that all must work well together, rather than as an organization. That distinction is important. I’ve never liked the term “organizational manager;” I prefer “leader.” You manage things; you lead people. And a company is made up of people, all of whom—whether they are believers or not—are made in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic value. And their work has value, whether they are emptying wastebaskets or directing board meetings. The trick is to create an environment that will foster that sense of value, promote individual ownership of work, and encourage growth and creativity—while also keeping in mind that we’re all still sinners and still make mistakes. There will always be a need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Another aspect of this is the concept of servant-leadership. Most companies are run on the Darwinian, hierarchical, top-down model of leadership, but the biblical way is a bottom-up, servant-leader model. My goal was to try to make our company vision and principles as clear and unequivocal as possible, and then push authority and responsibility as far down in the company as possible. Employees love the empowerment this gives them, though those in the top levels don’t always appreciate it as much. It’s a rarity in the business world. But that responsibility—and having leaders who understand the servant aspect of leading—helps motivate people.

One other thing we did that had a tremendous impact was to focus on loss prevention rather than just reacting to claims when they came in. We were unique in that we dealt directly with the people we insured—there was no middleman. So we had these established relationships that enabled us to see patterns of behavior over time, and we discovered that aviation accidents or problems don’t happen so much because of someone’s lack of knowledge but because of what they care about. If you care about the wrong thing at the wrong time—such as getting somewhere quickly without regard for important safety concerns—then you’re more likely to have a problem. So we decided we had a moral obligation to help our clients understand this. We made the culture of the company more about saving lives—which tended to attract more people who cared about that, which was good for business.

The point here is not “what a great thing we did at Avemco,” but rather that it doesn’t matter what business you’re in—you can always be looking for some way to push back against the effects of sin in the world and find the redemptive aspect of what you’re doing. We’ve all been put here to glorify God, whatever our work may be.

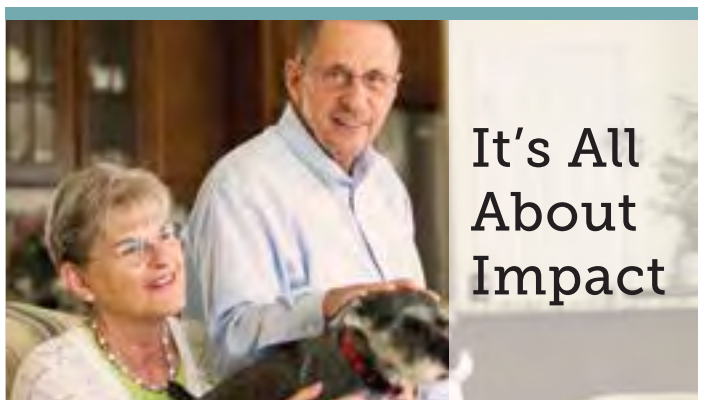
**Q. So you and Wanda decided to move back to St. Louis so that you could again be involved with**

**the Seminary through volunteering your time. What is your goal in this?**

**A.** Pastors need to be aware of the challenges that people in their congregations—many of whom are business-people—are facing as they try to live out their faith during the week. If I can help future pastors and other ministry leaders have a better sense of the “all of life” aspect of our faith, and if I can help business leaders find the redemptive purpose in their work, then I’m fulfilling what I believe to be my calling. I’m involved with Covenant because the Seminary is theologically faithful and lives that faith out in positive, practical, real-world ways. Business is often denigrated in our culture, but when it is done to Christ’s glory it can be a powerful instrument for the gospel. Covenant gets that!

**See our expanded article, videos of Jim, and more online at [covenantseminary.edu/thistle/jlauerman](http://covenantseminary.edu/thistle/jlauerman).**

*Rick Matt is associate director of print communications at Covenant Seminary and serves as a ruling elder at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (PCA) in St. Louis. He and his wife, Rebekah, have four children and live in Crestwood, Missouri.*



We sold our home, moved across the country, and with our remaining years want to support the training of the next generation of leaders for the church and help believers find the redemptive purpose in their work.

We strongly believe that the future of Christ’s church is our best investment and that Covenant Seminary provides the best training for those committed to a lifetime of ministry. Thus, we continue to give our time and resources to this work and have included Covenant in our estate plans to provide for future gospel leaders. Will you join us in supporting the Seminary this way?

With the hope of heaven Christ has given us, we desire to thank our King by leaving a legacy to help our “spiritual children,” and to ensure that mission for those who come after us, until he comes again. We pray that this effort brings glory to Christ. —JIM AND WANDA LAUERMAN



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