

# COVENANT

THE MAGAZINE OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

VOL. 30, NOS. 1-2

## Loving Our Neighbors in a Broken World

**REFLECTIONS**  
on the Church  
and Racial  
Reconciliation

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**ADDRESSING**  
Issues and Needs  
Biblically

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**STATE OF THE  
SEMINARY**  
Bringing the Gospel  
of Grace to a World  
in Need of Hope

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**THE NEW**  
Edwards Hall  
Community  
Center

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COVENANT  
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**THE NEW EDWARDS COMMUNITY CENTER**

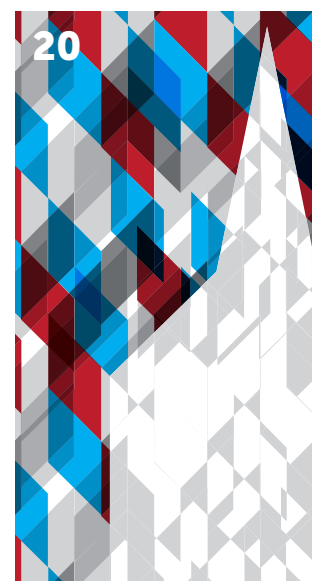
The Edwards Hall Community Center is back in business after a massive, 18-month renovation program that totally transformed our community gathering space. Take a look at the astounding results!



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**STATE OF THE SEMINARY 2015**

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Christians are called to address the difficult issues of our day and to care for the least, the lost, and the lonely. God's Word provides ample guidance for doing both in ways that honor God and our neighbors.



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"The Thistle" is your all-encompassing resource for news and information about Covenant Seminary. Read updates 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/).

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Volume 30, Numbers 1–2  
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*Covenant* is published by Covenant Theological Seminary, Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

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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.



### ON THE COVER

Ancient stone wall in Israel.  
Photo by James Howard.



“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22:37–40

Dear Friends,

Jesus’s straightforward admonition to love our neighbors as ourselves stands as one of the key principles of our lives as Christians and is central to God’s Kingdom mission. Yet so often we find it incredibly difficult to carry out—especially when our neighbors differ from us in some fundamental way.

Religious beliefs, political convictions, economic status, national or ethnic origins, skin color—even taste in clothing or sports teams or styles of music—have all too often been used as excuses to avoid God’s call to love our neighbors. Worse, they have been used to passively disregard, actively dislike, or even hate those whom the Lord has called us to love. Consequently, we become obstacles to God’s transforming gospel of grace and truth as we distance ourselves from those we see as “other.”

Over the past year, these tendencies have played themselves out in specific and painful ways as our nation, our denomination, our Seminary, and the broader church have wrestled with the complexities and consequences of a legacy of racial tension that continues to divide us. To the extent that we as followers of Jesus Christ have failed to address these issues in a consistent and compassionate manner, the gospel re-

quires that we approach one another in humility and sacrificial love, repenting where necessary for the purpose of moving together toward healing and wholeness. From last year’s events in Ferguson, Missouri, to the ongoing attempts at reconciliation in our nation to the remarkable time of prayer, repentance, and brotherhood among the pastors and elders at this past summer’s PCA General Assembly (see p. 30), the Lord is calling us to a deeper understanding of what it means to follow Christ and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This edition of *Covenant* draws on the voices and perspectives of some of our Covenant Seminary faculty and alumni to help us examine and respond to these critical issues. Biblical repentance is “unto life” (Acts 11:18) and gives us much to rejoice in as we look to the cross of our Lord, resting in his redeeming work on our behalf, and seeing there the love that not only saves us, but also motivates and empowers our own efforts to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Dr. Mark L. Dalbey, *President*

## Drs. Zack Eswine and Bruce McRae Join Seminary Faculty

Covenant Seminary is pleased to welcome to our campus **Dr. Zack Eswine and Dr. Bruce H. McRae**, who both begin new roles with us this academic year.



Dr. Zack Eswine (MDiv '95), who taught at Covenant several years ago, returned in July 2015 in a part-time role as director of homiletics and adjunct

professor of applied theology. He replaces Dr. Jimmy Agan, who left the Seminary in June to return to pastoral ministry. Zack will continue in his capacity as lead pastor at Riverside Church (EPC) in Webster Groves, Missouri, where he has served since 2008. He brings many years' experience as a pastor, preacher, and teacher to his new position at the Seminary. Zack will teach the introductory homiletics course as well as the introductory lectures for the core homiletics curriculum. He will also oversee the Seminary's adjunct and visiting instructors who teach the homiletics preaching labs and evaluate student sermons.

Dr. Eswine previously served as director of Covenant's Doctor of Ministry program from 2001 to 2008. Prior to that, he was lead pastor of Grace Church (PCA) in Hudson, Ohio (1995–2001); an associate staff member for the Navigators in Muncie, Indiana; and director of the Victim Assistance Program for Blackford County, Indiana. He currently serves as moderator of Mid-America Presbytery for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), is director of the Webster Groves Clergy Alliance for Racial Equality, is on the board of Webster's Alliance for Racial Dignity, and is a visiting lecturer at Grace Theological College in New Zealand. He is the author of several books, including *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, *Sensing Jesus*, and *The Imperfect Pastor*.

Read more online at <http://bit.ly/1LNpBW5>.



Dr. Bruce H. McRae, joined the Seminary in October 2015 as dean of academic administration and adjunct professor of applied theology.

He takes over this role following the departure in May of Rev. Chris Florence, who returned to pastoral ministry. Bringing a wealth of leadership experience in church, seminary, non-profit, and corporate contexts, Dr. McRae is highly skilled in leading teams and in bringing administrative and relational skills to bear in the service of God's Kingdom. His duties as dean of academic administration will include ensuring that the Seminary's mission and doctrinal standards are being fulfilled through academic policy, procedures, and resourcing. Dr. McRae is already known and respected by the Covenant community, as he has served as an adjunct professor of applied theology at the Seminary since 2009, teaching in the Doctor of Ministry Program.

Dr. McRae comes to St. Louis from Atlanta, where he has been serving with PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc., as a development officer for ministerial relief (2013–2015). Before that, he served as director of church relations with Great Commission Publications (2008–2013). Dr. McRae has been an adjunct professor with Reformed Theological Seminary Atlanta since 2003. Prior to his time in Atlanta he served in various senior and executive pastor roles. He holds an MDiv from Westminster Theological Seminary, a DMin from Fuller Theological Seminary, and an MBA from Georgia State University.

Read more online at <http://bit.ly/1P6ecTz>.

Covenant Seminary President Dr. Mark Dalbey commented, "We are very excited and humbled that Zack and Bruce are joining us during this important time for the Seminary. Their many years of pastoral leadership and administrative experience will be a great blessing for Covenant and its mission of equipping pastors and leaders for God's church and Kingdom. We praise the Lord for his gracious provision for this institution."



## Earn an MATS Degree Through Our Evening Program or Online Options

Are you looking to enhance your ministry by earning a seminary degree without necessarily committing to full-time study? Now you can! Covenant Seminary's **Master of Arts (Theological Studies) (MATS)** degree is now available through two convenient avenues in addition to the usual full- or part-time on-campus study.

The **MATS Evening Program** is designed for those desiring to pursue the degree part time through evening classes. Discounts are available for groups of three or more taking classes for credit. This is an excellent way for local churches or other ministries to train leaders, or for anyone to grow in understanding and living out their faith.

The **MATS Online Option** is designed especially for those who can't leave their current jobs or ministries to attend classes at Covenant. Now you can complete an MATS fully online! This newly revised and accredited version of the MATS is the same degree program offered on campus, but allows students to take all required classes part time or full time online. No on-campus residency is necessary. The program also allows for the possibility of applying a limited number of credit hours toward a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree.

Interested? Find out more online at [www.covenantseminary.edu/mats](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/mats).

Ready to start? Apply online at [www.covenantseminary.edu/apply-now](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/apply-now).



## MARC Degree Offers FSI/CMI Fellowship Tracks

Students seeking to better prepare themselves to engage biblically and thoughtfully with contemporary culture now have two additional ways of doing so. The **Master of Arts in Religion and Cultures (MARC)** degree program is especially designed to offer a broad biblical foundation for ministering in cross-cultural or international contexts. In addition to the MARC General Track, which provides a basic framework for such cultural and cross-cultural ministry, the program now features two new track options that cover the same essential core material but also allow for specific emphases depending on the student's area of interest and concentration.

- + **The FSI Cultural Apologetics Track**, offered in conjunction with our Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI), gives students the tools for developing a deeper understanding of the culture(s) around us to communicate the gospel more effectively.
- + **The CMI Missional Discipleship Track**, offered in conjunction with our City Ministry Initiative (CMI), prepares students for the particular challenges involved in ministering the gospel in city/urban settings.

Through the generosity of our donors, the MARC program is able to offer **up to eight Fellowships per year in the FSI and CMI MARC tracks**. These Fellowships include a tuition scholarship of up to 50 percent and the opportunity to serve a wide-ranging, practical ministry internship with either FSI or CMI, or approved affiliate ministries, depending on the student's degree track.

Additionally, students in our Master of Divinity (MDiv) program may augment that degree by pursuing the **MDiv CMI Missional Discipleship Fellowship option**, which requires the student to take 9 credit hours of courses from the CMI Missional Discipleship curriculum—6 hours of core courses and 3 hours of electives.

Learn more about the MARC degree at [www.covenantseminary.edu/marc](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/marc).

## Annual Schaeffer Lectures Address Significant Issues of Our Day

Each year, the Francis A. Schaeffer Lecture Series, sponsored by the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI) at Covenant Seminary, invites speakers from a wide variety of fields to offer a biblical perspective on some of the challenging issues facing our world. The goal is to help the Seminary community and the broader church engage with these issues in a courageous yet compassionate and gospel-centered way. Here **Prof. Mark Ryan**, director of FSI and adjunct professor of contemporary culture, offers an overview of the topics covered at our 2014 and 2015 Schaeffer Lectures.

### 2014 Schaeffer Lectures Offered Pastoral Approach to Homosexuality



*Dr. Mark Yarhouse spoke about homosexuality and the church at the 2014 Schaeffer Lectures.*

In a recent online post for *Christianity Today*, John Inazu, associate professor of law and political science at Washington University in St. Louis, noted that the coming

special guest lecturers Dr. Mark Yarhouse, professor of psychology at Regent University and director of the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity, and Dr. Wesley Hill, assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry. More than 500 people from the community and across the region filled the Seminary's Rayburn Chapel to overflowing as these two respected Christian leaders thoughtfully addressed ways in which the evangelical church might remain faithful to the scriptural witness on homosexuality while further developing and expressing faithful pastoral care for individuals struggling with same-sex attraction as they travel the difficult road of discipleship.

months will likely entail increased liberty for those pursuing the right to marry a same-sex partner and increased pressures on religious organizations and individuals who resist the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples. Toward the close of his post, Professor Inazu wisely reminds us that:

*[I]t would be a mistake to let our concern over these challenges lead to resentment or unkind words toward our neighbors, gay or straight. . . . Legal and political battles—as important as they are—have real-world consequences not only for us but also for our friends and neighbors. It would be a mistake to forget that our words and actions continue to matter regardless of the legal and cultural environment.*

With deep awareness of such rapid change concerning the cultural acceptance of homosexuality and with real-world concern for gospel witness and faithful pastoral care, in the fall of 2014 FSI dedicated its annual special lecture series to the topic *Homosexuality and the Church: Toward Faithful Pastoral Care*.

Co-sponsored by FirstLight St. Louis, the event featured

Drs. Yarhouse and Hill were joined by **Prof. Jerram Barrs**, FSI founder and scholar-in-residence (whose remarks opened and closed the conference); **Dr. Richard Winter**, director of Covenant Seminary's counseling degree program; **Ms. Julie Rogers**, ministry associate for spiritual care at Wheaton College; **Rev. Sean Maney**, director of FirstLight Ministries; **Rev. Ron Lutjens**, pastor of Old Orchard Presbyterian Church in Webster Groves, Missouri; and **Mr. Kyle Keating**, a PCA ruling elder and teacher of history and theology at Providence Christian Academy in St. Louis—all of whom participated in a conference-concluding panel discussion.

Pastors, counselors, ministry leaders, and parents praised the conference for its tone and content. Numerous follow-up phone calls, e-mails, and letters also attest to the timeliness of the topic and the judicious way in which the speakers addressed the current need for practical biblical direction in discipling those who experience the trials of same-sex attraction while desiring to walk as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

To listen to audio from this or other Schaeffer Lecture series, visit [www.covenantseminary.edu/resources](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/resources) and click "View Lectures."



## 2015 Schaeffer Lectures Explored Church's Missional Identity in a Changing Global Landscape

*Sent Into the World: A Missional Recovery of Ecclesial Identity* was the theme of the 2015 Francis A. Schaeffer Lectures, presented by the Seminary's Schaeffer Institute on September 18 and 19.

The event featured plenary speaker **Dr. Michael Goheen**, theological director and scholar-in-residence at the Missional Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona, and author of *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. The goal of the conference was to help believers recapture our identity as those who join God in his missional task to bless and heal the nations as the good news of Christ's redeeming work is made known in and through the church—the sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's salvation.

Other speakers included:

- + **Rev. Darrin Patrick**, founder and lead pastor of The Journey in St. Louis, vice president of the Acts 29 Church Planting Network, and chaplain to the St. Louis Cardinals.
- + **Rev. Josiah Bancroft**, director of mission at Serge (formerly World Harvest Mission).
- + **Dr. Luke Bobo**, curriculum director and resident theologian at Biblical Business Training.
- + **Dr. Michael Williams**, professor of systematic theology at Covenant Theological Seminary and author of *Far As the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*.

**Dr. Mark Dalbey**, president of Covenant Seminary, delivered the opening remarks.



## Defending Liberty Was Subject of 2015 St. Louis L'Abri Conference

L'Abri Fellowship in Rochester, Minnesota, brought its fourth annual St. Louis L'Abri Conference, titled *Defending Life and Liberty in a Brave New World*, to the campus of Covenant Seminary in October to address the many challenges to human liberty in an increasingly divisive, intolerant, and relativistic world.

Speakers included: **Mr. Dick Keyes**, director of L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough, MA; **Dr. David Lyon**, director of the Surveillance Studies Centre, Queen's

University, Kingston, Ontario; **Dr. Richard Winter**, professor of applied theology and counseling, Covenant Seminary; **Rev. Mark Ryan**, director of the Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary; and **Mr. Larry Snyder**, scholar, teacher, and former director of the Rochester L'Abri.



PHOTOS BY SEAN LOTTIN

## Seminary Hosts 2015 African American Leadership Development and Resource Weekend

Covenant Seminary was proud to host the 2015 African American Leadership Development and Resource Weekend on Saturday, September 5. The annual gathering, sponsored by the PCA's Mission to North America (MNA), brings together current and prospective African American seminary students, as well as missionaries, church planters, and ministry workers focused on urban or multicultural contexts. The goal is to provide a time of collaboration, fellowship, and encouragement while facilitating fruitful discussions about the growing need for well-trained Reformed African American professional and lay leadership. The 2015 gathering featured a variety of speakers, including several

Covenant Seminary alumni, designed to spark conversation around the themes of gospel-shaped activism, Christian responsibility, and social justice. The weekend featured events and presentations on:

- + The misguided doctrine of spirituality used to mask church-sanctioned racism and lack of evangelical involvement in social issues.
- + The theology of the Civil Rights movement and how we can learn from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- + Prayer as activism, protest as liturgical practice, and the question of congregational mobilization.

There were also discussions on cultural intelligence, protest as spiritual formation, and Christian responsibility in public justice; opportunities for small group discussion and candid conversation with local pastors and ministry leaders who have responded to social issues in a variety of ways; and interaction and Q&A with local activists and law enforcement representatives.

The conference was made possible by a unique partnership between the Seminary's African American Student Fellowship and Reformed Theological Seminary-Jackson, South City Church in St. Louis, the New City Network, and the PCA's African American Ministries Network.

## CMI Conference 2015 Shared Biblical Perspective on Racial Issues

We are confronted almost daily by bad news that dispels the myth of post-racial America. Is there any good news? How does the gospel weave our smaller personal stories and our racial and cultural identities into the larger identity of Christ's "one new humanity"?

These were some of the questions explored by the Seminary and the broader community during a special two-day conference in April 2015. Titled *Welcoming One Another: Racial Identity in Christ* and sponsored by Covenant Seminary's City Ministry Initiative (CMI), the conference aimed at sparking meaningful dialogue on racial issues while seeking practical and biblical ways to move forward in light of recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere around the country.

Featured Speakers for the event included **Dr. Carl Ellis Jr.**, associate pastor of cultural apologetics at New City Fellowship, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and assistant professor of practical theology at Redeemer Seminary; **Dr. Peter Slade**, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Ashland University; **Mr. Vincent Bantu**, co-chair of the theology committee of the Christian Community Development Association; and **Ms. Michelle Higgins**, director of worship and outreach at South City Church, St. Louis, Missouri. **Dr. Mike Higgins**, dean of students at Covenant Seminary, and **Dr. Greg Perry**, associate professor of New Testament and director of CMI, hosted the event and led various sessions during the conference.



PHOTO BY BECKY KIERN

## GA Fellowship Dinner Addressed Theme of Justice and Peace

Commissioners to the PCA's 43rd General Assembly in Chattanooga, Tennessee, their spouses, and anyone else who was interested were invited to a special fellowship dinner during the week of the Assembly focused on the theme *Justice and Peace: What Are We to Become?*

The event featured **Rev. Dr. Mike Higgins**, dean of students at Covenant Seminary and co-pastor of South City Church in St. Louis, and his daughter **Michelle Higgins (MDiv '13)**, director of worship and outreach at South City Church, who shared their experiences from ministering in St. Louis in the days during and following the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. Mike and Michelle explored practical ways to get involved, and addressed some challenges at the epicenter of the evangelical church's invisibility in protest, advocacy, and public justice issues in general. Michelle also joined **Rev. Kevin Twit (MDiv '95)** of Indelible Grace to lead a time of worship.

To read a Q&A with Mike and Michelle, visit <http://bit.ly/1QlCeLF>.

## Cusick Training Seminar Tackled Sexual Addiction Issues

Covenant Seminary's Student Life team and the Counseling Department hosted a special sexual addictions training conference on October 2–3 titled *Porn: Gateway to the Gospel*. The featured speaker for the event was **Mr. Michael Cusick**, author of *Surfing for God: Discovering the Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle* (Nelson, 2012). Mr. Cusick helped attendees understand what it means to walk alongside those seeking healing amid sexual struggle and bring the power of the gospel to bear on our broken sexuality.



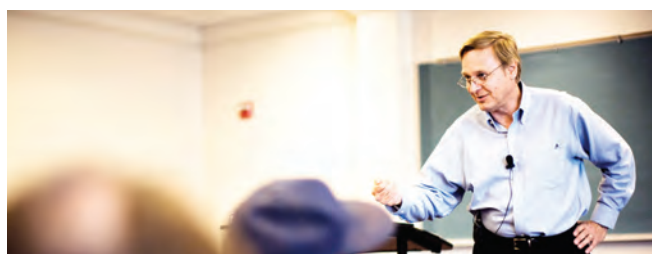


## Regional Conference

As part of our ongoing effort to bring the resources of the Seminary to our constituencies, the Seminary partnered with four PCA churches in Birmingham, Alabama, to present a two-part conference in January 2015 on *Your Role in God's Mission: Living the Gospel in All of Life*. The featured speakers were Dr. Mark Dalbey, Prof. Jerram Barrs, and Dr. Michael Williams. We hope to present more conferences like this on an occasional basis.

## Men's Leadership Breakfast (MLB)

This fall we are pleased to have Dr. Dan Doriani back with us to teach biblical themes from his book *The New Man*. Dr. Doriani addresses what it means to become a man after God's own heart, examining the biblical principles of masculinity that transcend culture. MLB meets every other Tuesday at 7 a.m. throughout the semester (a light breakfast is provided). All men are welcome to attend.



## Fourth Annual Covenant Theological Conference

This annual conference, sponsored by the student-led Theological Fellowship at Covenant Seminary, was held in January 2015 and offered papers and presentations by students from Covenant and other educational institutions on various themes. Dr. Hans Bayer (pictured above), professor of New Testament, delivered the plenary lecture based on his recent work in Petrine studies. Dr. Robert Yarbrough serves as faculty advisor for the Fellowship.

## Theological Fellowship Bantam Lectures

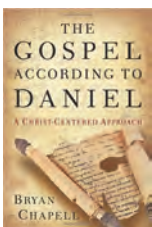
These special occasional lectures present speakers on a variety of theological topics. In March 2015, Dr. Peter Leithart, director of the Theopolis Institute, spoke on "Protestant and Catholic in Late Modernity." In April, Dr. D. A. Carson (above), research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and president and co-founder of the Gospel Coalition, addressed the seminary community on "The Biblical Pillars of Theodicy."

## Recent Faculty Publications and Other Kingdom Service

Covenant Seminary has been blessed with a distinctive and distinguished faculty—a community of world-class pastor-scholars whose academic excellence and pastoral focus is crucial to training faithful and fruitful pastors and ministry leaders. But their influence also extends well beyond the classroom, as they publish books and articles; travel across the country and around the world to teach and preach at churches, conferences, and seminars; and serve God's Kingdom in many other ways. Here are just a few recent examples.

**Prof. Jerram Barrs**, professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture, published a Romanian translation of his book *Through His Eyes: God's Perspective on Women in the Bible* and a Bulgarian translation of *Learning Evangelism From Jesus*.

**Dr. Hans F. Bayer**, professor of New Testament, published a Korean translation of his book *A Theology of Mark: The Dynamic Between Christology and Authentic Discipleship* and published *Apostolic Bedrock: Christology, Identity, and Character Formation According to Peter's Canonical Testimony* (Pater-noster Press, 2015).



**Dr. Bryan Chapell**, president emeritus and adjunct professor of applied theology, published *The Gospel According to Daniel: A Christ-Centered Approach* (Baker, 2014).

**Dr. David W. Chapman**, professor of New Testament and archaeology, co-authored (with Eckhard J. Schnabel) *The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus: Texts and Commentary* (Mohr-Siebeck, 2015), and was the editor for and a contributor to *The ESV Archaeology Bible* (Crossway, forthcoming in 2015–2016).

**Dr. Tasha Chapman**, director of educational studies and adjunct professor of educational ministries, co-authored (with Bob Burns and Donald Guthrie) *Intersecting Leadership in Marketplace and Ministry* (IVP, forthcoming).



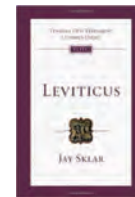
**Dr. Dan Doriani**, vice president for strategic academic initiatives and professor of theology, published *1 Peter* in the Reformed Expository Commentary series (P&R, 2014) and *The New Man: Becoming a Man After God's Heart*

(P&R, 2015), an updated version of his earlier *The Life of a God-Made Man*. Dr. Doriani also writes a monthly blog for The Gospel Coalition.

**Dr. Philip Douglass**, professor of applied theology, chairs the MNA Committee of Missouri Presbytery, meets extensively one-on-one with Seminary alumni during the PCA General Assembly each summer, and is a much-sought-after consultant on church planting, church personality, and other church matters.



**Dr. Robert A. Peterson**, professor of systematic theology, co-edited (with Christopher W. Morgan) *Heaven in the Theology in Community* series (Crossway, 2014), which he also edits; and published *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* (Crossway, 2014).



**Dr. Jay Sklar**, professor of Old Testament, published the well-received *Leviticus* in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries series (IVP, 2014).

**Dr. Richard Winter**, professor of applied theology and counseling, taught the course *Christian Counseling: An Integrated and Biblical Approach* at the 2014 Cambridge Summer School of Counseling in Cambridge, England.

**Dr. Robert W. Yarbrough**, professor of New Testament, served as president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2013 and frequently teaches at pastoral training conferences and Bible institutes in Africa and Europe.

## The NEW Edwards Community Center: Building Relationships for the Future



Covenant Seminary President Dr. Mark Dalbey (center) cuts the ribbon to open the renovated Community Center, assisted by (l. to r.) Wei-Min Hung and Andrew Trivers of Trivers Associates Architects, Vice President of Advancement John Ranheim, Board President Bill French, Board members Walt Turner and Bob Flayhart, and Senior Director of Facilities David Brown.

Edwards Community Center is back in business! The newly refurbished facility reopened at the start of the fall semester after a massive, 18-month renovation program. The goal of the project was to make the building—which over the years has served a variety of functions for the Seminary—more inviting and more conducive to fostering the growth of deeper gospel-centered relationships that are so vital to the formation of future pastors and church leaders.

Named for the Edwards family—whose heritage includes the former St. Louis financial firm of A. G. Edwards and Sons (now part of Wells Fargo Advisors) and who have been friends and avid supporters of the Seminary since its inception—the facility was originally built as a multi-purpose classroom. Later converted into a gathering space for students, faculty, and staff, the center became an important focal point for campus community life. Over the last several years, however, it was increasingly apparent that the facility was inadequate for the needs of a growing student body. Thanks to funds raised from many generous private donors, Seminary alumni, and a gift from the PCA’s Women in the Church, the center has undergone a complete makeover, transforming it into an up-to-date, accessible, and family-friendly facility.

### IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- + A larger dining space with a beamed ceiling, large windows that look out onto an exterior patio dining space, and a double-sided fireplace to add inviting warmth.

- + A more intimate booth seating area.
- + A community self-serve kitchen with seating around an open kitchen bar.
- + A new café and coffee shop near the larger dining area that will sell fresh, light fare.
- + More lounge and meeting space, with a reservable area for use by small study and discussion groups.
- + A recreation room on the lower level that includes facilities for table tennis and light fitness equipment.
- + Family-friendly restrooms.
- + An elevator for easier access to the lower level.

In addition, many environmentally friendly LEED concepts have been incorporated into the design, such as a light shelf to reflect light and reduce the use of overhead lighting, a highly efficient HVAC system that reduces energy consumption, recycled materials in finishes and furnishings, permeable pavers for the patio, and a rain garden to catch runoff from the roof.

*“So much of what shapes us in life happens around the dinner tables in our homes—sharing a meal, a conversation, the stories of our day. In like manner, we wanted to create a place for our campus community that provides a shared space for those kinds of formative times, a place that encourages relationships and conversations between students, faculty, and others within our surrounding churches. These kinds of relationships help to shape our students as they enter into a lifetime of ministry.”* - President Mark Dalbey



The Seminary celebrated the reopening of the Community Center in September with a campus picnic (1). The renovated center includes an expansive great room (2), the Covenant Cafe (3), a relaxing outdoor patio (4, 7), a cozy double-sided fireplace (5), and comfortable booths for eating and conversation (6).





**BOOK**

*ESV Women's Devotional Bible:*  
A Resource for the Church

**INTERVIEW**



Dr. Brian Aucker    Dr. Tasha Chapman

This Bible is a valuable resource for strengthening women in their walk with God and features theologically rich content with accessible and practical application.

Several members of the Covenant Seminary faculty are among the distinguished contributors to the *ESV Women's Devotional Bible*, published by Crossway in 2014. This Bible is a valuable resource for strengthening women in their walk with God and features theologically rich content with accessible and practical application. In addition to our faculty and professors from other institutions, contributors include musicians, authors, counselors, homemakers, and conference speakers. Covenant faculty who wrote articles or devotional material for the publication include: **Dr. Brian Aucker**, associate professor of Old Testament; **Dr. Bryan Chapell**, president emeritus and adjunct professor of applied theology, and his wife, **Kathy Chapell**; **Dr. Tasha Chapman**, director of educational studies and adjunct professor of educational ministries; **Dr. Dan Doriani**, vice president of strategic academic initiatives and professor of theology; **Dr. Robert A. Peterson**, professor of systematic theology; **Dr. Zack Eswine**, adjunct professor of applied theology; and **Mary Beth McGreevey**, adjunct professor of applied theology.

Drs. Aucker and Chapman here offer their thoughts on why this Bible is important and what it can mean for the church.

**Q:** What made this project meaningful for you?

**DR. BRIAN AUCKER:**

Several aspects of this project were meaningful. First, it was an honor to be asked to contribute to a devotional Bible with women as the primary audience. Second, the publisher, Crossway, wanted the devotionals to tie closely with the text while maintaining a view toward application to

the life of the Christian. Practically, this meant a strong commitment to biblical interpretation, which is vital for both women and men. I also loved the balance of texts that I was assigned. I had the opportunity to work with numerous Old Testament texts, some familiar and others not so familiar. However, I also had the chance to write devotionals on several New Testament texts, which was personally enriching.

**DR. TASHA CHAPMAN:**

I was honored and challenged by the assignment. One surprise was that I was asked to create devotionals on such diverse passages in both Old and New Testaments. A second challenge was the responsibility of trying to pen studied and life-relevant pages for American women in general. That motivated me to spend much more time interpreting and reflecting on the passages than I would have for my own sake, which was a blessing. I learned so much more than the few words allowed for each devotional.

**Q:** From your perspective, what is the need for a project like this?

**DR. AUCKER:**

This project is unique in that the contributors come from a vast range of settings and callings; it's good to bring together voices from such a range of perspectives. While the project was undertaken to produce a women's devotional Bible, contributors were women and men, pastors and non-pastors, academics and non-academics, authors, moms, dads, Bible teachers, etc. When you take a look at the finished product you find solid, theologically rich devotionals every three to five pages. This not only encourages meditation and reflection on God's Word, but also keeps the focus on the Word.

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The 365 devotionals drawn from passages throughout the whole of the Bible can help to further our reflections on life implications, broaden our prayers, and motivate us to active response to God's Word.

Encouragement to read the Bible is the main focus, with the devotionals serving the Scriptures.

**DR. CHAPMAN:**

To be frank, I wondered if the States needed yet another type of study Bible, but Crossway's plan struck me as uniquely helpful for furthering Bible study skills. The 365 devotionals cover a wide range of passages throughout the whole of the Bible and are printed next to the passage of focus. Each one focuses on interpretation of and personal response to the specific text rather than a topical study. Devotionals can be educationally helpful to us in many ways as we seek to grow in the knowledge and grace of God. For example, devotional reading can help us slow down to observe the biblical text more carefully, further our reflections on life implications, broaden our prayers, and motivate us to active response to God's Word by providing a sense of connection to others in our time and culture as we seek to learn from the same passage.

**Q: Why does the training of women in the gospel in this way particularly excite or encourage you?**

**DR. AUCKER:**

What excites me is training believing women and men to properly interpret and correctly apply the Bible that

they turn to for instruction in life and godliness. It sounds cliché, but this is not an issue of gender. Before and over my work as teacher at Covenant Seminary, I am a son, a husband, a father, and a grandfather. As such, I am understandably concerned for the welfare of my family and particularly that they are being nurtured and sustained by solid instruction. This is one of the reasons I embraced and accepted work on this project. It was a way that I could provide a small contribution to the wider task of making disciples.

**DR. CHAPMAN:**

I am encouraged by how bold the younger generation of women is to take the gospel, in word and deed, to difficult and dark places. Though many did not grow up in Christian homes learning the Bible, their passion to know God through his Word and to love God's people runs deep. Whether in ministry or the marketplace, these women make a godly impact in our society when they grasp how worthy and blameless they are in God's eyes through Christ. The freedom that comes from walking more assuredly in God's love and grace leads them to fruitful redemptive work in their various professions and relationships. It's exciting to be partnered with them.

**Q: How would you like to see your work on this Bible bless the church?**

**DR. AUCKER:**

As odd as it sounds, there is a way to write devotional literature that is only loosely connected to the biblical text. My desire is that women who read the *Women's Devotional Bible* will walk more deeply with the Lord whom they profess. I hope that women are blessed not only from the content that clearly arises from the biblical text, but also from the method of instruction in each devotional. It is generally the case that people appreciate a meal more than its ingredients. I would like to see each of these four-hundred-word devotionals provide a nutritious meal worthy of further reflection and meditation. While not a commentary per se, each devotional would be a good starting point for those preparing their own Bible studies or small group studies.

**DR. CHAPMAN:**

I hope the devotionals encourage more women to read and study the whole of the Bible, experiencing how every passage teaches us about God's work in this world and our part in his redemptive story.

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Order your copy of the *ESV Women's Devotional Bible* online at:  
[www.amazon.com/ESV-Womens-Devotional-Bible-Green/dp/1433538164](http://www.amazon.com/ESV-Womens-Devotional-Bible-Green/dp/1433538164).





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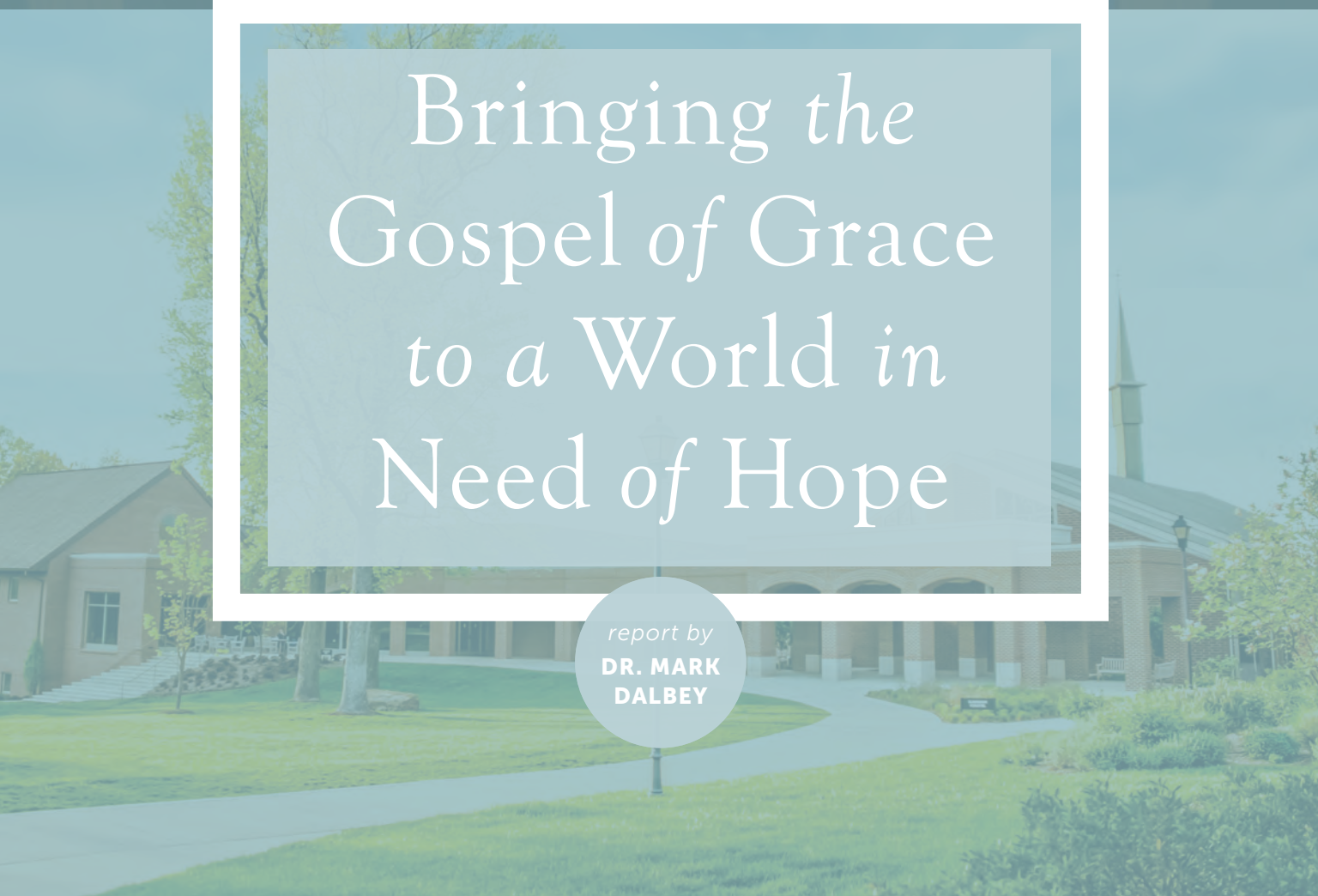
# SEMINARY

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Bringing *the*  
Gospel of Grace  
*to a* World in  
Need of Hope

report by  
**DR. MARK  
DALBEY**

In his report to the 43rd General Assembly of the PCA in June, President Dr. Mark Dalbey provided an overview of the Seminary's year and a preview of where we need to go as we seek to train pastors and leaders for Christ's church and Kingdom for the year 2025 and beyond. Here is an abbreviated version of his report.



The purpose of Covenant Theological 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. About five years ago we added that phrase "all for God's mission," and it is increasingly forming and shaping our understanding of everything we do at the Seminary.

#### ACHIEVING STABILITY FOR THE SAKE OF GOD'S MISSION

Last year I shared some of the struggles we were having with enrollment and finances. This year, I'm happy to report that by the grace and favor of God we are stable and vigilant, better understanding what financial health looks like and how important it is not simply in itself, but also for the purpose of serving the mission God has given us. This year we're on track to achieve operating results in the black for the first time in a few years without the equivalent of moving some money over from the "savings" account into the "checking" account. We've also begun to be more forward-looking—we are working on some strategic goals and plans for the future that we will tell you more about as they take more definite shape. God is meeting us in this as we seek to walk humbly with him and work boldly for his Kingdom.

#### A YEAR OF SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

A number of key impactful events took place at Covenant Seminary this past year. Certainly the dynamics related to the events in Ferguson, Missouri, about fifteen miles from us, have had an effect on how we understand the preparation of pastors and leaders for God's church and Kingdom. We've had to listen and learn, and figure out how to engage with and in the ongoing

ing conversations resulting from these events. We've been helped tremendously in this by our dean of students, Dr. Mike Higgins, and the pastor's fellowship that he and his brother-in-law started a year and a half ago. We are thankful for that, and for the number of African American graduates from the Seminary who are pastoring in St. Louis. In a related event, this past spring our City Ministry Initiative held a conference on *Racial Identity in Christ*, led by Dr. Carl Ellis Jr., associate pastor for cultural apologetics at New City Fellowship in Chattanooga. The conference had a tremendous impact on the life of our community.

Last fall, our Francis Schaeffer Lecture Series addressed the subject of *Homosexuality and the Church: Toward Faithful Pastoral Care*. We had a wonderful conference, emphasizing an uncompromising commitment to the biblical sexual ethic, and an uncompromising commitment to the biblical call to have compassion for people made in God's image who are fellow sinners like us. I was asked several times during the weekend of the conference, "President Dalbey, don't you think it's rather risky to have a conference on this topic?" I answered, "If anyone thinks this is a problem I'd love to have a conversation about it. But if our task is to prepare and equip pastors and leaders who understand God's Word and how to relate it to the presenting issues of our day, then I believe it is a greater risk to not have a conference like this."

#### A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I'm happy to report that God has provided the necessary funds for us to complete the long-needed renovations of our Community Center. We are on schedule and on budget for opening the new Edwards

We feel increasingly that our job is to follow Jesus into all the cities and villages, everywhere, with everyone, all the time, proclaiming, certainly, but also bringing, through our very lives, the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Community Center this fall. It will be a beautiful addition to our campus that will better reflect who we are as a community of grace and better help to shape the ethos of that community. (Update: See pp. 12–13 of this magazine for photos from our grand opening event in September.)

One of the sad things for us this year is that Dr. Jimmy Agan, professor of New Testament and the director of our homiletics program, decided to accept a call to pastor Intown Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, so he is leaving us at the end of the 2015 academic year. We are sorry to lose Jimmy, but we rejoice that the Lord will bless the people at Intown through Jimmy's ministry there.

But the news isn't all sad for us. The happy thing about it is that Dr. Zack Eswine, who used to teach with us, is returning in about a one-third capacity to teach homiletics and direct the homiletics program while remaining in his role as lead pastor at Riverside Church in St. Louis. We're grateful for Zack's willingness to join us in this way and for the Lord's provision for the Seminary (see p. 4).

#### OUR CALL TO "BRING THE GOOD NEWS" AS JESUS DID

I love being president of Covenant Seminary. It's a great privilege and blessing to be involved in the training of pastors and leaders in the way we are. It's a grand and glorious thing to be at the Seminary and to be part of the PCA. But I sometimes have to remind myself as president that even though we're called to do something that's important and necessary, neither I nor anyone else who stands at this podium and gives a report as a president or coordinator of one of our denominational agencies is doing anything that is more valuable or important in the Kingdom of God than any of the many other ministries that are represented here. We're all called to do something that is bigger than any of us and to do it humbly, with the recognition of who we are in Christ.

Luke 8:1 says, "Jesus went through the villages and the cities proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God." We feel increasingly that our job is to follow Jesus into all the cities and villages, everywhere, with everyone, all the time, proclaiming, certainly, but also bringing, through our very lives, the good news of the

Kingdom of God. We feel more and more that we need to be training missionary-minded pastor-theologians and leaders who have a comprehensive biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Why is this so important? I think it's important because the dynamics in the culture around us are changing. On the grand scale of things, the Seminary and our denomination are pretty small blips in the greater evangelical church. From the larger human standpoint, we're not very significant at all. Many of the issues that we see as significant and relevant are not necessarily significant and relevant to others beyond our small tribe.

As Christians, we are increasingly living as a minority within our own culture. We are people holding minority values more and more. Without compromising biblical truth and ethics, we must engage people with the heart and mind and embodiment of the gospel of Jesus Christ—who leads toward people as a friend for sinners. As we follow him we will lead people similarly. It will not be enough to simply call people to a biblical consensus of moral values without building bridges for the deep transforming power of the gospel. The path ahead may include the loss of many things that we hold dear, including our formerly privileged position within our culture. But this is nothing new for the church of Jesus. As we look through history and around the world today, suffering and cross bearing are the norms. At the Seminary, we feel increasingly that we need to train our students to go out into ministries to which God is calling them with the preparation for, and even the expectation that, they will be opposed.

As a Seminary and a denomination, we must humbly recognize these realities in the present world and humbly cry out to God to work in and through us as a missionary church to the world and to our own culture, including the so-called Bible Belt. In this, we need the help of our Asian American, Hispanic American, and African American brothers and sisters to help us see what we are blind to in the PCA as a majority culture of predominantly Anglo Americans—with, sadly, a history of not listening all that well. We must self-identify as a mustard-seed church and be willing for God to shape us and use us as he sees fit. We must commit to following Jesus and join with him in going "into all the cities and villages proclaiming and bringing

the good news of the Kingdom of God.” This is word and deed ministry. It’s grace and truth ministry. It’s speaking and embodying the Kingdom of God with a passion to see his Kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven—to whatever degree that is possible before his return—as King Jesus gathers the nations and generations together and restores all things.

While continuing to speak grace and truth into the issues of our day like abortion and same-sex marriage, amid diminishing cultural buy-in to our views on these matters, perhaps we are in a season where Christians, including the PCA, can be effective instruments of the gospel’s transforming power with regard to issues of social justice, racial reconciliation, and other social evils like human trafficking. But this will only happen as we humbly repent of our past sins, our little faith, and our presumption that we have all the answers because we’re Presbyterian and Reformed.

### NEW STEPS FORWARD FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH

**W**hy do I go on about some of these things? Because they are the context, the presenting dynamics we must address as we seek to train pastors and leaders for God’s church and Kingdom and as we think out to the year 2025 and beyond. How do we steward *now* the season we have with our students to help them engage the realities of the world to which God will be calling them?

As I noted earlier, we are in the process of thinking through strategic goals that we have been vetting with our board, faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and friends. In summary, we long to see our students enter a community of meaningful grace-and-truth relationships as they interact with a pastor-scholar faculty that is teaching a transformative, missional curriculum with a passion for engaging with God’s Kingdom mission in his world. We want them as well to be nurtured by meaningful mentored field education experiences as we send them out to lead and engage in God’s mission.

I would like to share with you briefly one new thing we are exploring in this regard. It’s still in the developmental stages at this time, so more details will be forthcoming as we get further along with it. We are currently planning to have a physical presence as Covenant Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. Since about 1998, many people in Nashville have been saying to us, “Come bring to Nashville what we value about Covenant Seminary.” So in response to that, we are pursuing accreditors and churches and other details that we hope will allow us to begin offering some

classes relatively soon in Nashville. This will be something of an on- and off-ramp for MDiv students who come from Nashville and want to go back to Nashville to minister. It will also be a place where people in Nashville who are in staff positions in churches and various other callings will be able to get deeper biblical and theological training without necessarily having to relocate to St. Louis. We look forward to sharing more about this exciting new project with you as things develop. (Visit [www.covenantseminary.edu/nashville](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/nashville) for more information.)

A key part of all of this, of course, is our faculty. They take our students deep into the Scriptures and historical, biblical, systematic, and missional theology. They also bring students into an understanding of meaningfully applied theology in the trenches of the church for the sake of the world. Our faculty loves the Bible, they love our students, they love each other, and they love being involved in this “all for God’s mission” seminary endeavor. You can see what one of them, Dr. Jay Sklar, professor of Old Testament, has to say about why he loves teaching at Covenant by visiting our website at <http://bit.ly/1Gjm9v>.

### A DENOMINATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

**T**hank you for supporting us in the ways that you do. We need your help as partnering churches who send students to us to be trained in this way. Seminaries are a unique place to multiply the impact of what God is doing. That’s what holds many of us, including me, in seminary education: to know that, while we’re not pastoring anybody directly, we’re teamed with like-minded people investing in those who will pastor others, and in this way, we can have a greater impact than we can even imagine over the many years that we get to be a part of such an endeavor.

Now, we believe, is a significant time for us as a seminary to set our course in a right trajectory for the future, with a deeper, stronger, and more comprehensive commitment to and expression of being true to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and the Great Commission.

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**Dr. Mark Dalbey** is president and associate professor of applied theology at Covenant Theological Seminary. He brings many years of pastoral and leadership experience to his role at the Seminary, where, in addition to his many responsibilities as president, he also teaches courses on *Worship*, *Gospel-Centered Leadership*, and *Gospel-Centered Parenting*. Mark and his wife, Beth, have been married for 40 years and enjoy spending time with their three grown children and their wives, and an increasing number of grandchildren (currently 9).

FEATURE

# Reflections

*on the Church and Racial Reconciliation*

# DISCERNING—AND BEING—THE BODY OF CHRIST

by Gregory R. Perry

The 2014–2015 school year started in the immediate aftermath of Michael Brown’s death on August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, a little more than 15 miles from the Seminary campus. As if that incident and its resultant cultural aftershocks were not enough, throughout the following year the news stream seemed like a torrent of death as many other African Americans lost their lives in police shootings under often questionable circumstances. Tempers flared as the killings tore scabs off old, deep wounds and called up the ghosts of racial tensions long buried just beneath the surface of our society.

Where does the body of Christ stand in relation to the dead bodies of our neighbors? Does the Spirit speak a word of life to and through the church about the sanctity of African American lives? How will protesters, police, and civic leaders know that black lives matter to Jesus?

The physical, historical, and social reality of our Lord’s own body provides the concrete sign on which we, as Christians, most need to reflect as we seek to understand this abuse of God’s image bearers in our society. How do we understand the violence against our African American neighbors, brothers, and sisters within the redemptive, historical drama of Jesus’s violent beating, crucifixion, and resurrection? What is the theological, social, and missiological significance of the apostle Paul’s identification of Christ’s followers as “the body of Christ”?

As we read in Paul’s first letter to the factionalized Christians at Corinth, “discerning the body” not only provides a preliminary “stress test” that evaluates the local church’s health, it also determines the integrity of its gospel proclamation. As if these stakes are not high enough, Paul goes further to write that “anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor. 11:29). What is this vital practice of “discerning the body”?

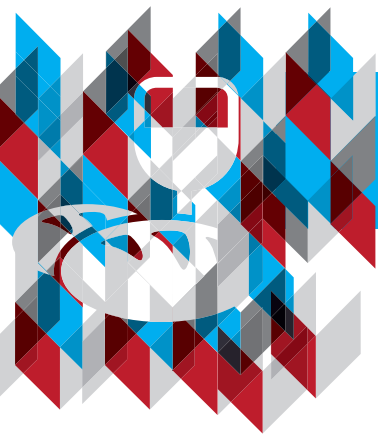
## DISCERNING THE BODY IN CORINTH

Three times, Paul tells the church at Corinth that there is a problem “when you come together” (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20). What should be a common good is, in their case, harm-

ful to some. (vv. 17, 30). The word translated as “come together” (*sunerchomai*) can mean “to assemble” or “to unite.” The painful reality in first-century, cosmopolitan Corinth—and in twenty-first century, intercultural American cities—is that when Christians “assemble” they are mostly “not united.”

Ever the theological realist, Paul describes the fractures (vv.18–19) protruding from the Corinthian body in the absurd extremes of their church meals. On the one hand, “one goes hungry”; on the other hand, “another gets drunk” (v. 21). Apparently, wealthier home-owning church members (v. 22) were providing gourmet meals for themselves and their social peers, not sharing with the whole church body, and/or they were “going ahead” (v. 21), not “waiting” to eat with their “brothers and sisters” (v. 33), who worked longer hours as day laborers. When these others arrived, they had to sit separately in the foyer, not in the dining room, and eat whatever was left over. While this kind of socially stratified behavior was normal at Corinthian dinner parties, Paul negates these assembly meals, saying they are “not the Lord’s Supper” (v. 20)! Indeed, Paul severely qualifies his earlier commendation (11:2) with pointed questions and a strong reprimand: “Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Are you despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not!” (11:22). In this toxic atmosphere of Corinthian malpractice, Paul rehearses the drama of what the Lord’s body, blood, and table signify—the salvation and judgment of bodies.

The words of institution at the ritual communal meal are framed within exhortations about where and how to eat it. This frame is marked clearly by two more uses of the word for “come together” (11:17, 18, 20 → 11:33, 34) with instructions to “welcome” and “share with one another” in order to avoid judgment (11:33–34). This frame brings Paul’s ambiguous phrase “discerning the body” (11:29) into focus. Paul passes on Jesus’s words and deeds. Paul does not write, “Say this!” for twice Jesus said, “Do this!” (11:24, 25). The meaning of Christ’s death is *proclaimed by the drama of the dinner* (11:23–26). The imperatives are plural:



For far too long, evangelicals have proclaimed “the gospel of the new me.” Paul’s focus, however, is the good news about “God’s new we.”

“you all do this!” The meal must be performed together because Christ’s body is “for the sake of you all” (11:24). In true Semitic fashion, “my remembrance” (11:24–25) is not

merely a matter of recall; rather, like its originating Passover occasion, the Lord’s Supper takes up the sign of God’s covenant to embody it faithfully in the present. Not, “Here lies my body” but “This *is* my body, which is for the sake of you all.” Not memorializing the covenant, but renewing and re-presenting it: “This *is* the cup of the new covenant in my blood.” According to Paul, these words of institution, these elements of bread and wine, *and* this arrangement of bodies eating and drinking together “proclaims the death of the Lord until he comes” (11:26).

“Eating and drinking without discerning the body” (11:29) is eating and drinking separately, selfishly focusing on one’s own physical and spiritual needs without regard for those of one’s brothers and sisters, who equally share in Christ’s body and blood. For Paul, the social segregation of the Corinthian Christians in their practice of the Lord’s Supper is grotesque, like an amputation from the body, even life-threatening. With prophetic insight and sternness, Paul interprets: “that is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (11:30). Therefore, “discerning the body” is a crucial practice of testing and treatment that Paul puts forward at Corinth to maintain the spiritual and social health of the church. Each member tests his or her relationship to Christ’s sacrificed body when he or she honors the intimate covenant relationship with members of Christ’s social body in a particular place.

### ED KING’S “CHURCH VISITS”

It is very important to notice that Paul did not write to “churches in Corinth” but to “the church of God, that is in Corinth, . . . called to be saints together with all those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus” (1:2). If the pattern of his epistolary salutations gives any indication, Paul would not today write separately to the Presbyterian, Missionary Baptist, Pentecostal, or AME churches of St. Louis, but rather to “the church of God, that is in St. Louis.”

Between the springs of 1963 and 1964, white Christian minister and civil rights activist Ed King and those—both black and white—who joined him for courageous “church visits” dramatized Paul’s local ecclesiology and his practice of “discerning the body.” Turned away repeatedly at two

prominent Jackson, Mississippi, churches that had adopted “whites only” policies, these visitors surprised ushers at the early communion service of Galloway Methodist Church. Hastily forming a human barricade, the ushers at Galloway blocked entrance to the chapel and the Lord’s Table. King began banging on the doors with his students, disrupting the meditative silence of those waiting to partake of bread and wine. He shouted, “If we can’t worship the same God together inside the same church buildings, then we will still knock on your door and so irritate you that you cannot worship your white God in peace, that you cannot escape thinking about the problems of segregation on Sunday morning” (see Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* [Princeton, 1997], 134). Like Paul, King understood that the way church members relate to one another reflects their understanding of Christ and the meaning of his sacrifice. With the drama of “church visits,” King, his students, and fellow ministers re-presented Paul’s question, “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13).

In the cities of North America, Christ is divided. Michael Emerson, a sociologist from Rice University, writes that churches remain “hyper-segregated”—more segregated even than our surrounding neighborhoods and schools. According to a National Congregations Study by Duke University, this is slowly improving as the percentage of U. S. congregations made up of 90% or more of one group has decreased from 93% in 1998 to 87% in 2012 (Laura Meckler, “How Churches Are Slowly Becoming Less Segregated,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 13, 2014).

To us, the church of God in St. Louis, and in your city, Paul asks which Jesus we are “discerning” as we “come together” separately. Though white bodies are normative in U.S. society, they are not in Jesus’s alternative society. His beaten, pierced, still-scarred-but-risen Jewish body is the measure of “mature humanity” (Eph. 4:13) and the very image of God (Eph. 4:24; Col. 1:15). If we do not worship, eat and drink, and share our lives meaningfully with other members of Christ’s body in our city or region, then, according to the Spirit through Paul, we are deforming our understandings of ourselves, of each other, and of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. We are not discerning Christ’s physical or social body.

### REMEMBERING, REPENTING, AND RE-INTEGRATING

For far too long, evangelicals have proclaimed “the gospel of a new me.” Paul’s focus, however, is the good news about “God’s new we” (Eph. 2:11–22). Nowhere are these

diverging priorities more evident than in the way the meal and principles described in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 are practiced. Paul’s concern is extrospective, relational, and social, not introspective, psychological, and individual. In American evangelicalism, human bodies are often discerned as dangerous to the spiritual, so the practice of the Lord’s Supper has been severely reduced to focus the “mind” of the individual believer on the “soul’s” relationship with God. In Corinth, however, the judgment that the Corinthians experienced in their ecclesial and physical body was a direct consequence of their social segregation. Because the hungry and thirsty cries of its members were being ignored, the whole body was becoming sick.

“Black Lives Matter!” is the strong, dignified complaint of disenfranchised neighbors, fellow image bearers, brothers and sisters who are hungry and thirsty for justice. What is the Spirit saying to the churches? Through the voices of our black neighbors, in concert with the apostle, the Spirit exhorts us, saying, “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me’” (Rom. 15:2–3). Paul quotes the Psalmist, who sings his lament in worship, appealing to the saving faithfulness of God (Ps. 69:9b, 13).

On April 4, 2015, several seminary students, fellow ministers, and I participated in a Mourning March in St. Louis organized by Faith for Justice. With family members of some of the slain, we cried to God over the number of murders in our city. We remembered the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As I was asked to pray at our stop in the Central West End, I responded to a complaint that many churches have abandoned city neighborhoods and remain silent about the misuse of force by police. I prayed: “Hear our confession, Lord, and show us your mercy. Forgive us for neglecting the pain of our neighbors, for treating you as our own personal Savior, but not as the Lord of our city. Enable us by your forgiveness to love our neighbors by working together for justice in our courts, in our policing practices and in the opportunities our schools and marketplaces provide. For you’ve told us clearly, Lord, that the kind of worship you receive is ‘to break the bonds of oppression, to pay a fair wage, to declare to everyone the year of the Lord’s favor.’”

Christians are called to study “the peace and purity of the church.” But how do we return to our study this semester in the face of ongoing violence such as the slaughter of nine of our brothers and sisters at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June? First, we must learn from the gospel witness of the victims’ families, who, while expressing their intense grief at their loss, also extended forgiveness to the killer, whose admitted inten-

tion was to incite a race war. That forgiveness and offer of the gospel was rooted in the brutal beating and unjust execution of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, we must reintegrate our unity as the body of Christ. In the wake of the horror at Emanuel AME, Pastor Don Burnett of St. Andrews Evangelical Church in Columbia, South Carolina, was deeply shaken. He and his predominantly white church body were hurting, and they knew that their friends at the nearby Potter’s Christian Life Center, which is predominantly black, were mourning too. Pastor Don and some of his elders had developed a praying fellowship with Potter’s Center pastor, Gregory Formey. One Sunday morning this past June, the members of St. Andrews reversed the direction of Ed King’s “church visits,” proceeding out of their sanctuary for the fifteen-minute walk to Potter’s Center. When Pastor Formey saw his friends enter, he was overcome. More than half the congregation of St. Andrews had come; the other half had proceeded to the Rhema Christian Center to visit the members of that congregation in their grief. After readings from Scripture and prayers of lament, they ended their service singing:

*We will work with each other; we will work side by side.  
We will guard each man’s dignity and save each man’s pride.  
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.  
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.  
We pray that our unity may one day be restored.  
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love.*

As we study the peace and purity of the church this year, preparing to share the Lord’s Table in our congregations, presbyteries, and at General Assembly, we will remember the Lord’s wounded body and repent of ways we have failed to bear the reproach of our neighbors and how we have separated from our brothers and sisters. We will reintegrate our lives into the body of Christ by learning from and praying and ministering with our fellow image bearers. Then, we will discern the body truly, and our cities will know that black lives matter to Jesus.



**Dr. Greg Perry** is associate professor of New Testament and director of the City Ministry Initiative (CMI) at Covenant Seminary. He has been involved in several creative nonprofit ministries seeking to embody the gospel while addressing social challenges in urban areas, and also serves on the board of Third Millennium Ministries. In the spring of 2015, he and Dean of Students Dr. Mike Higgins co-taught a class on *The Theologies of the Civil Rights Era* and helped to lead a CMI conference on *Racial Identity in Christ*.

## "AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

by Tony Myles

In January 2015, the Seminary's City Ministry Initiative (CMI) and African American Student Fellowship joined forces with St. Louis-area churches New City Fellowship, Peace Tabernacle, and South City Church to present a "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration and Teach-In" honoring the great civil rights leader's life, ministry, and vision in an evening of events centered on Dr. King's "Letter From the Birmingham Jail" (full text available at <http://bit.ly/1GeCqV8>). Following is the keynote address from that gathering.

In late summer 2014, after the Michael Brown tragedy, I took a short trip from my office with two of my white brothers in the Lord. After searching for about five minutes or so, we got out of the car and stood at a site that, as a citizen of this state, a resident of this city for most of my life, and as an African American, I should have known was literally five minutes from my office and six minutes from my house. There on that warm summer day we stood at the memorial stone of one Harriet Scott, the wife of Dred Scott, the slave who sued for his freedom in the 1850s and lost. Having reached the Supreme Court of this land, Scott's case ended with a decision that was expressed by Chief Justice Taney with these words:

*In the opinion of the Court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument. . . . They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the Negro might justly*

*and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race.*

If you want to read the whole of the court's decision, you can find it online. I would say that if you hope to find anything redeeming in it I'm not sure you will.

As I stood at Harriet Scott's memorial stone, I could not help but be struck by the lack of care that had been given to the cemetery on the whole. This cemetery, which extended far beyond what we initially thought when we pulled up to it, was covered in weeds about three to four feet high. And though the area where her memorial stone is placed had been cared for this troubled me given that no one actually knows where in the cemetery she is buried. This struck me as a picture not only of where our city is right now but also where our nation still is in many ways.

There has been progress. Some of the obstacles that keep us from treating people in general and minorities in particular like image bearers of God have been mown down. We have cut some major grass over the centuries. But there is still a whole lot of yard left to cut. And that yard has still got some major weeds in it, some major weeds that continue to prevent us from actually seeing people as and treating people as those who bear the image of God in the world, no

matter their skin color, ethnic heritage, tribal origin, socioeconomic status, and so on. And what I hear as I read Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter From the Birmingham Jail," and what I want to lay before you tonight, is a cry to the church.

It's a cry to the majority culture church in particular, but one that actually in our day has to echo in the black churches of our land as well. It's a cry particularly to those who have gone about chasing the American dream and forgotten the Kingdom dream, those who have forgotten God's historical and biblical answer to Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

God answers that question throughout the Scriptures with a resounding "Yes!"—a yes that comes through in passages like 1 John 3:17. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on him or her, how can the love of God be in that person? It comes through in a passage like Galatians 6:10: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." It comes out in a story like that of the good Samaritan, who went out of his way to help someone who had been robbed and beaten and left for dead on the side of the road. In responding to the young lawyer's question about who his neighbor is, Jesus tells him to emulate this Samaritan with his final words, "Go and do likewise" (see Luke 10:37).

This same idea comes out in Ephesians 2:14–18, where Paul reminds us:

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. . . . Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider."**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**

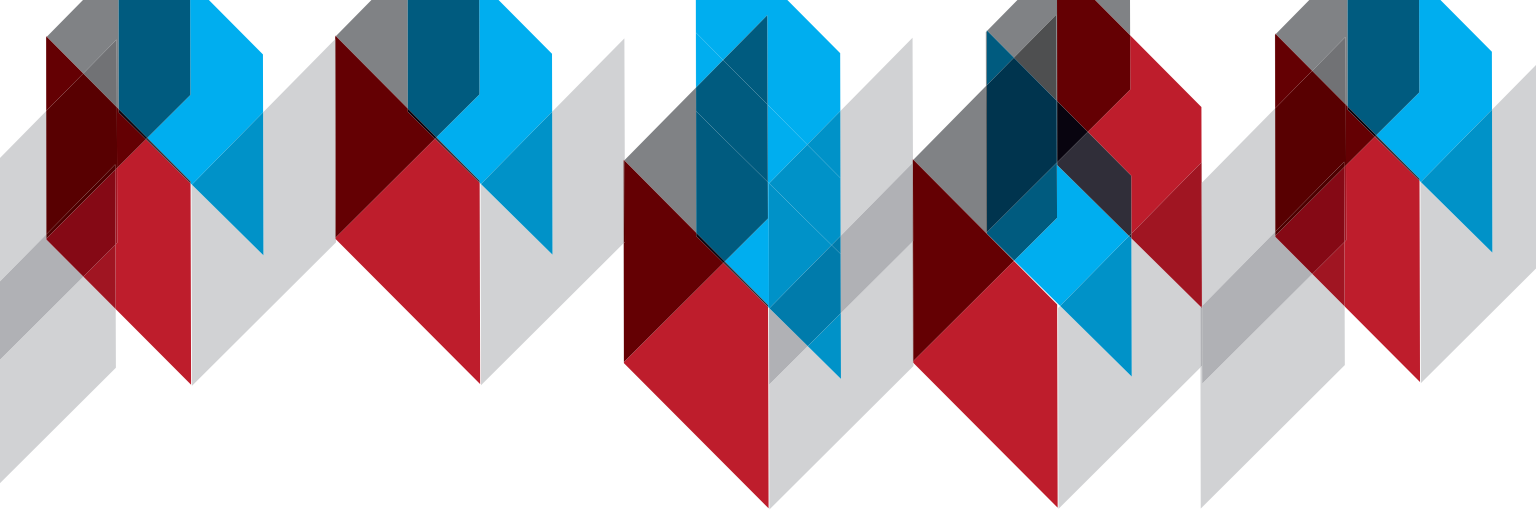
Did you hear it? We are one new humanity in Christ, a humanity that draws its identity not from the sinful narratives of our culture that continues to foster the idea that some people are more worthy of value than others; the sinful

narratives which cause us to justify excluding people from our love, care, respect, and justice simply because we judge them as not being as valuable as others. Let's not kid ourselves. Long before Michael Brown was shot and killed, long before Eric Garner was choked to death, long before Travon Martin was shot and killed, we had already made our decision as a culture as to what we think about folk like them (and I'm using the word "them" on purpose). In a way, like it or not, what is playing out on the national stage now is the result in part

of a decision we made long ago to devalue certain people, namely, the poor and needy of the world. And this is not just a white devaluing either.

What King lamented in his letter and referenced as something he was trying to address is more prominent now. He said, "At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of 'somebodyness' that they have adjusted to segregation." By the way, a good friend of many of ours, Carl F. Ellis Jr. [associate pastor for cultural apologetics at New City Fellowship in Chattanooga, Tennessee], a brilliant brother in the Lord, speaks of this complacency having given way in our day to nihilism among some in the most depressed contexts in our country. That is, people have given up any hope of things ever changing and so have turned to self-destructive and community-destroying values and behaviors, which is what you see unfolding among some in our culture. And that has to be spoken to and addressed right alongside the issue of racial injustice.

But it is that second force that King speaks to that I want to note. He says, "and, on the other hand, . . . a few



Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses.” Black folk, he is talking to us. And I want to suggest to you that his “few Negroes in the middle class” have grown in our day to many Negroes. We talk much about white flight and how much the white church has ignored these issues, but I would argue that much of our emphasis in the black church has been shifting more toward prosperity than justice. And before someone comes up to me afterwards with an anecdotal story of a black church that is addressing these issues, just let me say that I in no way intend to indict all black churches in that statement any more than I intend to indict all white churches in a lack of concern for these issues. I only intend to suggest and even pose

all should have understood the foundational truth of the *imago dei* didn't seem to get it. Those who should have understood what it meant that every race of people was created in God's image, those who should have as a result of that been ready to fight alongside of their black brothers and sisters to affirm that image of God in them, those who should have been ready when those four little girls were killed in the bombing of the church in Birmingham in 1963, those who should have been ready to denounce the violence, brutality, disrespect, racial superiority, and the like from within their own communities, were too often silent, or as King says, too often vocal in all the wrong ways. Indeed, their speaking out at times didn't help but only reinforced the status quo, leaving King to conclude, “Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of



Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

the question as to whether or not our heartbeat for justice is not being replaced with an insensitivity to the masses, which finds its source in the fact that many of us have now attained a level of success that has given us some freedom to not have to deal with these issues as much as we used to.

But we are not alone in sharing in this painful reality. The white church today is still struggling to break free from its complacency. Some fifty-two years after Dr. King wrote his letter, the white church by and large is still too often found, at best, straddling the fence, so to speak, and, at worst, erecting better fences to keep from dealing meaningfully with race and justice. King's deepest disappointment lay in the fact that having hoped to get the support of God's people in the white community in the struggle for justice and equality, he was met instead with resistance, questioning, and rebuke. Those who above

ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” In so many ways we are still right at this point.

I know many in the white culture who are still asking the question as it relates to Travon, Michael, and Eric, “What is the big deal? Why all the fuss?” I know people who still see this movement, in which people again are raising the question about what makes a person valuable in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of society, as a misguided, ignorant, and pointless pursuit. I know believers in the majority culture church who still struggle to see or believe that systemic abuses aimed at minorities and the poor continue to exist, who believe that the sole factor in the outcry is rooted in the *perception* of being victimized rather than the *reality* of it.

How do we break free from the fence-straddling or

fence-building tendencies we have around these issues in the church? How do majority culture and minority culture Christians alike enter into being salt and light in the world around these issues as Jesus has created us to be?

Let me suggest to you that the answer to these questions comes from a phrase that is often found on the lips of God as he speaks to his people as they enter into his mission in the world. And that phrase is, "Do not be afraid." In Isaiah 43 God reminds his people, whom he has called into the world to be his ambassadors, "But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.'"

Why do we build fences around our homes? Why do we place security systems in them? Because we are afraid of what might be taken from us or what might happen to us. Why do Christians who seemingly understand these issues straddle the fence? And why do some Christians, when they are confronted with these issues, build bigger fences? Ultimately, I believe the answer to that question hasn't changed much since 1963. If the church is going to address the injustice that continues to manifest itself along the lines of race and class it will have to lay hold of that God-given, Spirit-generating courage that causes us to do the very things in our day that King called for the church to do in his.

The church will have to lay hold of the courage to:

## 1 Examine the facts to see what injustices are still alive and well.

Why is it that nine out of ten blacks who are murdered are killed by other blacks? Yet, equally, why is it that African Americans between the ages of 15 and 19 are twenty-one more times likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts? Why is it that only 54% of blacks

graduate from high school, compared to three-quarters of their white and Asian counterparts? Why is that African Americans now constitute nearly one million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated population? We could go on, but the point is to say that courage means examining the facts for what they are and asking what injustices continue to prevail that we need to address. One example of this in the church was in the book of Acts, when the Greek widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. What did the church do? It looked honestly at the facts and said, "Yes this is happening and we have to speak to it with our words and actions."

## 2 Sit down at the table with one another and work through what it looks like to address those injustices.

King's embrace of negotiation as a way forward expresses a key biblical principle that is really foundational in the church in order for true reconciliation to happen. We can't come up with answers apart from each other. White Christians can't sit in a corner together, can't huddle up in all-white or predominantly white and socio-economically homogenous communities and then speak definitively, authoritatively, or accurately to issues of race and justice any more than African American Christians can come up with solutions to these issues without others. This was at the heart of King's letter and at the heart of his practice in moving justice forward.

## 3 Deal with our own brokenness individually through repentance and faith.

The gospel calls us to repentance and faith. It calls us to a repentance that looks at the reality and depth



We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

of our sin and does not sweep that reality and depth under the carpet. Rather, repentance calls us to confession, to the acknowledgment of how far we have strayed from God's laws, from the righteousness that he calls us to. It then calls us to place our faith in Christ alone as the hope for salvation and healing. Might I suggest that this purifying process is something that all

of us need to do around these issues of race and justice? And might I further suggest that there is a place for corporate repentance, a place for corporate purification? Can I suggest that the church in our culture still has a lot of repenting to do around these issues if we are going to be seen as having any integrity, any right to speak morally to the culture in these things?

**Take action that addresses the injustice head on.**

Lastly, brothers and sisters, courage is about *action*. It is about stepping out with the grace of God over us, the promise of his free forgiveness and healing over us, the promise of his strength empowering us. It is about stepping out knowing that God doesn't send us out to fight battles in our own strength. But knowing that he sends us out equipped with everything we need to stand. Stand therefore against all the flaming darts of the evil one who is at work in the world to advance the evil of injustice and racial prejudice.

Ephesians 6:14–18 says:

*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

And where is this passage found? It is found in the same book in which Paul instructs the church about the unity that Christ has won for her over the things that once separated her into two humanities instead of one. I want to suggest that this is the thrust of Dr. King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail" and of his encouragement to the millions of oppressed people at that time who were fighting for freedom and dignity. And it formed the thrust of the invitation he made to his white brothers and sisters to come stand with them.

As we face the issues of our day around race and justice, let us remember not only Dr. King's words, but also Paul's words to us: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."



**Tony Myles** (M.Div. '06), a native St. Louisan, is assistant pastor at New City Fellowship—St. Louis, and serves on the steering committee of the Reconciliation and Justice Network, which exists to cast theological vision for the church to understand and embrace reconciliation and justice as core elements of the gospel of the Kingdom. He is deeply aware of the need for churches that will faithfully enter into God's call to pursue reconciliation across racial, social, tribal, and all other dividing lines. Tony and his wife, Tanya, have four children.

## A REFLECTION ON FERGUSON

by Dr. Mike Higgins

*This reflection originally appeared in the Seminary's website shortly after the events of August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. It was later reprinted in the PCA's byFaith online.*

**T**he ongoing situation in Ferguson has brought out a lot of emotions and actions that seem to have taken most of the United States by surprise. However, I believe that most black people in the country would say that there are "Fergusons" in many places in the nation; so this was bound to happen somewhere.

Although the majority of blacks are very disappointed by the looting and the unwillingness to end these nighttime protests that are serving to distract the country from real issues of justice and peace, we are not surprised by the rhetoric of race. Black folks know that they are not the privileged race and when this becomes evident, by an alleged act of police brutality or racial profiling, they move toward a boiling point. This time the pot boiled over.

Even as an African American male, who is educated at the doctoral level and has reached the rank of full Colonel in the nation's armed forces, I still deal with anger. But this anger is so deep that it is unexplainable. And when the anger is challenged—especially by a well-meaning white person—the anger just gets worse. It is like we want to say to that white person, "Do you really need me to explain it!? What planet do you live on!?"

Yes, I am angry, but I try to use this emotion to effect change through dialogue and events that build bridges between those who have chosen to build walls to protect themselves from others. As a pastor in a predominantly white denomination, I believe I am called to love and to serve those whose ancestors may have owned my ancestors.

The only way to actually function in this environment without wanting to knock somebody down is to listen to what the gospel says about real reconciliation based on agape love. The Holy Spirit graciously reminds me of the redemption provided by Jesus to me, a sinner. Jesus gave his life for me; he chose to do it because he loved me. I have tried to hate white people, but I can't seem to pull it off. Three of the eight men who have mentored me to this point in my life are white guys. When I get angry about white stuff, they listen, give me room, and then take me out to a restaurant. Bottom line: it is a Jesus thing.

The Lord knows what it is like to lose a Son to violence. And amazingly, he is a friend of sinners, and he restores the fallen. May he restore this fallen community. Pray for the family of the victim as they are continually reminded of their loss. Pray for the police officer involved, as he too is somebody's son. This is an opportunity for the church to show unity in the midst of circumstances that might otherwise tear us apart racially and politically. But we are the church of the Living God; we will fall on our knees and hear the Holy Spirit declaring that God's righteous justice and perfect peace will prevail.



**Dr. Mike Higgins**, dean of students at Covenant Seminary, grew up in St. Louis. He served for many years as a US Army Chaplain (Col.) assigned to the Pentagon. In addition to overseeing the Student Life team at the Seminary, he also serves as senior pastor at South City Church in St. Louis.

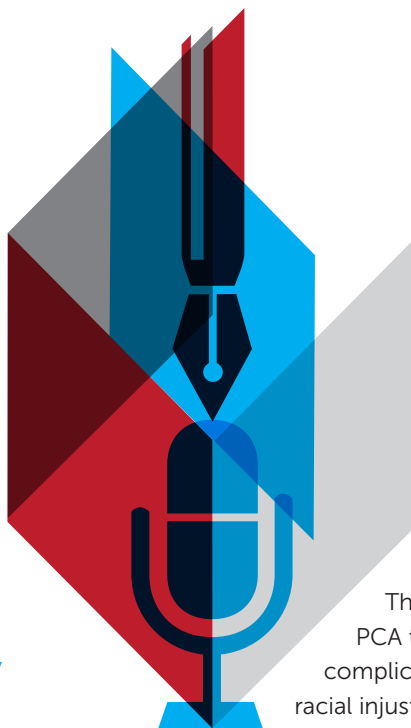
# THE PROTEST OF 2015: A TIME OF REPENTANCE AMONG BROTHERS

by Timothy R. LeCroy

Though uncontroversial in many ways, the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, June 8–12, 2015, was notable for a major debate late in the proceedings that dealt with a resolution calling the denomination to repentance for past sins with regard to racial injustice. **Rev. Dr. Tim LeCroy** (M.Div. '06) was present at the debate and offers here his perspective on what he and many others consider a milestone moment for the PCA. This article is adapted and condensed from a post at Tim's blog; the full version can be found at [pastortimlecroy.wordpress.com/2015/06/15/the-protest-of-2015/](http://pastortimlecroy.wordpress.com/2015/06/15/the-protest-of-2015/).

In 1843, in the midst of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 121 ministers and 73 elders filed a protest asserting the spiritual rights of the church over wealthy landowners. After filing the protest, the men walked out of the assembly and convened down the street to form the Free Church of Scotland, electing Thomas Chalmers as their first moderator. This event is now known in church history as "The Disruption of 1843." While the issues were different, the closing night of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America in June 2015 might just come to be known as "The Protest of 2015."

On the evening of Tuesday, June 9, 2015, Rev. Drs. J. Ligon Duncan III and Sean Michael Lucas, both pastors in Mississippi, stood up to make a personal resolution on the



floor of the General Assembly as it met in Chattanooga, Tennessee. That resolution called for the PCA to confess its sins regarding complicity with and involvement in racial injustice during the civil rights era and up until the present day. (The resolution can be found online at <http://byfaithonline.com/personal-resolution-on-civil-rights-remembrance/>.) These sins had recently been addressed through the research of PCA historians, including the same Dr. Lucas, as well as Dr. Otis Pickett and Rev. Bobby Griffith (PhD cand.). According to our rules of assembly operation, the resolution was received by the assembly and referred to the Overtures Committee, whose job it is to recommend to the assembly what action should be taken on the resolution.

The resolution was debated in committee for more than nine hours. The predominant arguments against its adoption were that the assembly needed more time to consider this issue and that the resolution needed refinement. Other arguments included the fact that the PCA did not exist during the civil rights era; that individual presbyters themselves currently in the PCA did not commit these sins and therefore could not confess to them; that the resolution seemed to cave in to political correctness and "white guilt"; and the idea that if prominent PCA churchmen were racists during that era, perhaps they have since repented of it and thus we should not now call them out.

Arguments for adopting the resolution included the notion that corporate confession is biblical; that we as a denomination have already delayed such an action for far too long; and that many members of our denomination, including pastors and elders, greatly desire this confession. Others also argued that we must stop hiding the past and be honest about what we did (or did not do). In the course of debate, Dr. Lucas passed out a paper with quotes showing the undeniable fact that southern Presbyterian conservatives (who would later enter the PCA) actively worked against the aims of the civil rights movement in the church and in the broader culture.

Ultimately, after the protracted debate in committee, a vote to recommend adoption of the resolution failed by

three votes (37–40). Then there was a motion to refer the resolution to the 44th General Assembly in 2016. This vote passed by a margin of thirteen votes (48–35). The rationale given by the majority, in addition to the rationale already presented, was that a momentous resolution such as this should come from several presbyteries in order to give it more weight. The majority also argued that the assembly needed more time to consider Dr. Lucas’s research and that another year would allow for the perfecting of the resolution.

The 35 committee members who voted against this formed a minority and agreed to produce a substitute motion asking that the assembly adopt the resolution this year. The minority felt that referring the resolution to next year’s assembly would be effectively “punting” the issue and would simply confirm common critiques of the PCA with regard to issues of race, namely, that we refuse to deal with racial sins directly but continually use diversionary arguments in order to “kick the can down the road” perpetually.

While the minority was forming its rationale, several members of the recently formed African American Presbyterian Fellowship (AAPF) approached the minority to say that the AAPF actually preferred that the resolution be referred to the next General Assembly because this would allow time for further substantive discussions that could provide more concrete ways for churches and presbyteries to demonstrate the fruits of repentance on this matter. With this new information, the committee reconvened and reconsidered its motion with updated rationale. With several members of the AAPF speaking for referral, the new motion and rationale passed the committee with an 80–0 vote.

However, after that vote, several other African American pastors approached members of the committee to say that while they loved their brothers and respected their views, they disagreed with the opinion that the resolution should be referred. While they agreed that further discussion is necessary and that concrete fruits of repentance must be demonstrated, they greatly desired to see the assembly confess our sins now. Some of these men noted that there were people in their communities whom they were trying to reach with the gospel who would not be a part of a PCA church as long as this issue was left unaddressed. As a result, several commissioners who were not on the Overtures Committee but had observed all the proceedings planned to make a substitute motion from the floor of the assembly to refer the resolution back to the Overtures Committee, which would, in effect, cause the committee to reconvene so that the resolution could be adopted this year.

The committee’s original recommendation came to the floor in the evening session on Thursday, June 11. Before the substitute motion could be presented, a point of parliamentary inquiry determined that no matter what action the assembly took at this point, the resolution would still have to be referred to next year’s General Assembly.

Despite this, and following some further procedural clarifications, the substitute motion calling for reconsidering the resolution this year was made.

Several commissioners made eloquent arguments on behalf of the substitute motion. They argued that the time for confession of acknowledged sin is always now; it should not be delayed. Some appealed to Psalm 32, on which Dr. Bryan Chapell, the moderator of the 42nd General Assembly in 2014, had preached during the opening night of this year’s assembly; the psalm says that if we delay in confessing our sins our bones will waste away. (In fact, during a time of prayer that later preceded the vote on this issue, commissioner Jon Storck prayed that if the decision to refer the resolution to next year was wrong, our denomination would waste away until we confessed our sin.)

Those who spoke for the committee’s recommendation to refer the resolution to next year did not challenge the need for denominational repentance, but argued that we simply needed to return a better product that had the support of the presbyteries. Several African American pastors agreed, adding that we also needed to make sure that whatever resolution we passed included action items for local churches and presbyteries to correct past wrongs and work for racial justice in the future.

As the discussion continued there was an attempt to suspend the rules of assembly operation so that the assembly could adopt the original resolution made by Drs. Duncan and Lucas, but the high threshold required for suspending the rules precluded such a move. Several times during the evening, the time allotted for debate expired. At each point, because of the weightiness of the opinions that were being expressed, the assembly voted to extend debate. No one wanted to shut out the movement of the Spirit that was beginning to stir in a powerful way.

As it became apparent that the will of the assembly was that the PCA confess its sins with regard to racial injustice, but also that the resolution calling for this should be referred to next year’s assembly (with the additional provisions for action steps recommended by the African American brothers), a question was raised as to what might be done procedurally to facilitate that but also allow us to confess our sins *now*. The moderator, ruling elder Jim Wert, in consultation with Stated Clerk Dr. Roy Taylor and the other parliamentarians on the dais, replied that a possible solution would be to file a protest and let the wording of that protest reflect such a sentiment. A group of commissioners with whom I was in communication began to discuss this idea as a possible way forward if the substitute motion calling for recommitting the resolution to the Overtures Committee failed.

As the assembly prepared to vote, commissioner Rev. Travis Hutchinson asked the moderator if we could take time to pray first. Mr. Wert granted the request, and Rev.



*Rev. Jim Baird at the microphone during the protest at the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly.*

Hutchinson and Rev. Jon Storck both prayed for the assembly. I've already mentioned part of Rev. Storck's prayer above; as I remember the substance of Rev.

Hutchinson's prayer, he stated that he still wasn't sure which way to vote at this point, but he asked that the Holy Spirit come and direct us all do the right thing in that moment.

I've never witnessed such an immediate and evident answer to such a prayer. The Holy Spirit did indeed come and directed us to what I believe was the best possible solution. After the two prayers the vote was taken and the substitute motion failed as expected. This brought the debate back to the main motion, which was the Overture Committee's original recommendation to refer the resolution to next year's General Assembly. But the Spirit was not yet finished with us.

In short order an older gentleman rose to microphone three at the front of the assembly. He identified himself as Rev. Jim Baird, one of the two living founding fathers of the PCA and the former senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi, an important and historic church in our denomination. Rev. Baird delivered an impassioned speech (find it online here: <https://pastor-timlecroy.wordpress.com/2015/06/16/transcript-of-rev-jim-bairds-speech/>); indeed, it was a confession of sin. He said that when twelve men gathered in the early 1970s to discuss founding a new denomination, their rationale was to do so in order to be faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed tradition. Furthermore, he said, none of the twelve men, including himself, were racists. Yet, he passionately and fervently confessed, "when it came to supporting our African American brothers and sisters during the civil rights era, we did nothing. We did nothing to help. We stood by and watched as they were abused and oppressed and let others take up the charge." As he continued to speak and confess his—and indeed our collective—sin, many of the men in the room began to weep. It was as if a great weight was being lifted off of us. We were finally beginning to be honest about our past and to confess it so that healing could come.

I grew up in the Pentecostal tradition, but this was the most intense movement of the Spirit I have ever felt in my life. The presence of the Spirit was palpable. Other men reported feeling goosebumps and other similar impressions.

Rev. Baird's speech had an immediate impact far beyond those gathered in the assembly hall as those watch-

ing the assembly online commented on social media. Mr. Jemar Tisby, a seminary student at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, and co-founder of the Reformed African American Network, said on his Facebook page:

*This man will forever have my utmost respect. . . . Rev. Jim Baird, a Southern Presbyterian pastor emeritus of a multi-thousand member congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, and one of the original twelve men who organized the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), confess[ed] his own indifference to the concerns of African Americans in the past and offer[ed] a heartfelt plea to see the Resolution on Civil Rights Remembrance passed this year and not get referred to next year's assembly.*

Dr. Anthony Bradley (MDiv '98), a professor at the King's College and a former professor at Covenant Seminary, said on his Facebook page:

*I totally agree with Jemar Tisby. I'd take a bullet for Rev. Jim Baird. WOW!!! I've been waiting 20 years to finally hear something like that.*

The next few minutes are a bit of a blur to me, but eventually the debate period ended and we came to a vote. The committee's recommendation to refer the resolution to next year passed with an overwhelming majority, though there were also several abstentions. I abstained because, while I agreed that the process outlined by the committee would eventually lead us to a good place, I also felt that we should be able to confess our sins that night, especially after they had been so clearly elucidated by Rev. Baird.

After the vote, the moderator opened the assembly to a season of prayer. Men began flooding to the microphones to confess their sins of involvement in and complicity with racial injustice—which is exactly what the original resolution had asked us to do! Early on in the prayer time, Rev. Dr. George Robertson, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, rose to pray. His church has also been important in the history of American Presbyterianism. The old Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) was founded there in 1861. Dr. Robertson confessed his own sins but also the sins of his congregation. He confessed that his church in those days had supported slave owning, and that the African Americans were kept in the balcony away from the white worshipers. He also confessed that during the civil rights era, when local police beat a developmentally challenged African-American boy to death in the town jail, the leaders of his church had done nothing.

This period of prayer lasted for about an hour as men continued to confess their sins and pray for healing. This was the longest time of prayer that many of us, including the moderator, had experienced at any General Assembly. Our Stated Clerk, Dr. Roy Taylor, had this to say about the prayer time in his report on the actions of the assembly:


*This writer has attended every General Assembly the PCA has ever had. In his opinion, the periods of prayer and expressions of repentance and brotherly love on the Thursday evening session of the 2015 General Assembly were the most evident and powerful work of the Holy Spirit at any PCA assembly heretofore.*

But still the Holy Spirit was not finished. After the prayer time ended, Rev. Jon Price made another motion to suspend the rules so that we could have another motion to the effect that the assembly officially confess our sins now. As had been expected, the moderator ruled the motion out of order because the assembly had already voted not to suspend the rules on this matter. Then, as had been planned, Rev. Price expressed that he wished to protest the ruling of the moderator, and Mr. Wert responded that he could do so, and that if others wished to join the protest, they could come to the front and put their names to it. According to Rev. Jon Storck, who recorded his observations on his Facebook page, this is what happened next:

*The clerk pulled out one piece of paper and then more than one-third and close to one-half of the assembly got out of their seats and walked up front to add their signatures to the protest!!! It was beautiful. The clerks started scrambling to try to find more paper. White delegates were repenting to black delegates while they stood in line to sign. God is good. So after approving one of the first and most robust policy statements on the protection of children last year, and then this, this year, perhaps the winds of revival are starting to stir?? Let your Kingdom come, Lord Jesus!!!*

Here is an account of what happened according to Rev. Price's own words that I obtained directly from him:

*I don't remember who it was, but he came up and thanked me. I still had my back to the assembly, filling out the protest. I said, "You're welcome, glad to do it." He said, "I don't think you understand; turn around and look." I turned around, and almost shed tears. It was so beautiful to see all those men in line coming to sign their names to that repentance.*



It was so beautiful to see all those men in line coming to sign their names to that repentance. One of the most beautiful things I've seen. I had goosebumps, and felt a deep moving of the Spirit.

REV. JON PRICE

*One of the most beautiful things I've seen. I had goosebumps, and felt a deep moving of the Spirit.*

Indeed, though at this writing the final count was not yet in, somewhere between 200 and 300 pastors and elders signed their names to the protest, the official wording of which read:

*We, the 43rd General Assembly of the PCA (the undersigned), understand that repentance is not merely a statement, but steps of faithfulness that follow. Allowing that more time is needed to adequately work on such a denominational statement, but also the need for action now, we recognize and confess our church's covenantal and generational involvement in and complicity with racial injustice inside and outside of our churches during the civil rights period. We commit ourselves to the task of truth and repentance over the next year for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel. We urge the congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America to confess their own particular sins and failures as may be appropriate and to seek truth and repentance for the gospel's sake within their own local communities.*

When all was said and done, the Spirit had moved, and, I believe, the best possible result had occurred. The wishes of many, including leaders in the African American Presbyterian Fellowship, that we come back next year with a resolution that is more specific and gives specific ways for churches and presbyteries to show fruits of repentance, were respected. At the same time, the desires of many that we confess sin this year were also answered as best as could be, given the will of the assembly. The time of confession and prayer, including Rev. Baird's and Rev. Robertson's confessions, and the protest signed by so many members of the assembly, will ensure that Chattanooga 2015 will indeed go down in history as the framers of the original resolution desired.

It was a historic moment. It was a holy moment. And I'm glad that we can finally be honest about our past and begin to confess it and make it right. Indeed. So while we are not proud that it took us so long, we may also be glad that the Spirit of revival is moving. Please join me in praying that over the next year the Spirit will continue to move and that at the 44th General Assembly in Mobile, Alabama, we will be able to pass an overture that truly acknowledges and confesses our sins and gives us concrete ways as individuals, churches, and presbyteries to move forward in righting past wrongs and seeking racial justice in the future.



**Dr. Timothy R. LeCroy** (MDIV '06) is pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Columbia, Missouri, and visiting instructor of church history at Covenant Seminary.

**Here is the text of the recommendation that the General Assembly adopted, along with the grounds provided:**

That the Personal Resolution on Civil Rights submitted by TE Sean Michael Lucas and TE J. Ligon Duncan III, be referred to the 44th General Assembly (80-0-0).

**Grounds:** After consultation with the leadership of the African American Presbyterian Fellowship, we present the following grounds:

Due to the gravity and complexity of racial sin, and sympathetic with the need to pursue corporate and personal repentance over it, the Committee believes that:

- A perfected version of the resolution would effect particular denominational, regional, and local church repentance more particularly, and could include specific suggestions with regard to the nature of the fruit of such repentance (Matt. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:10; WCF15. 5, 6);
- More time for Dr. Lucas's research to be disseminated and studied by the church would also help effect a more particular and heartfelt repentance (cf. WCF 15.1);
- Time for our African American brothers to visit with the Overtures Committee in next year's Assembly will further perfect the language and allow our repentance to be more heartfelt and accurate (cf. WCF 15.2)
- These matters of corporate repentance ought to come through lower courts of the church rather than by personal resolutions. [It is important to note that personal resolutions have special provisions in the RAO for people without access to the courts of the PCA or in case of emergency. (Cf. RAO 13-2; RAO 11-2: "Communications from individuals shall not be received by the General Assembly, unless they originate with persons who have no other access to the Assembly.")]

For the sake of the peace and purity of Christ's Church, and in preparation for the 44<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, the Committee encourages sessions and presbyteries to prayerfully consider any and all sins of racial prejudice and to pursue a proper course of action humbly, sincerely, and expeditiously (Matt.5:21-26; Eph. 2:1-22; 4:1-32).

## WE—AND OUR FATHERS—HAVE SINNED

by George Robertson

**I** love the Presbyterian Church in America!" In my 25 years of attending PCA General Assemblies, I've never heard that public confession of affection more than at this year's meeting of our highest court. But what's more meaningful to me is that I heard it often from my African American colleagues. Their saying "I love you" personifies the gospel, since neither our denomination nor our heritage has a track record of love toward minorities.

With a personal overture of repentance for the conservative church's actions and/or indifference during the civil rights struggle, teaching elders Ligon Duncan and Sean Lucas sparked a movement of public repentance by the gathered PCA that was far more intense than any of us envisioned. Because some brothers thought an even more effective resolution could be brought to next year's assembly—a resolution with more substantive action steps toward demonstrating the fruit of repentance—the original overture didn't make it to the floor. That inability to discuss the overture officially led to a prolonged discussion and time of prayer. God can beat straight blows with crooked sticks!

When I thought the resolution was going to make it to the floor for debate, I jotted down some notes for a speech. I share them here because I need to as an act of personal repentance. I need to as a representative of my

congregation and her officers' repentance. And I want to for the encouragement of all who long to see the church of Jesus Christ on earth resemble her complexion in heaven.

### A MATTER OF LOVE

As white members and leaders of evangelical churches, we must repent of our passivity and/or proactivity during the dark days of our nation's Jim Crow era. We must repent of our passivity—our sins of omission in which we failed to seek justice, follow the Golden Rule, and resist the cultural temptation to hoard power. But we must also repent of our activity—the ways we actively contributed to and participated in the sinful and exclusionary culture of the day, both knowingly and unknowingly. Jesus said that whether or not you're actually guilty of offending your brother, if and when you learn he has something against you you must "get going" and pursue reconciliation with him. Even if you're in the middle of a worship service, you must "leave your gift and be reconciled to your brother" (Matt. 5:23–25). Through the decades we have learned our African American brothers and sisters rightly have "something against us." In their years of struggle, even to the present day, we have failed to validate their oppression and at times have contributed to it.

As one who grew up in the Southern Presbyterian Church, I must confess my own as well as my people's sins. When racist jokes were told by my church friends and mentors, I not only laughed—I repeated them. They haunt me, as Paul's memories of killing Christians must have plagued him every time he met the surviving family members of his victims. On May 11, 1970, Charles Oatman, a 16-year-old developmentally disabled African American boy, was brutally killed while in the Augusta, Georgia, jail. He had been charged with murder because his mother had left a gun within reach and with it he had killed a younger relative. When his family was called to the scene at the jail, they found his body covered with cigarette burns and

## A MATTER OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY

marks from being stabbed with forks. His aunt Carrie fainted at the gruesome sight. This event, on top of the third-world conditions that African Americans were enduring in urban Augusta at the time, set off the infamous race riots that burned more than 100 city blocks and resulted in the shooting deaths of six other black men. In all the news reports housed in the archives, one thing is ominously missing. First Presbyterian Church of Augusta is never mentioned. We said nothing. We did nothing. My African American neighbors and colleagues have never forgotten that we were silent. No, it wasn't our members who beat Charles Oatman to death, but our silence was a form of complicity.

Privately and publicly, we have said to our African American community, "We are guilty. Please forgive us." Those whose cups overflow with grace have more than enough resources to confess generational sin, even if they are not individually guilty of it, even if they were not personally present during the time of the offense (see Dan. 9:8). Still, we share in this guilt through corporate solidarity. Just as we own the victories and beauties of our tradition during every General Assembly, now we must own the failures of our tradition too.

Even more amazing, those who still bear on their bodies and souls the marks of abuse have said, "We forgive you." And what overwhelms most is that they are willing to trust us again.

## A MATTER OF AUTHENTICITY

One of my dearest friends, who also happens to be black and a high-ranking official in our city, told me soon after he started attending our church, "You're sincere but not authentic." He explained: "There is no outward indication through the composition of your leadership or your public statements that you distinguish yourself from your racist past."

We are a sincere denomination and we are becoming more authentic. Let us become even more so. Overtures are acts of sincerity. But they must spur us to more authentic and objective acts of unity and reconciliation. Joint worship services and shared leadership are good steps. But there must also be true partnerships to effect observable changes in our communities—partnerships that involve mutual risk, trust, potential embarrassment, even persecution. In other words, if we're going to call ourselves brothers and sisters in Christ, there must be some outward proof that actually makes a name for Jesus.

Not only did I grow up in the Southern Presbyterian Church, but I am also the senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, where that denomination was founded in 1861. While I cannot speak to all the motives for all Presbyterians in the antebellum South, I can say with some authority what our pastor and members were thinking at the time. Ostensibly, they were protesting against governmental interference in the church's business. That point in and of itself may have been valid, but in our particular case as a congregation we were opposing governmental intervention that threatened our members' holding the slaves who sat in the second balcony of our sanctuary. Eight months before First Presbyterian hosted the founding Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States, our pastor, Joseph Ruggles Wilson, preached a sermon titled "Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible." In it Wilson argued that slavery is not only sanctioned by "both the utterance and silence of Scripture," but is also a "prime conservator of the civilization of the world, besides being one of the colored man's foremost sources of blessing." Benjamin Morgan Palmer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, was elected moderator of that assembly. In his "Thanksgiving Sermon" the year before he alerted his people to an "emergency," a threat against a "providential trust." What was it? "I answer," he said, "that it is to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing."

Every week Wilson's pulpit and Palmer's chair, which still remain in our church, remind me of three things. First, I must not be self-righteous in judging men's past sins. I too have blinders that will surely necessitate the repentance of my children's children. Second, the God who endured with my forefathers only because of Christ must endure with me as well. Third, I must live in a posture of repentance, daily asking the Spirit to free me from conformity to my age and transform my life by the renewing of my mind. Otherwise, I will inevitably repeat words as heinous as my forefathers'.

I haven't come to these realizations on my own. I've learned them from mentors, like my father. When I was a relatively new pastor, my uneducated dad taught me an important lesson on repentance. He showed me how important it is to learn how to feel the pain of oppressed people and to be willing to let one's heart be smitten by

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As we've admitted our church's past sins we've gained relationships with African American brothers and sisters in our city, which is being healed as a result of such public confession by whites and blacks.

the truth at any point in life—no matter how threatening it might feel. One summer, he and I read Charles Marsh's *God's Long Summer*, an account of the atrocities in Mississippi during the 1964 voter registration drive. I felt like I'd discovered a deep, dark family secret and feared he'd be angry that the author of this book was just another "troublemaking liberal trying to make white Southerners feel guilty." One evening at my parents' home in Corinth, Mississippi, we discussed what we'd read. My dad, who had never lived outside the Deep South but whose heart in recent years had been transformed by the gospel, reflected with tears and said, "I never knew, I never knew. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry I even went along with the conventions of the day, like calling a black man older than I was by his first name." He taught me how important it is to allow the gospel to keep one's heart soft to the pains of the world.

I've also learned these lessons from my church elders in Augusta. They've taught me how vital public confession of past sins—especially by a majority—is to racial reconciliation. What may feel to us something small—something that doesn't cost very much—communicates integrity and a desire for genuine relationship. As we've admitted our church's past sins we've gained relationships with African American brothers and sisters in our city. Our city is being healed as a result of such public confession by whites and blacks. Gospel-centered churches across racial lines are cooperating for the first time to do genuinely transformative ministry in our city. Further, African Americans are beginning to visit and join our church because they are attracted to this repentant posture. In fact, nearly one-third of our last new members' class of 60 were men and women of minority ethnicities.

## A MATTER OF RECONCILIATION

"They will know you are Christians by your love for one another," our Lord says—not merely your doctrinal precision. And Paul reminds us often that the gospel of the Lord Jesus produces reconciliation. As Francis Schaeffer put it, "If we do not love one another in a reconciling way, the Lord gives the world permission to dismiss our message. A lack of reconciliation weakens all." James Garfield, our nation's most reluctant president, grew impassioned when he said the extension of full rights to African Americans had "liberated the master as well as the slave from a relation which wronged and enfeebled both." Seventeen centuries earlier, Justin Martyr reported: "We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies." When we view ourselves as one new humanity in Christ, even our enemies will be forced to say, "See how they love one another!"

Out of love for one another, with a prayer for authenticity, with a humble plea for integrity, and with a desire for King Jesus to get a name for himself, let us live in a posture of repentance for our own and our forefathers' sins against our neighbors.



Rev. Dr. George Robertson is senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia, and a Council member of The Gospel Coalition. This article originally appeared on First Presbyterian Church's blog in June 2015; you can find it at <http://bit.ly/1WwffT>.

# ADDRESSING LIGHTNING-ROD ISSUES: A BIBLICAL APPROACH

by Douglas Merkey

## 1

### Why Must I Address Lightning-Rod Issues?

**S**ex, race, abortion, health care, homosexuality, and politics — there are few lightning-rod issues that attract more pastoral anxiety than these. At least that's my experience in coaching pastors, ministry teams, and churches for over ten years in the life arena, a ministry category that touches on all the topics listed above, plus more. I've met many pastors who shiver, shrink, or shut down at the prospect of preaching, teaching, or otherwise leading their congregations in thinking through these critical, yet highly sensitive, topics. Often, leaders push back based upon a complex web of struggles: fears real and imagined, unhealed wounds, misplaced trust, idolatry born of disbelief, and more.

Unfortunately, in a short article I can't personally sit down over a cup of coffee with a pastor to discuss across several months all the issues that may cause him to avoid addressing lightning-rod issues with his congregation. That is my preferred way, since I firmly believe that ministry flows from relationship. But we can still make some headway by looking at a few foundational questions that I'd probably bring up if we could grab a regular cup of Joe together. As you work through these questions, I pray you will be encouraged to a joyful, grace-inspired "I must!" when it comes to leading God's people through lightning-rod issues.

#### What Is the **Gospel?**

If the gospel is the crown jewel of our lives and ministries, and if it's the primary pattern showing God's way with both lost and saved people, then a quick reexamination of the

gospel will help us with the question at hand. Like putting a car up on the rack for a four-wheel alignment, re-exposing our hearts to the gospel shows us where we're out of spec and where corrections must be made.

If we're honest, we have to admit that we sometimes forget that the gospel itself, when faithfully proclaimed, elicits praises from some and curses from others. If we don't forget this fact outright, then perhaps at times we at least wish it always resulted in praise and never in cursing. Whether we forget or just wish, we know by experience that peoples' responses to the gospel vary, even when the message is faithfully proclaimed. We shouldn't be surprised at this; Jesus himself told us several times that this would be the case. So, if I am faithful to proclaim the full counsel of God—the gospel itself and all things related to it (including lightning-rod issues)—then I should expect a variety of responses from all my proclaiming.

Another way to answer this question is simply to recite the ABCs of the gospel. I do this with pastors and congregations often, asking them, "Will you please share the gospel with me?" After getting over their fear that I've asked a trick question, people usually cite themes like becoming aware of their sin, experiencing fear of God's justice and wrath for their sin, recognizing Jesus as the Savior from sin, and responding with faith and repentance unto salvation. "Ah," I muse, "so the old hymn 'Amazing Grace' is right when it says, 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fear relieved.'" Since grace is so closely associated with the gospel, this simple exercise reminds us that God's work in the gospel (by grace) includes arousing both fear and relief. Reaffirming this very simple fact about the gospel helps realign our ministry ideals.

If we forget or fail to proclaim the entire gospel, which includes the "grace that taught my heart to fear" part, then we will almost certainly forget or fail to address difficult topics like lightning-rod issues. Or, we may just address them halfway. We do this, for example, when we focus only on asking God's mercy for abortionists or on his forgiveness for sexual sin without also mentioning his in-

credulity at these sins and the peril in which they place the sinner. For the sake of the full gospel, let's not make these omissions, friends! Let's proclaim God's entire message about the gospel and about lightning-rod issues.

### Who Is Jesus, Really?

One of the best ways to answer this question is to do so personally, as in, "Who is Jesus in relationship with me?" It's a great question because I've found that we tend to relate the same Jesus to others that we experience relating to us. So, answering this question helps us realign our ideas of what it's like to know him and to relate him fully and accurately to others. For example, those whose relationship with Jesus is grace-lopsided tend to present a grace-lopsided Jesus to others. Those with a law-lopsided relationship with Jesus tend to present a law-lopsided Jesus to others.

For the sake of our question at hand, I suggest that

relates to us. When it comes to lightning-rod issues, for example, how does the real Jesus relate to us? Does he relate to us at all on those topics? Let me submit that the real Jesus leaves no topic uncovered in our relationship with him. If that's true between you and him, must it not also be true between you and those whom you disciple in Jesus?

### What Was Jesus's Life on Earth Actually Like?

Even a cursory look at leadership history in the Bible reveals some prominent truths. One that constantly strikes me is how much God's leaders suffered for speaking clearly about the lightning-rod issues of their day. Whether it was a king's adulterous affair (2 Sam. 11; Matt. 14:3-5), a nation's murder of innocent children (Jer. 32:34-35), the clergy's abuse of power (Isa. 56:1-12), God's wrath for specific sins (Romans 1), or the latest news story (Luke 13), God's leaders showed incredible forthrightness. And they suffered for it. Greatly.

**When it comes to lightning-rod issues, for example, how does the real Jesus relate to us? Does he relate to us at all on those topics? Let me submit that the real Jesus leaves no topic uncovered in our relationship with him.**

you list the attributes of Jesus that you seem to experience most profoundly and regularly as he relates to you. After doing this, cross-examine your list, asking, "Is the Jesus I described the real Jesus, or is it some version of Jesus that I've fabricated in my mind based on my own needs, misunderstandings, and brokenness?" This might be a humbling exercise. Of course, none of us can always hold a perfect, scriptural picture of Jesus in theory or in actual relationship. What you're looking for are major gaps between your personal picture of Jesus and the Jesus described in Scripture. For example, if you apply Jesus's title "The Lion of Judah" to your list, how does it match up? Is it all there—the soft furry demeanor that's warmly inviting (gracious Jesus), the sleek and majestic character (glorious Jesus), and the sharp claws and teeth powered by bone-crushing sinew (holy and just Jesus)? Is your Lion the Lion? Or is he a declawed Lion? A furless Lion?

As we think this through, it follows that we ask ourselves, "Is this the Jesus that I show to others?" Remember, we tend to relate to others the way we believe Jesus

Jesus is One in a long line of such leaders. As the perfect Leader, it's appropriate to ask if his life looked any different than the rest. The answer is an emphatic, "No." Of all the wonderful things we could say about Jesus the Leader, one that stands out is his unwavering willingness to talk about even the most difficult things to anybody, anywhere, at any time. In doing this, Jesus was absolutely fearless. And, like all the other prophets in Scripture, Jesus suffered for it. Greatly. So greatly, in fact, that he died for unabashedly and repetitively proclaiming the truth regarding the lightning-rod issue of the day: Who is the Messiah?

Nobody likes to suffer. The line of thought I'm pursuing here is not some masochistic justification calling us to address lightning-rod issues because we enjoy pain. I'm simply urging us to ask ourselves if we're actually following in the footsteps of our leadership forefathers, including Jesus, when it comes to addressing tough issues. In giving an honest answer to this question, practically every leader I know will experience some level of conviction. "No," we say in the darkness, "I am sometimes a coward."

The beauty of the gospel is that God forgives us for our cowardice. The privileges of confession and repentance open up streams of cleansing grace to rid us of this debilitating sin. Don't we want to radiate like Jesus? Don't we want to remain faithful, like him and other biblical leaders, to proclaim God's truth clearly regarding every issue, including lightning-rod issues? If we do, then we must fly to Jesus and confess our lapses to be bold in this area, receive his mercy, celebrate his forgiveness, and move forward in the grace he supplies.

Like me, I'm guessing you entered ministry primarily out of your fascination with and joy in Christ. So, as we wrestle with this topic, let's get re-acquainted with him that he might transform us more and more into his image regarding the whole topic of addressing lightning-rod issues.

## 2

### How Must We Address Lightning-Rod Issues?

If you're not yet convinced that you, as a leader of God's people, must address lightning-rod issues, then the rest of this article won't help you. It'll be like swimming lessons for someone who's still afraid of the water. If that's you, then please stop and re-read Section 1 again. If, however, you are convinced that you must address lightning-rod issues, then let's commence with some swimming lessons.

#### Enjoy Jesus in the Gospel

Continually enjoying Jesus in the gospel is the single most important thing we can do to prepare to address lightning-rod issues. Without this blessed ongoing experience, we'll only be whitewashing our words and serving God with our lips but not with our hearts. And we all know how such things dishonor God and hurt his people.

Enjoying Jesus in the gospel is absolutely essential because our mouths speak from the overflow of our hearts (Luke 6:45). This principle puts the premium for preparation on our hearts. And the key to possessing a heart that overflows with godly grace and truth is to continually enjoy Jesus as he is revealed in the gospel. The late Henri Nouwen ponders the beauty of this movement:

*Christian leaders cannot simply be persons who have*

*well-informed opinions about the burning issues of our time. Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus, and they need to find there the source for their words, advice, and guidance. . . . Dealing with burning issues easily leads to divisiveness because, before we know it, our sense of self is caught up in our opinion about a given subject. But when we are securely rooted in personal intimacy with the source of life, it will be possible to remain flexible but not relativistic, convinced without being rigid, willing to confront without being offensive, gentle and forgiving without being soft, and true witnesses without being manipulative. (Quoted in Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging, by Brennan Manning [Navpress, 1994/2002], 127.)*

To enjoy Jesus means that we ask the Holy Spirit to astonish us daily with a few essential gospel truths. We ask him to remind us of our own sinful wretchedness, and the furious, righteous rage it provoked from God. We ask him to help us feel the soul-crushing weight of our complete inability to rescue ourselves from that peril. We ask him to help us marvel deeply at the God who gladly became a man so he could live, die, and rise again to save our condemned souls. And we ask him to help us celebrate the free gift of salvation so lavishly offered to us by our incomprehensibly gracious God.

As the Holy Spirit revives our hearts in these supreme gospel truths, we're being prepared from the inside out to address lightning-rod issues. That's because a person who's enjoying Jesus in the gospel is beautifully dominated both inside and outside in at least two ways.

**1. Humility.** Because the gospel reminds us of our own depravity and peril, we're apt to be humble with our words and delivery. That's a good thing because discussions about lightning-rod issues tend to make everyone's blood pressure rise. But it's hard to throw rocks at others when we're flat-faced in awe and wonder over the God who rescued us despite our sin. Gospel-fired humility compels us to drop all the rocks we're ready to hurl at people regarding even the hardest topics. Read John 8:1–11 for a well-known example of this movement.

**2. Confidence.** Because the gospel reminds us that we are irrevocably adopted and beloved children of God, our humility is permeated with confidence. It's a confidence which prepares us to think, "I already have what I need and value the most: God's forgiveness and love. He's my Abba! He loves me! He's enough! I'm now free from my typical

neediness to have others respond well to my leadership. I'm free to love them by humbly speaking the truth to them about these tough topics."

This humble confidence marked the early Christian martyrs who continued to speak grace and truth as their persecutors raged against them. We see this in Stephen as he was being stoned to death for continuing to speak God's truth about the lightning-rod issue of the day: Is Jesus the Messiah? Only a man whose heart was captivated with Jesus in the gospel could say, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," as the stones rained down upon him (Acts 7:60). This is the humble confidence that we get, too, when we focus on enjoying Jesus in the gospel.

### **Incarnate**

By "incarnate" we mean "fitting our words and delivery to our audience." Our Lord embodied this principle, literally, as "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). He lived it out on a day-to-day practical level, too: "With many stories like these, Jesus presented His message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. When He was alone with His disciples, He went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots" (Mark 4:33–34, *The Message*).

We mirror Jesus's incarnation when we fit our words and delivery style to our audience. Of course, this does not mean that we become entertainers or spineless chameleons. It means that we understand our audience and search for the very best ways to tell them God's truth in love. This search must lead us to specific content (Scriptures, words, transitions, illustrations, etc.) and specific delivery mannerisms (inflection, pace, timing, volume, etc.).

Consider, for example, the phrase "pro-life." When addressing abortion or the sanctity of human life, is that the best incarnation of our/God's position? In my extensive experience as a coach to churches in the life arena, I can say that it is not. For many people (including Christians) the phrase "pro-life" arouses unhelpful thoughts of bombed abortion clinics, angry and judgmental people/protesters, and political (i.e., Republican) activism. It focuses people only on abortion to the exclusion of other important life issues. For this reason, I often coach people to think of a better incarnation of the honorable "pro-life" concepts espoused by God in Scripture. I suggest words like "champion of life" and "life arena." These phrases are received more handily and allow the speaker to define concepts more effectively.

Other examples of the need to incarnate come in the

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debate about when, where, how, or if we identify someone as "African American," "black," or as a "person of color." It shows up in the debate over someone being "gay," "queer," "homosexual," or someone who "struggles with sexual orientation." Our decision about what words we choose is an incarnational decision. And it is essential to how we address lightning-rod issues.

Before moving on, let's revisit our hearts for a moment. How do we grow our hearts as incarnational springs for incarnational words? We do it by marveling at Jesus's incarnation on our behalf. Pondering the fact that God became a man to save us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8) is enough to melt our hearts in joyous praise. We can also contemplate how God stoops on a daily basis to show us his kindness and to provide for our needs. He is still the God who "goes over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots" (Matt. 4:34). Experiencing God this way tends to captivate our hearts and cause them to overflow with incarnational desires, words, and mannerisms.

### **Speak God's Words**

When our hearts are captivated with Jesus in the gospel, and when we're astonished at his incarnation, we're most prepared to actually speak God's words regarding lightning-rod issues. As we consider our actual speaking, there are at least two things we must keep in mind.

**1. Speak God's Words.** To address lightning-rod issues means that we actually have to talk. We have to say something. I bring this up because I've frequently found that the most faithful Christian speakers sometimes strangely resort to their lifestyle and non-verbal indicators to tell God's truth when it comes to sensitive topics. The logic goes, "I don't need to actually preach about abortion. I just need to let people see how we love people in crisis pregnancies." It is easy to show how this mindset is completely contrary to Scripture, especially for those called to speaking offices in the church. While our lifestyle and non-verbals must adorn our words, they don't replace our words. Our (verbally) prophetic role is not suspended for lightning-rod issues!

Where do we find the courage to speak God's words? In relationship with Jesus. When we are enjoying Jesus in the gospel—Jesus, who was the most courageous Speaker of God's words in the universe—we will well up with courage to do likewise. We will find ourselves speaking when, how, and where he did. So, once again, we come back to the foundation: enjoying Jesus in the gospel.

**2. Speak God's Words.** Accurate exegesis of appropriate Scriptures is at a premium when dealing with lightning-rod issues. I say this because I've frequently found that the most faithful expositors sometimes strangely resort to statistics and stories when it comes to sensitive topics. Of course, statistics and stories can be helpful to illustrate God's words. But we must not replace God's words with illustrations about God's words.

As we learned at Covenant Seminary, our verbal delivery flows from exposition to illustration to application. We explain God's point, then we illustrate God's point, then we apply God's point. This is always wise, and it is essential when talking about lightning-rod issues. We must

speak God's words clearly, plainly, accurately, passionately, unapologetically, and humbly from a gospel-astonished heart. This is where everything starts.

Jesus actually demonstrated this basic movement. He spoke and did what his Father revealed to him (John 14). This required an ongoing love-relationship between Jesus and his Abba. And it works the same for us. In that relationship, the Holy Spirit illumines the Scriptures (i.e., God's words) in our hearts and minds, gives us the courage to share God's words, and even shapes our personalities, circumstances, and gifts to deliver God's words. And it all happens from the inside out.

Which brings us full circle, back to our need to continually enjoy Jesus in the gospel. As we do this, we experience his lavish grace and truth in our hearts causing our mouths to gush with godly grace and truth as we address lightning-rod issues.



**Douglas Merkey** (M.Div. '00) is an assistant pastor at Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church (PCA) in St. Louis, Missouri, and is founder and president of Churches for Life, which, since 2008 has been nourishing churches as gospel-driven champions of the sanctity of human life. He is also the author of *Gush: Refreshment for Thirsty Christians*, an engaging biblical guide for finding refreshment in God. Find out more about Doug and his ministry at [www.getintolife.org](http://www.getintolife.org).

*This article has been adapted and condensed from a two-part series originally posted in The Thistle, Covenant Seminary's online newspaper. You can find the complete version of part one here: <http://bit.ly/1BWSVAY>; and part two here: <http://bit.ly/1MFzjrj>.*

When our hearts are **captivated** with Jesus in the gospel, and when we're **astonished** at his incarnation, we're most prepared to actually speak God's words regarding lightning-rod issues.



# OUR CALL TO ATTEND TO THOSE IN NEED

by Marty Martin

PHOTO BY ROBERTO LAJOLO

## “You Will Always Have the Poor Among You . . .”

After many years of ministry experience, I’m convinced that this phrase from John 12:8 is the best known reference in the Bible concerning poverty. Christians frequently quote this verse as proof that poverty will always exist and cannot be overcome. When one believes this to be true, there is little urgency in dealing with physical poverty. Strong calls to do so are often dismissed as being nothing but “social gospel” and of secondary importance at best in living out the gospel of Scripture.

A friend and fellow pastor often said that a text without a context is a pretext. He is right. In this case, the context of John 12:1–11 and Matthew 25 and 26 is critically important for understanding what Jesus meant. The teaching concerning the poor found here is almost always taken out of context and simply does not mean what many Christians take it to mean.

The story in John 12 is that Mary, sister of Lazarus, took an expensive jar of perfume, anointed Jesus’s feet with the perfume, and wiped them with her hair. Judas Iscariot—identified in the same passage as having no concern for the poor, regularly stealing from the common purse, and on the verge of betraying Jesus for money—castigated Mary, saying, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?” From parallel passages in Matthew and Mark it is evident that Judas’s deceitfulness had already influenced his unwitting fellow disciples.

Jesus defended Mary and, in John 12:8, said to Judas, “You will always have the poor among you, but you will

not always have me.” Jesus’s message is powerfully biting: Judas would not always “have” Jesus because Jesus and Judas both knew that Judas was about to betray him. But Judas would still “have” the poor if he really cared to do anything about their poverty, which both Jesus and Judas knew he did not. This “outing” of Judas and his stunning lack of genuine concern either for Jesus or for the poor, when taken to teach that physical poverty is an insoluble problem and thus a secondary Kingdom concern, totally misrepresents the point.

Jesus’s laser-like use of sarcasm and the plural “you” in John 12:8 both are important because, to the extent that other disciples buy into Judas’s lack of tangible concern for the poor, the powerful irony of Jesus’s message is for them too. The point often missed is simple, but profound: relieving the material poverty of the poor is central to the gospel, not peripheral.

The Kingdom priority of addressing physical poverty is found in the extended teaching of Jesus in continuous, connected narrative starting at Matthew 25:31 with the “sheep” being separated from the “goats” and culminating in the Matthew 26 rendition of the anointing at Bethany. This provides the immediate larger context for understanding Jesus’s response to Judas and the disciples influenced by him. The unambiguous message: sheep address the physical poverty of the poor, goats do not.

The point of this teaching is not to identify who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. It is to underscore the profound Kingdom importance of responding together to the poverty of the poor and the tragedy of not so doing. The gospel everywhere assumes that all alike are spiritually poor, but it reserves and repeats, again and again, the central importance of responding to the material poverty

of the poor (Luke 4:18; 6:20; 16:19–31; Gal. 2:10; James 2:14–17; 1 John 3:16–18 for starters).

There are several reasons why this should matter to a pastor (or, indeed, to any Christian):

- The greatest resistance among Christians to sustained strategic response to poverty is theological and is usually based on misreading of Scripture, a reductionist view of the gospel, and a false dichotomy between faith and works.
- As the people in our churches look back over their lives, if they find that the gospel has not led them significantly and tangibly to address the material needs of the needy, then it has not accomplished one of its central purposes for their lives.
- Many people, Christians included, struggle to find purpose in life. Responsibility and purpose are inextricably tied together. When Cain asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God answered with chilling silence conveying the loudest possible “yes.” When people accept their responsibility, they find their purpose.
- Given our responsibility as pastors to prepare people for eternity, we first need to introduce them to present reality. Twenty percent of the world’s people live on less than \$1.25 per day; another twenty percent live on less than \$2 per day; eighty percent live on less than \$10 per day. The gap between the upper twenty and the lower eighty is widening. This is not okay and we are responsible, not for the ultimate solution, but to weigh in for the long haul on the side of the lower eighty. Otherwise, what real meaning does “God so loved the world” have?

Many feel pangs of shame when exposed to the plight of the poor and the magnitude of world poverty. Pastors profoundly influence how people resolve guilt and shame. Guilt and shame have little or no long-term transformational value. In fact they usually paralyze. We must move beyond them to a settled resolve in order to take meaningful steps. When Jesus told the paralytic to take up his mat and go home, the most meaningful and toughest step was the first one.

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

*“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And*

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Many feel pangs of shame when exposed to the plight of the poor and the magnitude of world poverty. Pastors profoundly influence how people resolve guilt and shame. Guilt and shame have little or no long-term transformational value.

*at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. . . .”*

— Luke 16:19–20

This story from Luke 16 is fascinating if just from the standpoint that it is the only story in the Bible that actually pictures an identifiable person in hell. In the end, though, the story isn’t about who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. Why the rich man is there is far more important for us than that he is there; although, for pastors, his being pictured in hell should stimulate serious theological reflection because he is apparently a member of the covenant community.

How so? He believed in God. He immediately recognizes Abraham, who represents God in this passage, and addresses him as “father.” He believed in the Bible. He is obviously familiar with “Moses and the Prophets,” though, like many today, he wrongly doubts that Scripture is clear in warning against that for which he has been held accountable. He believed that if someone rose from the dead it would really make a difference. He wants Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers so they might repent of their indifference. Abraham’s chilling reply: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.” Not even Jesus? It’s a serious question.

Lazarus is in great need. He suffers from disease, disability, and hunger. Both he and the rich man are not just single characters in this story, but are apt representatives of the “haves” and the “have nots.” Though Lazarus is laid

at his gate, the rich man pays no attention to him until he himself is in torment and thinks that Lazarus may be of some use to him in relieving his pain and being a messenger to his brothers. The gap between the rich man and Lazarus, a gap of indifference and superiority, is one that the rich man cultivated before either of them died, and it persisted into life after death.

This is a pathetic man, to be sure, but he is not an unbeliever. Then why is he in hell? It is not because he is rich. There are two rich men in this story. Abraham was rich too. God had blessed Abraham richly, giving him “flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys” (Gen. 24:34). As Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out, the rich man is in hell not because he is rich, but because Lazarus was invisible to him. This is a terrible story and one that is powerfully important today. Though there are some encouraging signs, the world’s poor are still largely invisible to many American Christians.

The personal peace and affluence that Francis Schaeffer described as our culturally controlling values breed the same kind of indifference and superiority that plagued the rich man in the story. Remember the statistics I quoted above: the gap between the wealth of the upper 20% and the lower 80% of the world’s population is growing.

It is symptomatic of how deeply seated our indifference is that these facts startle most of us—as if a profoundly impoverished world isn’t obvious to anyone with eyes to see. A significant number of those encompassed by these statistics are already Christians, so we can’t plead that if they would just give their lives to Jesus things would be different. We also can’t simply say that this is somebody else’s problem.

Are you starting to feel like I’m on a rant here? I do not intend or want to be just a trigger for either shame or anger. Neither of these emotions meaningfully addresses this central Kingdom concern. Nor am I advocating impulsive action. The issues of world poverty are messy and complicated. Physicians spend years preparing to treat patients with messy and complicated diseases. We should do likewise. Pastors can search the Scriptures, search their hearts, and prepare their congregations the way physicians are prepared for their vocations. We need to move past shame and past anger to a clear resolve to face such issues directly and biblically.

What’s in the balance? Isaiah 58:10 puts it succinctly: “If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” If we don’t, it won’t. The story of Lazarus and the rich man isn’t about who’s going to heaven or hell; it is about miss-

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We Christians believe salvation is by grace through faith and that obedience to the law, any law, cannot save us; however, law is not opposed to grace. In fact, in important ways, law and grace are mutually dependent. Like walls and a roof, they need each other. Like the physical and the spiritual, they can be distinguished, but not divided. Any nation or people that wishes to experience the grace of security and prosperity must be ruled by law, not by the whims of a ruler, a group, or the people themselves.

ing the point of “God so loved the world”—or not.

### God’s Kingdom and Love’s Law

Recalling what I was taught at Covenant Seminary, I can say that all kingdoms have three things in common: a ruler, a realm, and a reign. Thus, in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), queen Elizabeth is the ruler. These and other states that consider Elizabeth their Queen are her realm. Hers is a constitutional monarchy, and that fact greatly conditions how she rules. There is a law to which her rule conforms.

Psalm 47:7 says, “God is the King of all the earth.” Stating the obvious, in the Kingdom of our trinitarian God, God is the ruler. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” God’s realm is the entire world. Psalm 145:13 says, “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures

through all generations." God's reign is everlasting.

Despite the simple clarity these verses provide, much controversy has surrounded our attempts to understand God's Kingdom and especially the question of "how" God rules. At the risk of oversimplifying a tough subject, let's start with the simple assertion that God rules by law.

In late 2006, I came back from two years in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I had served as Food for the Hungry's country director. I was then and am now totally convinced that the rule of law is one of the greatest gifts any nation can have. Congo is a "failed state" and, not being ruled by law, it is ruled by chaos. Millions have died there since the late 1990s from violence, malnutrition, and entirely preventable diseases.

In the broadest sense, laws are patterns imposed either by authority (e.g., the Ten Commandments from God or civil laws imposed by a human government) or built by God into creation (e.g., the laws of nature). The laws of nature are the laws of God every bit as much as the Ten Commandments.

We Christians believe salvation is by grace through faith and that obedience to the law, any law, cannot save us; however, law is not opposed to grace. In fact, in important ways, law and grace are mutually dependent. Like walls and a roof, they need each other. Like the physical and the spiritual, they can be distinguished, but not divided. Any nation or people that wishes to experience the grace of security and prosperity must be ruled by law, not by the whims of a ruler, a group, or the people themselves.

When God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses, it was a great gift of grace to a people whose only identity was that of being slaves for hundreds of years. They were given a new identity as God's people, a system of justice, basic hygiene and sanitation guidelines to maintain public health, and an economic system that provided protections for the poor.

In Mark 12:30–31, when asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." Jesus clearly taught that love of God and love of neighbor were to be held together; neither is possible without the other.

Why? In 1 John 4:8 we read: "God is love." At the center of creation is God, who is love. Creation's laws or patterns come from love and lead to love. All creation, physical and spiritual, is accountable—and this too is grace. One of the great maladies of our time is lack of purpose in life. Accountability creates responsibility, responsibility cre-

ates purpose. Our being accountable to the "Law of Love" not only gives us responsibility, but also the purpose we so desperately need.

I've made the point above that our tangible response to the physical poverty of the poor is central to the gospel, not peripheral. The Law of Love applies to all, but Christ's followers have the special responsibility of demonstrating it for all to see so that they too might be drawn to the God who is love. Ultimately, what God commands will be done. "You shall" is both predictive and prescriptive. It points both to where God is guiding creation and how we are to get there. The Law of Love has been given to guide us, protect us, and enable us to experience life as God would have us experience it—all of us.

John the Baptist, called to "prepare the way for the Lord" (Luke 3:4), told the people, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none" (Luke 3:10). This was preparation for the gospel, foundational to all that would follow in the life and ministry of Jesus. The first public words of Jesus recorded by Luke are: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). In Luke 6:20, Jesus taught, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."

These verses provide the context in which the gospel of the Kingdom was and is to be understood. Take the gospel message out of that context and it loses its meaning. One of the greatest needs in the Reformed and evangelical churches today is the consistent, coherent preaching of the gospel in its context of God's special concern and affection for the poor.



**Marty Martin** (M.Div. '95) recently retired as chief operating officer for Food for the Hungry (FH). A graduate of the US Air Force Academy, he has served as a rescue helicopter pilot in the US, Vietnam, and Greenland; as an emergency medical helicopter pilot and VP of operations for Air Methods Corporation; as executive pastor of Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado; and as a board member, country director, and COO for Food for the Hungry. He and his wife, Rosemary, have three children and four grandchildren.

This article is adapted from a three-part series that originally appeared in *The Thistle*, Covenant Seminary's online newspaper. You can read the full versions of part one here: <http://bit.ly/1ID27SY>; part two here: <http://bit.ly/1T9PkdG>; and part three here: <http://bit.ly/1JC7p7p>.



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

**QUESTION**

When reading through the imprecatory psalms, I'm left wondering how they should instruct our corporate and personal times of prayer, especially with regard to the persecuted church. Can you shed some light on this?

Andrew Seley (M.Div. '14) // Assistant Pastor (Pastoral Fellow), St. Paul's Evangelical Free Church // St. Louis, Missouri

**ANSWER**

Dear Andrew,

Many psalms call on God for help as the faithful are threatened with harm from enemies, often called "the wicked." In a number of places, the requested help is that God would punish these enemies.

Christians, with the teaching and example of Jesus (Matt. 5:38–48; Luke 23:34; 1 Pet. 2:19–23), may wonder what to make of such curses: How can it possibly be right for God's people to pray in this way? Many suppose that this is an area in which the ethics of the New Testament improve upon and supersede the Old. Others suggest that these psalms only apply to the church's warfare with its ultimate enemy, Satan, and his demons. Neither suggestion is fully satisfying, both because the New Testament authors portray themselves as heirs of Old Testament ethics (cf. Matt. 22:34–40) and because the New Testament has some curses of its own (see 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8–9; Rev. 6:9–10). Each psalm passage must be taken on its own; however, some general principles will help in understanding these passages.

First, one must be clear that the people being cursed are not enemies over trivial matters; they are people who hate the faithful precisely for their faith; they mock God and use ruthless and deceitful means to suppress the godly (see Pss. 5:4–6, 9–10; 10:15; 42:3; 94:2–7).

Second, it is worth remembering that these curses are in poetic form and can employ extravagant and vigorous expressions. (The exact fulfillment is left to God.)

Third, these curses are expressions of moral indignation, not of personal vengeance, which the Old and New Testaments both forbid (see Lev. 19:17–18; Prov. 24:17;

25:21–22; Rom. 12:19–21). For someone who knows God, it is unbearably wrong that those who persecute the faithful and turn people away from God should get away with it, and even seem to prosper. These psalms are prayers for God to vindicate himself, displaying his righteousness for all the world to see, and that he will do what he said he would do. Most of these prayers assume that the persecutors will not repent; however, one (Ps. 83:17) actually looks to the punishment as leading to conversion.

Thus, when the New Testament writers employ these curses or formulate their own, they are following the Old Testament guidelines. Yet Christians must keep as their deepest desire, even for those who mean harm to the church, that others would come to trust in Christ and love his people (cf. Luke 23:34; Rom. 9:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). Hence, when they pray for God to protect his people against their persecutors, they should be explicit about asking God to lead such people to repentance.

With these things in mind, it is still possible that the faithful today might sing or read aloud even these sections of the Psalms, if it takes place in a service of worship, under wise leadership, for the good of the whole people of God.

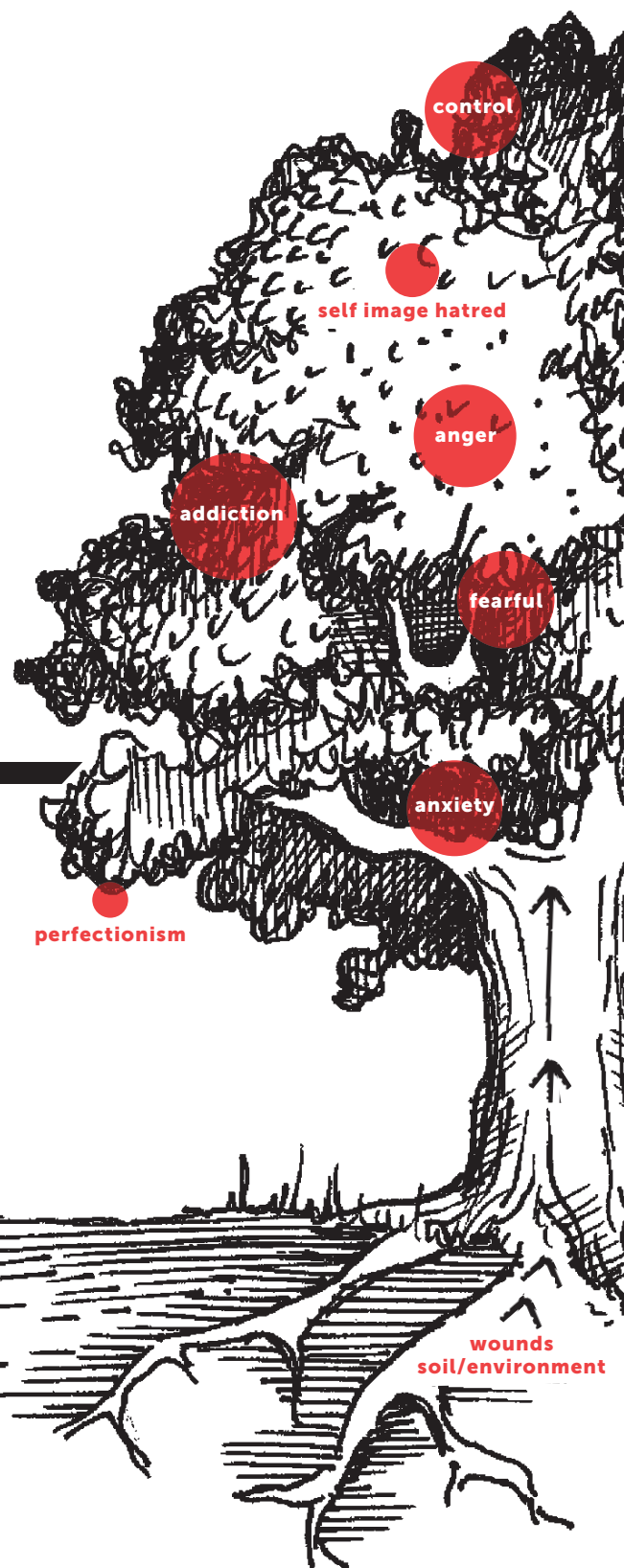


**C. JOHN "JACK" COLLINS**  
Professor of Old Testament

*This response is adapted from the "Curses in the Psalms" section of Dr. Collins' "Introduction to the Psalms," written for the ESV Study Bible, ©2008, for which Dr. Collins also served as Old Testament editor. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org).*

# From Root to **Fruit**: Cohort Groups Help **Grow** Future Pastors

Tree Illustration by Sarah Doriani



Cohort Groups are playing an increasingly important role in helping MDiv students at Covenant Seminary confront the messy details of their own lives as they prepare to lead and shepherd other “messy” people.

Associate Dean of Students

**Mark McElmurry (MAC '09)**

spoke with us recently about the profoundly life-changing impact these groups are having on pastors in training.



PHOTO BY RICK MATT

Mark McElmurray with the tree gift from his Cohort Group.

**Q: What are Cohort Groups and what was the impetus behind using them at Covenant?**

**A:** Cohort Groups are groups of six to eight students who meet together with a facilitator once a week throughout the semester. We use this time to help students learn to dig deeply into and share something of their personal stories with one another. The goal is for them to help each other see how their own brokenness fits into the larger story of what God is doing in the world and how his redemptive grace has application for even the darkest areas of our lives.

Up until a couple of years ago, we used what we called Covenant Groups. They were tied to the Covenant Theology course, and every first-year MDiv student was assigned to one of these groups for a year. Those in my particular group had an option to continue on for a second or third year if they wanted, but that wasn't true of all the groups. At that time, not all the groups focused on sharing life stories, either; most of them focused on other themes. Now the groups for MDiv students are called Cohort Groups and they're tied to the Spiritual and Ministry Formation course. Every one of them deals with life stories, which brings a lot more continuity among all the groups. This is something we've been dreaming about doing for a long time. It's how Jesus worked with his disciples.

The main impetus to move toward this model really came from the research done over several years by the Seminary's Center for Ministry Leadership that was published in the book *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*, by Drs. Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie (IVP, 2013). That showed how important it was for those in pastoral ministry or church leadership to be aware of and address some of their own life issues and spiritual challenges before they attempt to help others deal with theirs. Otherwise, the baggage they bring into ministry can cause some real problems. That insight might seem simple or obvious, but seeing it documented in such a significant way was huge for us. It just confirmed and solidified everything we'd been thinking about with regard to preparing people for ministry. Knowing why you do what you do, what drives you, and how Jesus meets you in those things and uses even your weaknesses for others' good and his glory—this is powerful stuff.

**Q: What has the reaction been like to this approach, especially for those who may not have done something like this before?**

**A:** It's generally been pretty well received, though every year there are a few students who resist it, at least at first, because they don't initially understand the need for it. There can be some fear there sometimes. Usually we try to tell them, "We're just setting a table of authenticity for you. You're welcome to come and eat as much as you'd like. But what and how much you want to eat are totally up to you. We're not going to force you to eat, but we want to set a safe table." With most of them, that seems to alleviate some of those fears.

**Q: How many groups are there?**

**A:** This past year we had eleven groups tied to the MDiv—ten groups of guys and one group of women. Under the

old Covenant Group model there would be two or three groups that had men and women together, so we were limited in what we were able to talk about in any depth. The new model frees us up to delve into more sensitive areas if we need to.

**Q: Do the older Covenant Groups still exist?**

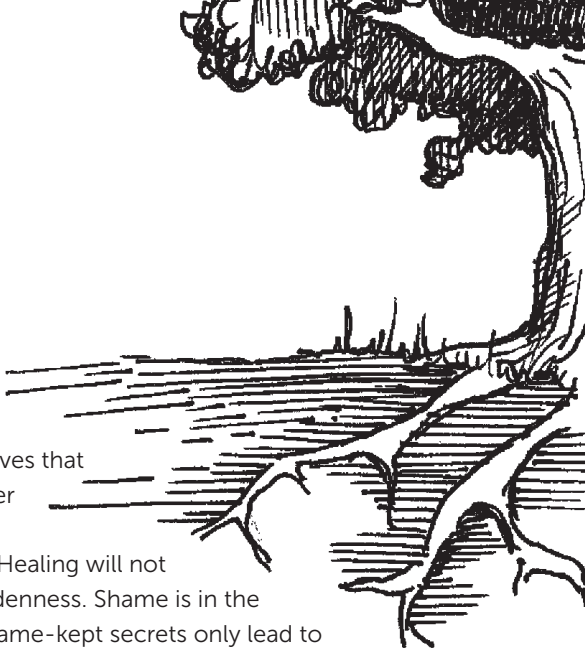
**A:** Yes, they're still around and open to anybody. They're based on more of a themed approach. Some of them focus on missions, some focus on chaplaincy, some focus on other things. It's the Cohort Groups that are a mandatory part of the MDiv curriculum.

**Q: Do any of the other degree programs use Cohort Groups?**

**A:** The MAC, MAEM, and MARC programs all use some form of required group participation. Some of those follow a similar pattern to the MDiv cohorts, but not all of them do. It depends on the purpose of the group within that program. One challenge for the MDiv groups is that it can be difficult to find enough qualified group leaders to facilitate. We currently have a few staff people with training and experience in leading small groups, as well as several licensed, trained counselors from the community who help us. They're willing to devote some of their time to this each week because they see the strategic nature of what we're doing and have a passion for training pastors.

**Q: Why is this process so important for the training of pastors?**

**A:** As Joel Hathaway, our director of alumni and career services, says, no one ever leaves the ministry for lack of knowledge. When someone does leave, it's usually because of morale or morals. The morale aspect is usually burnout; a pastor just can't do it anymore. The moral aspect is usually a moral failure of some kind. Our hope with the Cohort Groups is to try and get at the core of some of these problems before they manifest themselves later on in ministry. We teach and preach about the gospel here every day all day. Our students could diagram the gospel and the Bible up one side and down the other. But the practicality and reality of it has to hit home every day too, or all that knowledge doesn't really do you any good. So even though they know about the gospel intellectually, their own stories—and whether or not they've ever really thought about their own stories—impact their ability to experience the gospel and engage in it in significant ways or not. That's why these groups are so important.



Every year we have guys share things about themselves that they have never told anybody about before. Healing will not happen in hiddenness. Shame is in the details, and shame-kept secrets only lead to deeper brokenness, to deeper hiding. That usually leads to more shame. And that usually leads to them acting out in other areas of their lives. Shame is a powerful tool of the enemy. So the ability to name and confess your sins to one another so you might be healed is really beautiful and gospel-oriented. Whenever a guy is able to share his story and say, "Hey, I'm struggling with anger," or "I'm struggling with greed," or "I'm struggling with homosexual thoughts or with pornography," or whatever it happens to be, and seven other guys go over to that guy and hug him and say, "We love you, we're here for you"—that's one of the most beautiful pictures of the practical aspect of the gospel that I could ever imagine. That happens every semester, every year, and I'm always awed by it.

**Q: You mentioned recently that the guys in one of your groups surprised you with a special gift as a thank you for the experience they had with you. Can you share a bit of that story?**

**A:** Sure. These were guys who originally started with me under the old group model and had been with me for three years. Basically, right after the Baccalaureate services last year they surprised me with the gift of a tree that they had planted outside the Student Life office as a thank you for being part of their lives for those three years. It's a red oak, which is slow growing and long lasting, so it will be around a long time to remind me of them and to remind them of the kind of men they want to become: the kind who are deeply rooted and continue to grow powerfully. They read me a wonderful quote from C. S. Lewis and a nice note they had written for me. It was very moving.

**Q: That must have meant a great deal to you. But where did the idea of giving you a tree come from?**

**A:** From our time together, these guys knew me well and knew I have a love for trees. If you visit my office, you'll see

We've all heard stories about pastors and ministry leaders burning out, or about moral failure, church conflict, and so on. It's always these things that end up driving people from ministry. Pastors need to know how profoundly the gospel impacts their own lives in order to minister effectively to others. They also need an emotional maturity that will enable them to sit with others in their brokenness. This is exactly what I experienced in my cohort group at Covenant. Through Mark's skillful and gracious leadership, my brothers and I were invited into a space in which we were encouraged to be honest about who we were and where we were coming from—the good, the bad, and the ugly. The experience of sharing the deepest and most shameful parts of my story with brothers who listened to me and loved me in light of the grace of Jesus Christ was truly transformative and something that I think every future pastor should experience.

**MARK SANDVIG** (MDIV '17), former member of Mark McElmurry's Cohort Group and now associate director of Admissions at Covenant Seminary

I have trees everywhere—pictures of trees, pieces of trees, I even have a chair carved from the roots of a tree. I grew up on a farm of 200 acres and used to walk through the woods there with my dad, who'd point out all the different kinds of trees. He gave me a love for them. Then in college I studied wildlife conservation with an emphasis on botany, so I learned to identify and classify trees. I even have a huge tattoo on my arm of a tree with its roots growing everywhere, which is a commemoration of my own father, but also of God being my Abba, Father. Nothing reminds me more of the power, care, and safety of being in the presence of the Father than a large tree does. I also love how trees can be used to illustrate all kinds of things about life.

**Q: How so? Can you elaborate on that?**

**A:** For example, a couple of years ago I had a student draw me a tree diagram, and in it are the roots. Whenever I talk with a guy who is struggling with some significant issue, I show him that diagram and say, "If you look at the fruit of what you're wanting to be or do versus the fruit of what you're actually doing, there's a big difference." So many times, if we want to stop an addiction or behavior—or if we want to start some other better behavior—we just attack the fruit it-

self. We think, "I'll just do this or that," and we only focus on the fruit. But if you look at any tree, the fruit that tree gives only comes out of energy from the roots, which provide all the energy the fruit needs to survive and thrive and grow. So if we don't go to the roots of what's driving these realities, these sins in our lives, then we're focusing on the wrong place. The fruit we produce comes from our roots.

So that's why trees are important for me, and why this particular tree has a special meaning. It's that Covenant is a safe place for people to be broken, to be who you are and let the grace of God work in you so you can then engage in someone else's life in a meaningful way. That's the ethos of this place.

You can't take people any deeper than you've gone yourself. Sometimes graduates who in ministry now come back and tell me, "It's amazing how little preaching is actually a part of my job. It's mainly about counseling and care, engaging with people, diving into people's junk, their families and marriages." This is why we use Cohort Groups. We're preparing these students for life out there in ministry. It's not just about them becoming more self-aware or self-actuated and having better self-esteem. It's about the Kingdom of God and seeing it expand and grow in their lives, as well

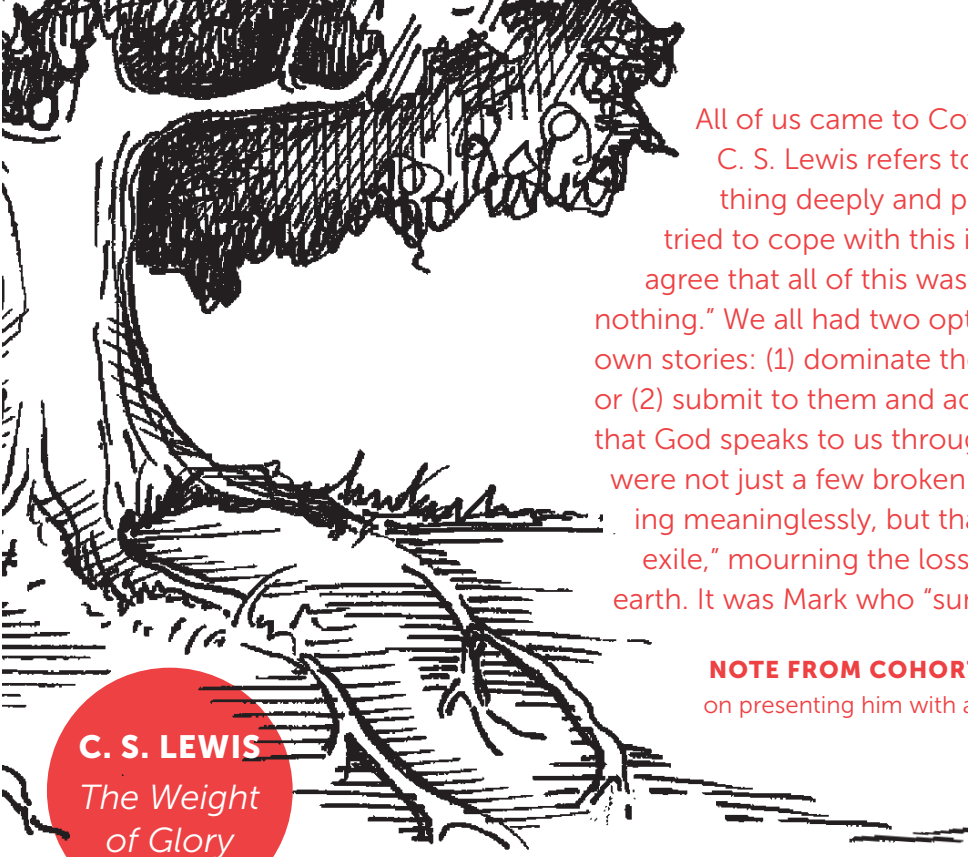
as in the lives of congregants around the world. Without some experience like this, a pastor may never deal with his own wounds, and he'll just cause harm to people he should be helping. Wounds that aren't yet transformed will be transformed. So this is not just about making future pastors feel better about themselves—which it will, by the grace of God, so we can rejoice in that—but it's about something much, much bigger.

**Q: Which brings us back to your tree metaphor.**

**A:** Exactly. If the roots of the tree are not healthy, the fruit of the tree is not going to be healthy either. Of course, there's always a bit of risk involved in sharing something of yourself with other people, but the rewards of doing so can be great. There's just something amazing that happens when you're part of a group of eight or so guys who are speaking truth into each other's lives with love. It's powerful.

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**Rick Matt** (MATS '05) serves as senior writer and editor at Covenant Seminary and is a ruling elder in the PCA. He loves hearing and telling the stories of how God is working in the lives of the Seminary's students and graduates. Rick and his wife, Rebekah, live in Crestwood, Missouri, and have four children.



All of us came to Covenant bearing that “old ache” that C. S. Lewis refers to—the sense that there is something deeply and profoundly wrong with us. All of us tried to cope with this in various ways, but I think we will agree that all of this was just “sound and fury signifying nothing.” We all had two options when confronted with our own stories: (1) dominate them, hide them, and bulldoze them; or (2) submit to them and accept that they are our stories and that God speaks to us through them. Mark reminded us that we were not just a few broken men sitting around a table emoting meaninglessly, but that somehow “we are all kings in exile,” mourning the loss of Eden but anticipating the new earth. It was Mark who “summoned us inside.”

**NOTE FROM COHORT GROUP** members to Mark McElmurry on presenting him with a red oak tree in honor of his leadership

**C. S. LEWIS**  
*The Weight of Glory*

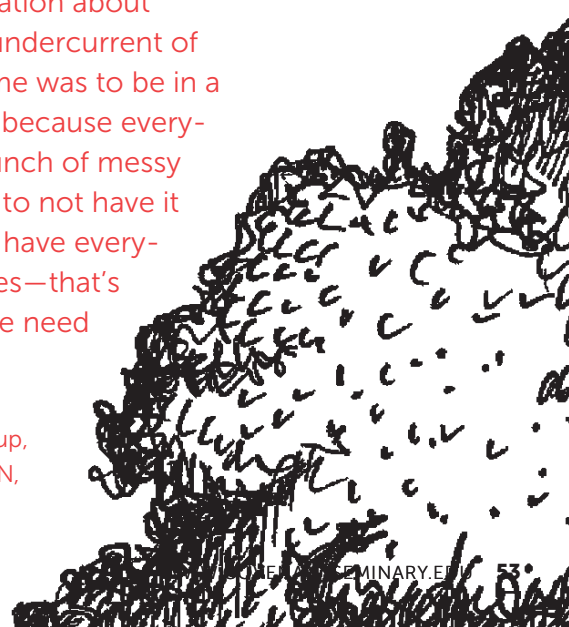
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Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honor beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.”

”

I think everybody goes into seminary with a preconceived expectation about what they’re there for. What they don’t realize is that there’s this undercurrent of “stuff” they aren’t aware of. The benefit of the Cohort Group for me was to be in a setting where I could be who I was and learn that I can be messy because everyone else is messy too. People need space for that. Ministry is a bunch of messy people ministering to other messy people. Knowing that it’s okay to not have it all together in your life, yet knowing that there’s a God who does have everything together and that we can count on him rather than ourselves—that’s very freeing. It allows us to let him work rather than feeling like we need to be God.

**CASEY CRAMER** (MDIV ‘14), former member of Mark McElmurry’s Cohort Group, now director of children and families at Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN, and chaplain to the Tennessee Titans football team.





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**WE DO NOT CHOOSE TO BE IN MINISTRY. IT CHOOSES US. RATHER, GOD CHOOSES US FOR THIS PURPOSE. HE CALLS SOME TO SERVE AS PASTORS, TEACHERS, AND SHEPHERDS OF HIS PEOPLE. OTHERS HE CALLS AS COUNSELORS, OTHERS AS MISSIONARIES. MANY OTHERS SERVE IN A MULTITUDE OF CALLINGS, WHETHER THESE ARE OFFICIALLY TERMED “MINISTRY” OR NOT. AND THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD SHAPES AND MOLDS THOSE HE CALLS FOR THE PURPOSES TO WHICH HE CALLS THEM ARE JUST AS DIFFERENT AS EACH OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED. THE LORD LOVES DIVERSITY; AFTER ALL, HE INVENTED THE IDEA.**

**F**or Evan (MDiv '14) and Te Anna Brown (MAC '15), as for many others, the path to ministry has been a tale of unexpected twists and turns. It is also a story of the love and kindness of many people along the way, especially of some Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) pastors and church members in Lincoln, Nebraska, whose encouragement and support—in more ways than one—confirmed the Browns' desire and abilities to serve the Lord, brought them to Covenant Seminary, and prepared them in ways they never could have imagined for the difficult but rewarding work they have come to love.

### FROM PASTOR'S KID TO BUDDING PASTOR

For Evan, the story began in the Central Valley area of California, near Fresno. He was the son of a pastor, the fourth of five children, and he realized early on that he had a passion for the Word of God and for sharing it with others. He was a marketing major in college but notes that "I always had a heart for missions."

While in college at California State University, Fresno (commonly known as Fresno State), he got involved with Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru) and found it quite rewarding. At one point, he and a friend went to a Cru missions conference, where they found themselves on fire to go on a mission trip. Evan's friend was invited to go with a Cru group to Kenya, while Evan was offered an opportunity in Bolivia. Both of them wanted to go to Africa, however, so rather than split up, they decided instead to go to Kenya on their own. Though they ended up in the same general area as the Cru mission group, they were not part of that team. "We spent about two months doing open-air preaching around office buildings and schools," Evan says. "I loved it. It really opened my eyes for ministry." Eventually he joined the staff of Cru at the University of California, Berkeley, while also working at an area church for a couple of years. His heart for ministry continued to grow. In July 1997 he went to a Cru staff training conference, and there the plot of his life began to thicken as the Lord introduced him to the woman who would very shortly be his wife.

### FROM TROUBLED CHILDHOOD TO HELPING PEOPLE WITH THEIR TROUBLES

Te Anna, meanwhile, had grown up in Cleveland, Ohio, the eldest of two sisters. Her family was not especially religious, she says, but her parents wanted her to have a good

education, so they sent her to Catholic grade schools. In the midst of a sometimes troubled childhood and her parents' eventual divorce, she came to know the Lord. It wasn't until she was involved with the gospel choir in college at Kent State University, however, that Christ truly began to grip her heart. "God did awesome things for me," she says.

One of those things was to give her a heart for sharing Christ. At one time she was working as a bill collector and used every opportunity she could to share her love of the Lord with others. Eventually her boss told her she could not do this on the job, but also said that she had "the gift of evangelism" and encouraged her to think about full-time ministry. Though she had been a public relations major and liked that field, she felt increasingly drawn to Christian counseling and pursued this instinct with graduate school at Malone University, a Christian school in Canton, Ohio. She never completed her internship, though, because—through God's providence—some big changes were just around the corner.

### AN UNEXPECTED WORK OF THE LORD

During this time Te Anna was attending a Bible study for African Americans. Unbeknownst to her, a white woman from Cru, who had previously had some bad experiences with black people, was looking to build bridges of reconciliation. The woman showed up unexpectedly one evening at the Bible study to share her burden for bridging the gap—and her desire to send everyone in the group to Impact, an annual conference for African Americans put on by Cru. "She said God had told her to come to us," Te Anna notes. The woman offered to pay the way for the whole group and intended to go along herself. This turn of events in itself was amazing evidence of God's work in Te Anna's life, but more was yet to come.

"As a kid I had always admired Mother Teresa and her missionary work," she notes. "At that conference I prayed about what the Lord might want me to do, and I heard an awesome call about missions." Impressed by what she saw and learned at the conference, Te Anna applied to go on staff with Cru. "At first I was afraid that some of the bad choices I had made earlier in my life wouldn't allow me to do campus ministry," she says. "Being with Cru helped me see that my past gave me more compassion for others. I was encouraged that my experiences could actually help me be a blessing."

But the Lord had still more in store for Te Anna—and for Evan—for soon his larger plan for two previously separate lives began to come together in a big way.

# WORKING TO BRIDGE DIVIDES IS PART OF THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION WE HAVE IN THE GOSPEL. THIS IS A PASSION OF OURS.



## THE INTERSECTION OF HEART WITH HEART

Te Anna and Evan met at a Cru staff training conference in July 1997. They were engaged four months later. In September 1998, they were married. Six months after that Te Anna was pregnant with the couple's first child. Soon there would be another. And another. Until eventually the Brown family would boast six children, currently ranging in age from 15 down to 1 year.

After their marriage, the Browns lived for a time in Atlanta, Georgia, where Evan and Te Anna worked together as Cru staff members with students in the Atlanta University Center, consisting of all the area's historically black colleges and universities. Evan was also sensing a strong call to church planting. He was encouraged in this desire by the leaders of the Southern Baptist church where the Browns had been married and where they then attended. The church ordained Evan in 2001 as a step toward preparing him for this possibility.

A season of changes and challenges, however—including a church split and the Browns' decision to leave their work at Cru, much as they loved it, because of the difficulty in raising enough support for their growing family—put these plans on the back burner. The Browns began attending a church in Fayetteville, Georgia, and Evan took a job with an airline to support the family—two moves that would, again, be used by God in unexpected ways. Meanwhile, the Browns' love for missions and the desire to plant a church grew ever stronger.

## CHURCH PLANTING AND CHALLENGES IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

In 2003, the Browns visited some friends in Lincoln, Nebraska, to talk with them about an exciting opportunity. The non-profit organization with which these friends were associated ministered to African American children in Lincoln. The organization was interested in planting a new church in the city. A group of suburban pastors in town, representing churches of six different denominations, was

interested in partnering with the non-profit to support the church planting effort. The two groups were looking for someone to spearhead and serve as the pastor for this project. With Evan's experience in campus ministry and his heart for church planting, this seemed like an ideal opportunity for the Browns. They began to consider the possibility of taking on this new work, praying about it intensely. The pastor at their home church was very encouraging and supportive of the idea. In God's providence, Evan's job with the airline allowed him to fly for free, so the Browns were able to travel back and forth to Lincoln several times to discuss the project.

In March 2004, the partnership in Nebraska called Evan to lead the planting effort, and the Browns moved to Lincoln to begin preparing for this new phase of their life and ministry together. In January 2006, they launched the church plant, called Abiding Grace Community Church. It was a non-denominational, multicultural church located near the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"It was truly a cross-denominational effort," Evan notes. "We had a Presbyterian church, a Southern Baptist church, a Bible church, a Berean church, an Evangelical Free Church, and an Assemblies of God church all working together with the urban ministry group to make this happen. The partnership agreed to fund the church plant for five years. We raised up leaders, did discipleship, counseled, trained, baptized, and did outreach and evangelism. Being near the university, we were a very diverse congregation. Lincoln is surprisingly more diverse than you might think, and it struggles with many of the same racial and cultural issues that you find in St. Louis and in many other large cities around the country."

The Browns faced many challenges in trying to minister cross-culturally in such a setting, but as Te Anna says, "This was our *heart*. We loved it." And the effort seemed to be going well; Abiding Grace grew to around 120 members at its peak. But as in any effort involving fallen human beings—redeemed though they may be—there were some major internal challenges as well. Unfortunate underlying tensions, including, among others, a difference in ministry

visions between the church plant team and the predominantly white leadership of the non-profit organization, eventually led Evan and Te Anna to sever their official partnership with the organization. Additionally, for a variety of reasons, most of the six area churches involved eventually withdrew their funding from the project. Their support had been given toward Evan's salary in light of the partnership with the ministry organization; thus, without it, Evan and Te Anna had to find other ways of raising money to support themselves and the church plant. This they did for a time, and though the Lord was gracious in blessing their efforts, they began to question seriously whether they should continue the work.

Only Zion Presbyterian Church, a PCA congregation whose pastor, Stu Kerns (MDiv '91, DMin '09), had been a driving force behind the initial plant idea, continued to support the project and the Browns for the whole time they were in Lincoln. In addition, he enlisted the aid of two other PCA churches in the city: Grace Chapel and Redeemer Presbyterian Church, both planted by former interns from Zion. Though leadership has changed at Grace and Redeemer since that time, all three churches have remained strong advocates for the Browns and their ministry. The care and encouragement they provided meant a great deal to Evan and Te Anna during a difficult and trying time. But, as often happens in ministry, the Browns felt that the Lord was trying to tell them something. After seeking much counsel and taking several weeks to pray about the situation, they decided to end their involvement with the project, which also meant the end of the church plant. "It was one of the hardest things we've ever done," Te Anna notes. "We loved the people there, but the differing ministry visions were hard to reconcile. In the end, the Lord gave us peace about the decision. He made it very clear that we were free to move on."

Even though they had a sense of peace with the situation, the Browns were hurting from the experience and unsure what the Lord would have them do next. They considered moving to California to be closer to family and friends for emotional support. They also thought they might go back to seminary while there to complete the education they had both started when they were with Cru. They even thought they might want to plant a church there at some point. But for the immediate future, they had no definite plans.

## THE MERCIFUL HAND OF A LOVING GOD

Once more the Browns felt the merciful hand of God reach out to them. He did it through the relationships they

had built with the PCA pastors in Lincoln. When in May 2010 Evan told them he was considering going back to seminary, they were thrilled. He recalls, "They told me, 'We want to send you to seminary. We think you have the gift of shepherding and we believe in your ministry. We want you to always stay in ministry. Would you consider going to Covenant Seminary in St. Louis? We'll help you do it—and your wife can go for free. We want to support you no matter where you end up, whether that's in the PCA or not. No strings attached and no pressure to join the PCA. We just want to encourage you.' We were amazed by that. They have truly loved us well. It was a great confirmation to us that we were called." Though the Browns had never heard of Covenant at the time, they knew the loving men these pastors were, and each of them spoke highly of the Seminary. So they decided to check it out.

In June 2010 Evan and Te Anna visited Covenant. They stayed at the Retreat Center on campus. They sat in on classes with Professor Jerram Barrs (professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture), Dr. Tasha Chapman (adjunct professor of educational ministries), and Dr. Donald Guthrie (then associate professor of educational ministries at Covenant and now professor of educational ministries at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School). They met and talked with students and staff of the Seminary. They were impressed by the fact that the faculty members were not just academics but were also experienced pastors with shepherd's hearts. They were impressed with the way everyone at Covenant seemed to care deeply about the students, taking seriously the calling to nurture and shape them personally for the work of ministry. Before the end of their visit, Te Anna says, "We felt a sense of peace about Covenant. We felt like it would be a time of sabbatical for us—a time of retreat where we could connect back into God's will." Evan adds, "We needed a good reason not to come to Covenant." So, almost miraculously, it seemed, they sold their house in Lincoln—in six weeks, during a bad housing market—and moved to St. Louis in August 2010, one week before the start of fall classes.

Again and again over the course of their time in seminary, they sensed God's hand upon them. At first the Browns' large family had trouble finding housing in St. Louis as occupancy codes limited the number of people who could live together in certain rental properties. Then a seminary student who was unable to sell a house that he owned in the area decided to rent it out instead. It was perfect for the Brown clan—and they were able to get it the exact week that the sale on their house in Lincoln was closing. Later, they were able to move closer to the Seminary when another house, owned by the son of one of the school's professors, became available for rent. Through a

combination of scholarships, half of Evan’s tuition and all of Te Anna’s was covered—and Zion Presbyterian Church in Lincoln graciously and generously supported them financially in various ways as well. To cover their living expenses, Evan worked multiple part-time jobs—sometimes holding three at once—while he and Te Anna juggled their schedules so that one or the other could be in class while the other was at home to care for and homeschool the children. They were also active in their local church, Jubilee Community Church in St. Louis City, where, after he graduated, Evan served as pastor of family care (in addition to also working as a house painter and doing other odd jobs as necessary) while Te Anna finished up her counseling internship.

Along the way, they tried to involve their children—Chayah, Andrew, Micah, Aaron, Tia, and Miko—as much as possible in the life of the Seminary. “We loved the fact that Covenant is so family friendly,” Te Anna says. “It’s wonderful that mothers and their children can come to class together if need be. Professor Barrs graciously welcomed our two oldest to his children’s literature class. That meant a lot. The kids also enjoyed the childcare at the Log Cabin on campus. We tried to make them part of the whole seminary experience. We’d pray for tests together, celebrate good grades together. Evan would even study his Hebrew with them. The kids loved the Seminary, and they loved it when we had guests over from the Seminary.” One spring, the five older children all played UPWARD basketball at a local church—with practices two nights a week and games all day on Saturdays for eight weeks. “We wanted them to be able to have something just for them,” Te Anna laughs. “Even though it was an adventure trying to juggle it all, we wanted them to know that this time was not all about us. People ask me all the time, ‘How have you been able to do

all this?’ I can only say that it’s all been by God’s grace.”

## THE CHALLENGES AND BLESSINGS OF SEMINARY

Being back in seminary may have been the fulfillment of a long-time dream for the Browns, but it also brought with it its own set of challenges. For one thing, even though they loved St. Louis, with its many free family-friendly activities and cultural institutions, they also recognized that the city struggled more than any other in which they had lived with ongoing racial and social tensions. These issues were made abundantly clear during the aftermath of the shooting in August 2014 of an unarmed black youth by a white police officer in Ferguson, a suburb on the northern edge of St. Louis. The resulting protests both in St. Louis and around the country had sometimes violent repercussions that have led to what many hope will be a more productive national dialogue on the topic of race in America. For Te Anna and Evan, this issue is personal. As Te Anna notes, “Working to bridge such divides is part of the ministry of reconciliation we have in the gospel. This is a passion of ours.” And while they know that neither Covenant Seminary nor the PCA as a whole are as racially and culturally diverse as they could be, given the PCA’s history as a predominantly white denomination, the Browns have been impressed and encouraged by the desire they’ve seen in both to grow in this key area.

Another challenge was that, amid all the expected busyness, joys, and struggles of seminary life, Te Anna received the unexpected news that she had developed a serious health issue: celiac disease. Suddenly, she required a lot of medical tests and needed to be gluten-free. The family wasn’t able to cover all her medical bills—but once again, angels of mercy in the form of Zion Presbyterian Church stepped in to help. “If the church hadn’t been there for us,” says Te Anna, “we could not have done all this. We’d have had to stop seminary. They helped us fulfill a dream that seemed so distant when we were at Cru.” “Those pastors have been such a tremendous part of our healing and growth,” Evan adds. “Until we met them we didn’t even know what the PCA was. We didn’t know what being Reformed was—but after coming to Covenant, we realized that we had been Reformed without even knowing it. They’ve been providing support, encouragement, and financial as-



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DIVERSITY OF GOD’S PEOPLE.**



# WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD. HIS WORD IS TRUE. HE DESIRES FOR HIS PEOPLE TO LIVE IN UNITY. HIS BLOOD BROKE THE BARRIERS BETWEEN US. WE WANT TO BE PART OF THAT. COVENANT REALLY PREPARED US TO DO THIS ONCE AGAIN.

sistance for nearly five years. It's brought me to the point of considering switching my ordination to the PCA, even though that wasn't at all why they did this. They've really drawn us by their care."

The Browns are also grateful for the love and friendship they found at Covenant. "We love how everyone ministers to one another," Te Anna says. "It really is like a family. And the professors have servants' hearts. They've experienced many of the things as church leaders that we went through ourselves. They've lived it out. It isn't just words to them. They've affirmed us in our calling and helped us process our way through some of our experiences. We also enjoyed the counseling classes very much. They were so helpful in showing us that it's okay to talk about troubling issues in the church, and showing us how to deal with others with sensitivity and dignity." Evan says, "Covenant really gave us a greater love for all of God's world and taught us how to love people well no matter what. It was good for the soul. It was good for our kids too. It was hard for them at first, but they really grew to love the place and the people. The two oldest boys now say they want to be pastors!"

## FAITH FOR THE FUTURE

As Evan graduated and Te Anna neared the end of her internship, what would the future hold for the Brown family? They could only continue walking by faith to wherever the Lord would lead them. Their dream, however, was not only to plant another multicultural church, but also to establish a leadership and lay counseling training center within the church to prepare lay leaders and counselors to

help minister the good news of the gospel to others. Evan notes, "So many people, even in the church, struggle and strive for freedom in the Lord. But to really experience that freedom you have to experience the gospel. Our heart is to help people do that, and to do it ideally in a church that values the diversity of God's people."

The Browns know that, considering their past experience with church planting, many people might think they are crazy to want to try it again. Certainly it will be challenging. But as Te Anna puts it, "Why do it again? Because we're *called* to it, and because of our love for the Lord and his people." To which Evan adds, "We believe that Jesus rose from the dead. His Word is true. He desires for his people to live in unity. His blood broke the barriers between us. We want to be part of that. Covenant really prepared us to do this once again."

*Postscript: As this article was being finalized, the Browns' adventure continued. Te Anna graduated in May 2015 and Evan pursued several ministry opportunities both within and outside the PCA. After many discussions with different churches and much prayerful consideration, the Browns sensed the Lord calling them to Aurora, Colorado, where, by his grace, they are now working with the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination to fulfill their dream of planting another multicultural church.*

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**Rick Matt** (MATS '05) serves as senior writer and editor at Covenant Seminary and is a ruling elder in the PCA. He loves hearing and telling the stories of how God is working in the lives of the Seminary's students and graduates. Rick and his wife, Rebekah, live in Crestwood, Missouri, and have four children.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AND CAREER SERVICES



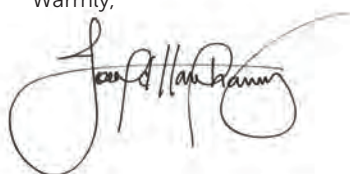
Caring for oneself during leadership challenges is difficult. Pitfalls abound. King David didn't wake from an afternoon nap to suddenly seek significance in another man's wife. Rather, his adultery was the result of a much longer process. His kingship was established in division.

Kingdom unification was ushered in with the murder of one official by another. Add the public death of a friend and the public rebuke by his wife, followed by even more war and the restoration of his enemy's grandson, and we can see that David weathered every form of relational, communal, and national challenge possible. He became un-anchored and lost sight of his ultimate joy.

Martin Linsky and Ronald Heifetz, in their book *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Harvard, 2002), describe this fatigue most leaders share with David: "The roles we play in our organization, community, and private lives depend mainly on the expectations of people

around us" (187). As you seek to differentiate self from role in the midst of daily ministry challenges, please read this book. If you want someone to process through it and the specifics of your situation with you, don't hesitate to contact me at 1.800.264.8064 or [joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu](mailto:joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu). I'm here to help.

Warmly,



Joel D. Hathaway  
Director of Alumni and Career Services

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**Ordinations, Installations, and Transitions**

**Chris Accardy** (MDiv '00) is now in his third year ministering to poor children and their families in the Mississippi Delta region.

**James M. Albritton** (MDiv '94) from associate professor of history at Huntingdon College to headmaster of Mars Hill Academy.

**Eric Ashley** (MDiv '07) from ministry coordinator/pastor to mid-adults at First PCA, Macon, GA, to pastor of discipleship at West End Community Church, Nashville, TN.

**Johan Baik** (MDiv '98, ThM '00) from Navy Chaplain to education pastor at Inland Church, Pomona, CA.

**David Beckmann** (MDiv '91) from teaching at Chattanooga Christian School, Chattanooga, TN, to resident director of the C. S. Lewis Study Center at the Kilns, Oxford, England.

**Steve Benson** (MAC '09) opened his own counseling practice, Grace Roads Counseling Center, in Charlotte, NC. Steve and his wife, Krista, also welcomed Zoe Grace, adopted April 1, 2014.

**David Bitler** (MDiv '12) to pastor of Rodgers Park RCA, Kannapolis, NC.

**Michael Briggs** (MATS '12) from director of Third Millennium Ministries to executive director of the Chalmers Center for

Economic Development, Lookout Mountain, GA.

**David Bush** (MDiv '02) has become a certified instructor with the International Conference of Police Chaplains.

**Nathan Carrico** (MDiv '07) from associate pastor at Cornerstone EPC, Katy, TX, to vice president of students, Visible Music College, Memphis, TN.

**Michael Colvard** (MDiv '09) from teacher at Redeemer Christian School, Kingsville, MD, to assistant pastor of youth and family at Harbor Church PCA, Mooresville, NC.

**Vi Coulter** (MDiv '07) to software developer, Temple, TX.

**Charles Davidson** (DMin '14) from El Paso, TX, to Monterrey, Mexico, with Mission to the World.

**John Kent Dawson** (MDiv '03) from assistant pastor to senior pastor of Brandon PCA, Brandon, MS. John also completed his DMin dissertation, titled "Double Cure: Getting Reoriented as to the Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification," in Dec. 2014.

**Larry Doughan** (MDiv '89, DMin '04) to church planter for New Life Fellowship PCA, Elk Run Heights, IA.

**Craig Doctor** (MDiv '13) ordained as assistant pastor at Kirk of the Hills PCA, St. Louis, MO. His wife, **Courtney** (MDiv '13), serves as director of women's ministry and assimilation at the Kirk.

**John Dowlen** (MDiv '12) from assistant pastor, Christ the King PCA, Roanoke, VA,

to assistant pastor, North Shore Fellowship PCA, Chattanooga, TN.



**David Ely** (MDiv '12) from assistant pastor, Westminster PCA, Martinez, GA, to RUF campus minister at Furman University, Greenville, SC.

**Mike Farley** (MDiv '00) ordained as assistant pastor of worship and arts at Central EPC, St. Louis, MO.



**Andrew Flatgard** (MDiv/MAC '04) from RUF campus minister at University of Memphis to assistant pastor of Christ the King PCA, Houston, TX.

**Alex Ford** (MDiv '10) from pastor at Sovereign King PCA, Garner, NC, to pastor of Kanawha Salines PCA, Charleston, WV. He and his wife, Holly (MAEM '11), also welcomed daughter Ivy Elanor on Oct. 11, 2013.

**Nate George** (MDiv '06) from teacher at Central Christian School, St. Louis, to fourth grade teacher at Veritas School, Richmond, VA.

**Ian Grant** (ThM '13) named as academic dean and registrar of Grace Theological College, Auckland, New Zealand.

**Joe Groeneveld** (MDiv '11) ordained as assistant pastor at Williamsburg CRC, Williamsburg, Ontario.

**Todd Gwennap** (MDiv '09) from assistant pastor at Arden PCA to assistant pastor at Christ PCA, Winterville, NC.



**Bill Harritt** (MDiv '12) ordained as assistant pastor in student ministries of Church of the Good Shepherd, Durham, NC; **Dr. Mike Honeycutt** preached the service.

**Scott Herron** (MATS '07) ordained as associate pastor of Trinity PCA, Bozeman, MT; **Bryan Clark** (MDiv '03) and **Steven Bostrom** (MDiv '77) took part in the service.

**Will Hesterberg** (MDiv '76, ThM '96) to director of development for ITEM (International Theological Education Ministries).

**Hayden Howell** (MAEM '10) from junior high assistant director at Independent PCA, Memphis, TN, to assistant director of youth ministry and director of mercy and justice ministries at Trinity PCA, Norfolk, VA.



**Stephen** (MDiv/MAC '09)

and **Charity Jones** (MAC '06) to work with Serge in London, England. The Jones family has served with Serge for five years, reaching unreached people groups in another European city.

**Jeremy Kicklighter** (MDiv '06) from senior director of admissions at Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, MO, to mobilization data and resource specialist for English Language Institute/China (ELIC) in Fort Collins, CO.

**Scott Lencke** (MATS '07) from pastor of Cornerstone International Church, Brussels, Belgium, to registrar, academic administration, and core curriculum instructor at Visible Music College, Memphis, TN.

**Brad Lucht** (MATS '11) from Greentree Community Church, Kirkwood, MO, to pastor of youth, Christ Church PCA, Normal, IL.

**Steve Marusich** (MDiv '00) from assistant pastor of New Covenant PCA, Melrose, MA, to pastor of Trinity PCA, Brownsburg, IN. Steve and **Kelly** (MAC '00) have three children.

**Jeff McCord** (MDiv '03) from assistant pastor at Christ Church PCA, Normal, IL, to executive pastor of Immanuel Church (Acts 29), Nashville, TN.

**Daniel McKinney** (MDiv '06) installed on Dec. 14, 2014, as pastor of Mountain Fellowship PCA, Signal Mountain, TN. **Aaron Tolson** (MDiv '03) preached.

**Andy Moehn** (MDiv '03) to pastor of Walnut Hill PCA, Bristol, TN.

**Bruce Otto** (MDiv '08) to pastor of Baileyville RCA, Baileyville, IL, Jan. 2014.

**Colin Peters** (MDiv '99) to senior pastor at New St. Peter's PCA, Dallas, TX. **Bryant McGee** (MDiv '97, DMin '06) preached for the installation service.

**Dan Quakkelaar** (MDiv '13) to church planter for Friend of Sinners PCA, Milwaukee, WI.

**Jeff Ridgway** (MDiv '01) from assistant pastor to senior pastor of Hope PCA, Randolph, NJ.

**Pete Scribner** (MDiv '06) to senior pastor of Calvary EPC, Flint, MI.

**Benjamin Sinnard** (MDiv '11) to Assistant Pastor, Cornerstone PCA, Delafield, WI.

**Luke Smith** (MDiv '13) ordained as assistant pastor, Rincon Mountain PCA in Tuscon, AZ, where his wife, **Joelle** (MATS '11), works part time at a Christian school. The Smiths welcomed **Audrey Marie** on Apr. 3, 2013, and **Dale Arkin** on June 1, 2014.

**Eric Stiller** (MDiv '08) installed as associate pastor of Central EPC, St. Louis, MO. **Clay Johnson** (MDiv '09), **Daryl Madi** (MDiv '97), and **Mike Werkheiser** (MDiv '05) were involved in the service.

**Patrick Tebbano** (MDiv '07) from associate pastor to lead pastor at University PCA, Las Cruces, NM, on May 1, 2013.

**Wes Parsons** (MDiv '09) from MTW missionary to Columbia, South America, to assistant pastor at Grace PCA, Dalton, GA.

**David Peters** (MATS '07) ordained and installed as assistant pastor at Crossroads Community Church PCA, Fishers, IN, March 8, 2014.

**Jay Simmons** (MDiv '04) from South City Church PCA, St. Louis, MO, to church planter in central Austin, TX. Jay and his wife, **Jen** (MAC/MATS '04), have two children.

**Matt Uldrich** (MDiv/MAC '03) to assistant pastor at Valley Springs PCA, Roseville, CA. Matt and his wife, **Cheri** (MAC '03), have three children.

**Benjamin Vrbicek** (MDiv '11) to co-senior pastor of Community E-Free Church in Harrisburg, PA. He is serving alongside co-pastor **Jason Abbott** (DMIN '14).

**Bryan Walker** (MDiv '07) from US Army Chaplain to teaching position at the International School of Qingdao, China.

**Daniel Waterman** (MDiv '97) promoted to Lt. Col in the US Air Force, June 1, 2014, serving as Wing Chaplain of the 480 ISR, Langley Air Force Base, Yorktown, VA.

**Patrick Weston** (MDiv '07) ordained and installed as pastor of next generation ministries, Grace PCA, St. Charles, MO.

## Family Updates

**Abby and Curran "Curry" Bishop** (MDiv '10) welcomed John "Jack" Curran and Peter "Pete" Knox on Nov. 5, 2013. Curry is pastor of Grace PCA, Carbondale, IL.

**Billy** (MDiv '11) and **Melynda Boyce** (MDiv '11) welcomed Luke Jonathan on Oct. 22, 2013. Billy is assistant pastor of Christ Church PCA, Arlington, VA, where Melinda also serves as women's ministry coordinator.

**Rachel and Phillip Bozarth** (MDiv '11) welcomed Roman John on May 18, 2013. Phillip works at Wells Fargo Advisors in St. Louis, MO.

**Brooks** (MDiv '11) and **Riva Cain** (MAC '11) welcomed Quinn Elizabeth on Nov. 27, 2013. The Cains live in Nagoya, Japan, and are serving with MTW's Global Youth and Family Ministries.

**Meredith and Marty Cates** (MDiv '13) welcomed Hatley-Grace Virginia on June 12, 2013. Marty is the director of student ministries at Seven Rivers PCA, Lecanto, FL.

**Jason** (MDiv/MAC '11) and **Conner Cochran** (ThM '10) welcomed Matilda "Tillie" on June 15, 2014. Conner works as a homemaker and in direct sales. Jason is the shelter counselor specialist at Miracle Hill Ministries' Greenville Rescue Mission in Greenville, SC.



L. DOURADO

Maggie and **Lucas Dourado** (MDiv '11) welcomed Margaret "Margot" Viola on Aug. 2, 2014. Lucas is the RUF campus minister at the University of Connecticut.

**Josh** (MDiv '10) and **Liz Floyd** (MATS '09) welcomed Joshua James Jr. on Aug. 18, 2014. Josh is assistant pastor of youth and families at St. Paul's PCA, Orlando, FL.

Samantha and **Matthew Goodman** (MDiv '13) welcomed Stephen Dalton on Dec. 3, 2014. Samantha works for the PCA's Committee for Discipleship Ministries (CDM), and Matthew serves as pastor of youth and assimilation at Christ Church Suwanee PCA, Suwanee, GA.

**Peter** (MDiv '10) and **Megan Green** (MDiv '13) welcomed Amelia Rose on Aug. 21, 2013. The Greens live in Wheaton, IL, where Peter is a doctoral student in biblical and theological studies at Wheaton College.

**Joseph** (MDiv '11) and **Kristin Groeneveld** (MARC '11) welcomed Carter John on May 24, 2013. Joseph is director for youth/young adults at Williamsburg CRC, Williamsburg, Ontario, Canada.

Amy and **Joshua Hall** (MDiv '13) welcomed Naomi Ruth on Oct. 6, 2014. Joshua is pursuing a career in

information technology.

Annie and **Nick Hathaway** (MDiv '07) welcomed Annelise Margaret on Oct. 23, 2014. Nick is youth pastor at Liberty PCA in Owings Mills, MD.

**Daniel** (MDiv '08) and **Emily Henry** (MAC '11) welcomed Josiah Edwin on Aug. 6, 2013. Emily is a homemaker and Daniel is an English teacher at Cornerstone Charter High School, Phoenix, AZ.

Ellen and **Tim Jackson** (MDiv '13) welcomed Haddon James on Jan. 22, 2014. Tim teaches at Heritage Classical Christian Academy in St. Louis, MO.

Kristi and **Duff James** (MDiv '00, MAC '02) welcomed Piper Duffy on Jan. 17, 2014. Duff serves as the planting pastor of City Church ARP, Asheville, NC.

Rachel and **Timothy LeCroy** (MDiv '06) welcomed Lucy Belle, Aug. 28, 2014. Timothy is pastor of Christ Our King PCA, Columbia, MO.

**Kristen** (MAC '03) and **Todd Mallonee** (MDiv '03) welcomed Andrew Jonathan, 25, 2013. Todd is assistant minister for families and children at Duke Street Church in London, England.

**Ryan** (MDiv '08) and **Ada Moore** (MAEM '08) welcomed Elizabeth "Bess" Armour on Sept. 7, 2014. Ryan is transitioning from RUF campus minister for the University of Alabama to senior pastor at Fort Worth PCA, Fort Worth, TX.

**Kent** (MATS '06) and **Susan Needler** (MAEM '11) welcomed Jack David on Mar. 4, 2014. Kent serves as director of communications at Covenant Seminary.

Melissa and **Mark Peach** (MDiv '09) welcomed Max Henry on May 15, 2014. Mark is a church planter at City Presbyterian Salt Lake PCA, Salt Lake City, UT.

Annie and **John Patton** (MDiv '10) welcomed Hudson Walker on June 20, 2014. John is the director of admissions at Covenant Seminary.

**Lauren Deibel Queen** (MAC '09) married Luke Queen on Apr. 12, 2014. Lauren is now fully licensed in both Missouri and Illinois as an LPC. The Queens live in Manchester, MO.

Jordan and **Rob Rayburn** (MDiv '11) welcomed Robert Stout II on Sept. 5, 2013. Rob is currently completing an overseas tour as a US Army Chaplain.

**Jim** (MDiv '09) and **Courtney Roach** (MATS '08) welcomed Zoa Marie on July 29, 2014. Courtney is a homemaker and Jim is a hospital chaplain at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Louis, MO.

Marietta and **Israel Ruiz** (MDiv '13) welcomed Lessley Valeria on Aug. 23, 2014. Israel is the church planting apprentice at Emmanuel PCA, Arlington, VA.

**Jonathan** (MDiv '12) and **Kathleen Shumate** (MAC '12) welcomed Calvin Douglas on Jan. 22, 2013, and

Jonathan August on July 16, 2014. Jonathan and Kathleen are itinerating missionaries with MTW, preparing to serve at Christ's College in Taipei, Taiwan.

Monique and **Carlos Smith** (MDiv '13) welcomed Nia Monae and Maia Angel on May 28, 2014. Carlos serves as youth pastor at First Baptist Church of Chesterfield, MO.

Katie and **Simon Stokes** (MDiv/MAC '13) welcomed Emory Louise on Aug. 24, 2014. Simon is the RUF campus minister at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

**Matthew** (MDiv '11) and **Megan Terrell** (MAEM '11) welcomed Zoey Leigh on Dec. 26, 2013. Matt is the RUF campus minister for Samford University.

Julie and **Josh Vahle** (MDiv '08) welcomed Adelaide Grace on July 25, 2013. The Vahles moved from Iowa City, IA, to Chapin, SC, where Josh serves as spiritual life pastor of Chapin PCA.

**Chris** (MDiv '08) and **Rebekah (Baxter) Weinrich** (MAC '09) welcomed Emily Ruth on June 20, 2014. Chris is an Army chaplain at Fort Gordon, GA.

Ashley and **Jason Wilkins** (MDiv '11) welcomed Eleanor Clare on Sept. 4, 2014. Jason is a Bible teacher at Westminster Christian Academy, St. Louis, MO.

**Shannon Wing** (MAC '13) married Tyler Jack Parker on Dec. 29, 2013. The Parkers

live in Raleigh, NC, where Shannon is working for a tech start-up company. The Parkers celebrated the birth of their son, Sibbes Haddon, on Oct. 2, 2014.

JoAnna and Jeff Zehnder (MDiv '09, ThM '11) welcomed Lydia on Nov. 27, 2014. Jeff is associate pastor at Fairview Reformed PCA in Ohioville, PA.

## Celebrations

**Stan Gale** (DMin '97) on the publication of *A Vine-Ripened Life: Spiritual Fruitfulness through Abiding in Christ* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

**Chuck Garriott** (MDiv '79) on the publication of *Rulers: Gospel and Government* (Riott, 2014), which he edited, with contributions by **Steve Bostrom** (MDiv '77), **Bobby Griffith** (MDiv '08), and Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology and Ethics **Dr. Clyde David Jones**. Chuck leads MNA's Ministry to State.

**Joseph Autry Greer** (ThM '92) celebrating a lifetime of ministry with his retirement by the North Florida Presbytery, July 1, 2014. He currently lives in Gainesville, FL.

**Rev. Martin Hawley** (MDiv/MAET '05, ThM '14) on the publication of *Hope for Haiti: An Account of Pastor Jean Jacob Paul and Reformation Hope, Inc.* (Wild Olive, 2013) and *The God-Centered Statesman: God's Sovereignty, Faith, and Civil Service from Daniel to Today* (Wild Olive, 2014). Martin is senior pastor of

Hope PCA, Woodstock, GA and executive director for Reformation Hope, Inc.

**Drew McGinnis** (MDiv '06) on the publication of *The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the Extra Calvinisticum* (T&T Clark, 2014). Drew works as a freelance editor and is a ruling elder at Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids, MI, where he lives with his wife, Melisa.

**Heath Kahlbau** (MDiv '02) completed his PhD in applied theology with a dissertation titled "Is Anything New Under the Sun?: A Comparative Evaluation of the Ante-Nicene Patristic Episcopacy and Common Polity Models Within the Contemporary Multi-Site Church Movement." Heath and his wife, **Shawna** (MATS '02), live in Lebanon, VA.

**Mimi Larson** (MATS '08) completed her PhD with a dissertation titled "Making Meaning of God: The Faith Experiences of Preschool Children." Mimi lives in Wheaton, IL, where she is guest assistant professor at Wheaton College.

**Jeffrey Mays** (MDiv '99) on the launching of Novare Science and Math (<http://novarescienceandmath.com>), a new company dedicated to developing a series of high-quality Christian science and math textbooks and resources.

**Doug Merkey** (MDiv '00) on the publication of *Gush: Refreshment for Thirsty Christians*. Doug is president of Churches for Life ([www.getintolife.org](http://www.getintolife.org)), a ministry that champions the sanctity of human life.

**Caleb Mitchell** (MDiv/MAC '03) created a service called A Smart Practice ([www.asmartpractice.com](http://www.asmartpractice.com)), which is geared toward helping new and old therapists with the business side of starting and maintaining a private practice.

**Dane Ortlund** (MDiv '05, ThM '07) on the publication of *Edwards on the Christian Life: Alive to the Beauty of God* (Crossway, 2014).

**Chris Peters** (MDiv '00) on completion of his PhD in history with a dissertation titled "James H. DeVotie: Leading the Transformation and Expansion of Baptists in Alabama and Georgia, 1830–1890." He currently serves as pastor of Cross Creek PCA, Hoover, AL.

**Brian Shelton** (MDiv '97) on the publication of *Prevenient Grace: God's Provision for Fallen Humanity* (Warner, 2014). Brian is VP for academics and professor of theology at Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, GA.

**Gerin St. Claire** (MDiv '13) successfully launched CalledTogether.us (<https://www.calledtogether.us>), a social network, peer community, and relationship website for singles who are called toward missions.

**Anthony Tan Siew Tat** (MATS '93) retired on Jan. 1, 2015, after 37 years as the pastor for Nazareth BPC in Singapore. He was a founding

member of the church in 1977. His wife, **Cecilia** (GC '93), served as the church's administrator for more than 10 years.

**Jim** (MATS '03) and **Kim Thomas** (MATS '14) celebrate 14 years at The Village Chapel in Nashville, TN.

## Prayers and Condolences

To the family of President Emeritus **Dr. Bryan Chapell** on the passing of Bryan's father, Wayman Glen Chapell, on Sept. 5, 2014.

To the families and friends of Covenant Seminary Board and former Board members **Ed Harris**, **Fleetwood Maddox**, and **Art Stoll**, all of whom went home to be with the Lord during the past year. Each of these men served the Seminary community faithfully and well for many years. We will greatly miss their wisdom and experience.

To the family of **Kate Kromann**, who passed away unexpectedly in her sleep in Sept. 2015. Kate is survived by her husband, **Ryan Kromann** (MDiv '10), and their two children, **Ellie** and **Samuel**. Kate directed the ballet program for the Seminary's Family Nurture program for eight years and served as family ministries administrator for The Journey West County in St. Louis, MO.

FEATURED UPDATES

### Covenant Grads Serve With MTW in South Africa

Matthew Haynes (MDiv '10; below, left), Bruce Wannemacher (MDiv '98; below, middle), and Tim Galage (ThM '07 ; below, right) are part of the Mission to the World (MTW) team in South Africa. Matt is director of distance education at the Bible Institute of South Africa and is responsible for all aspects of the distance learning program. Bruce serves as team leader for all MTW missionaries serving in South Africa and Zambia. Tim teaches New Testament part time at the Bible Institute. The Lord continues to bless their work greatly.



### Covenant Women in Europe Reunite for Retreat

Dr. Tasha Chapman visited with female alumni and alumni wives on the "Covenant Seminary Women in Europe" retreat held at Lake Balaton, Hungary, where she taught on self-care. Attendees were (l.-r.): Timi Suhai, Hungary; Dóra Szabados, Hungary; Dr. Chapman; Bori Mikola (ThM '13), Hungary; Annemarie Rietkerk, Netherlands; Meriel Cashman, England; and Staci King (MAET '14), Netherlands.



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## Committed to Christ and Each Other—for the Sake of the Kingdom

by Rick Matt

**H**arry and Peggy Krieg have both been serving the Lord in many ways for a long time. Most of that time, however, they didn't even know each other, as both had long and happy marriages to other people and very busy lives—Harry as a husband and father while running a bank and its holding company; Peggy as a wife and mother, and as secretary for her husband's successful manufacturing business. Following the deaths of their respective spouses—both lost to the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease—the Lord brought Harry and Peggy together in the providentially amazing way that only he can. Now their commitment to him and to furthering the work of his Kingdom is stronger than ever.

When Harry's wife of 69 years, Irene, passed away in 2013, he never expected to marry again. But his desire for companionship led him to seek a good Christian lady with whom he could go to dinner or the theater, go dancing, or simply spend time enjoying life. In visiting Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church in St. Louis several months after his wife's death, he mentioned this to Deena Stuart, director of gift and estate planning at Covenant Seminary, whose husband, Bob, was then serving as the church's interim pastor. Deena said, "I have just the person for you!" She introduced Harry to Peggy Schacht, whose husband, Roy, had passed away in 2011. Because of their strong faith in the Lord, the two hit it off immediately. "We started going to church together, having brunch together," Harry said. "Before long we were talking about what we wanted to do with the rest of our lives. There was such a harmony there, such a desire to serve the Lord and use the resources he had blessed us with to do work for the Kingdom."

The couple married in August 2014 and carried on a long-standing tradition in both their lives of generous support for Kingdom projects. Harry, for example, through his interest in the works of Francis Schaeffer and the Schaeffer connection to Covenant Seminary, had known about and been involved with the Seminary for years. He even earned a master of arts in general theological studies (MAGTS)



*Seminary supporters Harry and Peggy Krieg*

degree at Covenant after retiring from a long and successful career with Cass Information Systems, Inc. (which also owns Cass Commercial Bank), where he had served as CEO and chairman. His love for the Lord and passion for the Seminary's mission moved him to invest in that mission with several significant gifts. One of these was instrumental in helping the Seminary's free online course initiative (then known as Worldwide Classroom) get off the ground. Along the way, he also set up a trust with a sizable gift of stock that would help provide long-term support for the institution.

Peggy, too, was interested in supporting the Seminary, an outgrowth of her love for helping ministries in need of financial resources. The Lord had enabled her and her prior husband to provide key support more than once for churches that were struggling to get started, including one in Fiji, which, at the time was not open to allowing more churches in the country. By God's grace, with seed money and other generous gifts—and lots of prayer—the church was planted and succeeded. Peggy says, "The pastor who started that church told me recently that there are 14 churches in Fiji now, as well as a Bible college. He said the governor had declared Fiji a Christian nation!" Another time, a church in Florida needed funds to expand. Providentially, Peggy and her husband owned a building that their tenants wanted to buy; they were able to arrange a way for the tenants and the church both to benefit from the sale and provide the church with the resources it needed for expansion.

Like Harry, she had long known of Covenant Seminary and its work. Thus, when she first heard the vision for the renovation of the Community Center on campus, she was excited about it and what it would mean for the training of future pastors. Eager to support such a project, she and

Harry together made a major commitment that enabled the Seminary to bring the work to completion.

When the Kriegs toured the facility recently, they were impressed with how it turned out. "It's so beautiful!" Peggy commented. "This is just what the seminary students and their families need. To see all the people there and all the activities going on just makes our hearts jump for joy. We're so happy to be a part of that." Indeed, the Kriegs' love for Covenant and its mission has led both of them to make provisions for the Seminary in their estate plans.

What makes helping ministries like Covenant in this way so important to the Kriegs? It all goes back to the Lord's grace in their own lives. Peggy recalls, "We didn't have access to church much when I was young, but I remember the first time I was in a Sunday school class. The teacher told me the story of how Jesus died on the cross, what he suffered, and why he did it. I said then, 'If he loves me that much to suffer and die for me, then some day I'm going to follow him.' I didn't commit myself to him until years later, but that's my story today—I live for him because he died for me." Though the circumstances of her life, including living in Puerto Rico for 38 years because of her husband's business, led her through a maze of several denominational affiliations—Church of God, Lutheran, Baptist, and now, Presbyterian—her heart has always been focused on Jesus and what he has done for her.

Harry's experience, though different in the details, is remarkably similar at the core. After a youth spent, as he says, "goofing off" following the devastating separation of his parents, he was on the verge of ending up a total fail-

ure, even flunking out of engineering school in the Navy. Then, he says, "Around the time I married my first wife, I also accepted the Lord. He really changed my life. I became a serious person again and no longer goofed off." He buckled down and did well in the Navy, eventually earning a commission and serving in Saipan, while also taking correspondence courses to further his education. When he returned home, he went to business school, taking classes by day and working at night to support his family. Then it was on to graduate school and PhD studies at night, while working by day—though he never wrote his dissertation because by that time he was busy running a bank. "In retrospect," he notes, "I would say I'm thankful I experienced that failure and saw what the Lord can do. He made me a new person."

The Kriegs' love for the Lord is even stronger now that they are together. Harry says, "I told Peggy she's a real risk-taker for marrying me when I was 90 years old. But life is full of hazards. We feel it's worth the risk because of what God has done in our lives—and is still doing; it's not past tense. One of the prayers we have is for another Great Awakening in our country, and if the Lord brings that about we'll need more trained pastors to meet the need. We want to be part of helping that happen."

Peggy agrees. "We love the Lord; I don't know what else to say. We just want to be good witnesses for him."

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