



THE SEMINARIAN

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Issue 1

SCC President' Welcome

I would like to use this opportunity given to me as President of the Seminarian Community Council to offer to each of you my personal welcome to Lancaster and to the community at Lancaster Theological Seminary. In addition, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the elected Representatives, and the Committee Chairpersons of the Seminarian Community Council, I would extend the greetings of the students of this seminary and extend collectively our warmest welcome to this community.

As each of us takes yet another step in our journey of faith, it is my wish that we may all be nourished and sustained by the L.T.S. community in our time of preparation and growth. As in any community, the relationships and interdependences are only as strong as we, the members of the community, dare to make them. May we be a daring lot!

The Seminarian Community Council is an elected body of students who are actively involved, on behalf of the entire student body, in forming and shaping the seminary community; and who, along with the administration, staff, and faculty, help to provide an atmosphere conducive to spiritual and academic growth. The Council is comprised of elected officers and representatives as well as chairpersons of various committees functioning within the community. I would personally invite you to become involved in any aspect of the life of the Seminarian Community Council. Also, please take the time to familiarize yourselves with Section VIII of the Masters' Studies Handbook concerning the SCC.

Lancaster Theological Seminary is a diverse community made up of people from differing backgrounds, differing theological stances, and looking toward differing futures. As we struggle with our individual faith journeys, may we be aware that others are struggling too. May our community be bound together through the grace of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace,

Paul H. Dionne
President, SCC

From the Editors' Desk

One of the things that strikes me most about life at Lancaster Seminary is the remarkable diversity among those who study and those who teach here. We all have much to learn from each other and there is much that we can share together. We not only have a large denominational representation (with all varieties within denominational affiliations!) but we also have a large share of talent and creativity.

One vision that I have for the Seminarian is to provide a forum for ideas and concerns that impact us as individuals and as a community. Perhaps there is a paper or a project that has particularly captured our imagination and we would like to share some of our reflections with the wider community. Perhaps there is a sermon that we have been working on and struggling with and we would like to offer some of our insights with others. Perhaps there is an experience we've had in our field work assignments, or C.P.E., or cross-cultural work, or our summer jobs that we'd like to share. Or maybe there is a need to speak out on current issues. I invite you to think about these things and approach either Jeff Mettler or me about them.

Another vision that I have for this journal is to encourage and develop creative writing. I dare say there are many poets and writers among us, and Jeff and I would be very pleased to print your work in the Seminarian. Don't hide your light under a bushel! If you have a poem or short story, send it in; if you've written an essay or if there is a book you'd like to review, we'd be glad to have it.

We are going to try to publish on a monthly basis. Much of that, of course, depends on the amount of material we receive. And rather than duplicating the efforts of the Communicator (which is published weekly and contains all sorts of "newsy" items), we're hoping to allow space for more creative and critical writing. We request that you sign all material that you forward to us but we will publish your work with name withheld, if you wish. There is a Seminarian mailbox downstairs for your convenience. Please don't hesitate to let us know of any ideas that you have concerning publication. After all, it's your newspaper. We look forward to a challenging, stimulating, and creative tenure as co-editors.

Jim Symonds
Co-Editor

When I was in college, one of the first things I would do at the beginning of the school year was to secure a copy of the freshman handbook, which was replete with pictures of each student. Naturally, I would scan the information on females pictured, and would pick the one I would make a point to meet, just to help her get adjusted to campus life, of course.

My fascination (curiosity?) with incoming students has not waned any since my collegiate days, but my outlook has matured somewhat. After arriving on the L.T.S. campus this September, I saw 41 new faces, each of whom would have a story. I wanted to know a bit about all 41 of them.

The junior class consists of 41 students, 22 men and 19 women. Their average age is 35.07 years (which is higher by about a half year over last year's class). Interestingly, 18 students, or nearly half of the junior class, are affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Only seven (17%) are affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Eleven other denominations are represented, too, which keeps the current administration's policy of an ecumenical mix. The Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Independent Baptist, Episcopal, Moravian, Disciples of Christ, Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, Brethren in Christ, Pentecostal, and Lutheran Churches are all represented.

This class is largely a commuter class, with few out-of-state citizens represented. Pennsylvania residents number 33 of the 41 students, with other students coming from Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, and Washington.

There are also some highly educated people in the junior class. They hold ten Master's and one Doctoral degree. All told, there are 15 students in the Master of Divinity program and ten in the Master of Arts in Religion program. Sixteen students are registered as unclassified. Only 15 students are full-time.

We welcome the junior class and are excited about sharing our faith journeys along with them. Shalom!

Jeff Mettler
Co-Editor

Conservative Support Group to Form

Lancaster Theological Seminary is an institution made up of a diverse group of people from widely differing backgrounds. Some come for a theological education to fulfill a denominational requirement, others perhaps come for personal growth and enrichment. Whatever the reason, and however they arrive here, every year there is a percentage of the student body with a more conservative approach to faith than that of the seminary itself. They may consider themselves "born again," or "charismatic," or "fundamentalist," but whatever the name may be, they share a common concern toward scripture and faith. Most are aware when they enroll that they are not going to Bible School; others realize this later as they begin their courses. Some adapt easily to their new environment, yet others feel embattled, isolated and persecuted as they struggle with issues of scripture and doctrine, not to mention politics. Eventually these students find each other and develop friendships conducive to mutual support, yet even then there may still remain a feeling of isolation. In order to deal with this problem, a conservative support group will be meeting this fall on campus.

The main purpose of this group will be to help students who are committed to going through Lancaster Seminary to do so more happily and positively. It is not intended to be a gripe session about the seminary, or necessarily even an attempt to change it. The group is intended to provide a positive on-campus experience through sharing, discussion, fellowship and prayer. It will also provide a forum for discussion of issues raised by classes, chapel speakers, seminars, and current events, thus providing students an opportunity to respond to important questions.

At the present time, no date has been set for the first meeting, but mid-October is a target. If you are interested in becoming a part of this group, please leave a note stating your preference of morning (7:00 a.m.) or evening (4:00 p.m. or later) meeting time in Jim Dillner's mailbox as soon as possible. The final decision on meeting time will be published in the Communicator.

James Dillner

I'll call her Darlene. She live somewhere in Lancaster, or, to put it more specifically, nowhere in Lancaster. Once in a while she'll accept food or shelter somewhere, but for the most part, she lives by her wits... on the street. Shirell's story is different. She and her two sons left an unstable home in another state to start over in a new town. When they got here, they had to stay at a shelter for women and their children while Shirell looked for an apartment. As she brought little with her, it was good that they had somewhere to turn. Josephine also lived for a while at the shelter. She was 17, pregnant with her second child, and had been thrown out in to the street by her parents. All three of these women share something in common: they have been helped by an agency sponsored by The United Way of Lancaster.

On rainy nights like tonight, I wonder if Darleen is dry and warm. I also look out my window and, in the view of the College campuses, seminary housing, and professional people, and almost forget that people like Darleen, Shirell, and Josephine live in a "nice town like this". So often we think of The United Way sponsoring helicopters filled with food for the victims of an earthquake or tornado in Bismark, North Dakota or somewhere in Louisiana, but don't realize that needs are being met under our noses every day. One example is the Lancaster Guidance Center, which provides counseling services billed in proportion to the client's ability to pay. Another is the YWCA, which provides low-rent housing for women and day care for those who wouldn't be able to find work otherwise. The list is endless, and I won't belabor the point. It is important, however, that we realize that these people aren't statistics; they aren't faceless beings 40,000 miles away from our front door. The problem of homelessness in Lancaster is such that an average wait of three to six weeks exists for a room at the YWCA. These people aren't irresponsible or unintelligent, either. They are people who haven't been given a chance, or who don't think they deserve one. They are as human as you or I, and probably pass you on the street every day and you don't notice them.

The next time you hear the words "United Way", think about Darleen, Shirell, and Josephine, as well as their counterparts. These may not be their real names, but they are real people. And, if you are a part of the network known as The United Way, I just want to say that, "Thanks to YOU, it's working."

Kathryn Schmidt

From the Spiritual Life Committee

This year, the Spiritual Life Committee is providing a number of quality activities open to the entire seminary community which reflect different perspectives on worship. Considering the diversity of the seminary community, it is difficult to support and encourage the spiritual life of all seminarians and their families.

The Spiritual Life Committee currently is functioning through several sub-committees: compline, fellowship and prayer, bell ringing, prayer and fasting, prayer chain, and special events.

Compline is a brief (about 20 minutes) late evening prayer service modeled after traditional services for the daily hour of Compline. Its focus is on Christ as the Light of the World. Jim Symonds will act as Student Rector for the services which are scheduled Thursdays from 9:40 to 10:00 p.m. in Santee Chapel. Compline can be used as an effective study break or for spouses who work during the day and are unable to attend the daily chapel services. It also provides the potential for an evening Eucharist if there is sufficient interest.

Fellowship and Prayer offers the opportunity for the inductive model of Christian Education within the seminary community. Its structure is informal and social and embraces opportunities for relaxing and comfortable group prayer. It is an hour of relaxing fellowship Wednesday evenings from 9:30 to 10:30 in Nevin 304 with focus on topics of personal growth and faith experience. Susan Minasian serves as the Facilitator.

Bell Ringing serves a two-fold purpose. It signifies to the community the dual purpose of a seminary as an academic as well as religious institution. The bell ringing occurs every weekday at 8:00 a.m. to satisfy the former purpose and at 9:25 a.m. (and 9:35 p.m.) for the latter purpose. Curt Zemencik serves as Master of the Bell.

Allen Benner serves as the Director of the Prayer and Fasting committee. Prayer and Fasting is a 30- to 50-minute time of prayer and scripture reading alternating between extemporaneous worship, directed meditation, moments of silence, and the occasional Eucharist. Its emphasis is on stewardship and offers opportunity for more charismatic forms of worship. The group meets every Wednesday between noon and 12:50 p.m. in Lark 102.

The Prayer Chain provides an "instant" network of prayer with a focus on the immediate prayer concerns of the community. This committee is open to anyone who wishes to serve as its facilitator. This position requires a minimum of time commitment and the group meets whenever necessary in individuals' rooms or apartments.

Harry Moyer, Chairperson of the Committee and Spiritual Guardian, marshals the special events -- any activity concerned with spiritual growth which is not covered by the other subcommittees. Projected activities include a panel discussion of pastors/spouses on the problems of married seminarians. This subcommittee feels that it is important to meet the needs of the seminary community as they develop (using a variety of approaches). Any suggestions for additional activities should be forwarded to Harry Moyer.

A Fundamental Point of View

On Sunday, September 29, I attended services at Grace Bethren Church in Lancaster. Preaching the sermon was the Rev. Dr. Jerry Falwell, whose topic was "Looking at the Present." My motives were to get a first-hand impression of the man, and to confirm or reject my own preconceptions of this political fundamentalist. I left the service feeling no closer to the man politically, but less judgmental and even sympathetic to him personally. His biting comments against the media, liberals, orthodox main-line churches and welfare recipients show the amazing depths of his insecurities. A more tangible example of these insecurities is the presence of security guards all around him. Yet, the conclusion of his message was in making contact with those with whom you disagree in order to bring them to Christ.

The service began with a tirade of at least ten hymns (more than enough to ferret out any liberals or humanists) and an anthem by one of the "Old Time Gospel Hour" regular soloists. Then Falwell made his appearance -- with his bodyguards. He opened with some humorous anecdotes, then praised Grace Bethren Church (which was celebrating its 25th anniversary) for the founding of eight other churches. He emphasized the basic tenets of fundamentalism, the inerrancy of Scripture and the proclamation of the Gospel. He also acknowledged the Pepsi-Cola and Right Guard companies for their support, without which, he would not have been able to appear in Lancaster.

He began the body of his sermon with a reading from Galatians 6:9. the calling for Christians not to be weary of well-doing. He continued that "prosperity is usually the enemy of spirituality." "When we are hurting," he said, "God gets our attention." However, Americans are forgetting the source of their good gifts, their freedoms. Here, he identified the threat of Communism, and criticized the media for not recognizing the threat of Communism as an enemy not only of religion, but of the free press as well.

By citing the "Biblical Plan of Evangelism," which includes the preaching of Christ and our inviting, praying, and compelling others to embrace Christ, he reiterated his point: "don't get tired of doing good things." The outline he suggested in actively working out this plan keyed on the subjects of evangelization, edification, dedication, participation, and salvation. His basis message was this -- active evangelistic Christian outreach, or in his words, "soul-winning."

I was, admittedly, suspicious of Falwell's motives. His message was dynamically presented and biblically supported, but there were subtle messages on the periphery that put me ill at ease. There were not-too-subtle attacks on liberals and orthodox main-line churches, but it was innuendoes about money, the poor, and even the Mafia that I found disturbing. By "soul-winning," Falwell preached, "money will come with the people." Loopholes were not to be sought in taxes. Instead, we are to be "good citizens, honest to God" and "we should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and let Caesar be judged by God."

The service closed with an altar call preceded by a series of questions and showing of hands. I admire this fundamentalist tradition of confrontation and decision, but felt a sense of intimidation or "ferreting out" as well.

After the service, I was outside the church talking to a group of protestors about what I had seen and heard, when Falwell, with his wife, drove by in the back of a black limousine. There was no opportunity to talk, just a chance to smile back. A husband and wife soon came out of the church to talk with these protestors; angrily, but civilly. One young woman, who had joined in the discussion, said that she would have had more respect for Falwell had he done what the young couple was doing. Better still was the idea to lead the entire congregation outside to make contact with his enemies, out of love and not contempt, in the practice of his message. She then asked this: If Christ had been on hand that day at Grace Brethren Church and had known about these protestors, what would he have done? What do you think?

Drew Willard

