The College of Pastoral Leaders comes to the rescue of imperiled pastors.
In my office, there is a row of twenty-one photographs of a group of pastors I’ve been a part of for as many years. We meet for the first full week of every January, and we each bring two scholarly papers that we’ve written on assigned lectionary texts across the upcoming cycle of the liturgical year. We hire a scholar—generally a biblical scholar or a homiletician—and we work hard from Monday through Friday presenting papers to the group, complete with sermon trajectories, that are then critiqued and improved by the scholar and the rest of us. We’ve worked with such preeminent scholars as Tom Long, Fred Craddock, Walter Brueggemann, Jim Sanders, Beverly Gaventa, Gail O’Day, Luke Timothy Johnson, Clifton Black; and we’ve stayed in retreat centers in such locales as Princeton, Malibu, San Francisco, Atlanta, Louisville, Chicago, Memphis, Washington, and upstate New York.

A week of serious engagement with biblical theology equips us with new bounce for the coming year of preaching through the lectionary, and with a spiritual lift as well. Because we meet at a different location each year, we call ourselves “The Moveable Feast” (“moveable” because we go wherever it is most convenient for our visiting scholar, and “feast” because what happens in this week of grappling with texts is always, by the grace of God, a rich feast indeed). Though some of us claim to be part of the founding circle of the group, it has grown to about twenty-five people—men and women—who represent several different generations and every region of the country. Our scholarship together is laced with ever-deepening layers of relationship and commitment to one another—so much so that that row of photographs chronicling twenty-one different “Feasts” is a source of constant inspiration to me as I go about my daily work here. Over the years of my ministry, no continuing education experience has had a more formative impact on me than my annual rendezvous with The Moveable Feast.

In today’s parlance, we are a “cohort group,” and have been busy about the task of “sustaining pastoral leadership” for over two decades. A great deal of research indicates that such cohort groups are often the most effective way for pastors to attend to the ongoing stew of stuff in the mind (to say nothing of the heart and the spirit). All I can say is that I cannot imagine the shape of my own ministry without the presence in my life of dear and trusted colleagues who have affirmed me in what Carlyle Marney used to call those “balcony moments,” and have prayerfully supported me in those “cellar moments.”

So it is that I am a deep believer in the timeliness of what is starting to happen here at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary as our College of Pastoral Leaders begins to take off. It is part of a new movement in theological education that aims to support talented new generations of pastors as they negotiate the various rhythms of contemporary ministry. As you read about the College in this issue of Windows, I hope you will become a deep believer, too.

And, just for the record, thank you, Patrick and Michael and Cynthia and Rick and Doug and Christine and Karen (both of you!) and Tom and K. C. and Bob and Robin and Ben and Jon and Chandler and Neta and all the rest of you. Your pictures inspire me regularly, and you’ve done more than you’ll ever know to sustain my own ministry.

Theodore J. Wardlaw
President
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COVER: Faster than a speeding burnout. More powerful than a ministerial train wreck. Able to leap tall challenges in a single bound...With innovative programs like the College of Pastoral Leaders, Austin Seminary is helping to prepare a new generation of “super” pastors, equipped to handle the pressures and problems of ministry in the modern era. Photograph by David Gambrell.

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Each quadrant in the College of Pastoral Leaders
shield (imagined by Michael Jinkins and realized by David
Gambrell) contains Christian imagery. Clockwise from top left:
“In all of life we have our dealings with God,” by John Calvin;
the St. Andrew’s Cross, symbol of the Church of Scotland;
“A Mighty Fortress is our God,” a symbol of the Reformation; and
“The Pelican in Her Piety” symbolizing Christ’s sacrificial love.

Theological Education Fund
(1% Plan)

The theological schools of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
no longer receive funding from the basic mission budget
of the General Assembly. Churches are asked to
contribute 1% of their operating budgets to the
fund, which is then distributed to the seminaries.
New problems for pastors

The stressful nature of ministry is nothing new. In his second letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote:

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:25-28, NRSV).

Many contemporary pastors can identify with Paul’s suffering. Most have not experienced shipwrecks or stoning, but they can relate to feeling adrift,
alone, or abandoned; they’ve known sleepless nights, betrayal, and the scarcity of resources; and they feel the pressure of daily anxiety for the churches they serve.

Though the work of the pastor has never been easy, leading scholars of the church’s ministry believe that today’s clergy are confronted with an unprecedented set of concerns generated by the contemporary contexts of church and culture. A 2001 study on clergy burnout by Professor Michael Jinkins concluded:

Times are tough for pastors. Pastors are facing a range of concerns and needs in the contemporary church and in contemporary society that is simply staggering. They struggle to discover resources that will sustain and nourish them and their congregations, sometimes against daunting odds.

The world within and around the church has changed dramatically in recent years, and our notions of who a pastor is and what a pastor does have failed to keep pace with that transformation. Ministers labor under different working conditions than their predecessors: a wider range of responsibilities, less prestige, and shattered assumptions about the place of the church in society. And their parishioners bring new concerns as well, including competing demands for time and energy and a broader palate of religious and spiritual alternatives.

Perhaps a modern “retranslation” of Paul’s litany of trials and tribulations in ministry would read as follows:

Three times I was shouted at in the parking lot. Once I received a threatening letter. Three times I was left to tend the nursery during Sunday school; for nights and days I haven’t seen my family; on frequent hospital visits, in danger at session meetings, danger from budget cuts, danger from my colleagues at presbytery, danger from loneliness, danger from the I.R.S., danger from depression, danger at pot-luck suppers, danger from manipulative personalities; in sixty-hour weeks, through many a sleepless night of sermon preparation, intellectually and spiritually starved, sick and tired. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for the church.

All these factors have contributed to an alarming rate of attrition among those called to lead the church and serve God’s people. Citing burnout, disillusionment, and financial hardship, pastors are leaving the ministry in record numbers for less stressful, more lucrative endeavors. Some experts even fear that the increased stresses and diminished prestige of ministry have dissuaded young people from considering church vocations.

The church responds

Fortunately for pastors—indeed, for the whole church—in the last decade a number of individuals and organizations have recognized this problem and rallied to the aid of the imperiled pastor. One of the earliest and best known responses was a 2001 study conducted by Alan C. Klaas and Cheryl D. Klaas for the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Their research indicated that approximately forty percent of pastors in that denomination faced the immediate threat of burnout. The Klaas study influenced other denominations and church agencies to consider the emerging crisis in church leadership.

Those that have taken up the charge include: the Alban Institute; Duke University’s Pulpit and Pew proj-
ect, directed by Williams Professor Emeritus of Religion and Society Jackson W. Carroll; and the Journal of Christian Leadership and christianleaders.org, under the direction of Scott Cormode, George W. Butler Associate Professor of Church Administration and Finance and Assistant Dean for Institutional Research at the Claremont School of Theology.

**Austin Seminary’s contribution.** Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary has been at the center of this response from the very beginning. In the late 1990s, a lay person—a member of the Favrot family of Houston—had a conversation with her pastor about the difficulties of ministry in the modern era. Inspired by that conversation, Favrot Fund board members called on their historic relationship with Austin Seminary to address the problems pastors face.

This was the beginning of a very fruitful partnership between Austin Seminary and the Favrot Fund. With financial backing from Favrot—and in consultation with colleagues at the Alban Institute and the Office of Research at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville, the Seminary conducted a survey of 272 pastors from its past seven graduating classes; 161 completed and returned the survey instrument. The research yielded some surprising news: in contrast to the Klaas study, only six percent of Austin Seminary graduates reported that they were “no longer satisfied” with their calling. Other responses were not so surprising: seventy-four percent cited competing demands for their time as a major source of stress; most complained that interpersonal conflicts drained their emotional resources; many mentioned loneliness, related to geographical isolation and the nature of the pastor’s vocation. Although pastors identified study, prayer, and mentoring relationships as critical for sustaining ministry, relatively few availed themselves of these resources on a regular basis. (A detailed report and analysis of that study is available on the Austin Seminary web site: www.austinseminary.edu/cpl/survey.html)

Next, the Seminary convened a focus group of fifteen pastors to elaborate on these findings. “Broadly representative of the survey respondents, this group reflected a hard-won realism about the difficulties of pastoral leadership, but their enthusiasm for ministry and their love of the church was palpable,” observed Jinkins, who directed the study. Though members of the focus group had encountered the same set of challenges that confront most contemporary pastors, they seemed to have found constructive and effective ways of dealing with the stresses of ministry.

Hoping to share the strengths and resources these pastors had developed, while reinforcing areas where their preparation for ministry was lacking, Austin Seminary organized a series of conferences called “Resources for the Journey of Pastoral Ministry.” At these three annual events, a select group of Austin Seminary graduates have gathered to attend workshops with leading scholars in the area of pastoral ministry, seek the counsel and support of colleagues, discover new resources for the practice of ministry, and covenant to maintain spiritual, intellectual, and physical disciplines for sustainable ministry. Again, thanks to a generous grant from the Favrot Fund, the conferences were fully funded for all participants.

Austin Seminary’s partnership with the Favrot Fund has not only provided much needed support to pastors—it has had a decided effect on the way the Seminary does continuing education. Conceived in response to the crisis in pastoral leadership, inspired by the real-world experiences of successful graduates in ministry, and forged through collaborative work with Favrot and other foundations, Austin Seminary’s new program of Christian Leadership Education is poised to meet the challenges of ministry in the contemporary context.

**A “gift” for ministry.** Though many church agencies and theological institutions have joined the movement to sustain pastoral ministry, no organization has made so great an impact as the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The Lilly Endowment, Inc., believes that “strong and effective religious institutions are essential to a flourishing and humane society,” and that “high-quality pastoral leadership is integral to congregational vitality.” In recent years, the Lilly Endowment has devoted its considerable resources to two major causes: “identifying, nurturing, and educating a talented new generation of pastors” and “recognizing and supporting the excellent ones we have.”
With respect to the latter goal, the Lilly Endowment seems especially interested in funding projects that help pastors grow and stay in ministry, using networks of colleagues who face similar concerns.

The Lilly Endowment’s involvement with sustaining pastoral leadership began more than a decade ago. The “Entry into Ministry” program (1992-2000) encouraged seminaries to reconsider existing approaches to the preparation of men and women for church vocations. Austin Seminary was one of several theological schools that participated in this program. Other Lilly Endowment-funded projects in the late 1990s included the Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations, the National Clergy Renewal Program, and a number of smaller programs that concentrated on peer-learning groups. Still, Lilly Endowment administrators recognized a greater need. They invited “any nonprofit organization committed to supporting pastoral work and prepared to create or enhance a high-quality pastoral leadership program” to apply for a grant through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program.

Through that program, in 2002, Lilly Endowment, Inc., awarded forty-seven grants, totaling $57.8 million, to a diverse group of Christian organizations with a vision for sustaining pastoral ministry. Competition for the grants was intense; more than 700 institutions submitted proposals. Sixteen additional grants, totaling $26.1 million, were awarded in 2003.

The College of Pastoral Leaders. Austin Seminary’s College of Pastoral Leaders was one of those initiatives. Founded in 2002 with a five-year $1,563,641 Lilly Endowment grant, the College of Pastoral Leaders “offers pastors a chance to practice life-long learning in the context of supportive long-term relationships with colleagues.”

According to the design of the College, those supportive long-term relationships develop in “cohort groups,” clusters of six to eight people who: “covenant for mutual support and professional development, share similar learning goals, and are willing to commit to work together over a two-year period.” Groups of pastors create and refine their learning goals in consultation with the College’s director of professional development. Pastors have access to personal resources such as spiritual directors, educators, counselors, psychologists, and “College Fellows,” or mentors in ministry, through the College. Additionally, the College sponsors an annual conference on contemporary issues related to ministry and church leadership.

Under the direction of Principal Janet Maykus and Director of Professional Development Nancy Chester McCranie, the College of Pastoral Leaders has attracted a number of applicants and prospective cohort groups.

The future of pastoral ministry

There will always be trials and tribulations in ministry, but we can, as the church, work to make the pastor’s burden lighter. With the energy, ideas, and support of so many “partners in the gospel,” there is renewed hope for the future of pastoral ministry. As pastors, congregations, seminaries, and charitable foundations combine their efforts to meet the changing needs of clergy in contemporary society, the movement to sustain pastoral ministry will help churches “keep the faith” for generations to come.

The Apostle Paul discovered—through the persecution and suffering of his ministry—that Christ’s grace was sufficient to sustain him. Surely the same is true for pastors today. Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church (and our model for Christian leadership), continues to inspire, strengthen, support those who serve the church. Furthermore, Paul concluded that “power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NRSV) In faith, we may hope that the contemporary crisis in church leadership—and the ensuing response—will ultimately serve to empower pastors for their vocation, and edify the church for the worship and work of God.

David Gambrell, the associate editor of Windows, is also associate pastor for liturgical ministry at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Austin. He had to miss a Session meeting to meet the deadline for this article. And so it goes...
College bound

As the College of Pastoral Leaders launches its first season of Cohort Groups, Windows spoke with Janet Maykus, principal of the College, and Academic Dean Michael Jinkins, who co-wrote the grant proposal to fund the College, about their hopes and dreams for the program.

Why is the College of Pastoral Leaders a good fit for Austin Seminary?

Jinkins: Our mission is preparing people for ministry. That’s what we do. I know there are other seminaries that focus more on diverse kinds of ministry. And there is no doubt that people can, and do, come to Austin Seminary for other kinds of ministries: chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, as well as to prepare for Ph.D. studies. But our primary mission is preparing people for pastoral ministry. Of all the seminaries I know, Austin is the ideal place for this program. It’s a natural extension of our degree program.

What makes the College an effective design for post-seminary education?

Maykus: Pastors are human beings; they have lives just like everyone else. They have happy marriages, sad marriages, deaths and divorces, substance abuse problems, and all of the other trials of life. Or they have trials and tribulations related to leading congregations. Perhaps they’ve made a mistake that they want to flesh out with someone. It’s hard for pastors to find a place to talk about those things. They often have a feeling that they need to keep everything in a nice box. The College provides the opportunity for people to form intentional groups where they have to be accountable to each other. Confidentiality is utmost for our cohort groups. Yet the College is not just a place where people can get together and moan and groan. One of the organizing principles is to find something that takes you beyond yourself and pulls the group together, your corporate goal. Then each member of the group must have individual goals—an emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual goal—for themselves. Many pastors talk about the fact that they’ve put on fifty pounds since they graduated from seminary. Or they really wish they could exercise but can’t find the time. Well, now they’re saying, “I’m going to walk four times a week,” and the group is going to ask them, “Did you do that?” This program is individualized. The groups are telling us what they want to learn.

What sort of proposals have you received?

Maykus: I think one of the common threads that seems to run through most people who go into ministry is that, be they first-career engineers or right-out-of-college music majors, they have a creative twinkle. The College seems to be bringing out that creative side. I’m very excited about their projects; people are calling with ideas that I would have never thought of.

For example?

Maykus: One group, whose members have been out of seminary at least sixteen years, believes that the world has changed so much in that time that they know it should have affected their hermeneutic [biblical interpretation] in some way. And so they want to have four retreats with a preaching professor. For one of them they want to work on technology and the Human Genome Project and what does it mean to be a person. Another one will be on globalization, and what the global economy means for members of their congregations. I thought that sounded fascinating.

Another person called today and said that he used to
be a mentor through our Supervised Practice of Ministry program, and he’s been talking to a group of friends about how they wish there was some sort of mentoring program for pastors. They wondered if that would be a good idea for a grant. Could they, perhaps, look at what it means to be a mentor, the skills involved, and how to be a mentor to someone?

Why a “College”?

Jinkins: It goes back to the Latin word “collegium.” At the heart of Christian ministry there has always been the assumption of a group. We do ministry out of community. And the College represents that. It’s a way to both symbolize that and to make that happen again. In large multi-staff situations, you are so busy that your activity isolates you from any kind of collegium, especially among colleagues in ministry. In small rural churches it may be hard to even see colleagues in ministry. And so we wanted to recover the idea that community is the context for ministry.

People are yearning for connections, aren’t they?

Jinkins: Carlyle Marney used to teach on this faculty and was one of the great names among preachers in the South. When he left Austin to become pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, Marney was struck by what a difficult time he and other pastors were having. They started The Interpreter’s House, a safe place for pastors to gather and grow. Much of the design for the College has been based on that concept. Here’s a group of people with whom you can grow. You can learn really new things, and you can not know some things. And I think that’s an amazing gift.

Maykus: And I think it strikes a chord. I was at my denomination’s cluster meeting and one of the pastors in that cluster has submitted an application and become part of a cohort group of the College. He said his acceptance into the program was one thing he was excited about, and he explained what the College of Pastoral Leaders is. The interesting thing that happened from that was, not that everyone turned to me and said, How do I do that also? But that someone finally said, “Well that’s what this meeting should be. I feel like this cluster meeting is a verbal newsletter. Why aren’t we more intentional about our conversation? Why aren’t we talking about the struggles?”

I thought that was very helpful. So, at that meeting they started talking about how they were going to redesign the cluster meeting to have time for deeper conversation. I thought, this is interesting, the sorts of things that will peel off from people just hearing about this.

Jinkins: I think the Lilly Endowment, in part, has that vision. They’ve invested a lot of money in seminaries, churches, and other organizations across the country, millions upon millions of dollars, and part of their goal is to get kind of a contagion going. One of the reasons we finance only two years per cohort group is to say, “Let’s get you up and running. Let’s get you off to a good start, and we’ll pick up the tab.” Then after two years say, “Well, what are you going to do next? Go for it!” Then we turn around and get other groups going.

Five years out, how many lives will you have touched?

Maykus: I think at least 180.

The College is made up of cohort groups and a yearly conference. Talk about the conferences.

Maykus: The first day of the conference (February 19, this year) is just for cohorts; for many it will be the first time they have all assembled together. They will set their agenda for the next couple of years. This will be the first bilingual program that the Seminary has offered—two of our cohort groups are made up of primarily Spanish speakers so we will have simultaneous translation at this event. We’re excited about that. The title of the program this year is “Transforming Clergy Leadership.” We will, of course, address What is clergy leadership? And why does it need to be transformed? And what should it be trans-
formed to? And for whom are you being transformed?

Jinkins: One of the goals of the conference is to combine what we’re learning with what other people are learning. This will be an opportunity to bring research from the Pulpit and Pew project at Duke and to interface with others working in the same area.

What joys have you found in administering this program?

Jinkins: One aspect that I really like has to do with a group of pastors in upstate New York, who are all Spanish speakers. They wanted colleagues with similar interests. They really needed a particular kind of pastoral training, and they needed it available to them in Spanish. Well, that’s not easy to come by, even in the Southwest. It’s just a wonderful thing to be in a position to make that happen for them. Lilly has been a remarkable gift to churches across the country. It’s almost as if they’re sending a message to the church, “We know that things are tough for pastors. We know that things are tough for churches. But, hang in there. We want to provide some resources to make things better.” And they really are making things better. There are even people who have stayed in ministry because of this. And what’s amazing to me is that has already happened here with the Favrot conferences (see pages 4). It’s wonderful to sit down and read letters from participants that say, “You know, I was really at the end of my rope. I thought I was already too far gone, but I came to the conference at Austin Seminary, and I can see now how I can stay in the ministry.”

The gift from Lilly Endowment Inc. to fund the College was the largest gift to a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminary. How are we being good stewards of those funds?

Jinkins: When we received the money from the Favrot Foundation it was a marvelous gift. One of the most exciting parts of it, though, was when the Lilly grant came in. The Favrot gift of almost $100,000 made it possible for us to take the next step with a $1.56 million grant from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program. There’s no doubt that these are tight financial times, but we’ve always had the view that when we’re given gifts, we need to be the kind of stewards that multiply their effectiveness. And I think that has been true. I think we’re on to something that really does matter, and our goal is to keep earning the trust placed in us by investing in the lives of pastors and the ministries of congregations.

What’s next?

Jinkins: The traditional way of doing continuing education was that we would sit around and try to figure out what people ought to learn or might be interested in. We would have meetings, talk about it for months. We would put together a list. We would start inviting people. By the time we got around to having the event, the issue we were addressing might be two years old. Our hope now is to put theological education close to people at the point where they really need it. One of the great things we now have is technology that allows us to do that: pressing a button to ask, What’s today’s issue? and we really can find out. That means we’re that much ahead of the curve. It’s big, and we aren’t even halfway there yet.

Maykus: The use of technology will be an interesting and dynamic challenge in the College of Pastoral Leaders. With our web site, each cohort group will have their own chat room, and so even if the members of the cohort groups are in different parts of the country, they can have a running dialogue. What I’m hoping is that, from some of the things we’re learning through the cohort groups, we can put together distance-learning courses that we can put on the web. It would all be web-based learning so pastors in Guam and Juneau can participate just as easily as people here in Austin.

Jinkins: There are so many wonderful ways for us to go about this. We’re just at the beginning.
Pay it forward

Cohort group practices the spirituality of clergy wellness

BY RANDAL WHITTINGTON

So a Catholic priest, a Baptist preacher, and a Jewish rabbi are sitting in a room…

Actually, make that a Catholic priest, three Baptist preachers, an Episcopal rector, a Disciples of Christ pastor, and a Jewish rabbi.

Instead of a set up for a joke, this disparate collection of Austin men—whose tenure in ministry ranges from two-and-a-half to eighteen years—meets every Wednesday morning to offer each other moral support, pastoral care, and intellectual challenge. And they have become the first “cohort group” of Austin Seminary’s College of Pastoral Leaders.

This morning Frank Goldsmith, 38, pastor of Koenig Lane Christian Church, reads a selection from the book, *The Ironic Christian Companion*: “…the best companions are like Chaucer’s: an uncommon mix of a motley band,” and the men seem to resonate with that definition.

Though they represent a diverse theological spectrum, all share a passion for the Word, intellectual curiosity, and an irreverent sense of humor (somehow you know that more than a few “priest, preacher, and rabbi” jokes have crossed their lips).

For participants Ragan Courtney, Frank Goldsmith, Greg Rickel, Larry Covington, Larry Bethune, Steve Lucas, and Marty Pasternak, this “motley band” has also become a lifeline of sorts. “It is the highlight of my week,” says Rickel, 40, pastor of St. James Episcopal Church. “I want to be here. I don’t always get to be here, but I miss it when I’m not.”

“Ministry takes a toll on you,” says Goldsmith. “Most people only want to talk to the minister when they are in a needy position.”

“Or when they are angry,” chimes in one colleague.

“Or when you stood in the wrong place on Sunday
morning,” offers another.

“Here you can bring your own needs in,” Goldsmith continues. “You can bring your humor in. Sometimes having someone else who has stared at the same bizarre behavior that you are staring at is a very nice person to be with.”

Courtney, 62, pastor of Tarrytown Baptist Church, concurs. “The most helpful thing for me when I came here was to realize that all these guys are going through the same thing. I realized our church is not crazy…it’s just the church.”

The “Wednesday Morning Ecumenical Meeting” dates back eleven years to when Covington, 47, came to Austin to lead St. Louis Catholic Church. The priest, along with Bethune, 51, pastor of University Baptist Church, and others formed an ecumenical lectionary study group, but, says Covington, “We quickly evolved into something a little larger.”

The pastors insist that the interdenominational nature of the group is crucial. “Quite frankly,” says Rickel, “no matter how much we try to cover it up, there’s a lot of competition in Christianity, and more so within denominations.”

“I guess it gives us that permission to say what we want,” says Covington. “And we’ve had a sort of unspoken understanding that what goes on in this room stays in this room.” Agrees Goldsmith: “You walk into the group and there is honesty.”

Moreover, they are stretched by the theological diversity. “I’m in a denomination that really doesn’t want to talk about certain issues that are in society right now,” says Goldsmith, “one of them being homosexuals in the church. And I’ve got a companion over here from the Episcopal Church who’s having to face it from one direction; of course Larry Bethune is, from a different direction; Ragan is having his struggles with it. And so, in this room that dialogue occurs and I get to understand what the edges of that debate are about, and then have integrity as we look at Scripture and say, Where is Scripture authoritative about this? Where is clarity?”

“I do get stretched, absolutely,” says Rickel, “but then I remember a day I came in here and it was just obvious, I guess, that I was so stressed out that Larry said, ‘Let’s just pray for Greg,’ and that was so great.”

“The spirituality always surprises us,” agrees Courtney. “It catches us off guard.”

These men perceive that the group dynamic, while critical to their well-being, is elusive. “I cannot go home and tell my wife why this group is important to me,” says Goldsmith. “But she will tell you that come 9:00 on Wednesday morning, I am up here.”

“I think it is something mysterious,” says Courtney. “I think we’ve wandered into what the church really is.”

That is why they have formed a cohort group within the College of Pastoral Leaders: to look at the spirituality of clergy wellness and share their findings with other pastors. Goldsmith says, “We’re going to step out of here and see if we can map it out. You remember in The Name of the Rose where people are wandering around inside the labyrinth, and the next day [Brother William of Baskerville] walks around the outside, and then he was able to draw the whole maze? I kind of feel like that’s what we’re going to be able to do.”

Over the next two years, they have planned two retreats: one in an urban setting—New York City where their colleague Pasternak has recently moved—and at a Benedictine abbey in rural Indiana. They have invited Joe Phelps, author of More Light, Less Heat, to guide them in their work; perhaps a book of their own will result. They appreciate the twofold gift of time and accountability that the grant offers. Rickel says their Wednesday mornings have become “sacred time in a way that I’m not sure we can ever get this work done here, and I’m not sure we should. With some funding, we can go do it somewhere else, and that’s what we plan on doing.” And, he adds, “We’ll have someone looking over us, in a way, helping us along, expecting something.”

“I told my congregation that I felt like what we are doing is seeking clarity,” says Goldsmith. “I think we recognize that it would be beneficial for others. Ministry can be hard on people. I’m very interested in giving back to the community. I’m already getting what I want. Now, how do I go and tell somebody what this thing is?”

Which is what, in a nutshell, the College of Pastoral Leaders is about: discovering, implementing, and sharing resources for clergy health. Says Covington: “This is what happened at 7601 Burnet Road, and, God willing, it can happen in other places, but that will have to be as a result of a group of people coming together in trust, sharing a common love for what they do.”

Randal Whittington is editor of Windows.
Ambassadors of Austin Seminary
New program strives to connect supporters

When Marta Zaborowski, a first year seminarian from Tennessee, tells her story of choosing Austin Seminary for her theological education, two people figure prominently. Jim Collier (MDiv’69, DMin’84), pastor of her Wooster, Ohio, college church, and Joe Donaho (MDiv’63), interim pastor of her home church in Germantown, Tennessee, both helped to confirm her call to ministry and enthusiastically recommended Austin Seminary. Zaborowski remembers Donaho’s compelling description of the Seminary: the people are warm and welcoming, the faculty are engaging and talented, and the city is fun and interesting.

Collier and Donaho are two among a vast network of influential guides and mentors—alumni/ae, pastors, professors, and lay leaders among them—who embolden students to follow their calls which lead to Austin Seminary.

Inspired by an inconspicuous but vital network of faithful supporters, Austin Seminary has launched a new program dedicated to those people who further our mission by representing and supporting us: the Ambassadors of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The life of Austin Seminary and the lives of our supporters are intricately interwoven. Evidence of these relationships is plentiful across the Seminary campus. The portraits which line our halls and the names emblazoned on our buildings remind us that the Seminary’s service to the church is realized only in partnership with many generous and caring people. Student stories serve as testimonials to the devotion and significance of so many people’s efforts on behalf of Austin Seminary.

Our dedicated friends not only encourage prospective students to consider Austin Seminary, they also provide scholarship funds that make the decision financially feasible. For one recent student, that meant a group of twelve lay people from his church who contributed enough to the Seminary to pay his full tuition and some expenses.

The Ambassador program follows the biblical theme of the covenant relationship between God and the faithful that has been central to Christianity since its earliest expression. John Calvin describes the covenant relationship as a bilateral relationship, one of mutuality. Throughout his biblical commentaries, Calvin details God binding Godself to the people and the people binding themselves to God. Austin Seminary will follow this model of mutuality in its partnership with Ambassadors.

An Ambassador is a person of faith who covenants with Austin Seminary to enthusiastically promote and support the Seminary’s mission of preparing men and women for Christian service and leadership. In turn, the Seminary covenants with its Ambassadors to keep them informed and equipped in this role by providing prospective student applications and resources to share with those who have gifts for ministry.

The Ambassador program begins this spring with a series of events featuring dinner and an address by President Wardlaw. All who commit to be an Ambassador by July 2004 will be invited to a fall orientation on campus.

To find out more about becoming an Ambassador, please contact Molly Jensen, coordinator for the Annual Fund: mjensen@austinseminary.edu, 800-777-6127, or 512-404-4807.
**MLK Commemorative Service held on campus**

The Reverend Margaret Aymer delivered the sermon, “Semper Reformanda,” during a worship service on February 10 to commemorate the life and ministry of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A graduate of Harvard University and Union Theological Seminary in New York, where she is currently a doctoral candidate, Aymer was active in the life of Central Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, when President Wardlaw was pastor there. She has been an instructor at Johnson C. Smith Seminary of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

**Trustee news**

Dr. Beth Blanton Flowers has been elected to the Austin Seminary Board of Trustees, filling an unexpired term. A psychiatrist in private practice and associate professor in the Baylor College of Medicine, Flowers worships at St. Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas, where she is an elder.

Retired General Robert T. Herres, trustee since 2000, received the Outstanding Citizenship Award given by the Greater San Antonio Community of Churches.

Having completed his term as chair of the board, the Reverend Dr. Louis H. Zbinden Jr. has returned to the Seminary as the first holder of the Louis and Katherine Zbinden Chair of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership. This fall he co-taught senior preaching with President Wardlaw, and in the spring will teach “Workshop on Church Administration: Stewardship.” Zbinden retired in May after thirty years as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, which endowed the chair in his honor.

Four exceptional students from the Class of 2004 received fellowships for continued study during the Austin Seminary Association (ASA) Banquet on February 4.

The winner of the David L. Stitt award, presented by the ASA and named for the Seminary’s fourth president, was **Rebecca Corkill**. A member of First Christian Church, Houston, Texas, Corkill earned a B.A. in English from Rice University and served as program coordinator for the Rice University School of Continuing Studies. She is single. The Stitt Fellowship, given upon recommendation of the faculty on the basis of Christian character, scholarship, personality, and ability, carries a stipend of $10,000.

The Pile-Morgan Fellowship, named in honor of Leo V. Pile, Helen Porter Pile, Edmund Holland Morgan, and Estella Martin Morgan, was given to **Mary L. “Mally” Baum**. A member of Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas, Baum received a B.A. in foreign languages from Southern Methodist University and has served churches as a youth and campus ministry director. While a student she served on the Program of Study Committee. Baum is married and is mother to two boys. The fellowship carries a grant of $8,000 and is given on the basis of Christian character, scholarship, and ability.

**Jacqueline Udden Baker** received the $3,000 W. P. Newell Memorial Fellowship, established by Mrs. Newell in 1946. Baker received a B.A. in political science from St. Edward’s University and is a member of Central Christian Church in Austin where she served as director of Christian education. She is married and is mother to four children.

The Janie Maxwell Morris Fellowship, which carries an award of $2,000, was given to **David Jahnke**. A native of Mankato, Minnesota, Jahnke earned a B.A. from Gustavus Adolphus College then taught English in Korea. He is currently completing a Supervised Practice of Ministry internship at First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, Texas. Jahnke is married and has one child.
2004 MidWinter event engaging and lively

Dr. Carol A. Newsom, professor of Old Testament and associate dean of faculty development at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta, delivered the 2004 Thomas White Currie Lectures, “Moral Imagination, Ethics, and the Bible.” Dr. Gordon W. Lathrop gave the E. C. Westervelt Lectures, “Only One is Holy.” Lathrop is the Charles A. Schieren Professor of Liturgy and chaplain at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and author of many books including Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology (Fortress, 2003). The Robert F. Jones Lectures, “Pax Americana: Forming Faith in an Era of Empire,” were given by Dr. Don C. Richter, associate director for preacher Dr. Thomas Gillespie and an evening coffeehouse with the popular Austin singer-songwriter Sara Hickman—were added to enhance the half-century-old event. Gillespie has been the president of Princeton Theological Seminary since 1983. Additional MidWinter Lectures festivities include reunion activities for the classes of 1954, 1964, 1984, 1994, and 1999 (see photos, page 24), and the Austin Seminary Association (ASA) Banquet and Annual Meeting held at the conclusion of lectures which featured an address by President Wardlaw and a tribute to participants in the “Gospel Airlift” (see story, page 21).

By acclamation, members of the ASA elected officers at the Annual Meeting and Banquet. The new president is Mary Currie (MDiv’79, DMIn’90), pastor of St. James United Presbyterian Church, La Porte, Texas, and the new vice president is Dennis Ritchie (MDiv’98), pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Claremore, Oklahoma. New representatives include Lewis Allen (MDiv’81, DMIn’91), pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd, Sonora, Texas; Jeanette Heart (DMIn’03), pastor of St. Marks United Methodist Church, McAleen, Texas; James Lee (MDiv’00), associate pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Austin; Terri Matthews (MDiv’98), pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Arlington, Texas; and Rodney Swisher (MDiv’98), associate pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Austin.

For additional photos from MidWinter Lectures, or to complete a survey about what you’d like to see in future events, log on to www.austinseminary.edu/news/lectures.html.
Academic year introduces sizable entering class

Austin Seminary began its 2003-2004 academic year with an opening convocation service on September 2, 2003, in the Robert M. Shelton Chapel. The standing-room-only crowd listened to an address by W. C. Brown Associate Professor of Theology Cynthia Rigby, titled “Scandalous Presence.” Claiming the title of the second largest entering class, fifty-nine students matriculated in the fall: forty-four are enrolled in the Master of Divinity degree program, twelve in the Master of Arts in Theological Studies program, and three are foreign pastors studying at Austin Seminary for one year. The students come from sixteen states and Ghana, Trinidad, and Hungary; they represent eight different denominations. Joining several masters-level students who enrolled in the spring, the 2003 entering class numbers sixty-seven.

Returning to campus after a six-month sabbatical, Professor Rigby has been involved in research on sin and salvation. Her address to the community flowed from her work on a new book for which she is writing chapters on the Incarnation and the Trinity. President Theodore J. Wardlaw, participating in his first Austin Seminary Fall Convocation, welcomed the incoming class and new faculty and staff as well as those returning to campus.

Following the first day of classes, a special worship service was held Tuesday evening in the Shelton Chapel. President Wardlaw delivered the sermon, “Tell the Story,” and all members of the incoming class signed the Declaration of Intent, a one-hundred-year tradition in which students covenant to live responsibly and to support one another.
New director of professional development

Nancy Chester McCranie joined the College of Pastoral Leaders in September as director of professional development. She is charged with assisting cohort groups in identifying goals and strategies for sustaining ministry.

Academic Dean Michael Jinkins served on the search committee for the director of professional development position. “Nancy Chester McCranie is a respected pastor,” said Jinkins. “She brings a deep and life-long experience of the church and a passion for pastoral ministry to this new program.”

McCranie (MDiv’87) returns to the Seminary to help lead the newly formed College of Pastoral Leaders after seven years of work for Hospice Austin. McCranie continues a family tradition at Austin Seminary: her mother, Fern Chester, worked at the Seminary for twenty-one years and her father, Ray Chester (DMin’77) was in the first Doctor of Ministry class. “McCranie and her husband, Bill, are proud parents to two sons, Cassady, 6, and Patrick, 4.

Some new faces; some in different places

Harold Abbott has joined the maintenance staff. He has lived in Austin for twenty years and worked in the construction industry prior to his employment here.

Laura Birek joined the Office of Communications in August as web editor, managing the web sites for the Seminary and the College of Pastoral Leaders. She moved to Austin from Portland, Oregon, where she recently graduated from Reed College as a literature and theater major. View her work at austinseminary.edu.

Maria Collins has joined the staff as administrative assistant to the faculty. She hails from Houston, where she worked as a production assistant at the Alley Theatre.

Angela Arnold Dejong is a new addition as operations coordinator. Before coming to the Seminary, Dejong worked as a social science journal and textbook editor for Sage Publications.

Shannon Nelson is the new administrative assistant in the Office of Vocations and Admissions. She has a degree in office administration from Kilgore College.

Nancy Reese has become the new administrative assistant to the president. She served as administrative assistant to the academic dean since 1993. Rose Renteria, formerly secretary to the president, has joined the Office of Business Affairs as administrative assistant. Alison Riemersma has moved from faculty secretary to administrative assistant to the academic dean. Sharon Pawlik moved from the Office of Vocation and Admissions to the McCord Community Center reception desk as the new operations assistant.

Twenty-fivestraight years of keeping things straight

Two employees, whose behind-the-scenes work at the Seminary over a combined fifty years did much to maintain the appearance and efficiency of the institution, have said good-bye to Austin Seminary.

In a celebration attended by friends, family, and Seminary colleagues, the community said farewell to Robbie Lampkin on October 3. For twenty-five years, Lampkin served on the Seminary’s maintenance staff, keeping the Stitt Library, the McCord Center, and Currie Hall in pristine order. In spite of lingering effects of a car accident this summer, Lampkin was all smiles during her party. “Robbie has such positive energy,” reflected student Leigh Wisner (middler, Houston, Texas). “She invested in each of us a sense of joy.”

If, over the past decade or two, you have enjoyed one of the Seminary’s MidWinter Lectures, Commencements, Centennial events, or presidential inaugurations, it is likely, in part, due to Linda Cunningham’s gift of hospitality. Her attention to detail and dedication to quality manifested themselves in the special occasions as well as the day to day life of the Seminary—from exquisite floral arrangements and enticing menus to comfortable accommodations to smoothly run board of trustee meetings. Cunningham, executive assistant to Presidents Maxwell, Stotts, Shelton, and Wardlaw, resigned in July.
Senior Master of Divinity student Jennifer Rogers received a $2,000 scholarship from the Military Chaplains Association. Only five such scholarships are awarded in the United States every year, each going to a full-time seminary student who is already approved and serving as a chaplain candidate in one of the Armed Forces. Rogers, who will graduate in May, is serving in the U.S. Army, stationed at the Army Chaplain Center and School in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Christina Berry (junior, Albuquerque, New Mexico), who entered seminary as a Master of Divinity student last fall, was the writer for the 2003 PC(USA) Mission Yearbook for Children.

Pat Lee (middler, Metairie, Louisiana) has been elected moderator of the Synod of the Sun for 2004-2005.

Theology professors collaborate on new work

Professors Cynthia Rigby and William Greenway gave birth to Alexander Rigby Greenway on December 4, 2003. This is the first child for Greenway, associate professor of philosophical theology, and Rigby, W. C. Brown Associate Professor of Theology.

Learning the alphabet together ...this time in Hebrew

It was “déjà vu all over again” for Marta Zaborowski and Christine Hodo when they met during Austin Seminary’s orientation for new students last fall. The two women realized they had been third-grade classmates at Nottingham Country Elementary School (above, left) in Katy, Texas. They lost contact after Marta moved away in the sixth grade and had not seen each other since. The reunion of the two friends surprised both Zaborowski and Hodo. “I think it is a real God thing when something like that happens,” Hodo says. “Marta is a great girl and I am very glad that I get to spend the next three years of seminary with her.”

B. Stephen Taylor (MDiv’85) and his spouse, Gillian Trew, presented a silver St. John’s Cross to the Seminary in a worship service on December 4, 2003. The inscription on the base of the cross reads: “Given to the Glory of God and to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in honour of The Reverend Dr. Robert McElroy Shelton by the Reverends Stephen Taylor and Gillian Trew. Advent 2003. An honest man is the noblest work of God.”
The Dean’s Bookshelf

Building a personal theological library

Every year various bookstores, newspapers, and magazines run a list of the most popular books of that year, some of which advertise themselves as “The Best Books.” Often they are broken down into categories, “The Ten Best Novels” and so forth. It’s not unusual for people to ask professors and pastors for their opinions on the best books to read. And I usually have a list. Eugene Peterson’s list of suggested books is, itself, book length, and could be used to provide the basic core for a theological library. I confess that I love to read these lists, and from time to time read the books suggested there. My favorite such list, by the way, appeared in The New York Times several years ago: a list of novels set on college and university campuses. I’ve now read most of the books they listed, and found some gems there.

Recently, however, when a student came by to ask for a strategy to build her personal theological library, I encouraged her to take a slightly different tack. Instead of getting my whole list and simply reproducing it, I suggested that she start with a few really stimulating writers, like Eugene Peterson in pastoral studies, and Ron Hansen in fiction, read them, then track down their sources, follow their literary leads into the headwaters to see what shaped their thought.

For example, instead of simply slavishly following Peterson’s list, read Peterson’s Working the Angles, and notice whom he reads and quotes. In the endnotes of that book, you’ll find Abraham Heschel, one of the greatest Jewish scholars of the twentieth century, Gerard Manley Hopkins, a poet of depth and force, and Flannery O’Connor, the great Southern writer, as well as St. Ambrose, Karl Barth, C. S. Lewis, and G. K. Chesterton. I think of this approach as mining a vein of ore, following the ribbon of gold that runs through the best writing. As way leads on to way, you can then mine C. S. Lewis, to see how George MacDonald and Chesterton and classical writers (like Plato) and a whole host of others shaped his thought, going further up and deeper in, following the veins of precious stuff wherever they lead through biographies and historical sources, along a whole nexus of connections, letting our understanding grow as we engage the brightest and the best and the most profound.

Of course, we would expect that a good theological library would contain a core of solid reference books, like the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology, and good biblical commentaries (I’ve always preferred to try to find the best commentary on a particular book of the Bible, rather than to have too many sets of commentaries). But a personal theological library should also reflect the interests, imagination, and work of the one who builds the library.

Next issue: why poetry matters.

—Michael Jinkins, academic dean

Seminary acquires Horizons in Biblical Theology

Austin Seminary has acquired the scholarly journal Horizons in Biblical Theology: An International Dialogue. The journal, which has been edited by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary since its founding in 1978, will be published by Austin Seminary starting in 2004.

Horizons is a biannual biblical studies journal that addresses an international and interdenominational audience. A distinguished editorial board made up of scholars from the United States and abroad oversees the journal. In the quarter-century Pittsburgh Theological Seminary has had stewardship of Horizons, the journal has become an important medium for scholarly discussion.

The transfer of Horizons to Austin Seminary will coincide with a new editorial board for the journal. Austin Seminary Professor of Old Testament J. Andrew Dearman has been chosen as the editor-in-chief of the new Horizons editorial board. The new board will retain at least one faculty member from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. “Professor Robert Gagnon of Pittsburgh Seminary is a personal friend and in recent years has been a superb editor of Horizons. It is my hope that he will assist us in the process of transition and that he will serve for a time on our editorial board,” said Dearman. “Our first task will be to continue the excellence of the journal. We will look for ways to increase its circulation and to publish the best in international scholarship that contributes to the theological understanding and interpretation of Scripture.”
Academic Dean Michael Jinkins inaugurated as full professor

Michael Jinkins was inaugurated as a full professor on Tuesday, November 11, 2003, in Shelton Chapel. His inaugural address was titled “Loving God with Our Minds.” Professor Jinkins began his tenure as academic dean on January 1, 2004.

“Austin Seminary is well served by Michael Jinkins,” says President Theodore Wardlaw. “He is a well-known Reformed scholar, a splendid educator and administrator, a creative thinker, a pastor who knows this constituency inside and out, and—most importantly—a lover of the church of Jesus Christ.”

Jinkins joined the faculty of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 1993 after serving as a pastor for many years in Texas and Scotland. He received a B.A. from Howard Payne University, an M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a D.Min. from Austin Seminary, and the Ph.D. from King’s College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

In his teaching career at Austin Seminary, Jinkins has made significant contributions to the church’s understanding of the practice of ministry, pastoral identity, and the theology of Christian leadership. He was for seven years director of the Seminary’s Supervised Practice of Ministry program. Most recently, Jinkins co-authored the grant proposal that led to the establishment of Austin Seminary’s College of Pastoral Leaders.


In 1999 Dr. Jinkins received a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., through the Association of Theological Schools (A.T.S.) to fund his sabbatical research project on Isaiah Berlin at Oxford University. He was awarded an Oxford Foundation Fellowship by the Graduate Theological Foundation during his stay in England. He recently completed a book, Christianity, Pluralism, and Tolerance: A Theological Engagement with the Social Theory of Isaiah Berlin, based on this research; it will be published in 2004 by Routledge Press, London.

Professor Jinkins has received a number of professional appointments, including research associate for The New Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press) and visiting professor at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. He has also been a consultant for the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning and was a faculty-mentor for the “Excellence from the Start” program coordinated by the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Jinkins is married to Dr. Deborah Jinkins and they are parents to two children, Jeremy and Jessica.

IN BRIEF

Assistant Professor of World Religion Whit Bodman successfully defended his dissertation, “The Poetics of Iblis: Qur’anic Narrative as Theology,” in January. Oddly enough, he said it was “a lot of fun!” In June he will take part in graduation ceremonies and receive the Th.D. in comparative religion from Harvard Divinity School. Last fall Bodman organized a conference about the Palestinian-Israeli issue on the Seminary campus, presented two papers at the University of Texas, and gave a workshop on the Muslim Jesus at the Western Leadership
steering committee of the History of Christianity section of the American Academy of Religion and taught a six-week course, “Contemporary Issues in Theology,” at Tarrytown United Methodist Church in Austin.

David Jones, director of the Doctor of Ministry program, led a Spiritual Renewal Weekend for Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church in Kansas City, Kansas, on September 5-7.

Timothy Lincoln, director of the Stitt Library, led a retreat for Lutheran seminarians in December 2003 at Camp Lone Star in Elgin, Texas. He led a discussion of ecclesiology and pastoral leadership with a dozen ministerial candidates of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Cynthia Rigby, W. C. Brown Associate Professor of Theology, was the keynote speaker at the Lutheran tri-synodical conference in Kerrville, Texas, January 26-27, then traveled to Norfolk, Virginia, to address 1,200 educators at the national Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators’ conference, January 28-31.

Associate Professor of Old Testament Kathryn Roberts co-edited and contributed a chapter to a festschrift, David and Zion: Essays in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts (forthcoming from Eisenbrauns), for J. J. M. Roberts, William Henry Green Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Seminary. The volume, a tribute to the Princeton professor for his work in the field of Assyriology and Old Testament Studies, was announced at the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in November. Following his retirement later this year, Roberts will join his spouse in Austin.

International scholars find forum at Austin Seminary

Austin Seminary has recently hosted a number of visiting scholars, bringing new ideas and international views to the campus.

Dr. Andrew F. Walls, considered by many to be the greatest living historian of the missionary dimension of Christian history, delivered the 2003 Settles Lectures on November 3. The lectures were organized by Professor Arun Jones.

“Thorns of Anguish, Seeds of Hope,” a December 6, 2003, conference on peace in Palestine and Israel, featured two distinguished leaders: The Rev. Naim Ateek and Dr. Elaine C. Hagopian. Ateek, a Palestinian Christian, is the former Canon of St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem. He is the founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. Hagopian is Professor Emerita of Sociology, Simmons College, Boston, and a principal founder of the Trans-Arab Research Institute.

South African scholar Hendrik Bosman enlightened students as a lecturer in biblical studies during the January term of 2004. Bosman is a professor of New Testament at the University of Stellenbosch.
Hello Molly!

Molly Jensen joined Austin Seminary’s Institutional Advancement team in December 2003 as the new coordinator of the Annual Fund. She literally “hit the ground running” and has already been traveling to visit churches, alumni, and friends of Austin Seminary as she seeks to build support for annual operating funds.

Molly is no stranger to the Seminary community, having taught a course on “Moral Issues in Globalization” in the fall of 2002. She brings an impressive academic background with a B.A. in religion from Centre College, an M.T.S. in ethics from Vanderbilt Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in ethics from Vanderbilt University Graduate School of Religion.

Raised in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and active in congregations in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas, Molly is steeped in this denomination. Her parents and grandparents were ordained elders, and she grew up in the seminary town and denominational headquarters of Louisville. She has taught classes in local churches as well as in academic settings.

“We are excited to welcome Molly, who brings a deep love of the church, commitment to theological education, and incredible communication and interpersonal skills,” says Linda Evans, director of development.

Molly is married to Assistant Professor of Reformed Theology David Jensen, and they are parents to Hannah Grace, 5.

Grateful for a gift of “sterling”

He was not a “church going” person. Sterling Hogan was a major developer. He built one of the early shopping centers and subdivisions in Houston in the 1950s. In the 1940s he was my mother’s employer as he built housing along the “Big Inch” for workers on the pipeline that sent needed oil and gas to the Northeast during World War II. He was a fine person and a very kind boss to Mother during her working years.

I was not so unlike Mr. Hogan. I did not grow up much of a “church goer,” myself. During my time at the University of Texas, from 1952-1954, through my activity in the Westminster Presbyterian Fellowship at University Presbyterian Church, I got to know Dr. James I. McCord, the interim pastor there. Though he seemed an awesome, impressive (perhaps aloof), sometimes stern figure, I was blessed with a rare insight into—and personal friendship with—Jim McCord. I experienced his compassion, friendliness, and “good ol’ boy” self. His defining “recruiting words” to me as I left the University were, “I’ll save a place for you in the Seminary dorm.”

In 1956, after a two-year stint as a production engineer with Dow Chemical Company in Freeport, Texas, I decided to enter Austin Seminary for study. About that time, a great tragedy struck Sterling Hogan when his only son was brought down by cancer in the prime of life. Sterling Jr. was very active in the church during his brief adult life. Unsolicited, Sterling Sr. offered to pay my expenses to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary for three years! It was his way of honoring his son’s Christian devotion to the church.

Throughout my thirty-six years of active ministry, I have always looked for a way to say, “Thank you, Sterling Hogan,” my surprise benefactor. In recent years, because of an inheritance (pastors don’t often build up reserves for gifts!), I have been able to give to Austin Seminary by funding an endowed scholarship—to help some other student with education expenses. I am, at last, able to begin to say, “Thank you, Mr. Hogan, for your Sterling gift.”

—Ron Guinn (MDiv’59, ThM’71)
Members of Seminary’s “Gospel Airlift” honored on fiftieth anniversary of ministry

Three of the seven living pilots of Austin Seminary’s Gospel Airlift were on hand for this re-telling by Jerry Tompkins (Class of 1955) of their story at the ASA Banquet.

The Gospel Airlift was a unique ministry invented at Austin Seminary in about 1950. Across its four-year history, it involved seven pilots, dozens of students, and an unknown number of churches in remote parts of the Synod of the Sun.

Professor Ellis Nelson (MDiv’40), among other things, was responsible for field education assignments and had been looking for more student preaching opportunities for a growing student body. In 1949, Leslie Webb (MDiv’52) arrived as a junior, bringing family, luggage, and his very own airplane. At some point the following year, Leslie conceived an idea of offering his plane and his pilot skills in the service of the seminary and the churches. Nelson accepted the offer, and the Gospel Airlift was born.

About this time, Webb’s brother-in-law offered to swap Webb’s plane for a twin-engine, a UC78, known as the “Bamboo Bomber.” Webb and Nelson were soon joined by three middleclass, also pilots: Gerry Slusser (MDiv’52), a former Braniff Airlines captain, Arthur Strickland, a former Marine combat fighter pilot, and Joe Slicker (MDiv’53), who had been attached to a Marine unit in the Pacific. Nelson worked out elaborate schedules with the churches, and the Gospel Airlift was not only in the air, it was operating virtually on a weekly schedule.

There were several routes to churches needing pulpit supply in three states. Webb and the other pilots soon learned that the Bamboo Bomber’s engines were too light to efficiently carry seven people, so Webb voluntarily upgraded the engines. Sometime after the first year of flying, a trustee in Louisiana offered a used plane to the Seminary—a Gull Wing Stinson V77—which had been in storage. The Stinson could carry five lightweight people—another factor for Nelson to consider in organizing the placement.

One route serves as an example—the one to Monroe, Louisiana. Lloyd O’Neal, superintendent of home missions for northern Louisiana (sometimes called “the Bishop of Louisiana”), designed a minute-by-minute schedule at Monroe which would be a credit to today’s NASA planners. Classes met until noon every Saturday. Take-off by 2:00 p.m. was critical to arriving in Monroe before dark in the winter. There waiting for us would be a late-model Plymouth, with keys in the ignition. The student going to Ferriday, Louisiana, drove, dropping students off one by one in Baskin and Alto, at Union and Archibald, and sometimes in Winnboro or Jonesville. Students stayed in homes of members of the congregation. If you didn’t arrive too late, you might be asked to visit an ill member of the congregation, then you preached the next morning.

On Sunday, the student in Ferriday pronounced the benediction and left the pulpit promptly at 11:30, and, with a sack lunch in hand, headed toward Monroe with stops in-between to pick up students. The closer to Monroe you were assigned, the more likely you were to get a fried chicken dinner instead of a sack lunch.
In 1952, Webb graduated, taking his plane with him, and headed for Delhi, Louisiana, where he had often supplied the pulpit. Art Strickland departed at the same time for Newerlon, Louisiana. Slusser graduated that year, too, with an opportunity to go to Louisiana as well, but he declined to the great disappointment of a congregation. As pilots graduated, other students with pilot ratings—and war experience—stepped forward: Tom Cook (MDiv’54) an army Air Corps bomber pilot from the Pacific theatre, Bill Van Auken (MDiv’55), a Navy fighter pilot, and Rayl Parkhill (MDiv’54), another Marine Air Corps combat pilot.

The sad privilege of flying the last mile of the Gospel Airlift fell to Bill Van Auken when he ferried the Stinson to St. Louis where it was to be sold. The prudent buyer brought along a fabric tester and found the plane to be not air worthy. Bill was finally able to sell the plane at a reduced price. Says Bill: “If we had known that the venerable Stinson was holding us up on exhausted fabric, I’m sure we’d all have been driving cars instead of flying. Maybe I speak for some of us, ‘Thanks be to God for taking care of the ignorant with good intentions.’ (But don’t forget the fun we had!”

The Gospel Airlift had ended, but for the pilots and their fellow students, ministry in the church was just beginning. The older pilots had entered the Seminary often following life-changing experiences in war. We younger students, products of small churches, Westminster Fellowship and church colleges, arrived through camp and conference experiences. The interaction between the two groups was life-enhancing for us younger ones, who were a little surprised that now, all of us would be colleagues in ministry.

Alumni/ae acknowledged for service

At its Annual Meeting and Banquet on February 4, 2004, the Austin Seminary Association honored three notable graduates for their contributions to the Seminary and to the church. The recipients of the 2004 ASA Award for Distinguished Service were Thomas W. Currie III, Bobbi Kaye Jones, and Charles Brooks Partee.

A pastor for twenty-five years, Thomas W. Currie III (MDiv’73) has also taught at Austin Seminary and its extension campuses. Currently serving as dean of Union-PSCE at Charlotte, his published works include Ambushed by Grace, Prayers for the Road, and Searching for Truth: Confessing Christ in an Uncertain World. Described as a “preacher, teacher, pastor, theologian, author, administrator, sports fan, and poet,” Currie has also found time to serve the church through presbytery committees and as a commissioner to General Assembly. His grandfather, Thomas White Currie Sr., was Austin Seminary’s third president and his sister, Elizabeth Currie Williams, chairs the board of trustees.

Bobbi Kaye Jones (MDiv’80) is pastor of Saint John’s United Methodist Church, Austin. A highly regarded preacher, she has taught homiletics and tutored the biblical languages at Austin Seminary. Jones has made further contributions to the Seminary through the ASA Board and the Supervised Practice of Ministry Council, and to the United Methodist Church through the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry. Active in local social service agencies, Jones founded the Texas Faith Network and led the Texas Summit on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.

Charles Brooks Partee (MDiv’60) is P. C. Rossin Professor of Church History at Pittsburgh Seminary; prior to that, he served as professor of philosophy and religion at Buena Vista College. Partee is the author of three volumes: Calvin and Classical Philosophy, Adventure in Africa: The Story of Don McClure, and Encountering God: Christian Faith in Turbulent Times. Throughout his academic career, Partee has also considered himself a pastor; he has served congregations in Arkansas and New Jersey. Recently, Partee has garnered a reputation as a humorist; nearly fifty of his humorous articles have been published in the Presbyterian Outlook since 1998.

Distinguished Service Awardees: Tom Currie, Bobbi Kaye Jones, and Charles Partee.
Former Seminary President David L. Stitt dies

David Leander Stitt (MDiv'36), president of Austin Seminary from 1945-1971, died on Friday, October 3, 2003, at his home in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Born October 5, 1912, in Fort Worth, Texas, Stitt studied at Texas Christian University and graduated from Austin College in 1933. After graduating from Austin Seminary in 1936, he was ordained as pastor to First Presbyterian Church, Haskell, Texas. In 1938, he became pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1945, the Austin Seminary Board of Trustees extended the call to Stitt to become the institution's fourth president, a position he held for twenty-six years.

Throughout his years as president of Austin Seminary, Stitt traveled throughout the region winning friends and securing financial support for the institution. This strategy produced remarkable results, and was the foundation for the Seminary's stature in the synod and denomination. It is a commonly held belief that David Stitt—ably assisted by James I. McCord and C. Ellis Nelson—created Austin Seminary as it exists today.

The Seminary changed dramatically during Stitt's presidency. The campus quadrupled in size: Stitt was responsible for the construction of the Seminary library, an edifice that was later named in his and his wife's honor; Currie Hall, the McMillan Classroom Building, and the Trull Administration Building were built during his tenure. Student enrollment went from eighteen students in 1945 to 150 in 1971; it is estimated that nearly one thousand seminarians knew him as their president. The Austin Seminary faculty doubled under Stitt's care: a notable addition was Rachel Henderlite, the Seminary's first female professor and the first woman ordained in the southern Presbyterian Church. The Seminary's endowment increased tenfold.

In a move that surprised many, David L. Stitt resigned the presidency in 1971 to return to his first calling: the pastorate. Stitt served as associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Houston, and then as pastor of Bellaire Presbyterian Church, Houston. He retired in Houston and later moved to Black Mountain, North Carolina.

David Stitt served many of the governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church: as moderator of the Synods of Missouri (1942) and Texas (1952), moderator of the PCUS General Assembly (1980), and chairman of the Board of World Missions (1966-1975). He was a representative to the World Council of Churches and served on the boards of numerous ecclesiastical institutions. Stitt received honorary doctorates from Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Austin College, Texas Christian University, Rhodes College, Davidson College, and Presbyterian College. He served on the boards of the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund, the Presbyterian Pan-American School, Covenant Life Insurance Company, and Valero Energy Company. He also served as the director of the Institute of Religion at the Texas Medical Center in Houston.

Stitt shared his life and his ministry with Dr. Jane Dupuy Stitt. He is survived by their six children, David Stitt, John Stitt, Stephen Stitt, Daniel Stitt, Sara Stitt, and Susan Driver, seventeen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held Wednesday, October 10, at 10:00 a.m. at Gaither Chapel of Montreat College in Montreat, North Carolina, with the Reverend Jim Wharton (MDiv’51) and the Rev. Mary Faith Carson officiating.

On November 9, the Seminary held a memorial service for Dr. Stitt with his friend and colleague Ellis Nelson offering remarks. Said Nelson, “I think that this deep feeling that he was doing what God expected explains his relaxed, tranquil manner. The Seminary had many problems during David’s twenty-six years as president, but he seemed to feel that solutions would evolve.” Former Austin Seminary presidents Prescott Williams and Robert Shelton assisted President Wardlaw in the service. At the end of the evening, the Stitt children and grandchildren gathered with longtime Austin friends at the front of Shelton Chapel for a family photo which ended with a spontaneous chorus of “Happy trails to you... til we meet again.” Amen.
GA Luncheon

June 30, 2004, 11:30 a.m.

The Marriott Hotel, Richmond

President Theodore J. Wardlaw, speaking

Tickets are $21 and may be purchased through GA

Class of 1954: Jack and Alice Hunnicutt, Taft and Bobbie Jean Lyon, Bob Shepperson, Bill Tiemann, and Margaret and Milton Bierschwale.


Class of 1984: Paul Dean Alexander, Tom Tickner, Donna Knight, and Steven Jester.

Class of 1999: Bette Burris, James Lee, Monica Smith, Karl Schwarz, Caleb and Cathy Reed, Ray Reed, Kay Roberts, Holly Haustedt, and Cheryl Minard.

Class of 1964: James and Marilyn Sparks, Molly and David Duncan, Sarah Ann and Lindsay Moffett, and Mary and Warner Bailey. Inset: Joan and Ed Salvant.
WELCOME...

To Alicia May Brechin, daughter of Leighanne and Mark Brechin (MDiv’2000), born Dec. 12, 2002.


To Thomas Benjamin Hendrickson, son of Alex (MDiv’01) and Brett Hendrickson (MDiv’02), born Feb. 11, 2002, adopted Dec. 5, 2003.

To Graham Edward Hysom, son of Dennis Hysom (MDiv’92) and Lenora Hysom (MDiv’95), born Dec. 23, 2003.

To James O’Neal Strength, son of Joey and Deanie Strength (MDiv’99), born Sept. 9, 2003.

To Molly Whisler, daughter of Pat Felter (MDiv’94) and Shane Whisler (MDiv’95), born Jan. 13, 2002, adopted December 2003.

NECROLOGY

David L. Stitt (MDiv’36), Black Mountain, North Carolina, Oct. 3, 2003 (see story, page 23)

J. Kelly Neal (MDiv’39) San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 5, 2003

Simon Belvin (Certificate’43) Boswell, Oklahoma, Aug. 27, 2003

Lyndon M. Jackson (MDiv’45) Cherokee Village, Arkansas, July 15, 2003

John G. “Jack” Harrison (MDiv’52) Big Spring, Texas, Nov. 4, 2003


James H. Elder (MDiv’58) Richmond, Texas, Oct. 27, 2003

Walter B. Satterfield (MDiv’64), Kensington, Maryland, Aug. 15, 2002

Richard W. Weper (MDiv’00) Clinton, Missouri, Aug. 18, 2003

CLASS NOTES

1950s

Congratulations to James W. Mosley (MDiv’55) who was honored by Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center just outside of Little Rock, Arkansas, which has announced plans to build the “Mosley Tabernacle.”

1960s

Richard Young (MDiv’60) is serving as National Chaplain of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

Charie B. Reid (MDiv’68) was elected moderator of the National Association of Presbyterian Clergywomen. She also celebrated twenty-five years of ordination at the same church where she was ordained as associate pastor.

1970s

Alan Ford (MDiv’78) is moderator-elect of the Synod of the Sun.

Rebecca Reyes (MDiv’79) was awarded the Diversity Award by Duke University and Duke University Health System.

1990s

This past August, Beverley Parsons (MDiv’97) and Sue Abold (MDiv’97) traveled to Russia with a group of American Protestants to study the Russian Orthodox Church.

Amy Isbell-Hanschen (MDiv’98) was elected moderator of the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers.

Kristy Forbes (MDiv’98) and G. Logan Vits (MA’98) were married on September 20, 2003.

2000s


Christine O’Reilly (DMin’03) will teach a course on rural ministry, “Ministry in the Rural Church and Rural Community,” at Knox College, Toronto School of Theology, in May.

Phonathon a BIG success

A GIANT Austin Seminary thank you to the students, faculty, and staff that made the fall annual Alumni/ae Phonathon such an ENORMOUS success. And our GREATEST THANK YOU to all the alumni/ae who pledged $68,240—an increase over last year. In fact, alumni/ae giving is up significantly with gifts and pledges already totaling $147,534 thus far this fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2004.
The Elma Gunther Scholarships offer Austin Seminary students an opportunity for international or cross cultural study. In January, several students took advantage of the grant and the time away from the classroom to learn from and with faculty guides: Kathryn Roberts, associate professor of Old Testament, led a tour through European museums with significant holdings related to biblical religion and culture; Bill Greenway, associate professor of philosophical theology, took students to Zambia as part of an exchange between the Seminary and Justo Mwale Theological College; and Director of Vocation and Admissions Sam Riccobene travelled to Sun City, Arizona, to lead a seminar on ministry with older adults.