

AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# WINDOWS

SUMMER 2007

does **faith** have a place in our work?





### *The President's Preaching and Speaking Engagements*

**August 12**, *Preacher*, Snowmass Chapel, Colorado

**August 19**, *Preacher*, Village PC, Prairie Village, Kansas

**September 13**, *Speaker*, North Dallas Area Partnership Lunch

**September 16**, *Preacher*, First PC, Bonham, Texas, Theological Education Sunday

**September 30-October 1**, *Preacher and Lecturer*, United Presbyterian Forum, Fayetteville, Arkansas

**October 1**, *Speaker*, Second PC, Little Rock

**October 4**, *Speaker*, Longview / Kilgore Partnership Lunch

**October 14-16**, *Preacher*, First (Scots) PC, Charleston, South Carolina, Parramore Preaching Series

**October 27-29**, *Preacher and Lecturer*, First PC, Wichita Falls, Texas, Earle and Helen Crawford Renewal Series

**November 1**, *Speaker*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Partnership Lunch

**November 11**, *Preacher*, First PC, Pine Bluff, Arkansas

**November 15**, *Speaker*, Rio Grande Valley Partnership Lunch

**November 18**, *Preacher*, First PC, Houston

**A**s I write these words, my mind wanders back to a little coffee shop Kay and I were in just a few days ago. It was the last day of a two-week vacation in the mountains of North Carolina, and we were sitting at a table with two dear friends just drinking coffee and having one of those easy vacation conversations. Just over the shoulders of the others at that table, I happened to notice a man sitting in an overstuffed chair in the corner by the front plate-glass window. He was watching the world go by outside, and, in his lap, he was balancing a lapboard and a canvas upon which he was painting what he saw. I noticed a blue sky on the canvas, then a street scene and people window-shopping. A few moments later my eyes fell on him again, and now, from a photograph he balanced on his knees, he was painting a new scene—of a rushing mountain stream cascading around prominent stones and shaded by the rhododendron and mountain laurel that grow so plentifully in those parts. It dawned on me: the man was at work; and yet, clearly, he was deeply enjoying what he was doing!

Why is that such a hard concept for us Americans? We so often tend to see work as antithetical to enjoyment, or at least in some sort of tension with the fruitful ways in which we endeavor to spend the rest of our lives. Work, for too many of us, becomes the necessary evil that funds the life we want to live when we're not working. Or worse, work ends up consuming all of our life, until somebody says of us "They are working themselves to death." I have read recently that Americans have now eclipsed the Japanese in being the most over-worked people on earth. That is a sad commentary.

So maybe you will agree that this issue of *Windows* arrives right on time. Dave Jensen, associate professor of constructive theology, offers the lead article which is a fascinating and richly satisfying exploration of the theology of work from a eucharistic perspective. Michael Allen, an attorney in Tyler and a Seminary trustee, reflects on how he sees his work as a calling. Carol Merritt (MDiv'98), a pastor in Washington, D.C., offers a working mother's perspective on pastoral vocation. John Williams (MDiv'87) reflects, through his years in chaplaincy work at a Presbyterian college, on how college students often develop a sense of vocation. Carla Chatham, who has served this summer as Austin Seminary Senior Brian Dees' supervisor at the Religion and Labor Network in Austin, suggests why seminary students would profit from a deeper knowledge of labor justice issues.

I hope you will be inspired and informed by this issue of *Windows*, and, more importantly, I hope it will literally change the way you work.

Theodore J. Wardlaw  
*President*

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2-11 *Work and Faith*

2 Take and bless these things  
*Daily work and Christian faith*  
BY DAVID JENSEN

4 A crib for her bed  
BY CAROL MERRIT

7 An intertwining of vocation and faith  
BY MICHAEL ALLEN

8 A different way  
BY JOHN WILLIAMS

10 Calling for justice from the margins  
BY CARLA CHEATHAM

12 Commencement new beginning for sixty-seven

13 The Class of 2007

17 The Dean's Bookshelf

18 Community news

21 Development news

22 Faculty news

24 Alumni/ae news

*Back cover* Photos from the 2007 commencement

**WINDOWS**

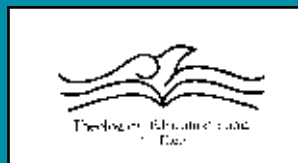
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Theological Education Fund  
(1% Plan)

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.

BY DAVID H. JENSEN

*Take  
and  
bless  
these  
things*

Daily  work  
& Christian faith

**D**aily work matters for Christian faith. Our ordinary labors—cleaning, cooking, caring for children, teaching, writing, investing, sculpting, trading, and building—are responses to the life God gives to the world. In Christianity, the ordinary materials and practices of life are charged with the holy. Basic foods of bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ in a holy meal; human flesh becomes Emmanuel in a first-century carpenter, a man who worked with his hands; water, basic and indispensable to life, becomes the promise of new birth in baptism; ordinary people gathered around Word and Sacrament become Body of Christ in the world. Bodies, baths, meals, and labor are central to Christian faith. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ and through the animating and sustaining

*power of the Holy Spirit, God takes these ordinary things as God's own and gives them to us, endowed with new life. Human work is not incidental to faith, but bound up with its chief movements. Work that has meaning responds to God's work that gives life to the universe, as we, too, contribute to the life of the world.*

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*David Jensen is associate professor of constructive theology at Austin Seminary and the author of Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work (Westminster John Knox, 2006).*

## thoughts on vocation

Though work matters for Christian faith, it is easy for us to overestimate its value. Throughout history people have fallen captive to the idea that in work we create ourselves. The modern slogan, “you are what you do,” merely echoes sentiments that have abided throughout the ages. We often place inordinate weight on our work: finding the “right” job, wanting to make a difference, desiring the best for our children. Believing these slogans, our tendency at times is to believe that we can never work too much, that there is always something more to do, some way to improve our labors in God’s sight and in others’.

The good news of Christian faith, however, is that we do not create or justify ourselves through work; rather, by grace God claims us, names us, and makes us God’s own. Reformation teaching is particularly adamant on this point: because God is already at work for us, we can rest in God’s grace. If Christian faith claims that work matters, it also prohibits us from attributing too much significance to our earthly labors. Though we are made to work, work is not our chief end.

If good work responds to God’s work for us, then our habits of daily work often fall short of this aim. We live in a world where work often becomes drudgery, where many who desire paid employment are denied access to meaningful work, where some control and own the labors of others, where white collar workers become addicted to work while others languish in unemployment lines, where job satisfaction deteriorates, where back-breaking and exhausting work eclipses Sabbath.

Human beings often experience work as alienation; indeed, as the biblical creation stories note, one of the first consequences of sin is that the God-given work of tending the garden degenerates into toil (Gen. 3:17-19). Christian faith, therefore, cannot glimpse work through rose-tinted glasses, but recognizes the travail we often make of our labors. The work of human creatures is decidedly fallen work. But even this recognition does not obscure the hope that lies at the center of Christian faith: in

As a kid, my mind’s eye replayed roles in books or on film from a child’s world-view. Today I share God’s story with a similar inquisitive spirit. Whether proclaiming the gospel from the pulpit or over a cup of coffee, the gift of storytelling continues to shape my ministry.

—Joyce Stewart (MDiv’06)



Jesus Christ all of creation—even our work—is redeemed. What does good work look like? We catch a glimpse of it every time we partake of the Lord’s Supper. Here, things and gestures of work are transformed, giving meaning and hope to our everyday labors.

### Things of work at the table

A mantra that reverberates in our consumer culture is that we work to secure an abundance of things. The

rewards of good work are not found in the knowledge of work well done, but in the host of prizes that result from hard work. If we work enough, we, too, can possess a house that is the envy of our neighbors, a car that meshes with our lifestyle, technological gadgets to soothe our ennui, and a big-screen television to saturate us with advertising and the desire for yet more things. The elusive promise of consumer society is that these things born of hard work can make us happy. In this atmosphere, the Eucharist offers another perspective. Acquiring things will only increase our restlessness and dissatisfaction. When God blesses the work of our hands, however, we are drawn back to the basic things of life: bread shared with the world, labor shared with others, the fruits of labor shared in abundance. Only these basic things of life can truly satisfy: bread, work that is cooperative, communion with each other and God. The Lord’s Supper fixes our attention on these things, blesses the human work involved in their creation, and calls us to share them with others.

The communion elements tell us that work is no stranger to Christian life. The central things at the Lord’s Table are not wheat and grapes, the raw stuff God provides for creation, but bread and wine, the products of human labor. Countless hours—indeed, years—of work go into the bread that appears at the Lord’s Table each Sunday: tilling soil at the beginning of planting season, sowing seed preserved from last year, watering nascent plants, weeding seedlings, praying for sufficient sun and rain, harvesting grain when it is ripe and golden, threshing wheat from

*Continued on page 5*

## thoughts on vocation



I teach at a seminary:

Listening to a woman share her pain over the loss of a child.

Later preaching at her ordination into

chaplaincy ...

Sitting with a man grappling with vocation. Later reading e-mails of his work as a medical missionary ...

By discerning my gift for teaching, I help others discern their gifts.

A profound blessing.

—Susan (Deluca) Werstein  
(MDiv’87)

# A crib for her bed

BY CAROL MERRITT

At the end of April, the Louisiana heat had already settled in for the summer. I expected it when I opened the creaking side door of our rural church, but I didn't anticipate seeing one of the elders, wrestling with an awkward gift for my newborn. It was beautiful: She rescued her daughters' crib out from the attic and crammed it into her car. Then she maneuvered the piece of furniture out of her Buick and headed toward me, armed with a monkey wrench.

Now, a used crib could mean a lot of things. It could convey the message: "Here Pastor, I was cleaning up my attic, and I couldn't bear to put this thing in the trash, so I figured you're the next best thing." Or it could denote, "I know this crib is way beyond any modern safety standards, but I knew you wouldn't mind your child's head slipping through the bars."

In this case, it meant none of the above. It was, instead, a clear message of appreciation to me and welcome for my daughter. I'm still moved when I think about it.

The church stood proudly in the center of Abbeville, the heart of Cajun country. I was the only woman pastor in town (I don't want to discount the Prophetess at the House of Prayer, but I don't think she technically considered herself a pastor or her gathering a church). I was an oddity, for sure, in that parish where a person was Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, or Pentecostal. Remember Robert Duvall in "The Apostle"? If you do, then you know where we were. Duvall shot the illuminating film just down the street.

Often, people in the community would visit our congregation just to see a twenty-something woman in a collar. It was so rare that when I made hospital visits, the attendant at the information desk would call her supervisor and say, "There's a woman here, and she thinks she's a priest."

I would have less patience with all of this, except I wasn't much different than they were. I grew up Southern

Baptist, and although I had gotten used to the idea of women being pastors, I wasn't quite used to the idea of being a pastor myself. That was clear when I found out I was pregnant. I was afraid to tell my session. I thought I'd let them down somehow. I planned on returning to work after maternity leave, but I knew that things would be different and I didn't know how.

The fear was not so strange. After all, I grew up in a climate where stay-at-home moms proclaimed that women who labor outside of the home robbed their children of the affection and nurture that they needed. I was torn, knowing that I was called to work outside of my home, yet realizing that our modern notions of employment (especially as pastors) can become a strain on the family. The long hours, the evening meetings, and the lack of clear boundaries often create work situations that are far from family-friendly.

Things were quite different when Calla was born. I brought her to work and learned to breastfeed in a preaching robe. Like a mamma kangaroo, I placed her in a little pouch and walked around with her. She was a good-natured infant who rarely slept, so she just looked up at my chin while I went about my business. And when I gazed down at her, there was this flood of love that must have punctuated my sermons, emails, and newsletters. My memories of that time are vivid and salient because my daughter became a part of my working days.

Abbeville, Louisiana, is not the most progressive environment in which one can work. But my tiny congregation did have one thing figured out: They were a child-friendly church. I knew that when I helped the elder pull the mattress from her car. They literally welcomed my daughter with open arms, passed her around the congregation, and cared for her as if she were their own. And in the process, they helped me to become a better mom and a healthier pastor.

I'm not the only one. I've noticed a whole new generation of pastor-moms and pastor-dads handling the joys of parenting and ministry with undeniable grace. With sippy-cups in hand, they contribute to work environments that care for families, and as a result, our churches model faithful work for our society. ▲



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*Carol Howard Merritt (MDiv'98) has served congregations in Louisiana and Rhode Island. She is currently a pastor at Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. and the author of Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation, published in August 2007 by The Alban Institute. Her blog can be found at [www.tribalchurch.org](http://www.tribalchurch.org).*

thoughts on vocation



In my Senior year at APTS I became acutely aware that my gifts and abilities lay in pastoral care.

Through the guidance of Prof. Allan Cole, my SPM and then CPE training, I was more clearly able to discern my true gifts. Instead of being a senior pastor that will lead people through their Christian walk, I will be a chaplain or associate pastor for Pastoral Care and Congregational Nurture that will meet people where they are, journey with them at their pace, and assist them in understanding what gifts God has given them so they can, in turn, use them in assisting others.

—Joaquin (Jake) Gonzales

chaff, grinding wheat into flour, mixing flour into dough, stirring in yeast, baking the loaf, bringing bread to market, to say nothing of the hours of planning, research, and transportation involved in each of these steps. The wine, likewise, is the product of endless hours of cultivation, trimming, pressing, fermentation, bottling, and marketing. Vineyards, moreover, do not produce an immediate yield, but require years of labor before even the first fruits appear. These holy things of bread and wine are the products of human hands applied to the bounty God has given; they are there because we work.

Our work alone, however, does not secure the place of these holy things. The bread and the wine also represent our cooperation with the rhythms of the planet. God gives us rains that water the earth, soil that nourishes the seedling, sun that radiates upon the land. Work the land too much and it will yield no more; plant water-intensive plants in regions of the earth where water is scarce and aquifers become depleted. The good work of human hands is cooperative labor, attending closely to the needs of the land. In a manner that recalls Israel's Sabbath practice, good work looks for a sustainable yield rather than the absolute maximum. Good work does not control or master the land, but considers the land as co-worker. Exploit this co-worker and bread becomes scarcer and wine more costly.

Good work is consistently aware of the worker's dependence on others, on the cosmos itself, and on the Lord of Creation. When we present the bread and wine on the table, the products of our labor, God takes them, blesses them, and gives us life. To our small response, God gives us God's very self over and again. Our offering becomes God's gift to us. As Alexander Schmemmann writes in *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, "That is why it is not 'simply' bread that lies on the disks. On it all of God's creation is presented, manifested in Christ as the new creation, the fulfillment of the glory of God." Many

contemporary attitudes toward work see human labor (and the fruits of human labor) as a zero-sum game. In order for me to have a job, someone else must be out of work; in order for my family to secure enough bread to live, some others must invariably go without. I must, therefore, compete with others for employment that is scarce and things that are even dearer. The Eucharistic economy, however, reveals work that redounds to creation and others, rather than taking away from them. Work can be shared, the fruits of

labor can multiply as God continues to give Godself in our offerings; goods need not only be private.

This kind of work satisfies because its bounty is shared among many. In contrast to fruits of work that we "earn" for ourselves, the food of the Eucharist is public, given for all. As Meister Eckhardt once claimed (quoted by Gordon W. Lathrop in *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology*), "There is no such thing as 'my' bread. All bread is ours and given to me, to others through me, and to me through others." Having partaken of this holy meal, sharing in Christ's body and blood, we rise from table to share this meal and our work with the world. It is no coincidence that offerings for the poor accompany celebrations of Holy Communion; without giving and sharing, the meal devolves into gluttony. We come to the Lord's Table hungry, responding to God's work with tokens of our labor in bread and wine; God takes these elements, blesses them, and gives us Godself, nourishing and satisfying our hungry hearts. Yet we leave the table not sated, but yearning for this food to be shared with all, recognizing that the Reign of God is not yet among us, that injustice suppurates in all corners of the globe, that thousands die every day for lack of daily bread. Nourished at the Lord's Table, we also go away hungry, rising from this meal to share ourselves, our labors and bread, with others.

The satisfaction that the

thoughts on vocation



In sharing stories and thoughts, and in building relationships, others have helped me discern gifts, and I

have seen hints of gifts in others and encouraged them. Prayer is essential—to make sure our discernment is from the Holy Spirit, and to be open to surprises as our Heavenly Father bestows particular gifts.

—Joan Gaines (MDiv'95)

Eucharist offers the world is different from the abundance of things promised by the American work ethic. Amid the holy things at table, we are reminded that only the basic stuff of life, shared in the fellowship of others, is what truly satisfies. Fulfillment is not found in work that constantly seeks more things, but in work that acknowledges its insufficiency but offers itself nonetheless. When we respond to God's grace, we come to the table empty-handed, offering in bread and wine tokens of our labor, desiring that they, too, might be shared. When we respond in this manner, we labor, hunger, and thirst for justice and righteousness, not simply for more things. As we long for God's Reign, we also recognize that this Reign also takes shape at the table, in gestures of grace that sustain our daily work.

### Gestures of work at the table

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body'" (Matt. 26:26). With nearly identical words, each of the synoptic gospels records Jesus' gestures and sayings as he shares bread and wine with his disciples during their final meal together. They are words and gestures that recall his feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16), words and gestures that resound with celebrations of Passover. Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives: what he does with the bread, he also does with his life. In this final meal, Jesus' actions capture the pattern of his work for the world: gestures of grace given for many. What Jesus does with his life and with this food, he gives to the world. The rhythms of his actions at table offer a window for how we might envision good work.

*Jesus takes the bread;* Jesus takes his life. He gathers before himself the food at hand: rather ordinary bread,

the kind that people in his culture ate every day. But in his gesture of grace, this ordinary loaf becomes his body. Jesus takes his life, the life of a first-century Palestinian Jew living under the reign of Caesar, a life of a man who worked with his hands, a life of a man who struggled against systems that fostered self-righteousness and acquiescence to poverty and injustice. But in this ordinary life, we encounter the decisive in-breaking of God. Jesus takes what he has been given and transforms it to reflect the radiant, sustaining presence of God. All that Jesus is given comes from God; he takes it and directs it back to God.

### thoughts on vocation



I have spent twelve years in my first call. People often ask me why (how) I have stayed in one place so long. I often suspect they may think that I am afraid to step out and move on. That is not the case, however...

I try to reevaluate my ministry situation on a yearly basis, asking, "Is my ministry here effective? Is my ministry doing good for this group of people? How can I make it better? Thus far, I have been able to see things in a way that makes it clear to me that I need to stay where I am ...

Vocation in ministry is about call rather than personal desire. Moses did not want to go to Egypt, Noah did not want to build an ark. When we stay put a little bit longer we can find that trust and relationship deepens and we can sometimes take people places we might not ever have dreamed of. My small flock has not grown a lot in the twelve years I have been here, but we have become a congregation of mission and care in the community and beyond. The elementary school principal says to everyone in town: "If you want to get something done in this town, call the Presbyterians."

All good things take time and patience.

—Kathleen Hignight (MDiv '95)

Good work also takes what we have been given. The Holy Spirit graces each worker, each person, with gifts that no other person can replicate. To be sure, these gifts require constant cultivation: Mozart's gift for music was only honed to good use through diligent practice. But, this practice became artful because of Mozart's unique gifts. Practicing scales as Mozart did does not guarantee that one will play and compose as he did. The world is richer, for example, that Nelson Mandela did not practice his scales as much as Mozart, but instead used his gifts of leadership in the struggle against apartheid. Discerning particular gifts is one of the first steps in forming a vision of good work. Work that fulfills, work that expresses some response to the work God has already done, requires that we acknowledge the gifts we have been given.

*Jesus blesses:* He gives thanks to God for the bread and blesses the loaf, responding to the gifts God has given. Jesus blesses everything he touches; no person or thing is too tainted for his touch. Jesus' table fellowship is staggering in that he will eat with anyone: beggars, out-

*Continued on page 9*



# An intertwining of vocation and faith

BY MICHAEL D. ALLEN

The small Presbyterian church in the farming town where I grew up was quite remarkable in teaching its children how a Christian life is to be lived. At an early age, we knew that each of us is a blessed child of God, God lives in our hearts, and we are channels for Jesus' grace to those around us. We were taught to live with integrity and that an important indicator of living with integrity is that our daily activities and our faith should be inseparably intertwined.

These teachings were passed down to us not simply through sermons, stories, and songs, but also through personal examples. For years on Sunday mornings, a successful businessman in our church would routinely come by my house and ask me to ride with him as he made repeated trips through the countryside picking up kids, many in ragged clothes, and bringing them to Sunday school. An elder who had serious health problems courageously kept the doors open to his credit grocery-feed store so that farmers, whether crops were good or bad, would have food to feed their families and livestock. When he finally closed the store, he forgave the many past due accounts. An older couple provided educational funds for needy students in spite of the fact that old fences and rusty barns on their cherished farm were in serious need of repair. Examples such as these were instrumental in shaping my understanding about how we can live and share the gospel.

As an estate planning and probate attorney, most of

my weekdays are spent sitting across the desk from clients. Some of my clients are very wealthy, and some are poor. Some are living in expectancy, and others are grieving a loss. As we talk, I carefully listen and try to discern how I can help.

Most of my meetings with clients take place in my office rather than a conference room. My office is a safe place. It is decorated with pictures, sayings, and keep sakes that remind me and show others where my heart lies and that faith and family are very important to me.



On my credenza is a saying by Rumi, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there." Nearby hangs a letter attributed to Chief Seattle which challenges us to realize that the earth and its creatures are sacred and that the God of the red man and the God of the white man is the same God. Just below that wonderful letter is a small ceramic monk which my sister mold-

ed. Attached to his waist belt is a saying by Saint Francis, "Speak the gospel always and if necessary use words."

My junior high Sunday school teacher taught that while few of us are called to be ministers of the Word, each of us is called to be a minister of the gospel. She was right. On my better days, I see clients through the same respectful, caring eyes as those with which the faithful mentors of my youth viewed the needy in our small town. At times, I faintly hear their words being whispered in my ears, "Mike, these folks need your help. Remember, you are an instrument of the Lord." ▲

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*Michael Allen is an attorney at Dobbs-Allen-Lottmann and an elder at First Presbyterian Church, Tyler, Texas. He has served on Austin Seminary's Board of Trustees since 2001; he currently chairs the Academic Affairs Committee and serves on the Anderson House Development Committee. He has also been an Austin College trustee and a director for the Texas Presbyterian Foundation, the East Texas Communities Foundation, and Mercy Ships Foundation.*

# A different way

BY JOHN WILLIAMS

In the Spring of 2005, Austin College senior Cody Pruitt wrote a song in which he described—with a little exaggeration and humor—what he perceived to be the presumptions of many people about the course of his post-college life:

Go to school. Get a degree.  
Get a job. Get a big TV.  
Get a house. Get a wife.  
Get a car. Get a life.  
Keep on working 'til you're done.  
Keep your life on the run.  
Retire when you're too old to have any fun.

Faced with that vision, he said:

I'm not ready for the rest of my life.  
I was barely even ready for today.  
I'm not saying that it's all that bad.  
I'm just looking for a different way.

Those lines are a good, if a little hyperbolic, portrait of the anxiety of many as they graduate from college. Cody had grown tired of being asked about *the rest of his life* and he resisted what he perceived to be the assumptions of others about what came next for a bright and articulate college graduate.

He's currently teaching English in Korea. He's found "a different way" to think about himself and his life.

This spring, I heard from a recent graduate whose experience working for the Social Security Administration led him to enter law school to study immigration law. Another had profound experiences on hurricane relief trips in his college years and has now gone to work for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

I've heard from one red-headed West Texan alum who preached a sermon this Spring in Korean; another whose experiences working with youth while she was in college and later a PC(USA) Young Adult Volunteer in Ireland have led her to a position working with at-risk girls in Austin; and one who is moving to Pennsylvania to begin her medical school residency.



One recent graduate, a software architect by trade, is currently directing the largest annual presbytery youth event in the country. Three 2007 alums are beginning their one-year postings as PC(USA) Young Adult Volunteers: in Guatemala, Kenya, and San Antonio. Another is beginning her service with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. This fall, recent Austin College graduates will be in law school, medical school, seminary, and entering all sorts of other exciting chapters in their lives. And there are some who aren't yet sure exactly what comes next for them.

Although each of their stories is unique, these young people have some things in common. When they were undergraduates, intentional effort was made to address each of them in a way similar to the way God addresses Moses in Exodus 3 and the following chapters.

At the beginning of Exodus 3 there is not much evidence that Moses was worried about anything more than his immediate comfort, safety, and preservation. God's words from the burning bush can be interpreted as an invitation to Moses to think about himself in "a different way." In that story, God invites Moses to participate in an act of service to others and then accompanies him as he reflects on his experiences and makes decisions about the direction of his life.

In the context of their relationship with a church-related college that treats them as unique and gifted individuals and invites and encourages them to share their gifts, Austin College students are invited to think about themselves and their lives in "a different way"—in more than purely economic terms.

The goal is to invite, encourage, and enable students to realize that who they are is much more than their paycheck stub or credit card limit. We strive to communicate to each of them that they are gifted people who have some things to offer that the whole world needs desperately. Like Moses, they are invited to participate in acts of service to others and accompanied as they reflect on their experiences and make decisions about the direction of their lives. ▲

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casts, prostitutes, tax collectors, even those who seek to kill him. To eat with someone is to convey a blessing, to offer a gesture of hospitality and thanks dearer than almost any other gesture. Jesus eats with others to feed the hungry and gladden the hearts of those gathered around the table. As he subverts bounds of social association and ritual cleanness, Jesus shows us that all people are recipients of God's blessing. For each one of them, Jesus gives thanks.

Good work is also blessed. If Jesus' touch extended to all, it doubtless includes daily work. In his own life, Jesus shows us how seemingly mundane work is taken, claimed, and blessed by God: in hands that heal, gesture, touch, and are pierced; in arms that embrace, hold, and labor with wood, whether on the carpenter's bench or on the road to Golgotha; in a voice that proclaims the good news and cries out in godforsakenness; in feet that journey from town to town and are nailed to the cross. In Jesus Christ, God's work blesses and claims us all. God comes not as the owner of work, not as one with the luxury not to work, but as an ordinary laborer. Jesus Christ dignifies and blesses all human work, and even redeems and transforms the humiliating work that sends him to the cross.

Blessing also implies another sense: Good work also is an expression of thanks. If all work is claimed and blessed by God, then our response is to echo that blessing in thanksgiving. Good work, in other words, is not merely a burden to be borne, but an occasion for expressing thanks to the Creator of all gifts. When I am gifted with unique abilities, when God blesses the work that utilizes those gifts, I respond by giving thanks, both in word and action. Good work, in and of itself, is an expression of thanks: a finely crafted chair, a graceful gymnastics routine, a sound medical diagnosis, a brightly waxed car, all involve work that employs gifts and gives thanks for them. Indeed, as an expression of thanks, the work of our hands often speaks more clearly and distinctly than our words.

*Jesus breaks bread.* The bread that he breaks feeds the hungry; bread that he gives as his own body is broken because of the world and for the world. Jesus is the One who is both broken by the world on account of sin and

the one who breaks himself for the world to forgive sin. His body bears the scars of a crown of thorns and the pierce of a spear. His body, broken-hearted and broken-boned, is given for others. Jesus' brokenness cannot be reduced, however, to the wounds that a sinful world inflicts on him. Brokenness, to be sure, is a mark of sin, but the breaking of Jesus' body also makes communion possible. We enter into communion with Christ in his willing breaking of himself. The break of his body is an opening for the world. In breaking himself, Jesus renders himself not simply his own, as if his body were his alone. As his body is broken, it is given for the world. To break bread is to share it, not to hoard it to oneself. Jesus does the very same thing with his body, a body given for the life of the world.

This double valence of breaking carries over to a vision of good work. All human work is broken as it is scarred by sin. No work of our hands offers an unadulterated glimpse of godly work. Sermons that proclaim the word of God become occasions for ego-stroking and self-

aggrandizement. Powerful athletic feats become occasions for greed and cult of celebrity. Songs that express the longings of the human heart are co-opted as advertising jingles for gas-guzzling SUVs. The most egregious examples of sin infesting work are relatively easy to spot, but there is no work that is immune from sin's cancer. Even if sin permeates our work, however, this does not negate the great good that comes from flawed labor. As the incarnation demonstrates, as the history of the church documents, God brings treasure out of earthen vessels. Indeed, recognizing sin on its own terms frees us from justifying ourselves through work, reminding us that work is not the chief end of humanity. Though we are made to work, endless work is not our lot. We are, rather, to enjoy communion with God and each other forever. Yet as sin breaks the body of Christ, so, too does it break our work.

Good work is also broken in the sense that we render it open to others. Jesus breaks bread to share with his disciples. If bread is not broken, it cannot be distributed. Good work, too, bears the traces of these seams—broken

*Continued on page 11*

## thoughts on vocation



I became a Christian at Rice University about my junior year, thanks to Presbyterian campus ministry. My major was mechanical engineering and I had planned this career most of my life. As I showed increasing interest in church and attending conferences, well meaning pastors asked me if I had considered the ministry. I replied that my vocation was to be Christian engineer. God changed my mind, and after two years in industry, I entered Austin Seminary with a new vocation.

—Linington Crossman (MDiv'53)

# Calling for justice from the margins

BY CARLA CHEATHAM

In the sacred texts of virtually every faith, one finds words calling for just treatment and pay for workers, indicating that all religions believe in worker justice. Similarly, faith and labor leaders share the common goal of seeking justice for all workers. Therefore, the mission of the Religion and Labor Network of Austin (RLNA) is to bring together people from faith, labor, and the community to call upon our religious values to educate, organize, and mobilize the people of Austin to support initiatives that advance justice for workers and improve wages, benefits, and working conditions, especially for low-wage workers.

Now in our fourth year, RLNA has a rich history of calling upon these common goals to organize candlelight vigils encouraging employers to pay money owed their workers; convince City Council to table a proposed anti-solicitation ordinance which would prevent day laborers from seeking work in public places and, instead, form an advisory committee to find a solution to meet the needs of both the city and laborers; successfully support city bus drivers and mechanics in securing a fair contract with Cap Metro; work with the Austin Sweat Free Coalition to secure unanimous passage of a City ordinance guaranteeing our tax dollars do not support garment sweatshops in the purchase of city employees' uniforms; and much, much more.

Regardless of a seminary student's calling, an understanding of the daily struggles workers face is vital for effective ministry. We have been fortunate to have Austin Seminary student Brian Dees working with us as a full-time intern this summer. When asked why he believes it is important for a seminary student to engage in worker justice, Brian said, "Leaders in the faith community, ordained or lay, are called not only to fulfill the priestly and pastoral offices, but also the prophetic office—that is, pointing out the disconnect between a community's

religious or ethical convictions and the state of the world around them. The prophetic office of the religious leader can sometimes get buried under sermon preparations, hospital visits, and the many, many other important roles clergy are asked to take on. Thus, it is important for students to be trained in the practice of being prophetic so it becomes a natural, regular part of what it means to be a religious leader, rather than simply a role reserved for election years."



*Brian Dees, left, a senior student from Midland, Texas, took part in a union action in Chicago this summer as part of his internship with RLNA.*

The objectives we set forth for Brian's internship included two main events. First, he was charged with organizing a clergy/labor breakfast in which we will bring together leaders from the faith and labor communities to talk about issues facing their constituents. Second, he is helping organize the "Labor in the Pulpits" ministry in Austin. This program sends members, workers, and labor advocates to speak to faith communities during Labor Day weekend services about the issues they face and the connections they see between faith and work.

Through both events, Brian says he is learning "how the struggle for justice cannot be a part-time or ancillary concern of religious leaders or people of faith; rather, it must be the centerpiece of our teaching, our preaching, and our action in the world. We are called to be prophets, not only in word, but also in deed."

While we are not called to everything, we are each called to do something. To be one person researching every product purchased to make certain it is fairly traded or not produced in sweatshops, seeking to change a system that allows city transportation workers to go for months without a fair contract, or calling for the fair treatment of our brothers and sisters who are strangers in a strange land and seek to honestly provide for their families is a daunting task.

However, when we go out to stand as one in solidarity with workers and together demand justice, we see our common God do mighty things in our midst. In so doing, we are all transformed. ▲

*Carla Cheatham is executive director of the Religion and Labor Network of Austin. Her own involvement with social justice issues was ignited when she worked with her home church in College Station on a Living Wage Campaign for the custodial workers at Texas A&M University. Learn more about RLNA at <http://ReligionAndLaborNetwork.org>*

open so that others are invited in. One paradox of the Eucharist is this: in breaking, we are made whole. As bread is fragmented, the Body of Christ draws together. Work that is broken open no longer belongs to itself or to a single worker, but to the whole world. Our work becomes whole, too, as it is broken for others, as the work of one draws on the work of many.

Having taken, blessed, and broken the bread, Jesus gives it to his disciples. As Jesus gives the bread, so, too, he gives himself for the world. Bread broken is bread given. Jesus, the Broken One, gives the gift of life to Lazarus, of companionship to Mary Magdalene, of healing to lepers, of fellowship to Zacchaeus, of his life on a cross, of his resurrected body to the world. In the life of Jesus, new life is found not in clinging to oneself, but when life is given for others. The bread that Jesus gives at table sustains a world in abundance.

Good work, likewise, gives to others and rests not in itself. When work is guarded so that others will not benefit, the result may be temporary prosperity for the hoarder, but death for a life that results in hoarding. The well-documented abuses of Enron executives offer a foil to work that is given for others. The slogan of these high-ups was to accumulate at all costs: hoarding the proceeds of hard work, lying to stockholders, employees, and accountants in the name of good business. These executives sought to keep for themselves the proceeds of their own work without accounting for the work of others or the claim of the public upon them. As a result, pensions evaporated, stockholders lost millions, and a titan of industry crumbled while its executives profited until the end. Hoarded work leads not only to the diminishment of others' work, it also proves unsustainable in the end,

## thoughts on vocation



As a Christian educator I have helped many church members discern gifts for teaching. We all have the ability to teach others what we know, however so often people feel inadequate to teach others about the Bible or theology. But remembering the definition of theology Cindy Rigby taught us in seminary, "we are all theologians because we all can talk about God," I am able to encourage novice teachers into the classroom. We all have the ability to talk about God and all who pick up the Bible are biblical scholars, you don't need special degrees to engage in teaching faith. What most people discover after jumping in and teaching for a short period of time is that they become better students as a result and learn more.

—Angharad Teague (MDiv'01)

abundance of society: sanitation workers who collect trash so that the health of a city is maintained; bus mechanics who offer their services so that children may ride to school; writers whose work moves the heart and piques the conscience of a nation; teachers whose gift is that others might come to learn more of the world's abundance; lawyers who represent juvenile offenders; accountants who form ledger sheets so that companies can distribute their wares; backyard gardeners who give their produce to neighbors. Good work does not rest in itself, but is broken open and given to the world.

As Christians celebrate the Eucharist, we recall Christ's work in the Spirit for the world. When workers approach the Lord's Table, they first remember Christ's work. As they are transformed by his work, however, their work, too, can draw on the gestures of the Supper. In the ordinary places, times, and things of human work, we recognize that Christ comes to us in the Supper as gift, transforming our work, too, into a gift from the Creator. The Supper, in no small part, anticipates the consummation of the world in Jesus Christ, work in which we, too have a part. As this bread is taken, blessed, broken, and given for us, our work is drawn into the life of the world. ▲

## thoughts on vocation



How vocal do you expect your "calling" to ministry to be?

Sometimes it can be only a whisper. Other times it may be a feeling overflowing like a brilliant sunset ...

The whisper came to me ... and after some 30-35 years in ministry, I am grateful for that Call.

Don't be afraid of the Call, but don't be fooled, either.

It may be time for you to pick up The Phone. You will have many great and grateful years of ministry, by God's grace.

—Ronald M. Guinn, Class of 1959

# Commencement new beginning for sixty-seven

The Reverend Dr. **Robert M. Shelton**, former president and Jean Brown Professor Emeritus of Homiletics and Liturgics, delivered Austin Seminary's commencement address on Sunday, May 20, 2007. Sixty-seven students received degrees: fifty-two, the Master of Divinity; ten, the Master of Arts in Theological Studies; and five, the Doctor of Ministry.

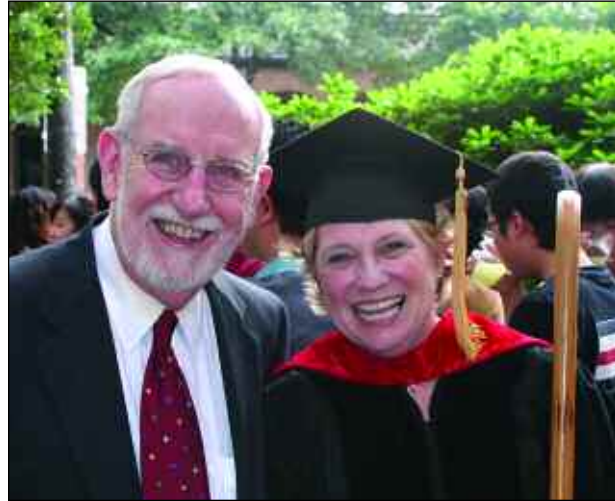
Shelton joined the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary faculty in 1971 and was named the Jean Brown Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics in 1982. He served as academic dean for fourteen years before becoming president in 1996. Since his retirement, Shelton has served as interim senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Dallas, First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, and First Presbyterian Church, Shreveport. His wife, **Fran Shelton**, was among this year's Doctor of Ministry graduates.

Commencement exercises also included the granting of special awards to graduating seniors who have distinguished themselves in their fields of study and leadership. **Charles Ray Kimball** received the Charles L. King Preaching Award, established to honor the former pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Houston and a distinguished denominational leader. Kimball is a member of First Presbyterian Church, Kerrville, Texas.

**Juan Ignacio Herrera** received the Rachel Henderlite Award, given to a graduating MDiv student who has made a significant contribution to cross-cultural and interracial relationships while at the Seminary. The award is funded in honor of the late Dr. Rachel Henderlite, who served for several years as professor of Christian education at Austin Seminary and was the first woman ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Herrera is a member of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Houston.

**Martha Caroline Langford** received the John B. Spragens Award, given to an outstanding graduate to be used for further training in Christian education. The award honors the late John B. Spragens, a former Austin

Seminary professor of Christian education and dean of students. Langford is a pastoral resident (part of the Lilly foundation Transition into Ministry program) at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois.



*Commencement speaker Bob Shelton with his spouse, new DMin graduate Fran Shelton.*

**Adrienne B. Coleman** received the Hendrick-Smith Award for Mission and Evangelism, given to a graduating senior who has shown academic interest in or whose life direction is focused on evangelism and missions in this country or overseas. The Hendrick-Smith Award was established to honor James H. Smith, William S. Smith, and John H. Hendrick, professor emeritus of evangelism and

missions at Austin Seminary. Coleman has been called to First United Methodist Church in Shiprock, New Mexico, a predominantly Native American congregation on the Navajo reservation.

**Tina Wynn Stenftenagel** received the Donald Capps Award in Pastoral Care, given to a student with gifts for and commitment to the church's caring ministries. The award was established to honor Princeton Seminary Professor Donald Capps. Stenftenagel will be a hospital chaplain at Scott & White in Temple, Texas, during her Clinical Pastoral Education program summer internship. She is a member of Bethany United Methodist Church in Austin.

In addition, the following awards were announced: the 2007 Ada and Adams Colhoun Award was granted to **Brenda Kennedy Leischner**; the 2007 Carl Kilborn Book Award was granted to **Sara Stegemann Drew**; the Chalice Press book awards were granted to **Aaron Milton Findley** and **Karen Denise Thompson**.

The Reverend Dr. **Allan H. Cole Jr.**, The Nancy Taylor Williamson Associate Professor of Pastoral Care at Austin Seminary, preached during the baccalaureate service on Saturday, May 19; presiding at the Lord's Table was the Reverend Dr. **John E. Alsup**, The First Presbyterian Church, Shreveport, Louisiana, D. Thomason Professor of New Testament Studies at Austin Seminary. Both services were held at University Presbyterian Church, Austin.

# The Class of 2007

Key to **Masters** degree entries: graduate's name and denomination (presbytery or conference under care); first call / placement or future plans. Key to **Doctoral** degree entries: graduate's name, current position; title of doctoral project.

MATS • Master of Arts in Theological Studies • MATS

**Kimberly M. Carter;** Church of God; completing plans for graduate studies



**Stephen "Steve" W. Vittorini;** Mission Presbytery; Development Director, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Austin, Texas

**David Wayne DeBerry;** Non-denominational; small group ministry, Gateway Community Church, Austin, Texas



**Duane E. Weilnau;** Lutheran-Missouri Synod

**Betty L. Duff;** Lutheran-ELCA; pursuing Texas licensure for private counseling/marriage and family therapy



**Linda Susan Wilbourn;** PC(USA); graduate studies, Master of Arts in Counseling, The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas

**Melissa Jane Russell;** Baptist, Alliance of Baptists



**Steven "Steve" E. Akins;** de Cristo Presbytery; seeking a call

**Joyce Marie Sawyer;** Santa Barbara Presbytery; volunteer teaching and service, First Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas



**Cameron Taylor Allen;** Grace Presbytery; Clinical Pastoral Education (summer), Dallas Methodist Medical Center, Dallas, Texas; seeking a call

**Kimberly "Kim" Ann Schirmer;** UMC; working in lay ministry in Austin, Texas



**Sarah Demarest Allen;** Grace Presbytery; Associate Pastor-Youth, Children, and Families, First Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas

**Deborah W. Shawa;** Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa; Pastor, Ng'ombe Presbyterian Church, Lusaka, Zambia



**James Scott Anderson;** UMC; PhD program (Biblical Studies), University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England UK

MATS • Master of Arts in Theological Studies • MATS

MDiv • Master of Divinity • MDiv • Master of Divinity









**Steven Frazier**, associate pastor, John Knox Presbyterian Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma; “Bridging the Gap: Deepening Worshipers’ Understanding of the Lord’s Supper Through Doctrinal Preaching”



**David Jenkins**, director of chaplaincy, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas; “Enhancing Integration of Psychological and Theological Reflection on Caregiving Practice: Implications for CPE Curricula”



**William Knudsen**, executive presbyter, Northumberland Presbytery; “From Surviving to Thriving: Effectively Training Lay Leaders to Identify Attitudes and Behaviors that Enhance or Inhibit Congregational Growth”



**Frances Shelton**, associate pastor for Congregational Care, Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas; “Blessed are Those Who Mourn: Offering Comfort through Worship and Theological Reflection”



**Sharon Turner**, curriculum designer, La Grange, Texas; “Bigger God, Stronger Women: Helping Women Expand their God Imagery through Art”

Key to **Doctoral** degree entries: graduate’s name, current position; title of doctoral project.

## The Dean’s Bookshelf

### Christian faith in the public sphere

I recently lectured to an ethics class in the International Business Fellows program at the University of Texas at Austin. The class, made up of graduate students from the business and law schools, the LBJ school, and others, was astonishingly diverse, representing virtually every continent on earth and most major faiths. While preparing for the class, I reflected on some resources you may find interesting.

The first two are relatively new: Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton, 2004), and Robert Kane, *Through the Moral Maze: Searching for Absolute Values in a Pluralistic World* (North Castle, 1996).

Michael Ignatieff is a public intellectual who has taught at Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard, and is now a member of the Canadian Parliament. His book is bracing, troubling, and thought-provoking in that he will not allow us an idealistic retreat from political realities. He writes: “Life’s toughest choices are not between good and bad, but between bad and worse. We call these choices between lesser evils. We know that whatever we choose, something important will be sacrificed. Whatever we do, someone will get hurt. Worst of all, we have to choose.”

Robert Kane teaches at the University of Texas at Austin. His book deals with the erosion of conviction

regarding the truths we hold in a world of competing moral claims. Not only is his book a subtle analysis of the problems we face, he also offers a compelling moral vision, as when he writes: “to teach a child in the early years what it is to love and be loved, to respect and be respected, is to give the child ears to hear whatever divine music the universe has to play.”

Another book that was helpful in preparing for this class was Arthur Schlesinger Jr.’s classic, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Riverside, 1949). Schlesinger sets forth a defense of liberty, not the rhetorical version politicians hide behind, but the dangerous and costly kind that requires us to make hard choices and pay the price for what we choose.

As I began reading these books I was musing over the much lamented fact that so few Christian theologians find themselves on the covers of magazines like *Time* these days, and that so few are thought of as public intellectuals. By the time I finished the books I had come to the conclusion that perhaps that’s not because the press is unwilling to hear from theologians, but because we theologians have failed to be as interesting or as compelling as the more “secular” public intellectuals. We certainly are seldom as interesting as someone like Reinhold Niebuhr, who held together both the role of Christian theologian and public intellectual. Maybe the Christian vocation of public intellectual isn’t dead; it’s just that few contemporary theologians have grasped the nettle of the calling.

—Michael Jenkins, academic dean



### *Charge to the Class of 2007*

by Theodore J. Wardlaw, president

Looking out at all of you here on this occasion, I'm imagining that, for some of you, at least, it may well be that everything about your life at this moment is not yet altogether nailed down. Some of you have parishes lined up, or know what graduate program you're going into next; but many of you are still deeply in the process of discerning what happens next. You've got interviews coming up with some search committees; you've still got benchmarks to meet in your presbyteries or other judicatories. As nice as this moment is, it's not like it necessarily settles anything—at least for most of you.

Twenty-nine years ago, I was basking in a moment like this. Except, unlike most of you, I had figured it all out at this moment. I was being awarded a coveted graduate fellowship, I was off come fall to Yale, where I was going to work on the first step toward a PhD. I was completely certain about my vocation—to be a professor of American church history in a seminary someday. My thought was that if Union Theological Seminary in Virginia was lucky enough and played its cards well, then they might get me on their faculty someday. I was clear that I was not going into the parish, because I was possessed of an extraordinary intellect that would be undernourished in a setting like that. I was about to get married, having finally negotiated with my fiancée that I was not interested—ever, ever, ever, case closed—not interested, thank you very much, in having children. It was clear to me that she had accepted that. I had persuaded her that it was an act of irresponsibility to bring children into the world we were, by necessity, living in; and we were clear about that now—no children. It was also clear that, after our wedding in July in Natchez, Mississippi, we would be leaving the South forever—or until, with my PhD in hand and several major best-selling books in circulation, Union Seminary called and begged me with a signing bonus to come be a professor. Especially if I got to start

as a full professor with tenure. In my case, I was clear: that was not too much to ask. We had it all figured out, is what I'm saying to you.

I could go on in this vein, but I'm noticing my watch; and in exactly one hour our older daughter is flying in from her freshman year in college, and I've got to pick her up at the airport.

So let me hasten to what happened next. After graduation, I went back to my home presbytery—the Presbytery of South Carolina. That was its name; but it was comprised of only three rural counties in South Carolina—and in fact, in those days in that small state, which is smaller, I'm sure, than Mission Presbytery, there were seven presbyteries. But I went back to the Presbytery of South Carolina and met with my Committee on Preparation for Ministry; and, if I say so myself, I was dazzling. I went on and on about the influences in my theological thinking: Reinhold Niebuhr, Richard Niebuhr, Harvey Cox, Jon Sobrino, Langdon Gilkey, James Gustafson. I talked about liberation theology. I sniffed a little about the suburban captivity of the churches, I went on about the ossification of American piety, I spoke impressively about how—in the minds of Charles Hartshorne and Alfred North Whitehead—God was still in the process of becoming God and was not only not completed with His world but was also not completed with Himself. That may have been the line I was most proud of, and if in the late '70s I had thought to use the word “Godself” instead of “Himself” I would have been even prouder. Bottom line, I was amazing. And then, when the interview was over, they asked me if I would leave the room for just a few minutes; and so I excused myself.

I was out there in the hall for an hour and twenty minutes. When I came back in, there was, at my place at the table, an open copy of the *Book of Church Order* (that was, for Southern Presbyterians, the predecessor book to the

*Book of Order*). “Mr. Wardlaw,” the Chair of the committee said, “we’re not persuaded that you can answer two of these ordination questions in the affirmative. In fact,” he went on, “we think you may be a Neo-Kantian Whiteheadian.” It began to dawn on me in that moment that they had not in fact been dazzled by me at all. And for the next forty-five minutes, I spent a lot of time going over the fine points of the Apostle’s Creed and the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer, and listening to them lay out their vision of what they expected from someone whose ordination they were about to certify. At the end of that time, by the grace of God, they handed my head back to me on a silver platter; and, a few minutes later, as I was slinking to my car, a member of that committee hollered and asked me to wait up for him. He’d excused himself from the rest of that meeting, still going on, to say something to me. He was an elder in Greenwood, South Carolina, and he ran a hardware store. He caught up with me, and he said, “Look, fellow. I know we were a little hard on you in there. But here’s the deal. The secret to being a successful minister of the Gospel is showing up.”

“Well, I did show up; I was here on time,” I said, woundedly.

“Oh, I don’t mean that,” he said. “What I mean is that, if you were ever my pastor, I’d want you to know all that stuff that you were talking about back there. I understand that that stuff’s important. But you would get to really be my pastor if you came to see me in the hospital, if you called when my wife was sick, if you were there when my kid was running around with the wrong crowd. I’m talking about showing up. That’s all.”

I want to borrow his words as my charge to you this day. And as I do so, I want you to understand that I continue to be a strident proponent of the importance of the stewardship of the mind, of thinking out the faith, of reading widely, and staying up with what the great thinkers of our tradition are writing about and saying in these days—it’s a value that our tradition brings to the smorgasbord of Christianity, and God knows it’s greatly underappreciated in our time. The stewardship of the mind may be the thing we do best as a seminary. But I also want you to remember what that hardware salesman said to me: it’s also important to show up.

When you get to your parish, and there’s a presbytery meeting, or a conference meeting or a diocesan meeting; show up. Show up every time. And in this time when every denomination I can think of is crammed full of single-issue affinity groups, make your denominational judicatory your primary affinity group. Show up.

When you get to that next graduate program; or beyond that, when you go to teach in a college or seminary, and there’s an important issue or event that is being processed in your community, show up! You have a stake in it.

When someone calls you on the phone, return the phone call. When they write you a letter, answer your mail. When they call you from the hospital, in tears—even on your day off—show up and let them know that they matter to you. And by the way, they had better matter to you—otherwise, you’re in the wrong business. In this age we’re living in, in which nothing seems more exalted than the primacy of the Self, I am sick unto death of listening to ministers reflect upon their vocation as if they could do something worthwhile for the Kingdom of God if the church people would just leave them alone. This is not a profession for soloists; so show up, for God’s sake.

Show up, even when your soul is parched and you’re not sure anything you’ve learned about the faith squares with your own experience of it. Show up anyway, because that’s often when the Church of Jesus Christ returns the favor and shows up for you. I can think of moments in my own life when I have been burdened and have wondered if I could go on, and some portion of the Church of Jesus Christ has laid its hands on me and said, “Let us help you carry that burden; why haven’t you told us sooner that you needed help with this one?” And when, for example, you can’t say the Apostles’ Creed without crossing your fingers, then don’t say it; but show up—and let the Church say it for you.

There was once a Christian named Simon, who lived in Syria in the early part of the fifth century and longed for closeness to God. He chose a path respected in his day and became a hermit. His search for God led him to isolated clusters of fellow hermits scattered about the deserts of northern Syria. But Simon was convinced that he could only find God by getting away, even, from his fellow hermits—even a loose collection of hermits was too much togetherness for him. So in the year 423, when he was about thirty years old, he began to live on a small platform on top of a pillar. At first the pillar was only about twelve feet off the ground, but it was increased in height over the years until it was sixty feet in the air. Simon lived up there on his isolated perch, for another thirty-six years. This remarkable feat earned him the name Saint Simon Stylites, Saint Simon of the Pillar.

I learned about Saint Simon by reading the book *The Christian Life: A Geography of God* by a noted pastor-scholar, and an Austin Seminary trustee, named Michael Lindvall. Michael has also written that often he is asked, as you will be, “Can I be a Christian on my own, or do I have to join a church?” Michael says, “I feel compelled to respond honestly, ‘Yes, you can. It’s been done.’ Sometimes I tell them the story of Simon the Pillar. Then I add, ‘But it’s extraordinarily difficult, and in spite of all the foibles of the church, it’s not nearly as much of a joy.’”

He and that hardware salesman are right. And you’ll discover it, too; if—over and over again—you simply show up. ▲

## Lynette McKissack retires after three decades of smiles

**L**ynette McKissack retired after serving more than thirty years on the Austin Seminary staff. Or, instead, as she says, she's on vacation. "Retirement sounds so old," she said. Lynette started in the kitchen in 1976 under the direction

those in need who came in asking for food. She remembers attending parties with the students and making homemade ice cream. "It was just the itty bitty things," she said. "I enjoyed just being here."

One story about Lynette that

*Seminary artist-in-resident C. D. Weaver created a pendant for Lynette in a shape reminiscent of the Seminary's logo. It was presented to her during Lynette's retirement party.*



of **Ruth Metcalf**. Lynette's aunt, **Bessie Maxwell**, also worked as a cook for the Seminary for about thirty years, and she was the one who first encouraged Lynette to apply for a job.

"We had a wonderful time together," Lynette said, remembering working with her aunt, including the time she was asked to open a window and got her thumb stuck. "Since then, I don't do windows," she said with a laugh.

Lynette recalls the differences in food service then and now. "We used to bring the food to the students at the table," she said, instead of having them come get it cafeteria-style. They also used to do themed dinners, happy hours (not with alcohol, though, she pointed out—just pretty non-alcoholic cocktails and hors d'oeuvres), holiday dinners, and brunch every Saturday morning. She also recalls

gets told frequently is about pumpkin pie. She knew the recipe by heart from making it so frequently. But one day, when making pie for a group on campus, she accidentally reached for the jar next to the cinnamon on the spice rack. "A student came to me and said, 'the dessert is good but it's really hot.'" At first, she thought he meant the temperature of the pie. Then she understood he meant that it was spicy. She tasted it, and realized she had grabbed the cayenne instead of the cinnamon. "But they liked it anyway," she said.

Lynette holds a special place in her heart for the people she worked with. She said a woman who worked with her, **Willie Johnson**, was also like a sister to her, and Ruth Metcalf, like a mother. "We had our disagreements but we always came bouncing back," she said. Her sister **Robbie Lampkin**

also worked at the Seminary for twenty-one years.

Lynette was a cook for eighteen years and then began working in housekeeping. In her retirement (or vacation) Lynette plans to look after her family—which includes eighteen grandchildren—and her friends. She also joined the YMCA and plans to play bingo frequently.

But she won't stay away forever. Lynette plans to come back from time to time, because, she said, her children and her job are the things that have kept her going throughout the years.

## HR director top grad

**Lori Rohre**, director of human resources, was the valedictorian of her Park University class in Austin on May 18. She practiced her valedictory address, "Who Am I and Who Can I Become?" in the Seminary chapel. Rohre, a wife and mother of a teenager, attended Park University full time, taking classes online and at night, while continuing her full-time position at the



Seminary. Rohre said it was important for her to get her degree even now because she values higher education and felt it was important for her job to have the degree. "It is also an example that I am setting for my daughter," she said.

## Butlers fund Barth Symposium

A Church for our World,” Austin Seminary’s first symposium on the legacy of Karl Barth, will be held November 13-15, 2007, underwritten by the Shirl P. Butler Endowed Fund for Barth Studies. **Shirl Butler** (MDiv’65) and his wife, **Detta**, wish to increase pastors’ appreciation for Barth, whom Pope Pius XII recognized as the “most important theologian since Thomas Aquinas.”

Shirl Butler says reading Barth brings him great joy. “I get excited with far more joy reading him than any other literature in any other category,”

he says. “From time to time I dry up in sermon preparation. Without fail when this happens, reading Barth brings excitement to my work ... Barth may be the greatest theologian and interpreter of the standards of the Christian faith,” says Shirl.

Shirl Butler has also been inspired by **Cynthia Rigby**, a Barth scholar and Austin Seminary’s W. C. Brown Professor of Theology, who is planning the first Barth symposium. “Dr. Rigby has been a kind of (secret) mentor which helps keep my theological juices flowing,” Butler says.

Butler says he went from being immersed in the secular life—consistently wanting more material things—to searching “for a source of meaningful life” through learning about science, philosophy, and psychology. He had served as a US Marine Corps Raider in World War II, and said his infantry unit experienced more casualties than any other. “I participated in twenty-seven months of human slaughter, which had nightmarish consequences,” he says.

Austin Seminary, which he entered in 1961, provided Butler with a good environment for questioning, analyzing, and fellowship, he says. However, he says he was looking for “guidelines and rules and confirmation of a single theology. So I pounded on faculty doors until I finally realized I was responsible for the formulation, maintenance, and correction of my faith. That’s real freedom! [But] what a burden real freedom can be!”

“My entire seminary experience was transforming,” says Butler, for which he is “eternally grateful.” Wanting to give something back to Austin Seminary, he and Detta decided that establishing the Shirl P. Butler Endowed Fund for Barth Studies “could guarantee that Barth could be heard in the centuries to come.”

Anyone can create an endowment to benefit Austin Seminary. An endowment a gift is made to the Seminary in a lump sum that is invested, and a percentage of the earnings are spent each year as designated by the donor. The original gift remains untouched so that funding can continue in perpetuity, leaving a legacy of the donor. The donor can designate any number of things to be funded: a program, a faculty chair, a scholarship, or a reoccurring event such as a symposium. The gift could also go into the general endowment, if desired. There are many ways to set up an endowment. If you would like more information, please contact Donna Scott at (512) 404-4807.



*Sydney Reding, Max Sherman, and Peggy Clark celebrate at commencement*

### Trustees complete service to Seminary

Three of Austin Seminary’s closest friends and most loyal supporters have completed their terms of service on the Austin Seminary Board of Trustees, each having served two nine-year terms, the maximum allowed by the Austin Seminary bylaws.

**Peggy Clark** is a partner in The Write Group. An elder at First Presbyterian Church, Falfurrias, Texas, and formerly an elder and church school teacher at Parkway Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, she became a trustee in 1990 and for many years chaired the Long-Range Planning Committee.

**Sydney F. Reding** is a retired banker of Stillwater National Bank and Trust and an elder at First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater. She began her service on the board of trustees in 1990 and was chair of the Student Life Committee.

**Max R. Sherman**, is retired dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin and is an elder at University Presbyterian Church, Austin. Sherman has served on the board since 1988. He has been chair of the Trustee Committee, a member of the Centennial Campaign Steering Committee, and chaired the last Presidential Search Committee.



*Detta and Shirl Butler*



John F.  
& Nancy **A**nderson House

*A new generation of residential student housing*

The cost of the new building is currently estimated at approximately \$8.8 million. The J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation Inc. has made a challenge pledge of \$2 million toward the project, on the condition that the balance of the funds, \$6.8 million, has been raised and construction of the building is underway by December 2007. Current gifts and pledges from individuals, churches, and foundations totals \$4.6 million. For more information or to make a gift, contact Donna Scott at 800-777-6127, ext. 807.

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*To view a video on Anderson House, go to [www.austinseminary.edu](http://www.austinseminary.edu) and click on "support."*

*Austin Seminary is coming to a city near you! The following Partnership Luncheons have been scheduled. Please contact Lucy Ogelsby for more information or to make a reservation: (512) 404-4886; [logelsby@austinseminary.edu](mailto:logelsby@austinseminary.edu)*

September 13, 2007 . . . . . Far North Dallas, Texas  
 October 4, 2007 . . . . . Longview, Texas  
 November 1, 2007 (NEW DATE!) . . Albuquerque, New Mexico  
 November 15, 2007. . . Harlingen, Texas, and surrounding areas

**Three appointed to faculty chairs**

Austin Seminary's Board of Trustees voted on the following faculty promotions and appointments during its May 2007 meeting:

- The Reverend Dr. **Laura Brooking Lewis** was granted the status of professor emerita of Christian education.
- The Reverend Dr. **Whitney S. Bodman** was promoted to the rank of associate professor of comparative religion, effective July 1, 2007.
- The Reverend Dr. **Allan Hugh Cole Jr.** was promoted to the rank of associate professor and named to The Nancy Taylor Williamson Chair in Pastoral Care, effective July 1, 2007. The board also approved a six-month sabbatical leave for Cole, beginning January 1, 2008.
- The Reverend Dr. **Stanley Robertson Hall** was named to the Jean Brown Chair of Liturgics and Homiletics, effective July 1, 2007.
- The Reverend Dr. **Arun W. Jones** was named to the John W. and Helen Lancaster Chair of Evangelism and Missions, effective July 1, 2007, and was granted a twelve-month sabbatical leave beginning July 1, 2008.
- Dr. **William Greenway**, associate professor of philosophical theology, was granted tenure, effective July 1, 2007.
- Dr. **David Hadley Jensen**, associate professor of constructive theology, was granted tenure, effective July 1, 2007.
- The Reverend Dr. **J. Andrew Dearman**, professor of Old Testament, was granted a six-month sabbatical leave beginning September 1, 2007.



- The Reverend Dr. **Jennifer L. Lord**, associate professor of homiletics, was granted a twelve-month sabbatical leave beginning July 1, 2007.
- The Reverend Dr. **David L. Jones** was reappointed as the director of the Doctor of Ministry program, effective May 1, 2008.
- The Reverend **Janet Maykus** was reappointed as the director of Christian Leadership Education and principal of the College of Pastoral Leaders, effective July 1, 2008.
- Dr. **Monya A. Stubbs** was reappointed as assistant professor of New Testament, effective July 1, 2008.
- The Reverend Dr. **C. Ellis Nelson** was reappointed as research professor in Christian education.

## FACULTY BRIEFS

**John Ahn**, assistant professor of Old Testament, led a workshop, May 2-4, at Mo-Ranch Men's Conference which set a new attendance record. He was appointed Hebrew Transliteration Editor for The Old Testament Library commentary series. He is helping to organize and launch a second generation Korean American EM (English Ministry) at the Lord's Church of Austin.

**Whit Bodman**, associate professor of comparative religion, spent almost three months in the Middle East, mostly in Cairo, working with Christians and Muslims on understandings of the Qur'an in preparation for a book on the Qur'an for Christians, to be published by Eerdmans. He also spent Easter in Jerusalem and visited with Israelis and Palestinians and spent a week in Amman, Jordan, and visited the Royal Institute of Islamic Thought.



*W. C. Brown Professor of Theology Cynthia Rigby was the keynote speaker and preached at the Snowbird Resort in Utah for the National Pastors Sabbath, June 28-July 2.*

The new book by Nancy Taylor Williamson Associate Professor of Pastoral Care **Allan H. Cole Jr.** (co-authored with Robert C. Dykstra and Donald Capps), *Losers, Loners, Rebels: The Spiritual Struggles of Boys*, is out from Westminster John Knox Press. Cole wrote an essay on "Epistemology" for *The Encyclopedia of Social Work*, 20th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) and three essays on texts from Isaiah for use during Holy Week in a new preaching commentary, *The Lectionary Commentary Series, Year B, Volume II* (Westminster John Knox, forthcoming). An article by Cole addressing experiences of loss prompted by retirement, "Monday Mourning: Negotiating Loss in Retirement," appeared in the July 30 issue of the *Presbyterian Outlook*.

In the international press, Associate Professor of Constructive Theology **Dave Jensen's** essay, "Verwundbarkeit und Spiel:

Skizzen zu einer Theologie der Kindheit," appeared in the German journal *Praxis Gemeindepaedagogik*, and Academic Dean **Michael Jinkins'** "Docent in Het Huis Der Verwondering," appeared as a foreword in the Dutch translation of Abraham Joshua Heschel, *De sabbat & Vernieuwing vanuit de traditie (The Sabbath)*; Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Abraxas, 2006)

**Arun Jones**, The John W. and Helen Lancaster Associate Professor of Evangelism and Missions, attended the annual meetings of the Association of Professors of Mission and American Society of Missiology (which he serves as Secretary-Treasurer). He also attended the Yale-Edinburgh Conference on Missions.

**David Jones**, director of the Doctor of Ministry program, preached at DMin student **Peter Haas'** installation service at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church on July 15th.

**Jennifer Lord**, associate professor of homiletics, has been elected treasurer for the Academy of Homiletics. She also served as a member of the Steering Committee and the Worship Committee for the biennial meeting of the Association of Lutheran Musicians in Houston in July and contributed a chapter for the book *New Proclamation: Feasts, Solemnities, and Other Celebrations*, forthcoming from Fortress Press.

Assistant Professor of Christian Education **David White's** manuscript, *Awakening Youth Discipleship in a Consumer Culture* (co-written with Brian Mahan and Michael Warren), has been accepted for publication by Wipf & Stock.

# A Church for Our World

## *A Symposium for Pastors on the Theology of Karl Barth*

*supported by the Shirl P. Butler Endowed Fund for Barth Studies*

**November 13-15, 2007**  
**Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary**

EBERHARD BUSCH, DANIEL MIGLIORE, AND CYNTHIA RIGBY



**Eberhard Busch**, the keynote speaker, is professor emeritus for reformed theology and head of the Karl Barth research group in the faculty of theology at Georg-August University of Göttingen in Germany. He was Karl Barth's assistant in Basel from 1965 until the time of Barth's death in 1968.

**Daniel Migliore**, Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, will give an opening address, setting the context for understanding Barth's contribution to the twenty-first century church.



**Cynthia Rigby**, W. C. Brown Professor of Theology at Austin Seminary, will lecture on "Karl Barth and Empire."

Other presenters include **William Greenway**, associate professor of philosophical theology, who will lead a workshop, "Karl Barth and Universalism"; **David H. Jensen**, associate professor of constructive theology, will preside over a panel discussion (with Busch, Migliore, and Rigby) and conduct a workshop on Christian vocation. Underwritten by a grant from Shirl and Detta Butler, the symposium includes accommodations, entertainment, coffee breaks and receptions, meals, worship, and fellowship time. Two evening events featuring Dr. Busch are open to the public. **Tickets for this symposium are limited**; registration and other questions can be directed to Alison Riemersma at 512-404-4821 or [ariemersma@austinseminary.edu](mailto:ariemersma@austinseminary.edu)

*Log onto*  
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### ***Super results for challenge***

Thanks to the generosity of Austin Seminary graduates, more than \$190,997 has already been pledged to the \$250,000 Anderson House Alum Challenge! If you haven't yet made your pledge, contact Donna Scott at 800-777-6127 or [dscott@austinseminary.edu](mailto:dscott@austinseminary.edu)

### ***Theological Education Sunday is September 16***

To schedule a student, faculty member, or administrator to deliver a sermon or minute for mission on Theological Education Sunday, September 16, please contact Georgia Smith at [alum@austinseminary.edu](mailto:alum@austinseminary.edu), 800-777-6127, or 512-404-4801.

### ***Last call for nominations***

The Austin Seminary Association is seeking nominations for the 2008 ASA Awards for Service. If you wish to nominate an Austin Seminary alumnus/a, please write a letter of recommendation **by September 12** describing his or her distinguished service to the Seminary or the church and mail it to David Evans or visit our website [www.austinseminary.edu](http://www.austinseminary.edu) (look under "alumni") to nominate electronically. Winners of the award will be honored at the 2008 ASA Banquet.

Nominate yourself or someone else to serve on the ASA Board! We attempt to reflect the geographic, denominational, racial/ethnic, and decade diversity of our 1500 plus living alumni/ae on the ASA Board. Terms of service are three years and ASA Board members are committed to being advocates for Austin Seminary. Nominations can be made on the web, by mail, or to [alum@austinseminary.edu](mailto:alum@austinseminary.edu)

## WELCOME...

to Luke Thomas Clifton, son of Daniel and **Sheri Clifton** (MDiv'02), born September 28, 2006

to Atalie Grace Dukes, daughter of Glenn and **Britta Martin Dukes** (MDiv'05), born June 1, 2007

to Adam Nile Bogle, son of Emily and **Spencer Bogel** (MDiv'04), born July 11, 2007, in Kampala, Uganda

## CLASS NOTES

1960s

**Charles R. Galbraith** (BD'61) married Fran Hillin on May 6, 2007.

1970s

**P. Joe Gossett** (MDiv'76) was honorably retired in May 2006 and now "serves God incognito" as a Southwest Airlines flight attendant. He is based in Orlando and lives in Odessa, Texas, and "looks forward to seeing and serving you onboard."

1980s

**C. Matthews Samson** (MDiv'87) has written a book, *Re-enchanting the World: Maya Protestantism in the Guatemalan Highlands*, published by the University Alabama Press in July.

1990s

**P. Alex Thornburg** (MDiv'90) has published two articles: "Why is Community so Hard?" in the Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators' journal *Advocate*, Summer 2007, and "Disaster and Deritualization: A

Reinterpretation of Early Disaster Research" in *The Social Science Quarterly*.

**David Gambrell** (MDiv'98) has been called as an associate for worship in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Theology and Worship.

**Carol Howard Merritt** (MDiv'98) has written a book, *The Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation*, published by the Alban Institute. With a Foreword by Dean Michael Jenkins, it will be available in August.

2000s

**Cassandra Dahnke** (MDiv'02) and **Donna Bowling** (MATS'03), have co-authored, with Tomas Spath, *Reclaiming Civility in the Public Square: Ten Rules That Work*. Available from the Institute for Civility in Government, which Dahnke and Spath founded, or through Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble, copies have been distributed to every member of the U.S. Congress.

**Anne Mellor Emery** (MDiv'07) married Greg Emery on June 30, 2007.

## ORDINATION

**Barbara Dyke** (MDiv'02) to serve First United Methodist Church, Mertzon, Texas.

**Jack Gause** (MDiv'02) to serve St. Peter's United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas.

**Cindy Layton** (MDiv'03) to serve Christ United Methodist Church in Kingsville and Riviera United Methodist Church in Bishop, Texas.

**Scott Campbell** (MDiv'04) to serve as chaplain of St. David's Round Rock Hospital, Round Rock, Texas.

**Jane C. Johnson** (MDiv'06) to serve First Presbyterian Church, Smithville, Texas.

**Michael E. Brundeen** (MDiv'07) to serve Jackson Woods Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, Texas.

**Adrienne Coleman** (MDiv'07) to serve First United Methodist Church, Shiprock, New Mexico.

**Eric Dittman** (MDiv'07) to serve First Presbyterian Church, Blackwell, Oklahoma.

**Amelia F. Howard** (MDiv'07) to serve First Baptist Church, Austin, Texas.

**Martha Langford** (MDiv'07) to serve Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Illinois.

**Scott Sandahl** (MDiv'07) to serve St. John's Presbyterian Church, Manchaca, Texas.

*If you have been recently ordained and are not recognized above, please contact Georgia Smith, coordinator of alumni/ae relations, at 512- 404-4801 or alum@austinseminary.edu*

## NECROLOGY

**G. William Ingram** (ThM'68) Leesburg, Florida, March 12, 2007

**Henry E. Williamson Jr.** (DMin'82) Clarksdale, Mississippi, April 12, 2007

**Claud M. Cluney** (MDiv'52) Tyler, Texas, May 23, 2007



*Juan Herrera*



*Steve Vittorini*

# Commencement 2007



*Debbie Shawa and family*



*Martha Langford*



*Linda Wilbourn*



*Junie Ledbetter, Anna Rosales, and Maria Luisa Palacios*



*Nancy Nelson and Robert McElwaine*

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**Fall | Winter 07-08**

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 Leading from Your Passion: How to Recruit and Retain Volunteers in the Life of the Congregation  
 Led by Rev. Rob Mueller

**October 15-17, 2007**  
 Small Church Pastor's Retreat  
 (at Mo Ranch)  
 Led by Dr. David Ruesink

**November 9, 2007**  
 Advent Lessons  
 Led by Dr. Arun Jones

**January 18, 2008**  
 Lenten Lessons  
 Led by Dr. David White

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*Doctor of Ministry director David Jones, second from left, with graduates David Jenkins, Steven Frazier, Bill Knudsen, Fran Shelton, and Sharon Turner*

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