

# DEAN'S LETTER TO FRIENDS IN MINISTRY

FALL 2009

Dear Friends in Ministry,

Many if not most of you have by now heard that I will be stepping down from my position as President and Dean of the Seminary at the end of this academic year. After a brief sabbatical I will return to teach at the Seminary as Senior Professor of Theological Studies. I am very much looking forward to the opportunity to be in the classroom, to write, and continue to serve the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) through scholarship. It was a decision that I weighed over many months and announced to President Parkyn and ECC President Gary Walter late this summer. I am pleased to be able to remain at North Park among colleagues and friends and look forward to profitable years of teaching and working with students. I have enjoyed immensely my 14 years as president and dean, but am eagerly anticipating this next phase of my life and work. As I write, the process for determining my successor is under discussion. I know that you will offer the next leader of the Seminary the same support, friendship and encouragement you have offered me over these many years. I am thankful for each one of you. Keep North Park Theological Seminary in your prayers as we go through this transition. Transitions are never easy and create anxiety. Pray that we will trust God through the process for strong leadership and a continued bright future for the Seminary.

## ENROLLMENT

Last year's fall enrollment was 46, and with an additional 20 students from the Center for Spiritual Direction, it rose to 66. This fall enrollment increased to 91 new students, while full-time equivalent numbers increased from 145 to 153, for a combined headcount of 274. Thanks to all who helped in the recruitment of this strong new class. Mark Olson and Eric Palmquist are continuing to explore ways to enhance both the quality and quantity of our students. In this challenging economic environment it was gratifying to see such a large incoming class. They are young and enthusiastic—and they really sing in chapel!

## ACADEMIC PLANNING

This year the faculty is continuing a conversation about the revision of our curriculum based in part on the many conversations with some of you during last year's listening tour. We recognize the need to rethink our program of theological education for the sake of the new challenges being faced by the

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**NORTH PARK  
THEOLOGICAL  
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church. Other things we hope to accomplish this year include the development of a program for multifaceted urban ministry education and a prototype for staff development in larger Covenant Churches. Academic dean Linda Cannell is working on these projects along with faculty, staff, and church leaders. This is part of our commitment to serve the entire Covenant Church.

## 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most important programs at the Seminary: the Presidential Scholarships. Under the leadership of former ECC president Glenn Palmberg and former North Park University president David Horner, this program was established to enable 20 Covenant students a year to attend the Seminary free of charge. This has brought hundreds of gifted and godly women and men to the Seminary to prepare to be pastors, chaplains, missionaries, and scholars. Some of them are serving in your congregations: preaching, teaching, working with children and teens, evangelizing, working for justice, leading worship, and managing the work of the congregation. The program has also been the anchor of our most important fundraising effort. During this year we will celebrate the Presidential Scholarships and ask for renewed commitment to financial support from churches and individuals. I hope you will continue to respond generously as we look to future generations of pastoral leadership for the ECC. In addition to the Presidential Scholarships we have another full-tuition scholarship sponsored by the Kern Family Foundation. If you are interested in finding out more about either of these programs, please contact Eric Palmquist (apalmquist@northpark.edu).

## FACULTY AND ALUMNI ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In recent years our faculty has enjoyed a superb publication record. A number of important works are either in the process of being published or are currently being written. Dr. Max Lee will have a commentary on Revelation published this fall. Dr. Phillis Sheppard has a manuscript on womanist theology at the publisher. Dr. Jim Bruckner has received a grant to work on a book on biblical perspectives on health and healing. Dr. Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom is working on a book on Pietism during her sabbatical. Dr. Phil Anderson continues work on a new history of the Covenant Church. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah's recent book has already sold around 5000 copies! I also want to commend recent Seminary graduate and Presidential Scholarship recipient Rev. Mae Cannon on the publication of her book, *Social Justice Handbook*, with InterVarsity Press. Mae is the executive pastor of Hillside Covenant Church in Walnut Creek, California. Congratulations Mae!

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

I think you can see that we have exciting and taxing challenges ahead of us. I appreciate your prayers and support as we continue to seek God's will for this place. I also encourage you to ask your superintendents about recent North Park Theological Seminary graduates when you are looking for additional staff. We have some wonderful, gifted people who are awaiting God's call. We have been blessed in recent years and we look forward to seeing what God will do in the coming years. Thanks again for your support, love, and encouragement.

Sincerely,



John E. Phelan, Jr.  
President and Dean