

# DEAN'S LETTER TO FRIENDS IN MINISTRY

WINTER 2010

*I want to thank you for all your encouragement, prayers, and gifts during my fourteen years as president and dean of the Seminary.*

Dear Friends,

A new year is upon us. Remember when we were so excited about the turn of the century? Somehow we have gotten through the first decade of the new millennium. And what a decade!

These have been years of appalling violence, profound losses, economic crises, and deep insecurity. We have engaged in a good deal of soul-searching within the church as well as without. Certainly the challenges that pastors face in leading congregations have not gotten any easier. In fact, things are more complex and tangled than ever. We are humbled at North Park Theological Seminary that young women and men still respond to the call of Jesus Christ and his church to enter this challenging, agonizing, and thrilling vocation. We are constantly examining and reexamining our program to assure ourselves that these students have the biblical, theological, spiritual, and pragmatic resources necessary to activate the gospel of Jesus Christ. We appreciate deeply your support and prayers over this decade.

Most of you know that I am stepping down as president and dean at the end of this academic year. After a sabbatical I will return to the classroom to teach Bible and theology. I am very excited about this new chapter of my life. David Parkyn, president of North Park University, and Gary Walter, president of the Evangelical Covenant Church, have organized a search committee and have begun the search for my successor. I know the members of that committee would appreciate your prayers and thoughts as they engage in this critical process. Pray that God is already preparing the person to lead the Seminary in its next chapter. Pray also for the faculty, staff, and students who are understandably interested in who will be the next president and dean of the Seminary.

A number of North Park's faculty and staff will be participating in the Covenant Church's Midwinter Conference. Included are professors Soong-Chan Rah, Linda Cannell, and Robert Hubbard, Provost Joseph Jones, and Chaplain Judy Howard Peterson. The Seminary always has a booth at the Conference. If you are attending please step by and say hello. Find out about all the new opportunities to learn and grow through our online program as well as our intensive classes. Of course, even if you aren't at the Midwinter Conference, you can find out about these opportunities from Eric Palmquist, our director of Seminary admissions ([apalmquist@northpark.edu](mailto:apalmquist@northpark.edu)).

There is still time to apply for scholarships for the next school year. The Kern

Scholarships are a marvelous opportunity for younger students to attend Seminary on a full scholarship and to experience the camaraderie of Kern Scholars from around the country. Not only will the scholarship support you while you are attending the Seminary, but it will also provide for several years of support and encouragement of your ministry after you leave Seminary. This is an amazing opportunity for those who qualify, but hurry. The application needs to be completed in time for the Kern screening process in March. Full-tuition Presidential Scholarships continue to be offered as well. If you know someone considering a call to full-time ministry who wishes to attend seminary, please direct them to Eric Palmquist, and let them know that North Park Theological Seminary has some of the most exciting scholarship possibilities around.

I am looking forward to seeing many of our supporters over the next few months. I want to thank you for all your encouragement, prayers, and gifts during my fourteen years as president and dean of the Seminary. I also want to make sure we finish on a strong financial note for the next leader of the Seminary. I know these are challenging times for many of us, but the need for strong ministry preparation has never been greater. We continue to want our students to graduate with as little debt as possible, so that their attention can be riveted on the gospel—the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ. So please consider making a significant gift to the Seminary by the end of our fiscal year, which is June 30, 2010. Thanks again for your support and encouragement over so many years.

If you are in the Chicago area, please stop by to see us. You are especially invited to the Palmquist Lecture on preaching with Dr. Craig Satterlee on March 3. We will be sending out more information about this after the beginning of the year. I would also ask you to pray for our graduating seniors who are going to be meeting with the conference superintendents in January. They are gifted, godly, and excited about serving Christ. We still have a few wonderfully gifted students who graduated in May who are awaiting a call. If you are looking for staff at your church, please contact your superintendent if you are part of the Evangelical Covenant Church and ask about a Seminary graduate.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement. It has been a joy to serve North Park Theological Seminary, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John E. Phelan, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John E. Phelan, Jr.  
President and Dean, North Park Theological Seminary