PREVENTING BURNOUT
Editor’s Note: Welcome to our inaugural e-version of Contact, Gordon-Conwell’s ministry magazine. Throughout the year, you will continue to receive print editions, and have access to an additional online-only version. This will enable us to provide you with more features, articles by faculty and information about the seminary. We welcome your input as we seek to keep you informed about God’s work through GCTS, our faculty, staff, students and alumni. Please tell us what you think at communications.office@gordonconwell.edu.

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MY SOUL IS WEARY WITH SORROW; STRENGTHEN ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.
PSALM 119:28
Reflections from the President

Today’s drop-out rate among pastors and missionaries is alarmingly high. It is sad to think that if the current trend continues, 50 percent of students now in seminaries will drop out of the vocation to which they believe God has called them.

The factors leading to this troubling reality are usually centered in three main areas: moral failure (frequently related to money, sex or power); inability to deal with conflicts that emerge in ministry; or emotional and spiritual burnout.

At Gordon-Conwell, we are seeking to address each of these potential stumbling blocks as we prepare men and women for the vast array of ministries to which God is calling them—pastoral, missions, counseling, teaching, para-church and the market place. In this issue we probe emotional and spiritual burnout, with a recognition that there are practical steps we all can take to remain faithful to God’s calling.

God has created us whole beings in which the physical, emotional, relational and spiritual dimensions are deeply intertwined. To care for ourselves spiritually without recourse to physical or emotional care is to fail God and to fail ourselves. Conversely, to care for ourselves physically or relationally without the spiritual and emotional care is also to fail our Lord and his calling in our lives. Preventing burnout calls us to a life of discipline, including those spiritual disciplines that continually enable intimacy with Christ.

May God grant to us both the wisdom and strength to live balanced lives with the Triune God at the center of every dimension. May we follow our Lord’s example, who as a young man, “Grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Lk. 2:52).

Dennis P. Hollinger, Ph.D.
President &
Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics
ON THE FRONT LINES

HELPING CHILD SOLDIERS RECOVER FROM THE TRAUMAS OF WAR

ANNE B. DOLL
DURING THE CIVIL WAR THAT RAGED THROUGHOUT SIERRA LEONE FROM 1991 TO 2002, ALUMNUS FRANKLYN JUSU MACAVORAY WITNESSED YOUNG CHILDREN AND ADULTS GUNNED DOWN BEFORE HIS VERY EYES.

His two younger brothers were abducted by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels and hauled into the bush, there to be drugged, brainwashed and turned into child soldiers able to kill, maim, rape and gang rape innocent people with impunity. A favorite torture technique was to chop off limbs.

Franklyn says his father died from the stress of losing everything when dissidents stormed and plundered his village, killing relatives, neighbors and friends. During the violent, 11-year war, upwards of 30,000 boys and girls were forced to become child soldiers. Most were between the ages of seven and nine.

After two years, Franklyn’s brothers returned to their war-torn village. “By the will of God, the rebels had rejected them,” he recalls. “But they paid the price.” When the boys arrived, they wept for hours, and gave “very discouraging reports that they had actually killed people…I realized that I was alive, and that I needed to be of help to my brothers and others…That’s when I was commissioned to ministry.”

Responding to that commission, Franklyn founded and now directs a ministry, Youth Recovery Initiative (YRI), located near Freetown and in his hometown of Bo. He and the program’s six staff members have helped 200 young people traumatized by the war. Moreover, a very successful International Training of these young people in different spheres of life, supported by Gordon-Conwell alumnus Dr. Kenneth G. Arndt (D.Min. ’12), also added value to the ministry’s endeavor. Franklyn says they started the ministry because some of the children had lost their parents and their homes and had no place to go. Nor, in many instances, was it safe for them to return to their own villages.

“So, we have the challenge of trying to engage them, give them counseling, disciple them, show them that a good life could be possible through Christ Jesus,” he explains. “We work with them one on one, comforting, trying to assure them of their dignity. They have to feel like they are still part of society, and that God will use this for good because God never forced this on them. What was done was forced on them by adults.”
“It’s a very difficult ministry,” he adds. “It’s a desperate issue to work with them, because they think what they did was wicked, and that if God is good, he wouldn’t have let it happen.”

In 2009, prompted by the enormous needs of the children with whom he was working, Franklyn enrolled at Gordon-Conwell, ultimately earning both an M.A. in Educational Ministries (2011) and an M.A. in Counseling/Mental Health Track (2013). He also holds an M.A. in Theology from the University of Sierra Leone, and is a pastor.

Since the founding of YRI, counseling has, of necessity, taken place in a child’s home or at a church. But many children have no home and/or no family members who will welcome them back.

“Kids originally lived in resettlement camps, but were later demobilized and reintegrated into the society,” Franklyn explains. “Most parents are fearful to accommodate their children because of what was unleashed on them during the war. Girl soldiers who had been raped by their captors face particular stigma when they attempt to return to their homes. As a result, many resort to prostitution or reconnect with the rebels who had abused them.

“Within these families there is much need for reconciliation and forgiveness, peaceful coexistence and development,” he adds.

Franklyn is in the U.S. seeking partnerships and funding to secure a house in Freetown where displaced children can live, be discipled, receive counseling and heal. The ministry has already secured land on which the house for children could be built.

He says the Gordon-Conwell community has been very supportive, for which he is extremely grateful. However, before he returns to Sierra Leone, he must be certain he has sufficient support. He says, “I can’t seek support in my country when people are perishing.”

**A NEW THREAT TO CHILDREN**

The needs of Sierra Leone’s children were further compounded in 2014, when Ebola virus disease (EVD) struck West Africa.

Considered the deadliest outbreak of Ebola since it was first detected in 1976, the epidemic has been particularly severe in Sierra Leone. As of August 17, 2015, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had reported 13,538 suspected, probable and confirmed cases; 8,697 laboratory-confirmed cases; and 3,952 deaths in that country.

Franklyn says the Ebola epidemic has ravaged his country and affected his entire town. He has lost family members, friends and church members to the disease. “When it started, there was no good education or physician. People stayed inside; they were afraid of the Ebola....When they got sick, they were afraid to talk about it, because when Ebola came to Freetown and people shared openly about it, everyone was traumatized, not knowing what to do. As such, they were very much prepared to die. Now they are coming out for help.”

Currently there is no cure for Ebola, no effective medicines, no vaccine. Medications that are used are very expensive. Hospitals have been overwhelmed, lacking sufficient staff, laboratories and facilities for detecting and treating the disease. Average mortality rate is 50 percent among those contracting Ebola.

“Ebola is still on the ground, up to now,” Franklyn comments. “The government passed a law that if people get Ebola, they can be assured they will get care if they go for help. But for people living in the country, it is very difficult because they are not allowed to move around as freely as they used to be...People don’t go to church as freely as they used to do, because they don’t know who carries the virus.

“As a post-war nation, Sierra Leone was ripped apart,” he says. “The recent epidemic of EVD has taken our nation into retrogression, hence impeding any developmental strides. It is sad to note that young people have always suffered, and have been reduced to nothing absolutely.”

When Franklyn was searching for the right seminary, he chose Gordon-Conwell because its core vision mirrored his own. “When I came there, I realized that the call was clear on my life. My country lacks Christian customs; Islam is a force. There is much need to train pastors and Christian leaders. This is the way of hope for our civilization.”

Franklin can be reached at jmacavoray@yahoo.com, or on his cell phone at 978-473-2115.
PASTORAL BURNOUT: A MORE COMMON PROBLEM THAN YOU MIGHT THINK
The story is told of an Army general who was informed by one of his staff that the senior officers were experiencing low morale. In response, the general bellowed, “Officers do not experience low morale! They help their soldiers deal with low morale!” Pastors may not struggle with low morale, but it may surprise Christians that pastoral burnout, being closely related to low morale, is a reality that must not be ignored—either by pastors or congregants.
While burnout is not a common experience of pastors (although some observers think it is on the increase), it is by no means completely absent either. In my involvement for the last seven years with Gordon-Conwell’s Oasis ministry, a counseling support ministry for our alumni, I have observed what seems to be a growing phenomenon that I call “general malaise.” Sometimes it is manifest as depression or anxiety; but more often it is simply a weariness of the soul, wondering if what one is doing is effective, or matters. From this soul weariness, it’s a short step to burnout.

When we speak of burnout, we usually refer to being extremely tired and in need of a few days of rest in order to rebound with our usual energy and vision. But, when the medical community refers to burnout, it is a physical and emotional phenomenon that takes six to 12 months of rest to recover from. I know whereof I speak.

It was 50 years ago when I was a pastor in Rockport, MA, and had just completed my first year of ministry. On a beautiful June Saturday in 1965, I decided to get in shape in one day after a winter of little exercise, and had a vigorous bicycle ride up and down the hills of the town. When I sat down for lunch, suddenly I could not speak (except in gibberish), and this was followed quickly by loss of vision and paralysis down one side. I was rushed to the hospital where I spent a number of days at Boston’s Massachusetts General Hospital.

The initial diagnosis was that I had experienced a stroke, but the usual tests did not confirm this. One of the top neurologists at Mass General would bring the interns around to see me and ask them for their diagnosis. When they said “stroke,” he called attention to the test results that did not confirm a stroke. They were silent and did not know how to properly diagnosis me. After a few days, however, the doctor came to visit me and revealed that he did not know what the problem was either!

This doctor thought I had a “stress-induced stroke” due to the heavy physical exercise of the bike ride, and that if my body could be rested sufficiently, I would recover. Further, he pointed out that he thought I was carrying the burden of the church myself when that was really God’s job. “There is a God, and you are not God,” he said. His analysis was right. Although I believed firmly in the sovereignty of God, I was behaving as though if anything good were to happen in the church, it was up to me to make it happen.

So, the doctor prescribed a pill to make me sleep 12 hours a night, and another one to wake me up in the morning, thinking that if the body was sufficiently rested, full function would return. Fortunately, the paralysis had gone away in a day or so after the initial episode, but speech and vision were slow in returning. After several weeks, I slowly began to re-engage in pastoral work, but it took about a year to completely recover.

My doctor today said what happened 50 years ago was likely what is now referred to as a “neurological migraine variant,” rather than a “stress-induced stroke.” The cause was the same—not pacing myself, but behaving as though I were God, thereby putting my body under stress that resulted in a physical breakdown.

In his classic book The Stress of Life, Canadian medical doctor and researcher Hans Selye describes what stress and burnout are. His research indicates that everyone has a “baseline” and a “threshold” in dealing with life. Defining stress as “the nonspecific response of the body when any demand is made on it,” he focuses on the physical responses of the body when we hit the threshold too often without returning to our baseline. Calling it the “General Adaptation Syndrome,” Selye says that there is a natural “alarm phase” which is triggered whenever we get close to the threshold in dealing with the stuff of life. This sets up a physical process (interaction of the brain chemicals serotonin, dopamine, epinephrine, norepinephrine and melatonin) that is automatic and brings the body back to the baseline (called the “resistance phase”). If this is not done, then the “breakdown phase” begins.
SOME PEOPLE HAVE HIGH THRESHOLDS FOR HANDLING STRESS; OTHERS HAVE LOW ONES. AND, UNLESS WE STAY WITHIN OUR NATURAL GOD-GIVEN PARAMETERS, WE CAN PUSH OUR BODIES INTO THE BURNOUT PHASE. THAT’S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME 50 YEARS AGO.

THE PRIMARY CAUSE FOR BURNOUT IS UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS, BOTH THOSE WE PLACE ON OURSELVES, AND THOSE WE ALLOW OTHERS TO PLACE ON US.

Here are the classic signs of approaching burnout:

- Cognitive function slows down: We are not able to think clearly for long periods of time; the mind just seems to be mush.
- Sense of helplessness and hopelessness: the sense that “nothing will work,” a loss of hope. This thinking is the single most debilitating factor in battling stress.
- Regression to a more comfortable behavior experienced in the past: We often ignore important tasks, and are indifferent to significant relationships.
- Become locked into destructive patterns of thinking and behaving: A spiral downward.
- Depression: mild to moderate, often unrecognized.
- Physical illness (not attributed to a “medical” condition): colds, ulcers, headaches, backaches, nausea, weakened resistance system, etc.

If there is “bunching” of the symptoms, it is time to take stock of one’s way of dealing with life. Studies suggest that there are only two ways of dealing with stress in order to avoid burnout. One has to do with deliberate efforts to reduce stressors by recognizing that the threshold is being pushed and making a conscious decision to “cut back.” This works best when perspective and counsel from others is engaged. Making a decision to “cut back” is not easy, but it can and must be done.
MAKING A DECISION TO “CUT BACK” IS NOT EASY, BUT IT CAN AND MUST BE DONE.

The second way of avoiding burnout is increasing one’s tolerance level for handling stress. Here are the common, and proven, methods for doing this:

Maintain an active devotional life: Read and reflect on Scripture, practice regular prayer, trust God in all things, even those that are frustrating or baffling.

Hold fast to your original call from God. Trust God to continue to lead you.

Take a sabbatical if needed: Time away from regular duties can be restorative in experiencing renewed vision and energy for the work of ministry.

Deliberately seek out a “soul friend,” one with whom you can be totally honest and who can be a means of support in talking about your inner life and tasks of ministry.

Work to secure a happy home life for you, your spouse and children. Family problems often contribute to high stress.

Eat a healthy diet in order to maintain good health.

Maintain purity of mind in selections of recreational reading, movies, TV, etc.

Be intentional about taking a Sabbath day in doing things that restore the soul.

Learn to laugh and enjoy life. “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Prov. 17:22).

Have one or two hobbies that bring enjoyment and a change of focus from daily tasks, and be disciplined in pursuing the hobbies appropriately.

Learn how to deal with conflict and do not avoid it when it happens.

This is not an exhaustive list, and in many ways is “what your mother taught you.” But research shows that practicing these behaviors can help to ward off burnout. The words of Richard Baxter in his classic work, The Reformed Pastor (1656), are relevant: “If you are burnt to the snuff [the end of the candle], you will go out with a stink.”

And, Robert Murray McCheyne, the early 19th century Scottish pastor who died at age 30, said to a dear friend as McCheyne lay on his deathbed, having “burnt himself to the snuff,” “The Lord gave me a message to deliver and a horse to deliver it with [by which he meant his body, not a literal horse], but, alas, I have killed the horse and can no longer deliver the message.”

Burnout can be avoided. It must be avoided. Not doing so exacts a high price.

Dr. Kenneth L. Swetland is Senior Professor of Ministry. Since joining Gordon-Conwell in 1972, he has served in a number of capacities, including Professor of Ministry, Academic Dean and Campus Pastoral Counselor. Now working part-time, he counsels pastors through the seminary’s Oasis program and has taught in a D.Min track. He has been a pastor and chaplain in various New England churches, and a psychotherapist for several counseling centers on Boston’s North Shore. He is ordained in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.
RESOURCES FOR READING ABOUT STRESS AND BURNOUT

**THE STRESS OF LIFE**

HANS SELYE, M.D.

A classic work quoted by others often.

**STRESS WITHOUT DISTRESS**

HANS SELYE, M.D.

A popularized summary of *The Stress of Life*

**OVERLOAD SYNDROME: LEARNING TO LIVE WITHIN YOUR LIMITS**

RICHARD A. SWENSON, M.D.

Swenson is a Christian doctor whose works are read by many pastors.

**MARGIN: HOW TO CREATE THE EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL, AND TIME RESERVES YOU NEED**

RICHARD A. SWENSON, M.D.

**STRESS/UNSTRESS: HOW YOU CAN CONTROL STRESS AT HOME AND ON THE JOB**

KEITH W. SEHNERT, M.D.

**ADRENALIN AND STRESS: THE HIDDEN LINK**

ARCHIBALD D. HART

Hart is a well-known and respected Christian psychologist.

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Wisdom from Scripture

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep" (Psalm 127:1-2, ESV).

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me...for apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).
A PASTOR’S PERSPECTIVE ON CLERGY BURNOUT

Anne B. Doll
In his nearly 32 years of pastoral ministry, Rev. Dr. Dorington (Dori) Little (D.Min. ’92) admits that he has occasionally skated close to the edge of clergy burnout.

Fortunately, he has been able to avoid this debilitating condition by tapping into the support and counsel of fellow pastors, colleagues on his staff, former professors and friends, and by developing helpful attitudes and practices he has tried to follow throughout his ministry.

Dori is senior pastor of the 301-year-old First Congregational Church of Hamilton, Massachusetts, on Boston’s North Shore. It is a church liberally sprinkled with individuals from nearby Gordon-Conwell and Gordon College. But the rank and file of the church, he explains, “are local North Shore folks who are passionate about their faith, and want to impact the culture and understand what it means to live as a Christian in the often perplexing time in which we find ourselves.”

He was called to the church in 1997, after serving for 14 years at an Evangelical Free Church in Boone, Iowa.

Rev. Little prefaces his remarks with the comment that “ministry can sometimes be inconvenient. Pastors have to operate on that principle and be willing to protect their hearts against bitterness. When the inconvenient calls come (and I’m not saying that in a negative way), it is also remembering that entering into people’s pain is a sacred privilege. So you have to set yourself aside. And we’re all sinful, fallen human beings, pastors included, and it’s difficult sometimes.”

Dori says that while he is not always the best one to practice what he preaches, “guarding your day off is important, and if you wind up having to do something on your day off, finding other ways to compensate for that time. In recent years, I have found, too, that taking up exercise has been helpful in just having a better attitude about ministry. It helps clear the mind and rejuvenate the body.”

He advises, in addition, that “every church is different. I understand that...Apart from the fact that we all deal with people, churches have their own personality and character. And there are seasons in ministry. Some are filled with joy and you see the amazing things God is doing. Sometimes they’re difficult. It’s hard to know how God is leading, what’s happening and why this is happening in the church.

“But if you have the bigger perspective that all these things are being worked together by God for His purpose in the local church, for its wellbeing, then you look with anticipation to what that might be, should it be revealed to you on this side.”

Although pastors are expected to maintain a strong spiritual life, Dori says guarding that spiritual life is a common plight among everyone, not just pastors. “Much of the Christian life is perseverance, figuring out how to rest, when to rest. One of the things that has been really helpful when I’ve been exhausted...is to reinvigorate my own personal Bible study. And finding new ways to do it so it’s fresh and alive, rather than just routine and duty bound.”

He adds that when seminarians nearing the end of their time at seminary come to him frustrated, recognizing that they could not learn all that they had wanted to, he reminds them—and himself—that “We’re paid to study. We get this privilege of having our whole lifetime stretched out in front of us where we learn to love books, theology, exegesis, and figure out how those intersect with life and culture, with the joys and pains of our people. And so,” he advises the students, “when you’re really exhausted, think about what you can pour into yourself in a measured way that will help you think differently, or grow or be refreshed. Study is a luxury we get that most people don’t. And you have to set those habits early, otherwise they’re really difficult to create.”

The longtime pastor admits that at times he has neared the point of burnout, more so when his current church launched a nearly 10-year building and renovation project. “We did it deliberately and patiently,” he explains. “And on one level that shouldn’t be a problem because it’s all joy. But on another level, it’s just a wearing kind of thing, often dealing with very understandable church dynamics that arise when you have hundreds of people with hundreds of opinions. They’re not wrong. It’s just what it is.”

Before the project was completed, his elder board granted him a sabbatical, which he will take beginning this fall. The elders told him, “We want you to rest, because you’re tired.”

“My leaders have looked after me,” he says. “They’ve been good to me, very gracious. They also understand when I need to be gone. For example, I have a sister who is dying of cancer. They let me go if I have to dash off to Seattle for several days. They’re not thinking about the time off, because they know I have worked plenty of days off when I needed to for them.

“I would be remiss,” he adds, “if I didn’t say what a wonderful staff I have at the church, the people who are my
Dr. Dorington (Dori) Little, Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church of Hamilton, Massachusetts, has participated in “probably a dozen” of Gordon-Conwell’s annual Spurgeon Sabbaticals for pastors. He gives high marks to these 10 days off to help pastors rest and renew. “They are able to confidentially share their burdens, have a good study time that feeds their souls, pray together and listen together about their respective ministries,” he says. “They can have a true sabbatical that is life giving, spiritually and physically.

“It’s a small group—only 15 pastors—and it’s very, very wonderful.”

Learn more about the Spurgeon Sabbatical!

For one close friend, the situation “became so pressure-packed and toxic that he even was hospitalized because of the stress. He realized that he no longer was a help to his people, and they were certainly not a help to him. He had a very godly attitude toward it, but he just felt that for their wellbeing and his own, he would step aside. And when he was able to rest and rehabilitate, God just wonderfully provided a completely different kind of ministry, which has been a huge blessing to him. It’s nothing short of amazing.

“I know that’s not true for everyone. I have friends in ministry who are being hammered all the time. They’re desperate and they have no place to go. It’s a scary thing.”

Rev. Little readily admits that the inconveniences of ministry have at times impacted his family, particularly his wife, Elizabeth. And most of all, he is grateful “for her unwavering support and understanding of the call to pastoral ministry and its incumbent demands. She grew up in a pastor’s home, so on one level she totally gets it. But that doesn’t mean it hasn’t sometimes taken its toll. Actually, Elizabeth is the true servant in this tandem.

“Our three kids, who are now adults, also have been really gracious. They all love the Lord, which is a wonderful thing. But occasionally they would say, ‘Hey, Dad, where have you been?’ It was a good corrective. The inconvenience of ministry is not an excuse to ignore your family.”

Former Gordon-Conwell professor Dr. Scott Hafemann was Dori’s D.Min. thesis advisor. They became good friends, and remain in regular contact. Dori says that one of the concepts Scott addressed in class has always stayed with him. “We were discussing II Corinthians 11, verse 28, where Paul talks about all these hardships he’s gone through...all this suffering. But then he says, ‘Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me, all the beatings and concern for all the churches.’ In other words, the apostle’s heart ultimately was for the Church. Do all these things for the sake of the Church.

“I’m not an apostle, and I’m not remotely trying to put myself on Paul’s level. But what he says about his concern for the Church is the thing in ministry. This is what drives you through the inconvenience of times and seasons. You have a burden for the Church, the local church in which you serve, and the burdens of people. You want them to know Jesus more deeply, and you’re keenly aware that you yourself need to know Jesus more deeply, and we’re in this thing together.”
459 New Ministers of the Gospel Receive Diplomas

At Commencement services in May, Gordon-Conwell conferred a total of 396 master’s degrees and 63 doctoral degrees to students of its four campuses.

Hamilton/Boston

In a joint service for the Boston and Hamilton campuses May 9, the seminary granted 281 master’s degrees and 46 Doctor of Ministry degrees.

Commencement speaker Gary Haugen, Esq., Founder and President of International Justice Mission, delivered the message, “The Vessel Shall Not Fail.” He was awarded an honorary doctorate based on his lifelong commitment to justice, particularly on behalf of the world’s poor. International Justice Mission (IJM) is an organization devoted to protecting the world’s poor from violence.

Before founding IJM in 1997, he was a human rights attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, where he focused on crimes of police misconduct. He is the author of several books, including Good News About Injustice (Intervarsity Press) and, most recently, The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence (Oxford University Press).

A Baccalaureate service the preceding evening featured Dr. Donna Petter, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Director of the Hebrew Language Program at Gordon-Conwell.

Commencement at Jacksonville Campus

Gordon-Conwell granted 17 Master’s degrees at its Jacksonville campus on May 16. Bishop Vaughn McLaughlin, pastor of The Potter’s House Christian Fellowship in Jacksonville, was the Commencement speaker.

Bishop McLaughlin has received recognition from federal, state and local officials for his groundbreaking work as founder of The Potter’s House Christian Fellowship. His work and that of related Potter’s House ministries have benefitted countless individuals in the Jacksonville community through hospital and nursing home ministries, food and clothing efforts, transformation of jails and prisons, support for new business development and many additional endeavors.
Multiple Events Held on Charlotte Campus

Clockwise from top left: Faith in Public Life Forum; Graduation; David M. Rogers Hall of Mission dedication (Louise Rogers and President Hollinger); Baccalaureate; Peter Farynyk and his wife; Panel: Mart Green (Mardel Inc.); Stick Williams (The Duke Energy Foundation); Bishop Claude Alexander, Jr. (The Park Church); David and Jason Benham (Benham Real Estate); Ann Caulkins (The Charlotte Observer), P. Anthony Zeiss (Central Piedmont Community College).

On May 15, Gordon-Conwell—Charlotte hosted the “Faith in Public Life Forum,” featuring Mart Green, Founder and CEO of Mardel Christian and Educational Supply and board chair of Hobby Lobby. Other forum speakers included Vice Chair of the seminary board, Rev. Dr. Claude Alexander, (Senior Pastor, The Park Church and Ministries), Tony Zeiss (President, Central Piedmont Community College), Ann Caulkins (Publisher, Charlotte Observer), Stick Williams (President Duke Energy Foundation), and David and Jason Benham (Benham Brothers Real Estate Group). Participants spoke of their spiritual journeys and how their strong Christian faith impacts their work in the public sphere.

The Charlotte campus then celebrated the opening of the new David M. Rogers Hall of Mission. The building was completed in 2015 as part of Gordon-Conwell’s recent Expanding the Boundaries capital campaign. The hall is named after the late Greer, South Carolina native, David M. Rogers, beloved seminary trustee, Charlotte Board of Advisors member, alumnus of the campus’ first graduating class, attorney and President of Joshua’s Way.

Participants in the celebration included Dr. Dennis Hollinger, President and Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics; Louise Rogers, widow of David Rogers; Mart Green; Jean Graham Ford, sister of Rev. Billy Graham, international evangelist; Rev. Dr. Leighton Ford, President of Leighton Ford Ministries; Dr. Robert E. Cooley, President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell, and Dr. Timothy S. Laniak, Dean of the Charlotte campus and Professor of Old Testament.

A Baccalaureate service featured as speaker The Rev. John Bradosky, Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).

Bishop Bradosky served for 32 years in pastoral ministry within diverse urban, suburban and multi-cultural settings. He was ordained as Bishop in the newly formed North American Lutheran Church after serving as its General Secretary for a year. He is known for a reliance on the Holy Spirit, and is remembered within his former church for his compassion for the hurting and the lost.

Bishop Bradosky also received an honorary doctorate at the Charlotte Commencement.

Capping off the festivities, Gordon-Conwell—Charlotte awarded 81 masters degrees and 17 Doctor of Ministry degrees on May 16, at Steele Creek Church of Charlotte. The Commencement speaker was Mart Green, who, in addition to his aforementioned roles, is also founder of Every Tribe Entertainment, and served as Chair of the Board of Trustees at Oral Roberts University until 2014. In 2005, he was named by Christian Retailing Magazine as one of the top 50 people who have most impacted and shaped Christian retailing in the last half century.
Special Conference in Fall 2015 to Honor Dr. Garth Rosell

The Surprising Work of God: Calling the Church to Spiritual Renewal (An Historical Perspective for Developing Future Expectations) will take place October 13-14, 2015, on the Hamilton campus. The conference is open to alumni and the general public, as well as the entire Gordon-Conwell community.

Speakers include:

- Dr. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., President Emeritus and Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Old Testament Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Dr. Adrian Chastain Weimer, Assistant Professor of History, Providence College
- Dr. George M. Marsden, Francis A. McAnaney Professor Emeritus of History, The University of Notre Dame
- Dr. Jim M. Singleton, Jr., Associate Professor of Pastoral Leadership and Evangelism, Gordon-Conwell
- Dr. Grant Wacker, Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Christian History, Duke University
- Dr. Ed Stetzer, President, LifeWay Research
- Dr. Timothy Tennent, President and Professor of World Christianity, Asbury Theological Seminary
- Dr. Garth Rosell, Professor of Church History, Gordon-Conwell

Dr. Rosell retired August 1, 2015, after 37 years of dedicated ministry at Gordon-Conwell.

Click here for a schedule of events, to register and to leave a short note of thanks or a memory for him.

Dr. Garth Rosell joined Gordon-Conwell as Professor of Church History in 1978, after teaching church history at Bethel Theological Seminary for eight years. During his tenure at Gordon-Conwell, he also served as Dean of the Seminary and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. As the Academic Dean, he helped establish the Doctor of Ministry program and the Harold John Ockenga Institute, and worked to strengthen and enlarge the faculty and deepen the ties between the seminary, the Church, the academy and the larger community.

Read more about Dr. Rosell here.

Program Highlights

Can We Expect God’s Awakening Presence Today?

The theme of spiritual awakening is multifaceted and complex. What can be learned from the great movements of spiritual awakening throughout history that can be instructive for the Church today?

These encompass the religious awakenings in the Old and New Testaments; the First and Second Great Awakenings of Edwards, Whitefield and Finney; the awakenings brought on by the ministries of Spurgeon, Moody, Graham and in the latter half of the 20th century, the Pentecostal movement around the globe and the more recent spiritual awakenings in China, Africa and South America.

What is normative about these movements? Are they intended to be sustained? What activities precipitate them? Can they/should they be “managed?” Institutionalized? What are the ethical implications surrounding them? How might they inform and shape the current climate of the Church in the 21st century?

The conference will address these foundational questions... and more.
Robin Higle to Lead Key Human Resource Efforts

Robin Higle (MAR, ‘13) has been named Executive Director for Organizational Effectiveness and Human Resources at Gordon-Conwell. She succeeds Susan Arslanian who served as Director of Human Resources for more than 16 years.

Robin previously served for four years as the seminary’s Director of Stewardship with the Advancement team. In addition to leading the seminary’s Human Resources department, she will work with senior administration to help drive alignment between organizational mission and human resources.

Robin has held Human Resources and organizational effectiveness positions in companies such as Comcast and AT&T Broadband, and has led and designed teams and processes focusing on business process excellence and change management. She is a graduate of Gordon College, and earned a Masters of Arts in Religion degree from Gordon-Conwell.

Seminary Alumna Assumes CUME Leadership Post

Virginia Ward (MA Youth Ministry ‘10) has been named Director of Leadership and Mentored Ministry Initiatives at Gordon-Conwell—Boston. She also serves as a trainer for the national DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, and as youth pastor at Abundant Life Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her husband, Larry, is senior pastor.

She previously served as Director of Black Campus Ministries for InterVarsity. She is currently completing a Doctor of Ministry degree in Emerging Generations at Gordon-Conwell. She and her husband reside in Boston, and have two adult sons.

ATS Appointment

Dr. Mark Harden, Dean of Gordon-Conwell—Boston, was recently named to the board of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), an accrediting agency for the 270 graduate schools of theology in the United States and Canada.

Member schools educate a combined total of 74,500 students and employ more than 7,200 faculty and administrators.

Dr. Harden was appointed to a four-year term, beginning in December 2014. He is the only campus dean on the ATS board.
Upcoming Global Education Opportunities

Gordon-Conwell is pleased to announce three Global Studies courses over the next 24 months. These courses are offered to meet the requirements for a range of degree programs for current students and are also open to all students, alumni and friends.

**Heritage of the Reformation**  
Wittenberg, Germany  
Led by Dr. Gordon Isaac  
**July 17-July 31, 2016**

Open to all GCTS students, alumni and friends.

Relive the watershed events of the Protestant Reformation. Daily lectures by Dr. Isaac and local Luther scholars will be interspersed with educational excursions to such places as Luther’s birth and death house in Eisleben; Castle Church where he posted his 95 Theses; Wartburg Castle where Luther was held in seclusion for 10 months, during which time he translated the New Testament into German; and an overnight stay at the Augustinian Cloister where Luther became a monk.

A unique feature of the course will be the opportunity to interact with German ordinands studying at the Preacher’s Seminary (Prediger Seminar) located next to the Leucorea, the university building where Luther lectured.

The course also provides fresh insight into the life and ministry of Christ. Visit Shepherds’ Field where the Good News of Jesus’ birth was announced. Tour his birthplace in Bethlehem at the Church of the Nativity. Attend a baptism service in the same Jordan waters where Christ was baptized. Sail the Sea of Galilee in a wooden fishing boat, recalling Christ’s exchange with the fishermen. Walk the Palm Sunday road to the Garden of Gethsemane, site of Jesus’ betrayal (Luke 22). Visit the Upper Room, and follow the Way of the Cross out the Damascus Gate to the Garden Tomb. Culminate the course with a moving communion service at Calvary.

**Study Seminar in Israel and Jordan**  
Led by Drs. Tom and Donna Petter  
**January 2017**

Open to all GCTS students, alumni and other friends.

Experience new depth and richness in your personal Bible study and future teaching and preaching ministries. This course offers many opportunities to walk, see, feel, and touch the roots of your faith, encounter the divine and sense His presence. Follow the Children of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land. Continue to Mount Nebo where Moses looked out onto the Promised Land before he died (Deuteronomy 34). Cross the Jordan River into Israel. Sing the Psalm of Ascent while going up to Jerusalem.

This course offers a unique opportunity for those planning to work overseas in missions or in leadership positions with global development agencies. This course will be taught in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a city with more than 400 active NGO’s engaging a host of human problems. If conditions are favorable, a visit to the Burmese border and to Chiang Rai will be included.

The group will visit more than a dozen NGO’s to interact with staff and observe their work and ministries. Site visits are selected based on their modeling of best practice, their effectiveness and on the extent to which their program models provide interesting contrast with each other.

Interpersed with lectures on development and visits to NGO sites will be opportunities to worship in local churches and enjoy local Thai culture, including a Thai Culture Dinner, riding elephants at a local elephant camp, and visits to the Queen’s Gardens and a local market.

**NGO’s and Development**  
In Mission Thailand  
Led by Dr. Todd Johnson  
**May 24-June 15, 2017**

Open to all GCTS students, alumni and other friends.

Experience the rich and varied models of international development first-hand. This course seeks to augment biblical, theological and historical foundations with real-world immersion in a variety of international development settings. It also reflects on the role of globalization in the spread of the gospel.

Experience the rich and varied models of international development first-hand. This course seeks to augment biblical, theological and historical foundations with real-world immersion in a variety of international development settings. It also reflects on the role of globalization in the spread of the gospel.
Gordon-Conwell’s Center for the Study of Global Christianity projects 500 million more Christians in 2050 than Pew

Todd Johnson, Ph.D.

A book by Jonathan K. Dobson (M.Div. ’05, Th.M. ’06), The Unbelievable Gospel: Say Something Worth Believing, was selected for Christianity Today’s 2015 Book Awards list in the area of Apologetics/Evangelism.

In a review by former Gordon-Conwell professor Dr. Timothy Tennent, now President of Asbury Seminary and Professor of World Christianity, Dr. Tennent wrote: “The Gospel does not change, but we must always be attentive to how we can best communicate afresh to each generation. Jonathan Dobson demonstrates, once again, that he is one of the church’s leading thinkers in knowing how to present the Gospel effectively in an increasingly postmodern world. I highly recommend it.”

The Unbelievable Gospel is available at the Seminary’s CBD site.

The Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project released a report on April 2, 2015, on the future of world religions, consisting of population projections between 2010 and 2050.

A major finding of the report is that by 2050, Christian and Muslim populations will be nearly the same size, 2.9 billion and 2.7 billion, respectively, with no change in the percentage of the world that is Christian (31.4%). In January 2015, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity released a statistical table on the status of global Christianity from 1900–2050. While our analysis is similar to Pew’s in many ways, there are some important differences. We anticipate a much wider divergence between the Christian and Muslim populations in 2050: 3.4 billion Christians or 36.0% (compared to Pew’s 2.9 billion) and 2.7 billion Muslims (similar to Pew).

Why the difference? The Center taps into knowledge from contacts in every country of the world who inform us what is happening in non-traditional forms of Christianity, such as house churches. Some of the most significant growth of Christianity in the world today, and into the future, is indeed non-traditional, and does not easily get picked up in traditional demographic measures such as censuses, surveys and polls. This is particularly the case in China and India. Pew does not take into account conversions in either China or India, citing a lack of reliable data. As a result, the Center’s percentages of Christians in China and India in 2050 (15.8% and 6.9%, respectively) are higher than those of Pew (5.4% and 2.2%). The Center projects Christians in China and India at a combined 330 million in 2050, compared to Pew’s figure of 108 million.

The Center can be reached for inquiries and further explanation at info@globalchristianity.org.

Alumni book wins prestigious award
In 2011, Adam Stephens found himself seriously overworked. Newly married, he was teaching four sections of theater at Marshall University in West Virginia. He was volunteering with a college ministry that he and his wife, Ashley, had started. And he was working at Starbucks, all while Ashley was pursuing a master’s degree.

Though busy, he enjoyed what he was doing. “Teaching young adults theater and the arts was rewarding, but my marriage was beginning to suffer at the hands of too many good things.” He and Ashley began attending marital counseling in order to process their transition to married life and establish healthy habits as a couple.

During this time, he and Ashley were also very involved at Christ Community Church in Huntington, WV. Their pastor, Gregg Terry, a GCTS alum (M.Div., ’75), prayed with Adam about a possible future in pastoral ministry. With that came the need for seminary.

Adam applied and was accepted into the M.Div. program at Gordon-Conwell’s Jacksonville, FL, campus, and also secured a part-time job at the seminary.

When Adam and Ashley moved to Jacksonville, they realized they needed to change the way they had been living, so they made a pact. For one year, they would not be involved in “extracurricular” activities. They would work and go to church, but commit to nothing else.

“The Lord was gracious,” Adam says. “We had lots of time together and we grew in our relationship.” During that year, they also found a home at Paramount Church. “The church was so supportive. They did not pressure us to join or lead any activities. In fact, they helped us have discipline and focus on each other.”

By the time that year was up, several opportunities had emerged. Adam’s part-time Gordon-Conwell staff role grew to a full-time position, and he and Ashley were ordained as deacons in their church. They’ve recently begun marriage counseling training together.

Adam reflects that “Ashley is probably the best human I’ve ever met. We’re best friends and a great team, and she’s an integral part of how I see my pastoral role.” It’s because of the difficulties that they endured early on in married life that they are eager to offer themselves in service to others.

“We aim to finish our training,” he says, “and offer premarital counseling through our church soon.”
With Sincere Gratitude

Kurt W. Drescher

As we approach the final year and phase of “Our Legacy – Our Future” Comprehensive Campaign, we do so with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to our great God. Very few campaigns go exactly as planned. In our case that has probably been a very good thing, as God has showed up in ways that we never planned for or even could have imagined.

Certainly, many of the projects that we set out to accomplish have been completed at this point, and we are so grateful for hundreds of God’s faithful people who have partnered with the seminary. At the same time, we have several unfinished priorities, and an enhanced priority that has developed. This article will highlight one remaining capital project, the Hamilton Apartment Renovations, as well as our our renewed commitment to advancing technology throughout the institution and our planned giving priority. The second, enhanced priority on advancing technology is very much in keeping with our initial plan, and may be one of our greatest opportunities as we train leaders of the Church to advance Christ’s Kingdom in every sphere of life by equipping Church leaders to think theologically, engage globally and live biblically.

First, a quick update. We set out to raise support for student scholarships, which we have done and are grateful to God that we have exceeded our $7.5 million goal by 40 percent. At the same time we realize this remains one of the greatest needs for our students, and we are steadfastly committed to continue raising funds for student scholarships as a top priority in our advancement efforts. We purposely to raise support for new programs and initiatives like the Hispanic Ministries and Biblical literacy in the Church, which we have done and are immensely grateful for the ways in which these programs are advancing the Kingdom through Gordon-Conwell. We set out to increase the participation of donors at the seminary, and we feel blessed that 70 percent more people are participating with the ministry annually today than when we started the campaign in summer 2010. We set out to raise capital support to improve our facilities and to steward well the properties that are under our care. We are so grateful for the new building in Charlotte, the Alumni and Pierce Halls in Hamilton as well as the beautiful and much needed improvements on the Hamilton campus grounds.

As we look at what we have left to accomplish, three things remain our focused priorities for the balance of this campaign beyond our regular commitment to raising funds for scholarships and raising resources for the Seminary Education Fund, our annual fund for operations.

**Hamilton Campus Apartment Renovations**

The Campaign to Renovate the Apartments on the seminary’s Hamilton Campus is called **A WELCOME HOME**. We believe that God calls individuals to ministry. For many, pursuit of that call is a family matter. The majority of students enrolled at Gordon-Conwell on the Hamilton campus are married and many are parents. They come from across the United States and around the world, leaving behind the familiar and safe in response to God’s leading.

Students choose Gordon-Conwell because the school offers a first-rate education. For students and their families living in campus apartments, the seminary is also a home. Some sectors of theological education are trending toward commuter campuses and online learning, which we have as a part of our educational offering. At the same time, we continue to value the residential educational experience that takes place on our Hamilton campus. Here, 80 percent of students are full-time and 50 percent live in one of our campus apartments.
In fact, few seminaries today offer the breadth and depth of community life that is available at Gordon-Conwell on the Hamilton campus. This advantage is noticed. Our students speak of the blessings that come from living in community with other learners and their families. Over the three or more years of a seminary program, neighbors become friends, the call to ministry grows stronger and networks develop that sustain a lifetime of Christian service.

For many students, access to affordable, on-site housing is what makes a residential seminary experience possible. With educational debt a topic of national concern, we are pleased to be able to help students hold the line on living expenses. During the most recent academic year, 27 percent of our apartment resident student families were international, and 35 percent of our apartment resident student families had children.

Back in the 70s and 80s, generous donors funded the construction of apartment units on our Hamilton campus. Several decades and many student families later, we can say with confidence that the buildings have served their purpose well. The original investments in student apartments have been returned many times over in Kingdom outcomes around the globe.

Now a $2.3 million renovation plan targeting 115 of those campus apartments will bring a much-needed face-lift to tired décor and enhance energy efficiency. The coming renovations are a tangible expression of the seminary’s holistic approach to theological education. At Gordon-Conwell, we are committed to developing minds for the glory of God, but never at the expense of the individual or families. Our commitment is to the whole person. We care about how our students are living as well as how they are learning.

Some donors are choosing to fund the full cost of renovating an apartment. Others will provide a portion of the $20,000 per unit amount. Naming opportunities are available to donors wishing to fund renovation of a single apartment, an entire floor of apartments, an apartment building or an apartment village.

Unlike many capital campaigns in which the proposed work doesn’t begin until all funds have been committed, renovations through A WELCOME HOME can proceed as gifts accumulate in $20,000 increments. Our hope is to renovate a quarter of the 115 apartments in each year of the campaign payout periods.

To date we have already raised more than $550,000 towards this campaign priority, have completed five renovations and have five more apartments presently undergoing renovations. Please join us in providing A WELCOME HOME to Gordon-Conwell students and their families with your gift for renovation of the campus apartments. You can be God’s instrument of blessing to women, men and families whom God has called to ministry.

**Equip Ministers for Today’s Technological World**

We live in an age where technological possibilities stand ready to enhance all areas of seminary life—from teaching and learning to leadership and decision-making. Gordon-Conwell is committed to leveraging technological innovation so that the seminary’s technology excellence matches its excellence in rigorous biblical ministry training. In this way our next generation of church leaders will be equipped in and for today’s technological world.

We are living in a time of breathtaking technological change. New educational and communication technologies are proliferating at break-neck speeds, fundamentally changing the way students think and learn. If we are to advance Christ’s Kingdom in every sphere of life by equipping Church leaders to think theologically, engage globally and live biblically, we have to deliver knowledge in ways that people expect, understand and can use in today’s world.
People expect to work, learn and socialize whenever and wherever they want. Speed, accessibility and connectivity are the watchwords of our day. Classrooms are increasingly open and collaborative. And the role of educators continues to change due to the vast resources accessible via the Internet.

Additionally, churches are increasingly capitalizing on technology. An example is Grace Chapel, a church in Lexington, Massachusetts, where 10 Gordon-Conwell alums and three current students are serving on the pastoral staff. One pastor calls the church’s ministry “tech intensive.” Fifty technology volunteers regularly work to ensure that projectors, cameras, internet feeds, simultaneous translation, etc., all run smoothly. Today’s pastors must be prepared for a technological environment in which they likely will serve.

In the midst of this swirl of change, Gordon-Conwell is committed to assimilating top-notch technology with the academically challenging biblical training for which we are known. This campaign, iTEK: Equip Ministers for Today’s Technological World, invests in:

* **Infrastructure.** Standardizes and integrates the technological foundation across campuses in order to pursue our mission collaboratively and efficiently.

* **Talent.** Empowers faculty and staff to better utilize technology in the classroom and supporting roles.

* **Enterprise Systems.** Provides strategic tools to help seminary leaders make decisions and vision-cast for the future.

* **Knowledge Delivery.** Enhances student training by creating dynamic learning atmospheres.

We are happy to share that approximately 90 percent of the money we are striving to raise in planned gifts will go directly to endowing student scholarships. The remaining amount will cover building endowments, which will help reduce the burden on annual operations.

As a seminary community, please know we are deeply grateful for the long-term investments that have already been made. We have received many planned gift commitments from friends of the seminary, and we are incredibly blessed to be partnering with these sacrificial donors who are helping to secure the training of the next generation of church leaders. Please know also that your planned gift can truly make the difference in the lives of future generations through this type of legacy commitment.

It is with sincere gratitude that we thank every single person who has contributed to the seminary through the giving of your resources and/or for lifting us up in prayer. We absolutely cannot do the work of equipping the next generation of church leaders without your help in both of these critical areas. When we set out on this journey with a very large, God-sized campaign goal, we did that with great intention. Five years later and with a year to go, we offer thanksgiving to our great God for the great things He has done.

May this be the prayer for Gordon-Conwell’s Our Legacy – Our Future Comprehensive Campaign as we seek to serve the Church:

> **Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21, NIV).**

Please keep praying for us and if you would like to help impact the next generation of church leaders through any of the ways mentioned above, please give me a call or email me at the information below.

Kurt W. Drescher  
Vice President of Advancement

978-646-4070  
kdrescher@gcts.edu  
www.gordonconwell.edu/giving
ALUMNI NEWS

Welcome, New Alumni!

This spring, we welcomed over 400 graduates to the alumni community across four campuses, including the Hispanic Ministries Program and Doctor of Ministry degrees. As an alumnus of the seminary, you can make a difference for Gordon-Conwell and, more importantly, for Christ and his Church. As you serve others, stay connected and make an impact. We want to help.

ALUMNI CONNECT

We encourage you to stay in touch with each other, with faculty work and the seminary. Take advantage of the following resources to help you connect:

- Join the Alumni Website, submit news, update your contact information and learn about upcoming events
- Find alumni Facebook pages for Hamilton, CUME, Charlotte and Jacksonville
- Read InCommunity, Gordon-Conwell’s monthly alumni newsletter

The following Alumni Connect events will be taking place this fall. Find one near you or come from a distance to join us for a time of fellowship, seminary updates and opportunities to grow in your faith.

October 2015

OCTOBER 3
Alumni Connect Breakfast, Atlanta, GA

Join Drs. Dennis and Mary Ann Hollinger as they meet with alumni in the Atlanta region. Watch for registration and more details to come.

OCTOBER 13-14
Alumni Connect Luncheon
Surprising Work of God Conference, Hamilton Campus

ALUMNI IMPACT

Continue to have an impact in your area of ministry and on Gordon-Conwell:

- Benefit from alumni resources, including continuing education, ministry tools and administrative services such as graduation verification and transcript requests.
- Recommend a student. Your recommendations have great impact.
- Give online. Any gift amount matters and helps us secure additional funding.

Please Tell Us What You Think

We want to know how best to serve you through the monthly InCommunity e-newsletter. Please take our two-minute survey to tell us what you think.
A CONFERENCE IN HONOR OF GARTH M. ROSELL

The Surprising Work of God:
Calling the Church to Spiritual Renewal

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR DEVELOPING FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

October 13-14, 2015

The theme of spiritual awakening is multifaceted. What can be learned from the great movements of spiritual awakening throughout history that can be instructive for the church today? Join us for two days as we explore this theme of spiritual awakening and honor Dr. Garth Rosell for his contribution to the field.

www.gordonconwell.edu/surprising-work
When Mom Becomes the Student

When Carmen Imes (MABS ’11) is asked how a mother of three young children can pursue a master’s degree in Biblical Studies at Gordon-Conwell—Charlotte and a Ph.D. in Biblical Theology (Old Testament) at Wheaton College, she quips, “I recommend marrying Superman!”

It was actually “Superman,” her husband, Danny, who suggested she pursue her love of studying. When the former missionary to the Philippines returned to the States in 2005 to continue his work with their sending mission agency, SIM, he discovered that its U.S. headquarters was a next-door neighbor of the Charlotte campus.

“At the time, I was homeschooling our oldest child, and I had a new baby,” Carmen says. “I thought, ‘Really, adding school to the mix sounds like too much.’” But she had always hoped to earn master’s and Ph.D. degrees eventually, then teach at the college level. So when Carmen explored the possibility of graduate school, she discovered that Gordon-Conwell offered not only a scholarship for SIM missionaries, but also evening and weekend classes. She remembers thinking, “Oh, this is perfect.” She could be home with her children during the day, and her husband could care for them at night.

“It took me five years to earn my degree, because partway through I had another baby,” she explains. “I took it slow and easy.”

It wasn’t long into her degree program before Carmen’s professors started saying she should really think about going on for a Ph.D. “When Danny and I thought it through, we realized that we should do this now, even though the kids were still small and I was busy with them. Then we could be done with graduate school and move back to Oregon to be near family.”

Carmen says that Dr. Tim Laniak, Campus Dean and Professor of Old Testament, was her advisor and “a wonderful support all the way through,” helping position her for Ph.D. studies. Of the 20 courses required for her degree, 17 were customized to prepare her for doctoral studies.

“All the professors were so willing to work with me,” she says. “They helped me gain the academic foundation I needed, which was really wonderful.”

In 2011, with her master’s diploma in hand, she packed up her family and moved to Wheaton, IL, to begin the next phase of her academic journey. “My husband has always done administrative work for SIM. So after working closely with the international office for six years while we were in Charlotte, they had no problem with his working remotely.”

While the family was in Wheaton, Carmen emphasizes, it was Danny who made it possible for her to take Ph.D. classes and study. While also working for SIM, “he did all the shopping, cooking, cleaning, getting the kids off to school. He took care of everything possible so that I could focus on my work.”

For the first three years, she remembers, “the kids were cheering me on all the way. We made a little chart for them to fill out every time I got something done. So they felt they were a part of it, and were excited when they saw progress.”

In the devotional that follows, presented last year at a Gordon-Conwell Alumni Connect event, Carmen recounts her arduous journey as a doctoral student, noting that at the beginning of her Ph.D. studies, she had established “an ambitious goal of finishing the three-year program in three years’ time, which few students actually do. My husband and I threw ourselves into the doctoral scene with focused diligence. It was beyond intense. We poured every ounce of our energy into the project.”

Then an unexpected delay in her program stretched the end point from three years to five or six. “But,” Carmen insists, “it has been an important season for us to see that you can’t always plan so that everything turns out the way you had hoped. And it has helped us refocus on what really matters. As much as we like our timelines, graduating in three years wasn’t the most important thing.”
Editor’s Note: Charlotte campus graduate Carmen Imes delivered the following devotional at a Gordon-Conwell Alumni Connect breakfast held during the 2014 Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) conference in San Diego, CA.

When a woman becomes pregnant, she enters liminality. She is officially on the threshold of motherhood, and yet she has not yet experienced most of the aspects of motherhood—nighttime feedings, diapering, discipline, pushing a stroller, singing the ABCs.

Liminality is usually temporary, but it can be prolonged. My first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. Part of my grief was because I found myself in the strange position of having been a mother, but lacking a child to prove it. Mother’s Day that year was especially awkward and painful. Was I a mother? Or wasn’t I? I didn’t really belong in either category.

Few people actually enjoy liminality. We have an inborn desire to seek order and belonging and predictability. Just a few months after that awkward Mother’s Day, I became pregnant again and happily left the liminal state behind. My grief largely dissolved as soon as the ambiguity of my status was resolved. Others are not so fortunate. Immigrants or refugees sometimes spend long stretches of time in a liminal state: lacking papers to legally work or even stay in their host country, and always feeling like an outsider.

Academia intentionally creates liminality. We invite students to leave home and enter into an entirely new environment with a new set of expectations and roles. With our help, they scrutinize themselves in order to re-shape their identity and discover their vocation. But they are not welcome to stay. Just when they feel comfortable in college, we push them out into the “real world” to begin the process all over again as full-fledged adults. Graduation is a ritual designed to mark that transition between academia and the outside world. To some extent it re-defines students by qualifying them for new roles in society. Crossing the stage, they cross the threshold to a new season of life.

Three and a half years ago I crossed the stage in Charlotte and shook hands with Dr. Hollinger. I was draped with an outlandish fabric hood that doesn’t keep the rain off and that I have never worn since, but which made me ridiculously excited. In that moment I officially became an alumnus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, qualifying me for breakfast this morning, among other things.
Because I’m a glutton for punishment, I immediately entered a doctoral program at Wheaton College, with the ambitious goal of finishing the three-year program in three years’ time, which few students actually do. My husband and I moved our family of five to Wheaton and threw ourselves into the doctoral scene with focused diligence. It was intense. Beyond intense. We poured every ounce of our energy into the project. This past February, I could see the finish line. Against all odds, I turned in a complete draft of my dissertation and advanced to the final round of interviews for a tenure-track position in sunny southern California.

Four days later we got the news. My dissertation wasn’t done yet. That meant no graduation, no job, and a whole lot more work ahead of me. We were stunned. This happens to lots of people in the dissertation process, but it had never happened to us before. For weeks I felt completely disoriented. Our narrative didn’t allow for a dissertation that stretched indefinitely into the future. We were ready to move on with life! As our plans unraveled before our eyes, we entered into a liminal state. I was no longer a student in the traditional sense of the word, but I had not yet graduated, and so I joined the ranks of ABD, those who would rather do anything but dissertation.

Along with the personal disappointments came a social dislocation and all the well-meaning questions that go along with it: “Are you finished with your “paper” yet? Or will it take a few more weeks? When is it due? Are you still in school? When do your classes start?” Most folks can’t fathom the idea of a “paper” that takes years to write and revise. They don’t see that I’m at my desk 30-plus hours a week working on it, so for all they know I’ve quit. Like most doctoral students, I have certainly entertained that possibility.

Ironically, my dissertation is on the Decalogue, which appears in Exodus when the Israelites are smack dab in the middle of nowhere, between what was and what will be. Israel’s wandering years are the ultimate liminality. God has brought His people out of Egypt and into the wilderness. They experience all the disorientation that comes with a major move: Where can we get food and water? Who’s in charge? Where are we going? Are we there yet? Yet they know that the wilderness is not their new home. It’s only temporary. After a few weeks of upheaval, the stress gets to them, as it does to most of us. They want stability! They want to go home! They become nostalgic—it wasn’t so bad in Egypt! At least we had leeks and onions!

But God is not in a hurry to lead them out of liminal space and into the land He promised to give them. They’re not ready yet. He has lessons to teach them that can only be learned in a state of dislocation. Sinai becomes the laboratory of their identity, the workshop of their character. YHWH appears before these emancipated slaves and tells them who they are under these new arrangements: You are a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, my treasured possession. Slaves no more, they have been specially selected as YHWH’s covenant partner. At Sinai He reveals Himself to them, and He issues commands that paint a portrait of the way He expects them to live now that they are His. But it does not come automatically.

In the echo chamber of the desert, competing narratives try to make sense of Israel’s experience. Their story can be spun any number of ways. Here are just a few of the voices that ricochet off Mt. Sinai:

“If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death” (Ex 16:3).

“The LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are” (Deut 4:20).

“It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth” (Ex 32:12).

“Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh... Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods” (Ex 18:10-11).

Before his death, Moses reflects on the years of wandering. The early chapters of Deuteronomy give the authorized answers to the question burning in every Israelite soul: “Why?” Moses says, “Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ... As a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you” (Deut 8:2, 5).
These were not wasted years. They were years of training. Moses wants them to be ready for what comes next. For that, they need to learn to tell their story. He teaches His people the following narrative, an official answer to their children’s question, “Why?”

“We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness” (Deut 6:21-25).

It’s human nature to try to make sense of our experience, to wonder “why.” And to question who we are and where we belong. Just as a variety of narratives battled for Israel’s attention; our story can be spun any number of ways:

Is this liminal state a mark of failure? A gift of sabbath? A spiritual attack? A punishment from God? Do I have what it takes to move on? Does God even care if I do?

In those “in-between” places, we are faced with many questions. We are no longer certain about who we are. We are not sure how God is leading, or even if he’s leading. In our desperation to restore a sense of order to our lives, we’re always in danger of adopting the wrong narrative. But God has us right where He wants us. He has lessons to teach us that can only be learned in a state of dislocation. Lessons about who we are. About who He is. And how He’s calling us to be in the world.

Wrapped in liminality are gifts such as perseverance, perspective, rest, creativity, empathy, gratitude, and most of all, faithfulness. Rushing on to the next thing may prevent us from becoming who He wants us to be when we get there. In this place of upheaval and instability, we must let Him shape us. We serve a God whose primary purpose is not to make us comfortable or successful in the eyes of the world, but to transform us. Liminality—that unsettled and unsettling place that brings out our deepest fears and longings—is His workshop.

Israel’s failure to trust God’s goodness in the wilderness was fatal for an entire generation. As we move in and out of liminal seasons, you and I are invited to exercise a trust in God that leads to life.

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Gordon-Conwell–Charlotte campus’ third annual “Engage Our Culture” forum will focus on racial reconciliation.

**Bridging the Great Divide**

The Church’s Call to Racial Reconciliation

Open to the Greater Charlotte community and beyond | Friday, October 23 - Saturday, October 24

Suggested $10 donation for Saturday event will be collected on-site, and registration is required. Register here.

Register by clicking here

**Friday, October 23, 2015**

When: 7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Where: The Park Church, 6029 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte

Speakers: Margaret Yu, Dr. Mark DeYmaz, Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Bishop (Dr.) Claude Alexander, Jr., and Dr. Tim Laniak (moderator)

Who: Open to the greater Charlotte community and beyond

Cost: Friday night panel is free and open to public, but registration is required. Register here.

**Saturday, October 24, 2015**

When: 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
(Alumni coffee gathering 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

Where: GCTS, 14542 Choate Circle, Charlotte, NC

Speakers: Margaret Yu, Dr. Mark DeYmaz, Dr. Soong-Chan Rah

The Saturday program also includes a panel on “Critical Issues Facing the African-American Church,” with Bishop Philip M. Davis, Dr. Peter M. Wherry, Dr. Jim Logan and Wade Burns, moderated by Dr. Rod Cooper.
In Memoriam

Alexander Miller Calhoun (‘92 M.Div.) went to be with the Lord on March 29, 2015, in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Throughout his life, Alexander actively lived out his faith in a variety of ways. He was a member of Campus Crusade during college and a member of Athletes in Action in his 20s. He was always an avid sportsman and passionate about fitness and activity.

Bard Alan Finlan (MATS ’84) passed away on July 6 at the age of 60 in the Rockport, MA, area. Bard was passionate about music and earned a Doctorate in Music at the University of Southern California in addition to his Masters in Theological Studies at Gordon-Conwell. He was an accomplished conductor and singer, and a member of the Christ Church in Hamilton, where he sang in the choir. Bard was also a technician for Verizon for several years in the Rockport area. He is survived by his wife and three sons.

Jorge Gautier (‘84 M.Div.) went to be with the Lord on December 8, 2014. He was a man of integrity always seeking God’s word and ministering to others through education. Among his and his wife’s fondest memories were the years spent at GCTS.

Rev. Dr. Martha Giltinan (‘85 MATS) went to be with the Lord on December 12, 2014, after a courageous battle with leukemia. Martha impacted many with her service as both a priest in the Anglican Church of North America and a faculty member at Trinity School for Ministry. Martha held a passion for the inclusion of women in all levels of church and life, particularly in the Global South.

Mary Louise Laird (MATS ’89) went to be with the Lord on June 9, 2015. Mary was born on January 7, 1942, and was a resident of Glen Allen, Virginia.

Lucy Lincoln (‘94 M.Div.) went home to her Lord on December 19, 2014. Lucy was an active servant of the Lord throughout her life. Her work included teaching art at Bethel Christian Academy in Portsmouth, NH; serving as a graphic artist with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Darwin, Australia; and living and ministering in Russia and Israel for two decades, including 16 years translating the Scriptures into a little-known language. She also published articles on Bible translation and interpretation. She was a licensed minister with the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, as well as a member of Evangel Bible Translators and the First Congregational Church of Windham, CT.

Rev. Donald Marcum (‘57 M.Div.) went home to his Lord on November 16, 2014. After he received his master’s degree, Don and his wife moved to Costa Rica in 1957, where they served for five years as missionaries for the Latin American Mission. Upon returning to the States, Don and his family lived in Florida, Philadelphia and Illinois. Along with teaching secondary school and ministering to churches in the States, Don studied Estate Planning and Financial counseling. He received his CLU and was certified in many areas of estate planning and financial counseling.

Joseph Jay McKenna (‘88 MATS) went to be with the Lord on May 8, 2015, after a long battle with cancer. After graduating from Gordon-Conwell, Jay traveled with his family to Yemen and the Cayman Islands to participate in the work of international schools. Upon returning to Beverly, MA, Jay worked in accounting at Harbor Schools and the Northeast ARC. He eventually became the CFO at Fidelity House Inc. in Lawrence, MA. Throughout his years in Beverly, Jay served as a lay leader at the North Shore Community Baptist Church and Highrock North Shore.

Gordon Clark Nyquist (‘81 M.Div.) went to be with the Lord on February 26, 2015. Gordon ran his own business for 25 years while faithfully serving his church as both elder and Bible teacher. As a husband, father, grandfather and friend he was a blessing to many. Gordon passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. He was 60 years old.

Rev. Wayne Porter (‘52 B.Div.) of North Berwick, ME, went to be with the Lord on July 28, 2013. After a near-death experience while in pilot training during WWII, Wayne gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Following the war, he studied at Gordon College of Theology and Missions and then at Gordon Divinity School. In 1952, he moved with his family to North Berwick, where he faithfully served the Lord for 32 years as the beloved pastor of the First Baptist Church.

Rev. Milton Rhodes (‘53 M.Div.) passed away on March 24, 2015. After serving in WWII as a Master Technical Sergeant, Milton returned and graduated from Houghton College. He continued his education at GCTS, and received his ordination with the Primitive Methodist Church. He ministered to congregations in Massachusetts and then to Methodist churches in Western Pennsylvania. During and after his career in the ministry, Milton served as a chaplain at a Veterans Administration hospital in Pennsylvania for several years.

Gerald M. Rowe (attended in 1948) peacefully passed away on June 18, 2014. After his studies at Gordon Divinity School, Gerald served as a pastor in Schenectady, NY, and Middlebury, VT. During his time in Middlebury, Gerald held many committee and officer positions in the Vermont State Baptist Convention, including trustee and president. After retiring in 1985, he continued to serve as an interim and supply preacher in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York and Maine. Gerald was also an accomplished trumpeter and avid runner, known by many as “The Running Reverend.”

Wendy Stauffer (‘87 MAR) went to be with the Lord on July 8, 2014. After graduating from GCTS, Wendy served as a youth minister at Trinity U.C.C., Hanover, PA, and at First U.C.C. in New Knoxville, OH. More recently, Wendy was a homemaker and a substitute teacher at Littlestown (PA) Maple Ave. Middle School. Wendy was a member of the First Church of God, Hanover, and the founder of Ultimate Wellness Ministries.

Susan E. Thompson (‘94 MAFM) went to be with the Lord on February 13, 2015. Susan received her Master of Family Ministry from GCTS. She loved the Lord, her family, photography, traveling and serving the church. Sue was 58 years old when she passed away.

Rev. Matthew Yukon (‘98 M.Div.) went to be with the Lord on January 15, 2015. After attending GCTS, Matthew was ordained as an American Baptist pastor. He served at the Huntington Assembly of God on Long Island before serving for 16 years as the pastor of Northville Baptist Church. Matthew’s wife and partner in ministry for 23 years, Delilah Yukon, also went to be with the Lord on March 23, 2015. Both passed away after courageous battles with cancer.

1960s

Dr. Gordon S. Gross (‘63 BD) recently published Tragedy Transformed: How Job’s Recovery Can Provide Hope for Yours, which looks at how Job deals with tragedy, depression and anger. Through the example of Job, and people today, Gross helps his readers reflect on how biblical faith sustains believers through tragic circumstances.


1970s

Rev. Dr. Vance Drum (‘74 Th.M.) was appointed Director of Chaplains in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in September 2014. In this position, Vance supervises 110 prison chaplains, six regional chaplains and five parole chaplains. The TDCJ is the largest prison system in the United States.

John W. Rain (attended 1974-1975), an attorney for Thompson & Knight LLP, was recently named 2015 Chambers USA “Leaders in Their Field” for his expertise in the Energy: Oil and Gas (Transaction) category.

1980s

Rev. Dr. Edwin Aponte (’82 MATS) was recently appointed the new Executive Director of the Louisville Institute at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Dr. Aponte had previously held the position of Dean and Chief Executive Administrator of Palmer Theological Seminary at Eastern University in St. Davids, PA. Dr. Aponte assumed his new position on July 1, 2015.

Dr. James Ernest (’87 M.Div.) has been named the new Editor in Chief at Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Dr. Ernest has held various roles in the publishing world, including Executive Editor for Baker Academic and Brazos Press. He also worked previously at Hendrickson Publishers as Acquisitions Editor and Associate Editorial Director and at H. W. Wilson Company.

Rev. Vincent Joy (’83 MATS) has taken the position as Hospice Chaplain at Hospice Compassus in Bedford, NH. Vincent is also busy with his new ministry, Finding Real Freedom Ministries, which focuses on preaching the Gospel of Christ in prisons and during evangelistic trips in Kenya.

R. Bruce Stevens (’81 M.Div.) recently published *Admiring and Praising God: Meditations on the Excellencies of God’s Character,* a practical tool to help us praise God with our minds and hearts. Through daily prompts, Stevens helps us reflect on God’s goodness based on our own life experiences.

1990s


Dr. Scott Larson (’88 M.Div., ’97 D.Min.) recently published *Groundwork: Preparing the Soil for God’s Transformation,* a book that uses a combination of research and years of personal experience to equip people in ministry with tools to help others experience God’s transforming work.


Dr. Randy Pelton (’96 D.Min.) recently published *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching.* Dr. Pelton’s book provides preachers with a method for finding the “big idea” in the passage that is faithful to the context and leads to a Christ-centered application.

Rev. Steven Samuel (’95 M.Div.) continues to serve as pastor at Westbury Gospel Tabernacle on Long Island, NY, where he has ministered for more than 18 years. This year the church is celebrating 50 years of ministry, with a celebration scheduled for June 2015. Steven and his wife, Elizabeth, have two teenage daughters, Rebecca and Rachel. They appreciate the prayers of God’s people everywhere for their family and ministry.

Dr. Jay Sklar (’96 M.Div.) recently published *Leviticus: Tyndale Old Testament Commentary,* a book that makes clear what God spoke to the Israelites as well as what He says to us today.

Peter Sprigg (’97 D.Div.), Family Research Council’s Senior Fellow for Policy Studies, appeared on CNN to discuss the recent changes in Indiana’s policies on religious freedom. Peter also recently appeared on Fox News 5 to discuss the transgender policy being considered in Northern Virginia schools.

Rev. Greg Whiteside (’91 MRE) became the pastor of Trinity Fellowship Church, a non-denominational church in Hickory, NC, during the past year. Greg has previously had careers teaching high school math; working on staff with Young Life, which he started in Hickory in 1986; and ministering in another church.

Christian T. Collins Winn (’99 D.Div.) and Roger E. Olson recently published *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition.* Through tracing the development and main themes of the movement, they discuss why there is a vital need to recover classical pietism as a means for Evangelical renewal.

2000s

Dr. Bradley Bitner (’00 MAR) recently published *Paul’s Political Strategy in 1 Corinthians 1-4: Constitution and Covenant.* Bradley examines 1 Corinthians 1-4 amid first-century politics, showing the significance of Corinth’s constitution to the interpretation of Paul’s letter.

Jeanne DeFazio (’04 MAR) recently published *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift* with Teresa Flowers. Gordon-Conwell’s own Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts, Dr. William Spencer, penned the introduction.

Eddy Gilmore (’02 MATH) paints a vivid picture of the life of a child of a hoarder in his recently published memoir, *The Emancipation of a Buried Man.* Gilmore invites his readers to join him on a quest for knowledge as he describes the experiences, adventures and faith he encounters in life.

Dr. Mark Jennings (’05 MABL) earned his Ph.D. in Ancient Judaism and Christianity from Marquette University in May. Dr. Jennings has taught in the New Testament department at Gordon-Conwell since 2011, and in August he will begin his new position as Head of School at South Shore Christian Academy in Weymouth, MA.

Dr. Robert MacEwen (’00 M.Div.) recently published *Matthean Posteriority: An Exploration of Matthew’s Use of Mark and Luke as a Solution to the Synoptic Problem,* a book that explores the Matthean Posteriority Hypothesis. Dr. MacEwen is currently Professor of Biblical Studies at the East Asia School of Theology in Singapore.

Dr. Eliseo Nogueras (’01 MAUM, ’08 M.Div., ’15 D.Min.) was appointed Joint Force Headquarters Chaplain for the Rhode Island National Guard (state Chaplain) and holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He has been pastor at Casa de Oracion Getremani (Gesemani Church) for 33 years and completed his D.Min. in Public Ministry of the Hispanic Church at Gordon-Conwell in May 2015.

Dr. Charles Tieszen (’05 M.Div., ’06 Th.M.) recently published *A Textual History of Christian-Muslim Relations: Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries.*

Elisabeth Elliot Gren, well-known missionary, author and speaker who also served as an Adjunct Professor at Gordon-Conwell, died June 15, at the age of 88.

Elisabeth was born to missionary parents in Belgium, grew up near Philadelphia and in New Jersey, then enrolled at Wheaton College. There she met her future husband, Jim Elliot, who like Elisabeth was called to missions. Following graduation, she attended Wycliffe Bible Translators’ Summer Institute of Linguistics in Norman, OK, and Prairie Bible Institute in Canada to prepare for international missions.

In 1952, Elisabeth and Jim left independently for Ecuador as mission workers. Elisabeth served in the western jungle with the Colorado Indians, and Jim ministered in the eastern jungle with the Quichua tribe. The two were married in Quito in 1953, and together began translating the New Testament into the Quichua language, under the auspices of Christian Missions in Many Lands. In 1955, their daughter, Valerie, was born.

Valerie was only 10 months old when her father, Jim, was speared to death by Aucas Indians, along with fellow missionaries Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Ed McCully and Peter Fleming. Elisabeth later returned to Ecuador with her young daughter to minister among several tribes, including the same Indians who had killed her husband. Many of them were converted to Christianity. She also worked with Nate Saint’s sister, Rachel, helping translate the Bible for the tribe she served.

In 1969, Elisabeth married Gordon-Conwell Professor Addison Leitch, who died in 1973. In 1974, she became an Adjunct Professor at Gordon-Conwell, and for several years taught the popular course “Christian Expression.” In 1977, she married Lars Gren, a Gordon-Conwell student who had left his career to be trained as a hospital chaplain.

Elisabeth and Lars later worked and traveled together and were active supporters of the seminary. They were married for 36 years.

Over her lifetime, Elisabeth wrote 20 books, including several about Jim’s death and her experiences in South America. Her best-known book, _Through Gates of Splendor_, made Christianity Today’s Top 50 Books that have shaped evangelicals. The book also became a bestseller, as did _Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot_. Her books have been credited with helping shape the modern understanding of missions.

From 1988 through 2001, Elisabeth also had her own daily radio program, _Gateway to Joy_. Devoted listeners will recall with fondness her words that opened each broadcast: “You are loved with an everlasting love. That’s what the Bible says. And underneath are the everlasting arms. This is your friend, Elisabeth Elliot.”

Senior Professor of Ministry Dr. Kenneth L. Swetland notes that “many students will remember her with fondness and thanksgiving to God for her teaching and for her courageous stand on numerous issues.”

Her memorial service took place June 23, 2015, at Gordon College in Wenham, MA, and a reception was held at Gordon-Conwell’s South Hamilton campus.
These are tough times to be in ministry. I hear this from Doctor of Ministry students as they share about their struggles to make disciples in congregations that have higher expectations than ever amid a broader culture that has a lower than ever estimation of religious professionals.

Our first response is to redouble our efforts, deluding ourselves into thinking, “If I just work harder, smarter, longer…, I can still lick this!” Of course, the main result is that we eventually find ourselves licked—weary, exhausted, discouraged and despairing. When we can’t fix it where we are, we turn to an equally fruitless response: escape.

We ask ourselves, “Where is our refuge?” Sometimes we delude ourselves into thinking that the solution is a different congregation, or some other sort of ministry. Our question isn’t all wrong—just the interrogative. It’s not “Where is our refuge?” but “Who is our refuge?” Respite comes in a person, not a place.

Psalm 46 helps us get the question right and provides the only answer that will sustain us in ministry: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (v. 1, NIV). To make sure we don’t go back to running ourselves into the ground or running away, the Psalmist throws in a repeated refrain that elaborates on the opening affirmation: “The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (vv. 7, 11). The Hebrew highlights how God’s presence is both intimidating to enemies (sabaoth—“Almighty” in the sense of Yahweh as the Commander-in-Chief of Heaven’s armies), and intimate for ourselves (immanu—“with us”), the same opening phrase used in prophecies of Jesus, who is Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

We even have a hint of how to access this place of divine defense and relational restoration in a repeated, untranslatable Hebrew word that follows verses 7 and 11, and first appears at the end of verse 3: selah. The best guess about its meaning is that it was some kind of musical notation used to guide the temple singers, perhaps like a rest note. The effect is to punctuate the psalm by calling us to pause and pay special attention, particularly when our lives seem to be filled with falling mountains, roaring waters and warring nations.

Psalm 46:10a captures this selah spirit: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Let these words seep down to the depths of your weary soul by repeating them slowly and asking the Lord to make them a deeper reality in your life and ministry. Shorten the text with each repetition and linger upon each line before going on to the next:

“Be still, and know that I am God....
“Be still, and know that I am...
“Be still, and know...
“Be still...
“Be...

For it is only out of this still place of knowing and being known that we can rest in full assurance of the fulfillment of our ministries: “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (v. 10b).

Dr. David Currie (M.Div. 1984) is director of the seminary’s Doctor of Ministry Program and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology. An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), he has nurtured Christian leaders in ministry roles ranging from discipling college students and faculty as a staff member and instructor for the Coalition for Christian Outreach to pastoring several churches in the U.S. and abroad. Dr. Currie has also been involved in cultural and ministry activities relating to China.
We are all a part of God’s story. Listen to the personal stories of Marcus, Josh, Elizabeth and others and witness how God is moving in the lives of Gordon-Conwell students, faculty and alumni.

www.gordonconwell.edu/mystory