

from the president's desk

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

When they called me as president, the Seminary's Board of Trustees was clear that they wanted me to institute changes. I understood what that entailed, and, to some extent, what it would cost. Let me be clear first that change does not reflect ill on the past. In a well-run and stable institution, change is generational. A colleague put it beautifully: change is a process of realignment, not a matter of rejecting what went before. It is in that spirit that we are together involved in a process of self-discovery and realignment. The process embraces our curriculum, our organization, our way of communicating.

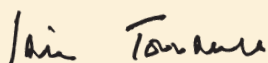
Any process of intentional change should begin with serious consideration of who we are. First, we are very blessed. That strikes me more and more each day. We are blessed with astonishing resources, and remarkable, creative people in the faculty, the staff, the trustees, and the students. We are, as my colleague and friend Darrell Guder would put it, "a missional school." Whatever changes we encourage will be centered in that conviction. And who we are cannot be separated from what we do. Any dislocation between being and acting would mean that something was out of alignment.

This clarifies our vision and challenges us. Together my colleagues and I believe that our vision is constantly to be alive to the calling of Jesus Christ today, maintaining integrity with our past while listening and reaching out to a changing church and world. In pursuit of this vision, we are a hybrid institution, one that embodies both unrivalled research and pedagogy, and also leadership formation for and service to the church. Our vision is to be a community of hospitality and dynamism, learning and transformation.

This issue of *inSpire* celebrates just such a vision. Please join me in taking pride in the recognition granted Kathie Sakenfeld in her nomination as president of the Society of Biblical Literature, and in Ross Wagner's appointment to an Alexander von Humboldt Scholarship to study at the University of Goettingen. Please enjoy Clift Black's topical engagement with Johnny Cash. Please take note of the courage and witness of Beth Pyles's presence in Iraq, and of the way Chip Dobbs-Allsopp's class in Bible felt so engaged with the world outside the classroom that they traveled to Mississippi to work in hurricane relief.

These undertakings and conversations, in none of which I am directly involved, are at the very heart of our identity. We are developing a strategic plan. Outward-looking activities and discussions such as these are and will be the characteristic marks of our identity. And that is the spirit in which I want our community to approach the upcoming General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Birmingham. As church, we are encouraged to respond and work in an outward-looking and reconciling way, even, and especially, in a divisive world.

Yours sincerely,



Iain R. Torrance

Photo: Jon Roemer

