

from the president's desk

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

As we near the end of the 2002–2003 academic year, our nation is at war, occasioning controversy at home and abroad. It should come as no surprise that the Seminary campus is embroiled in that discussion that generates both heat and light.

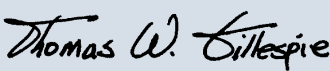
Chapel sermons have focused on the conflict, teach-ins have been held on “just war” theory and its implications for the present situation, prayer vigils have been held, and forums for debate have been arranged. Typically, the varied views and perspectives pretty much reflect those of our society at large.

Perhaps what is unique to this and other theological schools is the conscious effort on all sides to discern the best public policy in the light of our shared faith in Jesus Christ and the God we know and trust through him. That touches us all at the deepest and most sensitive nerve in our lives. Thus, emotions run high and occasionally tempers flare.

It is encouraging to note, however, that the members of the campus community have demonstrated considerable maturity and exercised evident goodwill in their efforts to come to terms with an issue of national, international, and theological impact. Nonetheless, those who think of seminaries as ivory towers far removed from the real world reveal the fact that they have never attended one.

Princeton Seminary, once again and still, stands in the Reformed theological tradition, which mandates that faith engages, both intellectually and practically, the world that God loves and for which Christ died.

Faithfully yours,


Thomas W. Gillespie



Pray for Peace

I read in *inSpire* [winter 2003] that some of your students went on a peace march, and thought you might be interested in the peace poem I wrote and put to music.

*Please pray for peace. Please pray for peace.
Pray that all acts of war will cease.
Pray that love will enter each heart,
and hate and evil will depart.
Pray that all will have food to eat,
and a safe place for all to sleep.
Let's give others a helping hand.
Let's reach out across this great land.
Let's be a friend to those in need,
and every day let's sow a seed.
And when our acts of kindness grow,
Peace will abound. This I know.
Please pray for peace.
Pray that the violence will cease.*

*Mrs. Edna Mae Dambeck
Ewing, New Jersey*

Grateful for Holiday Tradition

I was glad to receive the latest edition of *inSpire*, and noted with sadness the passing of Bob Jacks. I have great regard and respect for the Office of Speech Communication in Ministry, from which I received tremendous support and help with my own communication skills.

I also noted the caption on page 8 about the highlight of the Seminary year, namely the worship service celebrating Christ's birth. Are you aware of how that tradition started?

It started when I was president of the junior class and a member of the Princeton Seminary Touring Choir. The choir was under the leadership of Dr. David Hugh Jones in those days. As a member of the choir and president of the junior class (1970), I was surprised to learn that PTS did not do anything for Christmas before the students left for the holidays. I worked with Dr. Jones to see if he would have the then-all-male choir sing, asked Dr. Macleod to set a date for a worship service, and then invited Dr. James I. McCord to speak at what I hoped would become an annual event.

It gives me delight that this annual celebration still enhances the calendar of events at the Seminary.

*Thomas L. Duncan ('72B)
St. Clair Shores, Michigan*

In Defense of Military Chaplains

Editor's Note: We have received a number of responses to Bruce Cameron's letter, "Protesting Military Chaplains" [winter 2003, page 3]. The responses below have been excerpted from them. Readers will note that in the summer/fall 2002 issue of inSpire we published several letters written in appreciation of the military chaplaincy. We believe that one of the strengths of Princeton Seminary is the diversity of views on issues its larger community cares deeply about. While we do not plan to print additional letters about this feature, we do remember and pray for the chaplains among our graduates who have been called to service with our nation's military at war in Iraq.

Does Bruce Cameron feel that there are certain categories of people from whom the preaching of the gospel is to be excluded? I would think that the gospel of grace and forgiveness would be especially pertinent to our military personnel.

"A minister in uniform is blasphemous," he states. Are ministers in poverty-stricken areas endorsing poverty? Are hospital chaplains endorsing the medical profession or perhaps sickness and disease?

Most chaplains I knew did a good deal of missionary work in the countries they visited. Many others make tremendous sacrifices. My Catholic assistant, Lt. Vincent Capidanno, was killed in action in Vietnam. Others are separated from their families for months in service to their Lord.

*John A. Baxter ('54B)
Lexington, Virginia*

In my 46 years serving the church, it certainly has been Mr. Cameron's voice and the voices of those who agree with him that have been reflected in the statements/positions of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Given a chance, the denomination would have ended all endorsement of, and communication with, its military chaplains. Having served as an army reserve chaplain, I resent Mr. Cameron's audacity and obvious ignorance of the role of military chaplains.

Let Mr. Cameron continue to work for peace and let there be great blessings upon his work as we join him in daily prayers for peace and justice. But I disagree if he thinks that anyone who supports the military chaplaincy favors killing the innocents.

*Don A. Wright ('57B)
Pocatello, Idaho*

I am a United States Navy chaplain and an ordained Presbyterian minister, currently serving a marine unit in Okinawa. I read Bruce Cameron's letter with interest, both given my vocation and the fact that we are both children of the '60s.

My experience with Princeton Seminary spans many years, and I found the spring 2002 *inSpire* article about military chaplains quite rare, and rarer still in the warm light with which it showed the history of Princeton seminarians stepping up to the plate for national service.

Especially intriguing to me is Mr. Cameron's declaration that a minister in uniform is "blasphemous." The chaplain corps of the navy numbers fewer than one thousand individuals, but there are untold numbers of lay ministers—Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others—who work with chaplains every day to care for the young men, women, and families who serve our nation. His indictment includes not simply the ordained, but all believers who have chosen to set aside particular freedoms and put faith in the constitutional process of our country before taking up arms in what we pray will be a just defense of the United States and her interests. War and the violence surrounding war is sin, and we each have a role in doing what we can to end the injustice that accompanies such political and societal evil.

Perhaps it would help if Mr. Cameron saw military people in the way that chaplains have the opportunity of seeing them. They are human beings who often put their lives at risk, surrender personal liberties and privileges, and sacrifice families and self for a greater ideal. The real evil would be to stay silent and ignore these children of God, who deserve so much better. The men and women of faith who serve in the military, and the chaplains who serve this far-flung community, ask only that they be given the privilege of sitting among the body of Christ.

*Philip D. King ('97B)
Okinawa, Japan*

I read with "horror" Bruce Cameron's letter [in the winter 2003 *inSpire*] about military chaplains.

My 87-year-old father is a World War II veteran who survived the Pearl Harbor attack. He has spoken often of the vital role of our chaplains in service to the military. They minister sacrificially to our soldiers, who risk danger beyond imagination. Chaplains minister to people "where they are," just like Christ did.

What a wonderful nation we live in. Mr. Cameron can express his views freely, knowing that his freedom is secure through our constitution and our armed forces.

*Ian C. MacDonald ('85B)
Atlanta, Georgia*

I am a third-year seminarian at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, who also happens to be a retired marine corps lieutenant colonel with 20 years active duty, and I am against the war on Iraq.

Mr. Cameron seems to reason that because our elected officials in Washington decide to use military force as a means of diplomacy, those young men and women who go to fight, bleed, and die should not have access to clergy in what could be one of their greatest times of need.

Since I believe the women and men who serve in our armed forces deserve access to pastoral care when they need it, just like the rest of us, and since I don't think many of the "alumni/ae of PTS who have worked for peace and justice causes from the time they were in seminary" will be in the trouble spots of the world like Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Balkans, or maybe even back in Iraq, it seems to me the military needs to take chaplains with them wherever they go.

*David Penman
Stafford, Virginia*

Ministry Not a Military Career

I particularly enjoyed the winter 2003 issue of *inSpire*, for a couple of different reasons. The article on the Confession of 1967 was informative. In fact, I've referred to C-67 specifically and quoted from it in a handout to my adult education group. We discussed how the Scriptures are not like watching a videotape, but are historically and culturally conditioned.

I was also pleasantly surprised by Bruce Cameron's letter concerning the inappropriateness of military chaplaincy. I thought I was the only person on the planet with such a viewpoint. Certainly, military personnel need and deserve spiritual care from a pastor, no less than do civilians in the "standard" range of congregations. What I object to as unethical is ordination to the military, taking commissions as officers, and assigned rank. The vocation then becomes a military career, ipso facto.

What are the possible alternatives? Couldn't civilian chaplains serve military personnel? The answer is: only because the government won't allow it. Our willingness as Christians to be dictated to in this way is the perfect example of just how completely the church has been domesticated and co-opted by the status quo, and how it has lost its prophetic vision and voice.

*Jack Moriarty ('92M)
Ellicottville, NY*