

## from the president's desk



Photo: Jon Roemer

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This semester, now ending, has brought a lot of travel. Not long ago, I returned from Lebanon, where I cochaired a session of the International Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with His Eminence Metropolitan Panteleimon of Tyroloe and Serention as my Orthodox opposite number. Metropolitan Panteleimon has become a trusted friend. He is abbot of Moni Vlatadon, the monastery that marks the traditional place where St. Paul preached to the Thessalonians. The subject of our dialogue was the catholicity and mission of the church. Delegations from the Orthodox church and the world-wide Reformed churches engaged in open and respectful

conversation about our perspectives on faith and the world we all live in.

We share the world with so very many people in many traditions, cultures, and nations. As those who teach and study at a theological seminary, we know that people of faith around the world are our cherished conversation partners. *These conversations are vital*, be they between the world's religions, between different parts of the Christian family, or even between those who disagree within the Presbyterian denomination. What matters is that, even in face of apparent difficulty, such conversations continue to be held, friendships are maintained, and trust is preserved. I recently joined with the other nine presidents of the PCUSA seminaries to implore individuals to read carefully and reflect on the Report of the Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. I want to encourage anything I can to hold our church together and to lead us beyond mutual recrimination or denunciation.

This fall we were delighted to invite members of a neighboring Muslim faith community to our campus, where we shared prayer, food, and conversation with them as they broke the Ramadan fast. In February, I am pleased that Yasir Ibrahim, a specialist in Islamic reforms who also teaches part time here at PTS, and David Wolf Silverman, a resident scholar at The Jewish Center of Princeton, New Jersey, will join me in leading a continuing education seminar on how our three faith traditions understand peacemaking and warfare and their effect on today's world.

In reading in *inSpire* of some of your experiences and involvement in interfaith dialogue and in talking with you in meetings around the country, I know that Princeton Seminary, through you, has a great deal to offer in these important conversations. We also have much to learn about others and about the God who calls us to ministry.

The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ does not change. But our ways of expressing it so that others in a twenty-first-century world might hear, and might experience the love that Christ incarnates, may change. I encourage all of us to choose and learn from conversation partners who will help us experience the glory and compassion of God as these partners, in their own hearts and minds, experience that glory and compassion.

Yours sincerely,

*Iain Torrance*  
Iain R. Torrance



### Inspiring Connections

Thank you for the interesting and informative issues of *inSpire* that you prepare and send to me. Along with the interesting articles and pictures, I'm glad to keep up with classmates through Class Notes. There was a classmate mentioned recently who was my good friend in seminary, but we'd lost touch. I was able to restore our acquaintance through *inSpire*.

Thank you very much for your wonderful service to us.

*Stuart D. Robertson, ('80M)*  
*West Lafayette, Indiana*

### Accessibility Still an Issue

I have just read the latest edition [winter/spring 2005] of *inSpire* and think it is the best one yet. From cover to cover I found inspiration as well as good sermon material.

I was particularly interested in "The Heart of the Matter," as my last nursing job before seminary was at a rehabilitation center. During my time at PTS there were a few students with physical disabilities. One woman in her middle year had to use a wheelchair. Her comment at graduation was that the Seminary did help, but only after she made a particular request. It is sad that twenty-one years later, the situation hasn't changed much.

*Barbara Price (Patton) Rolph ('84B)*  
*Chino Hills, California*

### Bowling with Bells On

"Bells are Ringing" (winter/spring 2005) says, "The bronze bell...replaces the bell originally installed in the cupola of Alexander Hall in 1828, which was silenced several years ago by a crack." This sentence is contradicted by the photograph of the bell, which shows that the original bell was destroyed by a fire. The inscription notes that the new bell replaces the second bell, cast in 1913 (or 1915—the photo is not clear).

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I was once told that pieces of the original bell were melted down and cast into small replicas, which were sold to raise money for the new (ca. 1913) bell. The Benham Club owned one of those replicas, which was rung by the chief of Benham at the start of meals.

One piece of the original bell escaped melting. The end of the bell clapper, nearly round except for a stub of the broken shaft, appeared in Alexander Hall each spring for a tension-relieving bowling party during final exams. The bowling pins were water-filled glass bottles; the heavy bronze clapper rumbled down the then-wooden floor and shattered the bottles into a most ungodly mess.

One year in the mid-'40s a highly respected member of the Warfield Club appeared with the clapper and announced the bowling party. In a later year, I learned that the clapper had been passed to a Benham man, who kept it hidden in the false bottom of a large chair, along with his wine bottle (presumably safely separated). I have no idea how long the custom continued.

*Robert F. Scott ('48M)  
Hockessin, Delaware*

**Politics Left and Right**

In the winter/spring 2005 issue of *inSpire*, one letter-writer quoted John Donne incorrectly. He wrote, "No one is an island in and of itself. Every person is a piece of the continent..." The real quote is, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent." Must historical correctness always take a back seat to political correctness?

There was also an article in that same issue titled "Reflections in Red and Blue." While I support some of the author's ideas, such as his insistence not to buy into the anti-Christian hatred of the political Left, I disagree with his analysis of national politics. He says that his moral values support his political ideas. My moral values are almost

the exact opposite, and they support my political ideas. Of course you tend to hear only the politics of the political Left in an academic setting. I am quite sure that is the case at Princeton Seminary; that was true even when I was a student there. But I would remind the Left that there is another way of thinking.

*John Noah ('68B, '69M)  
Green River, Wyoming*

"Reflections in Red and Blue" (winter/spring 2005), while full of youthful passion, was inappropriate without another article offering other points of view. The editor(s) failed the



reader in this respect given that war and faith are such volatile topics in American conversations. The author's passion unfortunately overshadowed a clear articulation of a position that shows nuance, maturity, and depth.

*Case Thorp ('00B)  
Orlando, Florida*

**Please write—we love to hear from you!**

We welcome correspondence from our readers. Letters should be addressed to: Editor, *inSpire*, Office of Communications/Publications, Princeton Theological Seminary P.O. Box 821, Princeton, NJ 08542-0803 email: inspire@ptsem.edu Letters may be edited for length or clarity, and should include the writer's name, address, and telephone number.

**Hurricane Grief and Relief**

Thank you for reminding folks about the damages the hurricanes have caused in Florida ("A One-Two-Three Punch," winter/spring 2005). Charley, Jeanne, and Frances had a large impact on tropical Florida but Hurricane Ivan was at the time named the fourth worst natural disaster in U.S. history, and the impact on the Pensacola area was substantial.

Statistics cannot express what we have witnessed. It reminded me of 9/11. Although the tragedies were very different, it looked as if a bomb had been dropped—several bombs. People were in shock. Some had lost their homes entirely. You couldn't get gasoline anywhere. The Rev. Nan Adams at Navarre Presbyterian Church said that she was helping a church member clean up after the storm and they found a three-foot fish inside the baby grand piano.

But there were blessings in the midst of it all. Rebuild Northwest Florida (founded by Presbyterians) issued a roofing blitz campaign, and mission teams worked to restore the interior of homes through the "adopt a family" program ([www.rebuildnorthwestflorida.com](http://www.rebuildnorthwestflorida.com)). United Ministries has helped 2,000 families with more than \$200,000 ([www.united-ministries.com](http://www.united-ministries.com)) and continues to care for those in crisis situations. The Presbytery of Florida commissioned a hurricane response team to organize mission teams and disburse relief funds. To date, Pensacola-area PCUSA churches have housed 578 mission workers from all over the country. The Presbytery of Florida Hurricane Response Administrative Commission (PHRAC) has provided monetary aid to those in need, and worked with

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Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to provide a Disaster Response and Preparedness Seminar attended by representatives from five presbyteries and the synod executive.

We are deeply grateful for all those who have reached out with prayer, service, and love.

P.S. I was thrilled to see the article about the Matheny School and their art program ("The Heart of the Matter," winter/spring 2005). I served as a chaplain there and found it deeply meaningful.

*Karen Wamstecker ('02B)  
Pensacola, Florida*

I am a 1955 alumnus and have undertaken lecture tours over the years to the states. Currently I am a minister of the United Reform Church in England and work as a professor with the Open University. We here were appalled by the tragedy of New Orleans and extend our deepest sympathy to the relatives of those who lost loved ones. Hopefully by the time of your next issue matters will have improved for that beautiful part of your county.

I thought the response of the alumni/ae was very compassionate and understanding. I was particularly interested in those letters that mentioned how God allowed such happenings to occur since I have just written a book titled *Is God a Scientist?* (Palgrave) which seeks to probe this problem. There is no ultimate answer, but it would appear that the corruption that entered into mankind involved nature, and it will also figure in the final redemption.

*Robert Crawford ('55B)  
Goring by the Sea, Worthing,  
West Sussex, England*

**Editors' Note:**

*Our prayers are with all those in Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi who suffered during the hurricanes last year, and more recently during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, as well as Hurricane Stan in Guatemala and the disastrous earthquake in Pakistan. If you are interested in contributing to relief efforts, please consider a gift to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance ([www.pcusa.org/pda](http://www.pcusa.org/pda)). Teams of Seminary students and staff will have the opportunity to work with PDA in areas affected by the hurricanes this January, to aid in clean-up work, and in September to help with reconstruction. Planning for the trips is in progress.*

**Cassock Question**

What is the significance of the red cassocks worn by Dr. John Cairns and Dr. Iain Torrance in the photos that were taken at the inauguration and installation service ("PTS in Photos," winter/spring 2005)? I have seen other Church of Scotland ministers who wore similar vesture, but in those cases, the cassocks were blue. I also wondered whether the open black over-gowns which they were wearing are British

academic/doctoral robes or simply open-sleeve Geneva preaching gowns.

(By the way, your office produces the best alumni/ae magazine in the country!)

*Ken Mott ('79B)  
Canyon, Texas*

**Dr. Torrance's reply:**

Many thanks for your message. The red cassocks: they are scarlet, and are worn by members of the Chapel Royal (i.e. The Queen's chaplains). Scarlet is the color of the royal household. The cassocks are a personal gift from the Queen, after she has appointed one a chaplain. Both John Cairns and I are chaplains to the Queen.

The open gowns: British academic and preaching gowns are open. In a British master's degree gown or doctor's undress gown, you put your arm through the sleeve (the sleeve hangs down). In a bachelor's degree gown, the arm is inside the sleeve.

At my installation, John Cairns wore the scarlet cassock and on top wore the tasseled gown of a moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I have one of those gowns (actually my father's), but left it in Edinburgh. I wore on top of the scarlet cassock the black (undress) gown of an Oxford D.Phil.

