



Western



**Collaboration
and Competition
in Ministry**

**Celebrating a 20-
Year Partnership
with Arcade Church**

**Lynn Ruark Retires
After 35 Years of
Student Service**

Letter from the President



What Does it Mean to Work Together Well?

Welcome to the third issue of Western Magazine. You may have noticed that each issue focuses on a theme that we believe is especially important. In our first issue, it was Gospel-centered transformation and in issue #2, global mission. We draw these themes from either key components of our “Toward a Classic Strategy for Evangelical Renewal” document or our institutional core values.

This particular issue features two of our core values. One, strategic collaboration, is explored more prominently; the other, resourceful stewardship, is more in the background. But, as you will see, the two are very much inter-related since one of the most effective ways to achieve resourceful stewardship is by pursuing strategic collaboration.

Because of our commitment to stewardship, we have included in this magazine our fiscal year-end fund appeal. Please read that letter for more details about this cost-saving (but hopefully not response-reducing!) experiment.

Both collaboration and stewardship are means to an end, not ends in themselves. So as you read about various examples of how Western is taking a proactive role in developing ministry partnerships – both corporately as a school and individually through our faculty, staff, students and alumni – please remember that the end for which we aim is the God-honoring, Gospel-empowered transformation of human lives. To that end, I think you’ll be encouraged by what you read.

This issue also features updates from each of our campuses including a special anniversary in Sacramento and the “comings and goings” of some Western team members (e.g., introducing Charmaine Williams and honoring the retirements of Lynn Ruark and John Branner).

Finally, Greg Moon and Bonnie Ekholm share some ways in which you can partner with Western that don’t involve writing a check.

We pray that you will find this issue both enjoyable and edifying.

Your co-laborer in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randal Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Randal Roberts

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Western Seminary strives to serve as a catalyst and resource for spiritual transformation by providing, with and for the church, advanced training for strategic ministry roles.

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P.S. If you didn't receive a copy of our new quarterly electronic newsletter this past March, that likely means that we don't have a current email address for you. The e-newsletter complements this magazine by featuring personal profiles, reports on recent and upcoming events, and the like that fit better in a more-frequent publication than this twice-yearly magazine. Distributing the newsletter electronically not only saves us a lot of money in production and mailing costs, but also allows us to include “hot links” so you are just one click away from more information. If you missed the March edition, it is archived online at <http://www.westernseminary.edu/News/Publications/index.html>; if you'd like to receive future issues, please share your email address with us on the same web page.

Table of Contents



4 **Collaboration and Competition in Ministry: A Personal Perspective**

President Randy Roberts offers a candid consideration of the gains and challenges associated with partnership and why Western is committed to working with others, even when it's difficult.

11 **Sacramento Campus Celebrating a 20-Year Partnership with Arcade Church**

During the past two decades, God has built a lasting partnership between Western Seminary and Arcade Church and transformed a small teaching site into a thriving campus. Hear from three of the men who have led our Sacramento team.

12 **San Jose Campus Meet our Newest Advancement Team Member, Charmaine Williams**

We're excited to welcome San Jose coaching student Charmaine Williams to the advancement team. Get to know Charmaine in her own words as she discusses her investment in God's kingdom, her relationship with her husband, and their passion for mentoring young couples.

13 **Portland Campus Seven Years and Six Hundred Students Later...**

Walking across the graduation stage, Dr. John Branner never imagined that he'd return to Western Seminary as a faculty member. With a lifetime of living overseas and significant leadership experience, Dr. Branner has been uniquely equipped to teach students who, like him, come with a love for the world and a desire to serve God cross-culturally.

14 **A Promising Partnership**

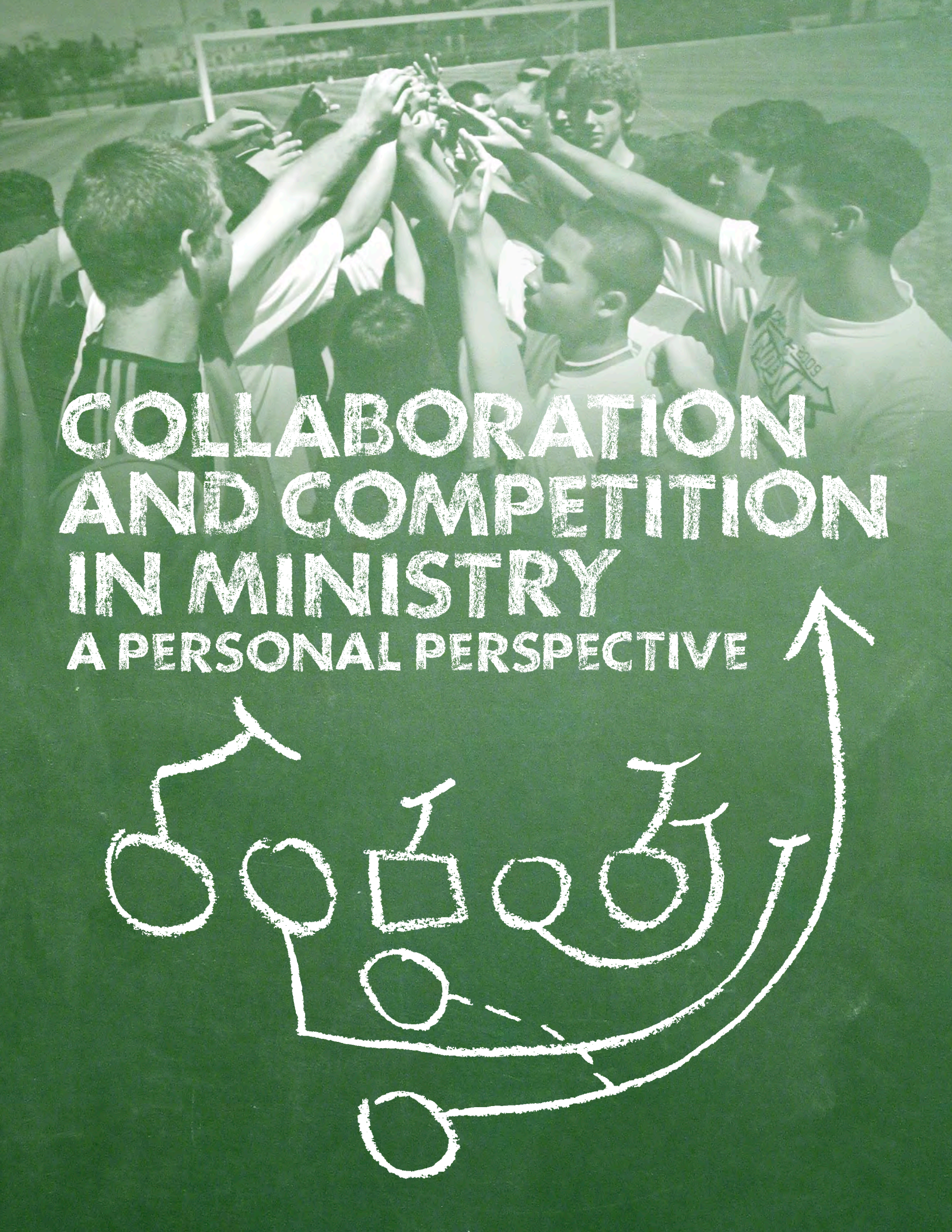
Dr. Jeff Louie discusses his role in facilitating a growing collaboration between Western Seminary and The Gospel Coalition.

17 **In Appreciation of 35 Years of Student Service**

Lynn Ruark invested his career at Western Seminary, serving as both financial aid director and dean of students. As he prepares to retire this summer, we invited him to reflect on his years in Student Services.

19 **Time, Talents and Treasures: Three Principles for Wise Stewardship**

Vice President of Advancement Greg Moon invites us to consider creative means for investing in the work of Western Seminary.



COLLABORATION AND COMPETITION IN MINISTRY

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE



By Randal Roberts

I've been thinking a great deal recently about the nature and value of partnerships. One reason is that collaboration has become a "front burner" topic for students of organizational effectiveness. James Austin of the Harvard Business School writes, "The twenty-first century will be the age of alliances. In this age, collaboration between nonprofit organizations and corporations will grow in strategic importance.. We are living in a time where no organization can survive on its own."

Austin's assertion is a bold one. While the future of any Christian ministry is dependent upon God's providence, the fact that we see many congregations and parachurch ministries struggle – and some close – reminds us that God's promise of guaranteed existence is only given to the Church as a whole.

The tension between cooperation and competition takes on additional significance in light of the current landscape of Christian higher education. For example, there are now six evangelical seminaries within 45 minutes of our Portland campus. While I normally try to maintain what Stephen Covey calls an “abundance mentality” (i.e., there’s plenty of work for everyone, so don’t become too preoccupied or troubled by “competitors” in your field), there are times when I wonder if this region can really support that many schools. If it can’t, then those schools might face challenging times ahead.

One key component is a shared vision of ministry impact that can best be reached together rather than separately. Ministries that are targeting a similar need, and whose missional impact could be enhanced in breadth and/or depth by greater cooperation with another group, are great candidates for collaboration.

Part of me is instinctively inclined to defending Western against competitors. But another part of me—and I believe the more sanctified part—is drawn to an effort to forge some sort of closer working relationship with these other schools, and with a variety of other ministries that you’ll read about in this magazine.

Why? Because I think that tack is more in synch with the ways and purposes of God. My colleagues agree, which is why Western adopted collaboration as one of our core values.

“Kingdom thinking” can be much easier to talk about than to live out. So in this article I will share some thoughts on ministry cooperation informed by biblical truth, personal experience, and best practices. These remarks are admittedly far from a definitive word on the topic; I am well aware that there are other “takes” that could, and should, be considered along with mine. Nevertheless, I think we have learned some things along the way that may be of help to others who share our commitment to pursuing ministry collaboration more than competition.

My understanding of “partnership” is informed by missiologist Luis Bush’s definition: “an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.” Practical synonyms include cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, joint ventures, and strategic alliances. Furthermore, this association can be either formal or informal.

Why should Christians pursue these collaborative partnerships? Part of the answer is embedded in Bush’s definition. “Sharing complementary strengths and resources” to accomplish a mutually desired goal introduces the notion of synergy. In other words, working together creates a dynamic that makes the partners more effective together than they would be by themselves. In fact, the result is frequently more than just $1 + 1 = 2$; often collaborative efforts feel more like

$1 + 1 = 3$ (authors frequently cite as an illustration the fact that the pulling power of two horses together is much more than just that of one horse doubled).

So, when the scope or challenge of a task exceeds the available resources of any one ministry, the possibility of forming collaborative partnerships should be prayerfully considered. I wonder how often ministries instead merely pray that God would just grant them more resources, not realizing that His expanded provision may come through cooperation. Such an approach also recognizes the scriptural notion of divinely-designed interdependence.

Enhanced ministry impact is just one benefit of Christian collaboration. Another is modeling Christian unity. The importance of unity is a key theme in Scripture (cf. Ps. 133; Jn. 17; etc.), for the demonstration of loving and mutually supportive community provides a credible and compelling context for our proclamation of the biblical gospel that both redeems and reconciles. It is much easier to practice the spirit of Rom. 12:15 when we remember that we are all ultimately on the same team! Whenever a spirit of competition—even “friendly” competition—blinds us to this, it is far too easy instead to rejoice when other ministries weep and to weep when they rejoice. So here is an opportunity to honor in practice the unity that ultimately bonds together genuine followers of Christ.

Partnerships that begin with a limited number of well-defined, realistic and meaningful objectives, combined with a clear understanding of what each party will contribute to the pursuit of those objectives, provide an optimal entry point for a relationship that can grow as trust deepens and success fuels enthusiasm for expansion.

A third benefit of collaboration relates to stewardship. Duplication of effort typically produces increased costs and less-than-optimal deployment of resources. Why? Because each ministry must cover the full operating expenses of maintaining its own infrastructure, meaning that economy of scale savings are forfeited. That in turn frequently exacerbates the financial vulnerability of each ministry, leading to increasingly desperate appeals to donors and foundations for “bail out” gifts.

Related attempts to “increase market share” (whether driven by institutional ego, financial need, or both) generate additional temptations. For example, we might commit ethical compromises in how we talk about similar ministries to potential customers. Or we might cut corners by way of quality controls to enhance the “curb appeal” of our ministry (I wonder how much curricular change in seminaries is driven more by this quest for

ORGANIZATIONS

Given our desire to train practitioners for real-world ministry, we partner with a number of parachurch organizations. This allows us to provide strategic training for their staff without asking them to leave the field in order to pursue an advanced degree. We have facilitated distance education courses for Campus Crusade for Christ staff serving in Australia. We have offered a special summer track of In-Ministry courses for Jews for Jesus staff from Brazil, Israel, England, South Africa, and New York. We provide grants for staff members of Young Life, WorldVenture, Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL, Campus Crusade for Christ, and The Navigators.

We have also collaborated with camp and conference ministry center Mount Hermon in the mountains of Santa Cruz, California. Mount Hermon staff and interns have the opportunity to register for Western classes at reduced cost, and can earn a master of arts degree with a specialization in camp and conference ministry.

"We are delighted to embark on this partnership to create a unique educational path for men and women who are called to Christian camp and conference ministry. This powerful ministry vocation warrants the same intentional preparation as other specialty areas. Those who seek to be capable program directors, eagerly embracing creation, recreation, and the intense focus of a temporary community to move people deeper into the love and grace of Christ, will benefit from seizing this opportunity."

Roger Williams, Executive Director
Mount Hermon Christian Camps and
Conference Center

CHURCHES

We also partner with other para-church organizations and churches to share office and classroom space. Our Sacramento campus has been hosted by Arcade Church for twenty years. In Portland, we donate office space to prayer organization International Renewal Ministries, and invite director Dennis Fuqua to teach our students about prayer in our spiritual disciplines class. Trinity Church meets in the Portland chapel on Sunday mornings, and rents office space for their staff.

SCHOOLS

We have also partnered with a number of Christian educational institutions. For some, this means that their students are invited to register for courses at Western without a separate application process. For others, this means that we will allow graduates of training programs to apply for advanced standing in our basic Bible and theology curriculum. With one undergraduate institution, we have developed a plan whereby students can reduce their combined bachelors and Master of Divinity program by up to one full year.

Phoenix Seminary
Multnomah University
Corban University
Warner Pacific University
George Fox University
Re:Train

We also work in conjunction with Perspectives on the World Christian Movement to offer class members the opportunity to earn seminary credit for their participation in the course. Perspectives students register with Western and earn three credits for the price of one, while also completing an extensive study of missions history and researching an unreached people group.

“optimal market positioning” rather than by the desire for ongoing pedagogical improvement, and what impact that might have on the quality of future Christian ministry leaders).

So if ministry collaboration helps us to live out even more effectively certain biblical values and aspirations, what are the building blocks that need to be in place as we seek to develop these partnerships?

One key component is a shared vision for ministry impact that can best be reached together rather than separately. Ministries that are targeting a similar need, and whose missional impact could be enhanced in breadth and/or depth by greater cooperation with another group, are great candidates for collaboration. A full merger of operations isn't necessary. This side of heaven, our incomplete sanctification will inevitably result in a diversity of denominations, local churches, and parachurch ministries, and God even appears to use that diversity to accomplish His purposes. I am suggesting, however, that diversity can become dysfunctional when it leads to duplicated efforts that appear to reflect greater concern for the building of individual ministry empires than the building of God's Kingdom, or when it tempts us to succumb to carnal attitudes and actions that run contrary to the biblical value of evangelical unity. As one scholar observed, “Western individualism multiplies organizations as a carcinoma multiplies cells—and with not altogether dissimilar pathological effect upon the Christian body.”

Much of this proliferation and duplication comes from an unrestrained, and often unjustified, “we can do it better” mentality. Shouldn't we instead ask what we are well-positioned to tackle that isn't already being done well enough by brothers and sisters in Christ?

A shared vision for ministry also implies that there is a reasonable concurrence in theological beliefs, core values, and methodological practices. This doesn't mean that everyone involved has to agree on everything, but rather that there is sufficient agreement on the most important things needed to sustain a joint effort. The term “co-belligerent” has been coined to describe parties whose world views are very divergent, but which overlap in one area of shared concern (even if for different reasons). For example, evangelicals may share with radical feminists an opposition to pornography, or with New Age pantheists a concern for ecology. But that overlap is not extensive enough to support much by the way of collaborative efforts. Evangelicals, however, can agree to disagree with each other on secondary matters of faith and practice and still work together fruitfully because we share so much else in common.

Bush also notes that a partnership involves a willingness to share one's resources with another. Greed, selfishness, and similar expressions of our fallen nature can easily undermine cooperative efforts, particularly whenever money is involved (e.g., shared revenue and costs). Perceptions of “fair share” can vary widely and should be carefully

WESTERN GRAD'S PARTNERSHIP HELPS MOBILIZE THOUSANDS IN DETROIT

Partnerships can be powerful tools for mobilizing a great number of people around a common cause. This April, approximately 28,000 Christians from more than 500 Detroit churches participated in the Detroit Prayer Walk sponsored by Everyone A Chance to Hear (EACH). EACH was established by Detroit-area pastors with a vision for seeing God at work in one of the most economically-challenged American cities. Western Seminary graduate Bob Shirock (M.Div., 1983 and D.Min., 1986) serves on the EACH executive team and steering committee.

“This is all about showing the love of Jesus through both our prayers and our actions,” Shirock shared in an article featured in Outreach Magazine.com. “There is great need in our area. We hope that this kind of outpouring will make many people more curious about the love of Christ through thousands of different prayerful acts of personal and community service.”

EACH is a collaboration among a growing number of evangelical churches in the region. Their mission?

“Working together as a body of believers, we will give everyone in the Metropolitan Detroit area a chance to take the next step in their journey toward Jesus.”

EACH member churches are working with local social service agencies and Christian ministries to provide training and ministry opportunities to people in the greater Detroit area. In addition to this spring's prayer walk, EACH members are working to establish two mobile medical and dental units to serve their community, provide thousands of meals each day in partnership with Detroit Rescue Mission and the Forgotten Harvest food organization; sponsor periodic “resource fairs” offering practical help for human service needs through local organizations; and continue to meet regularly for prayer.

For more information on their creative partnership approach, visit eachtoday.com.

WESTERN PARTNERS WITH OTHER SCHOOLS TO SPONSOR CONFERENCE



BEV HISLOP

signs and materials for two other Christian schools from the area as well. In April, anyone who attended the Faith and Culture Writers Conference saw just that. With close to 220 people in attendance, the Faith and Culture Writers Conference was sponsored by Western Seminary, Corban University and Multnomah University.

Dr. Beverly Hislop, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care to Women at Western Seminary, leads the Women's Center for Ministry which has organized many speaking and writing conferences through the years. Past writing conferences sponsored by the Women's Center for Ministry overlapped in content with what was already available in the Northwest. The Faith and Culture Writers Conference "was an effort to do something different," shared Hislop. "Our goal was not just to be different for the sake of being different; rather, it was an effort to meet a need that was not being met by writing conferences in this area."

With that in mind, the conference team began to look for two keynote speakers. "Randy (Roberts) was the

Walking into the chapel lobby on Western Seminary's Portland campus, one might have been surprised to not only see Western's recruitment materials displayed, but

one who suggested partnering with other schools for the conference. As we were looking around, it became clear that faculty from Corban University and Multnomah University would be well-suited to address the topics at hand," Hislop remarked.

When asked what was gained through collaboration, Hislop does not hesitate. "The pool of expertise that we drew input from was larger. It really enhanced the conference and multiplied the potential and reality of what we wanted to create. There were more voices, which made feedback broader and pushed us out of our normal box. The diversity was incredible on a lot of levels."

The diversity that Hislop speaks to cannot be ignored; over 114 churches and 17 different schools were represented by conference attendees. "It's phenomenal! Four states as well as Canada were represented," exclaimed Hislop.

As in any partnership, there were snags along the way. "Each time we had to remind ourselves of why were doing this; to bring honor and glory to God. We never wanted to leave dead bodies along the way just to hold the best event possible," shared Hislop.

In the end, collaboration among the team proved to be a worthy experiment. In Hislop's words, "We all benefited exponentially because of the collaboration. Everyone on the team was an expert in their field. I loved the expanse of ideas from members who know the writing world better than me."

articulated up front lest they cause problems later. At the same time, not every partnership is going to provide the same return on investment. Some Western partnerships even cost us a bit financially, but we remain committed to them because we feel they are the right thing to do. God's blessing isn't always accurately tallied on an Excel spreadsheet.

As in any partnership, mutual trust is the glue that helps both to form it and to hold it together. If either party is suspicious of the motives of the other (normally exhibited by a feeling of being used by the other), serious problems are on the horizon that should be discussed candidly and constructively. Once lost, trust can be very difficult to regain (how many times does someone who lied to you have to tell the truth before you will again consider them to be trustworthy?).

Similarly, trust tends to develop incrementally as people show themselves to be trustworthy. Because of this, effective partnerships often start small and then expand in scope as that enhanced mutual trust strengthens the foundation upon which it is built. Patience is needed, and pushing a partnership too fast or too hard can easily become counterproductive.

By the same token, as imperfect people we will make mistakes. Hence, the biblical virtues of forbearance, forgiveness, and giving the benefit of the doubt (along with other expressions of godly love found in I Cor. 13) will also be valuable in forming and maintaining healthy partnerships.

Partnerships that begin with a limited number of well-defined, realistic and meaningful objectives, combined with a clear under-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

From the Desk of the President

Dear Friends of Western,

Experiments, by their very nature, always teach you something. At the very least, you find out if something works or not. If it does, you've made major progress towards your goal. If it doesn't work, at least now you know that (which itself is still a form of progress).

This letter is an experiment. And I'll be very interested to see if it "works," because something important is at stake.

What makes this letter an experiment? Because we are including it in this magazine rather than following conventional fund-raising advice and sending it to you separately.

And why are we doing that? Because it saves us over \$4000. And it also saves you another fund appeal in your mail box.

And what's at stake? To a significant extent, whether or not we finish this fiscal year in the black.

Even with the expenses incurred last fall in relocating our San Jose campus, along with the ongoing effects of the recession, I am pleasantly surprised that we still have a halfway decent chance of finishing this academic year without a deficit. That's important for schools like Western, because when you start running deficits, you also start spending time writing reports to accreditors that we would much rather spend training Gospel-centered ministry leaders.

Having a balanced budget at fiscal year-end is also an important indication that we are being wise stewards, neither over (or under!) extending ourselves in seeking to be faithful to the mission God has entrusted to us. So we pay close attention to that indicator when we're making future plans, and it significantly influences whether we keep moving forward or pull back a bit.

I trust that both this cost-savings experiment, along with the efficiencies that come from the collaboration efforts described in this magazine, illustrate our ongoing commitment to faithful stewardship of all the gifts given to us.

But the Parable of the Talents teaches us that faithful stewardship involves more than just saving money; it means using resources in a thoughtful way to maximize their benefit.

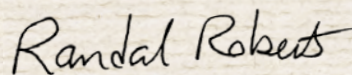
That's why I hope that, after reading this magazine, you have a renewed sense of how much good is being produced by your investments in Western. As you've seen, our ministry impact is expanded through our collaboration with many other God-honoring ministries so your dollars go even further in training the kind of leaders the church needs for today and tomorrow. So, in one sense, this entire magazine comprises a form of appeal for your support; my role in this letter is just to do the formal ask.

So we'll see how this experiment turns out. I'm hoping—and praying—that communicating with you this way will indeed be seen as thoughtful stewardship, not as being cheap. And, furthermore, that you'll also be encouraged by how much our partnering with others multiplies the number of lives being transformed by the biblical gospel.

Of course, I could be wrong.

But if so, I still would have learned something.

Your brother in Christ,



Randal Roberts
President

* If you would like to contribute toward our fiscal year-end expenses, you may do so by clicking on the button "Make a Gift to Western" at this link: <http://www.westernseminary.edu/Donors/PDX/makeagift.htm>

Celebrating a Twenty-Year Partnership with Arcade Church

This year, our Western Seminary Sacramento campus celebrates a twenty year anniversary. We've come a long way from our early days and are grateful to the men and women who have served in Sacramento during the past two decades as teaching faculty and staff.

Three men in particular have made significant contributions, serving as site director (in chronological order): Dr. Jon Venema, Dr. Tom Tunnichliff, and Dr. Dave Fredrickson. We asked each of them to tell us about their experience with Western, and how they saw God at work during their tenure.

When the Sacramento site first opened in 1994, Venema was at the helm. "At that time, we basically had a trailer that we used for our administrative offices on the property of Arcade Church," he remembered. As a teaching site, Western Seminary Sacramento afforded people the opportunity to take a limited number of classes toward a degree that could be completed in either San Jose or Portland.

Venema collaborated with staff at Arcade to develop a mutually-beneficial partnership; one that has lasted 20 years. Western allowed church staff to take classes in exchange for rented space, and also invited Arcade pastors to help teach key courses. Together, Western and Arcade built a library and expanded classroom space.

"As students enrolled that gave us more of a presence with the church, with the community, and we kind of mutually grew together," Venema said. The collaboration proved to be not only a practical way to meet needs, but relationally and spiritually significant as well.

As a former pastor, Venema had a natural desire to connect with other pastors throughout Northern California, and spent a significant amount of his time traveling and connecting with ministry professionals. When Tom Tunnichliff took over as site director, he continued to develop partnerships with new churches and strengthen the relationship with Arcade Church.

"We continued to build strong partnerships with vibrant churches in the area that were sending us their youth pastors, associate pastors, even senior pastors," Tunnichliff said. "We had a lot of dynamic pastors that used to come as adjunct faculty and students always raved about getting their biblical and theological studies from guys who are preaching and leading church each week. It was a huge time of building trusting relationships between the church and the seminary."

As more students enrolled, more space was needed. Arcade Church generously offered more office space for the Sacramento teaching site. Western's staff felt that the Lord was in this opportunity; which was confirmed when an anonymous donor provided \$10,000 for the expansion. Another donated office furniture.

"It really felt like a new start up venture," Tunnichliff continued. "We didn't have the capital from a Silicon Valley venture capital firm, but the Lord provided." As Western staff saw God's hand at work, they dreamed of the day when the site would be given full approval as



another campus location, accredited to award full degree programs. Both Venema and Tunnichliff laid the foundation for the accreditation process that would later be successfully completed under current site director Dave Fredrickson's leadership.


The other two things that stand out to me are God's faithfulness and the importance of being adaptable. We've more than doubled in size since the time I've been here, in terms of enrollment. The number of classes we've offered has at least quadrupled.

— Dave Fredrickson, Site Director

Fredrickson had been working as a local pastor in the Sacramento area and his wife Kim was teaching as an adjunct faculty member at Western. Tunnichliff originally asked Fredrickson to teach at the Sacramento site, and he later accepted the job of site director and academic coordinator.

"The two things that stand out to me are God's faithfulness and the importance of being adaptable," he said. "We've more than doubled in size since the time I've been here, in terms of enrollment. The number of classes we've offered has at least quadrupled."

"The other big challenge that involved God's faithfulness was going from zero degree programs on campus to four degree programs on campus in a span of six years. Every year to two years we were getting approved for a new degree," he said. Earning the approval from accrediting bodies was a labor-intensive process.

As staff and faculty consider the future, they are grateful for a 20-year partnership with Arcade church that continues today, as well as the stories of how God is using Western Seminary to shape men and women for kingdom impact. Looking back, they see how God's faithfulness to overcome obstacles and provide resources to meet a growing student demand testifies to His care of ministry leaders in Sacramento and beyond. 

Meet our Newest Advancement Team Member, Charmaine Williams



Charmaine Williams (left) joined our advancement team this spring, working from the San Jose campus. She also spends her time studying coaching at Western, raising four daughters, and leading a vibrant marriage ministry with her husband Pat. In her own words, Charmaine tells us about her heart for biblical stewardship and passion for helping Christian couples enjoy successful relationships.

VERY EARLY IN LIFE I realized that when God blesses us with any talent, any money, anything we can do – it is because He has something for us to do. That’s how I really envision the advancement world – an opportunity to advance the kingdom. In the end He is honored and glorified, whether it be through a student who is helped by a scholarship, or a person advised by a volunteer mentor, or a talent that I can help another church or organization develop. I’m serving the Lord as I meet the needs of others.

I met my husband at Santa Clara University. He was a believer at the time and really strong in the Lord. He was one of the reasons I really started to look at my faith more strongly than I had. It has been a wonderful journey ever since then. We got married in 1990 and just celebrated 20 years of marriage. Our oldest two twin daughters are turning 18 in June, the next daughter turned 16 this past March, and the youngest is seven.

When Pat and I were interested in getting married, we had to go through quite a few classes. As part of our pre-marital counseling, we answered 100 questions on a Scantron. For the next three months we would go over these questions. It was such an eye opener. As much as we loved the Lord and loved each other, there were still areas where we were struggling with where we were coming from. We asked, “You answered ‘a’ and I answered ‘c;’ what was that about?”

We were married at 23 and 25. Two to three years in, our friends were divorcing and that’s really sad. By that time I had started going to a Baptist church with my husband. We asked church leadership if we could we set something up for married couples. The pastor gave us his blessing and allowed us to do that.

The class is called marriage fundamentals. We teach 15 weeks twice a year. We take couples down the road of understanding themselves, understanding each other, and understanding the Lord more fully.

It’s neat because we serve not only our church, but also many other churches in the Bay Area. If couples understand marriage, then they will make the right choice: whether it’s to go ahead, or wait and grow a little more, or to see red flags and discern that this relationship isn’t what God is calling them to. In every class there are couples who break up, couples that wait, and couples that go on and get married.

At the end of the day, I feel that if you will give your life over to the Lord and allow Him to direct your path, you can’t go wrong. Even through the challenging times – and we’ve had our fair share – God has been with us. I would encourage everyone that God is with you in the good times, He’s with you in the down times, and you can count on Him. With no regrets. God has fulfilled abundantly more than I could have ever done or imagined. 📖

Seven Years and Six Hundred Students Later...

In August 2004, Dr. John Branner set foot on the same Western Seminary campus from which he had graduated thirty-eight years prior. Now, seven years later, Dr. Branner will retire from his full-time role as associate professor of intercultural studies.

When asked if teaching was ever in the plan, Branner replies with an emphatic, “No!” The plan, he explained, was always the same: to serve the Lord on the mission field all of his days.

Having spent two decades in Taiwan, it was upon his return from the mission field in 1990 that Branner received some of the best advice. “I was looking for work and a friend told me that I should not consider any kind of church ministry. My last twenty years had been solely comprised of overseas service. The North American church was too far removed from what I remembered it being and what I had participated in.”

Instead, Branner found himself working in another cross-cultural setting in a school in Arizona before assuming the position of Asia Ministries Director for CBI International (now known as WorldVenture).

“While I didn’t know it at the time, this job was key to helping me in the classroom at Western. Having worked cross-culturally only in a Chinese context, this director role exposed me to other world religions and how missions work is being done elsewhere. I was responsible for one hundred and seventy-five missionaries in seventeen countries all over Asia,” Branner reflected.

Everyone should care! Even if you’re not open to overseas service, you will face this issue at some point. Immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia and Latin America are continuing to move into our neighborhoods. Local churches need to know how to bridge the cultural divide.

Traveling ten weeks each year, Branner’s exposure to cross-cultural ministry expanded tremendously as he watched the world change. “I remember the anticipation of my first trip to London and my plan to eat real fish and chips. Instead I only saw two other Anglos in my time there and had to wait until I was in Bombay before eating fish and chips. The world was changing.”

Branner shared that currently in world missions, “You’re more likely to be working under national leadership, which is different



from a generation ago. It’s not as much pioneer work anymore and the Church in the Southern Hemisphere is more vibrant than the Church in the Northern Hemisphere.”

When Branner’s early retirement from CBI was announced, he was interested in assuming a role as a missions pastor, but God had other plans.

Today, more than six hundred students have sat in classes taught by Dr. Branner. Many students share his passion for intercultural studies and aspire to work in a cross-cultural setting.

With students coming from a rich diversity of backgrounds, it is not surprising that Branner’s favorite part of being in the classroom is the interaction that takes place. “I’m not a classic lecturer and we do lots of case studies in class that generate good discussion. Case studies come from all over, but each one is true,” explained Branner.

What should a primarily Latino congregation do when they find out some of their congregants are residing in the United States illegally? How should a church respond when the worship leader claims to be transgender? “I love getting students to think through new things and interact with each other over issues that each of them could face in a lifetime of ministry,” shares Branner.

As they look to retirement, he and his wife, Kathy, anticipate becoming more involved in their local church and FOCUS, a ministry to international students. “Traveling to China will continue to be on the agenda, too. By the end of 2012 all nine of our grandkids will be living there, either full or part-time.”

With much passion and a lifetime of cross-cultural experiences under his belt, Branner answered quickly when asked the question, “Why should people care about intercultural studies?”

“Everyone should care! Even if you’re not open to overseas service, you will face this issue at some point. Immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia and Latin America are continuing to move into our neighborhoods. Local churches need to know how to bridge the cultural divide. Someone crosses cultures when they move from Portland to Eastern Oregon.

“You should care because much of the world still doesn’t know Jesus. The Great Commission calls you to care.” ■





By Dr. Jeff Louie

I sense that many seminaries are losing the value of Christ. While they may impart valuable skills, they can be disconnected from the central aspect of the message of Christ. Homiletics, exegesis, biblical languages or ministry contextualization are fine disciplines, but unless they are founded upon the cornerstone and continually connected to the triumphant Christ through faith, they lose their spiritual power.

There is one extreme where seminaries become places of higher learning alone, and lose their value to the local church and grass roots ministries. There is another extreme where seminaries can trend toward a fluid theological commitment. It becomes “whatever works” as long as it is in the name of Jesus and with an orthodox doctrinal statement hidden somewhere, just in case someone asks.

In light of these trends, Western Seminary has a great opportunity to be radically different, a place where our students learn a biblically sound and clear message of our triumph in Christ, through faith, but also learn what it means to be in real-life ministry. In order to build upon this potential, we have many opportunities to partner with like-minded ministries. These partnerships are not intended to dilute our significance, but rather to expand the reach of our significance beyond our campuses and classrooms.

In light of the Western Seminary’s renewal document, and its change toward “Gospel-centered transformation,” one promising partnership is with The Gospel Coalition. The Gospel Coalition is a movement founded by D.A. Carson and Tim Keller. Its purpose is to reclaim the center of biblical Christianity, with its foundation being the gracious triumphant work of Christ through faith, as it applies to our eternal

FACULTY COLUMN

salvation as well as our spiritual growth in this life. The movement can be described as broadly Reformed, but allowing for differences among its members on topics like ecclesiology and eschatology. It is within this focus of the triumphant Christ through faith, cast within a larger theological broadness, that a partnership with Western Seminary can be found. A wealth of information is provided at The Gospel Coalition's website, as well as sponsoring national conferences.

Through an invitation by Don Carson, I was invited to become a stakeholder in The Gospel Coalition at its inception. During the first two years, the initial group of thirty to forty members worked on two foundational documents: our statement of faith and our vision for ministry. When the documents were unanimously approved the council of stakeholders became united by theology and purpose.

The national conferences can be an asset to the students at Western Seminary, but the great value of this movement relates to regional ministry opportunities. In the Bay Area, we have an active regional branch of The Gospel Coalition. We have developed a series of conferences promoting the Gospel. A conference on June 3 and 4 in San Jose featured D.A. Carson, Mark Driscoll, and Matt Chandler as the speakers. It was held at the Church on the Hill, where a Western Seminary alumnus serves as the executive pastor. Many Western Seminary students from the Bay Area attended the event.

But events in the future could involve an even greater partnership with our seminary, as some Western alumni and students have been approached to develop future conferences and ministries on "Suffering and the Gospel" and "Minorities and the Gospel." These latter conferences could be a great blessing as we deal with practical themes of ministry, but through the focus of the triumphant work of Christ. Imagine a conference on suffering, where all the main speakers have a Western Seminary affiliation, who have all dealt with suffering through tragedy or disease in their own lives, who all speak on ministering to the suffering, but who are all convinced that Christ has procured the ultimate victory through His work and that there is great value in Christ's sustaining grace even if we never have full restoration, or even good health in this life. What a blessing that would be! For a conference on ministering to minorities and the gospel, the San Jose campus of Western Seminary would be a natural fit, as we have a high minority representation in our student body, which includes Latino, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and African American individuals. Too often ethnic ministries are overwhelmed by the cultural values of those ethnicities. But imagine ethnic ministries that put the Gospel of Christ above cultural values!

Besides regional conferences, the partnering of The Gospel Coalition with Western Seminary is also presently seen in the pastoral fellowship that meets at the San Jose campus on the first and third Tuesday of each month. The purpose of this fellowship is to learn how to preach with a gospel centeredness, which is to make Christ the unashamed hero of all our proclamation, as well as the empowerment of our spiritual life application. Often preaching might focus on making us the hero if we work harder for God; or it might have an overly guilty tone chastising us for not being dedicated enough; or it might have a wisdom tone, counseling us to live in this life better if we apply biblical principles. In Gospel-centered preaching, we seek to have the listener live out their faith in practical manners in all areas of life, but this victory is ultimately not in themselves. Rather, it is based upon the victorious Christ. I find that this is in line with the emphasis on Gospel-centered transformation at Western Seminary, where the gospel that saves us is the same gospel that is at the center of our transformation. For example, in a recent meeting we discussed how to preach the book of Exodus. Instead of the usual sermons on "The Leadership Techniques of Moses," "How to Deal with Grumbling People?," or "What Red Sea Do You Need to Cross in Your Life," we focused our discussion on how Christ completed our understanding of Exodus in regards to the Law, leadership, sin, grumbling, and entering the land. We also assessed how Moses, though a great leader, was incomplete and needed the ultimate prophet to come to deliver his people. We came up with about twenty ways to preach Exodus through the triumph of Christ.

Western Seminary has many avenues for partnership. I believe that The Gospel Coalition is a natural one, as we share many core values. It is my prayer that this natural partnership brings glory to Christ our Lord, as we proclaim His triumph at the cross, resurrection, enthronement and return together. ■

In Appreciation of 35 Years of Student Service

Thirty-five years ago, Lynn Ruark came to Western Seminary for a year of education – training he thought would help him transition from his job as a school counselor to working in church ministry back home in Minnesota. Turns out the Lord had other plans. Instead of joining a church staff, Ruark has enjoyed a rich career at Western serving students, faculty and staff with a counselor’s skill and a shepherd’s heart. His work as dean of students and financial aid director established new institutional norms and defined Western’s ethos as a school marked by personal attention and deep care for each student. He has been known as someone who can adeptly use humor to diffuse tension and pain, regarded as a friend to thousands of students and alumni, and affectionately dubbed the staff member with the messiest desk on campus. As he retires this summer, we asked him for some reflections from his years in Student Services.

“I’ve always felt the Lord has a sense of humor,” Ruark teased, explaining that while his temperament naturally leads him to avoid conflict, his role at Western has prompted him to mediate difficult situations. In his roles as dean and financial aid director, Ruark’s work has been largely behind the scenes, providing support to students as they endeavor to graduate. Sometimes this has required frank discussions. Other times, this has meant reaching out to those who have suffered a loss. Occasionally, Ruark has needed to walk with a student through struggles with academic dishonesty, marital infidelity and sexual immorality, divorce, drug abuse or dismissals.

Ruark never aspired to work in higher education, but now sees the hand of God at work throughout his tenure at the seminary. As a first-term student, he accepted a part-time position (as assistant to the dean of students) on Western’s staff. His wife Marcia was working as a nurse, and the seminary job seemed like a good opportunity to help pay for educational expenses. When the school’s administration wanted to start a financial aid program, they looked to Ruark to take the lead. When the dean of students later left his



Lynn Robert Ruark, M.S.
Dean of Student Affairs

Gordon College; B.A., Hamline University; M.A.T., Connecticut College; M.S., St. Cloud State College; Western Conservative Baptist Seminary; Admissions Counselor, Hamline University, 1966-68; public school teacher and counselor, 1969-75; Assistant to the Dean of Student Affairs, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1975-78; Western, 1978-.

Mr. Ruark's years of counseling experience prepared him to meet the needs of students. While here at Western he has shown his caring sensitivity to the personality needs of each individual and has proven in action his skill in meeting those needs.

Lynn Robert Ruark, Dean of Student Affairs

office to become a full-time teaching professor, Ruark was promoted to fill his spot.

“I think the most significant contribution that I’ve made to the seminary has been dealing with problem students and student problems,” he said. Holding students accountable is slow-going work that can take months, even years. “Dealing with those issues doesn’t always turn out right immediately. I’ve had to learn to see my interaction with a student as one step in a long process.”

Registrar Rob Wiggins has served alongside Ruark on the Student Services staff for twenty-five years and speaks of his colleague with great warmth and respect. Wiggins noted Ruark’s various roles and contributions, including twenty years of mentoring the student government members (now Student Ministry Team) and annual leadership of Western’s Hood to Coast relay team.

“Parallel to all of that he’s also been a friend, counselor, and encourager to the faculty,” Wiggins explained. “That’s an unofficial role, but it flows from who he is. Many of the faculty and staff who have gone through hard times have been really ministered to by him.”

How would Lynn like to be remembered by his friends among the Western alumni, faculty and staff?

“In terms of what I’ve contributed to the organization, I hope that people see and appreciate my willingness (and I hope ability) to help people deal with difficult issues in a way that will result in their betterment.”

Wiggins affirms that Ruark’s lasting legacy will be rooted even more deeply in his character than his specific roles or accomplishments. “In any institution, you need to have people who are compassionate, loyal, friendly; people that make an institution warm, caring, and relational. Lynn has been one of those remarkable persons.”

Upon retirement, Lynn looks forward to spending time with Marcia, their four children, six grandchildren, and two great-nephews. **W**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

standing of what each party will contribute to the pursuit of those objectives, provide an optimal entry point for a relationship that can grow as trust deepens and success fuels enthusiasm for expansion. While sometimes fragile, and often energy intensive (especially in the early stages), significant rewards frequently await those who patiently and faithfully persevere together.

In conclusion, not all of our attempted partnerships have borne fruit. But then again, none of the fruit that we have seen would have happened if we hadn't tried. So here are a couple of suggested take-aways for you to consider prayerfully as you too determine your response to this issue of ministry collaboration or competition:

If you are part of a local church or parachurch ministry that faces a "too much opportunity, too little resource" challenge, might that be a cue to explore more seriously closing that resource gap through a partnership with like-minded believers? Perhaps a very small youth group could be merged with the group of another congregation (or multiple congregations) to generate the critical mass that facilitates effective ministry. Similarly, if you are part of a mission initiative seeking to reach a specific people group, might that effort be aided by active cooperation with other evangelicals with a similar burden?

Do you connect your personal giving habits to the benefits that come from partnerships? Many of us lament the thousands (millions?) of dollars given by undiscerning people to ministries that end up being used for private jets, vacation homes, etc. But are we aware that our gifts might inadvertently be enabling a different kind of waste if they are being used to duplicate ministries already being done well by others? To what extent do the ministries you support reflect a partnering commitment that leverages the impact of your gifts? Do you know? Have you asked?

Finally, please remember that partnering is a means to desired ends, not an end in itself. In other words, pursue partnerships not just to collaborate, but when they in fact might contribute significantly to the benefits described above. When we keep that in mind, we will find that collaboration is a wonderful way to express the transforming power of the gospel. ■

Recommended Resources For Ministry Collaboration

Well Connected: Releasing Power, Restoring Hope through Kingdom Partnerships



By Phill Butler (Authentic Media, 2005)
This book serves as the "bible" of Christian ministry partnerships. Extending over 330 pages in length, it offers both the theological basis for collaboration as well as very practical advice on how to partner effectively with others (including some very helpful appendices such as "Our Ministry: Are We Good Partnership Material?"). You'll also want to visit the related web site at <http://www.intlpartnership.org/>

A New Kind of Big: How Churches of Any Size Can Partner to Transform Communities



By Chip Sweney and Kitti Murray (Baker Books, 2011)
Using as a case study Perimeter Church in suburban Atlanta and the 150 church network (known as Unite!) that it put together to minister to that city, Sweney and Murray illustrate that congregations don't have to be large to ignite and/or meaningfully participate in partnership efforts that can dramatically impact their community. Lessons they learned along the way are especially helpful.

One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists



By Chad Brand and David Hankins (B&H Academic, 2006)
While perhaps not the easiest or most exciting read in places, this volume nevertheless is significant in that it tells the story of how cooperation within a denomination (in this case, the Southern Baptist Convention) can increase kingdom impact. Many of us outside the SBC are envious in particular of how the Cooperative Program has made theological education much more affordable for SBC students. One could only pray that other evangelical denominations/associations would share that vision!

Power to the Church: A Strategy for Cooperation and Transformation



By Morris H. Chapman (B&H Books)
Chapman, recently retired as head of the SBC Executive Committee, has been an advocate of ministry partnerships for over four decades; so what he has to say should be worthwhile. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to determine the status and availability of this book. My best guess, after doing some web research, is that it hasn't yet been published; thus, I'm mentioning it here so you can join me in watching for it.

Time, Talents and Treasures: Three Principles for Wise Stewardship



Greg Moon

For many years, local businessman Mel Morasch has visited Western Seminary's Portland campus with an unusual Christmas gift: meat boxes. You see, Morasch and his family have owned a meat processing and packing company for more than 50 years. As a committed Christian, one of the ways that Morasch invests in the kingdom

is by donating 100 boxes of frozen meat to needy seminary students each winter. It's an incredible encouragement and practical help for seminarians who are working hard to provide for families in the midst of graduate study. This year, Morasch Meats expanded their giving to include regular gifts of chicken and beef cuts to our café. This allows us to provide hot, healthy meals for students at incredibly low prices.

Morasch is a beautiful example of partnership and creative giving. Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to witness the transformational nature of a gift, both for the one receiving and for the one giving. Gifts to institutions are often measured on the dollar amount. However, gifts come in different forms. I like to think of gifts in terms of three categories: time, talent, and treasure.

TIME

Would you be willing to volunteer once a month? Once a week? You could help us with projects from home, or volunteer at our campus locations.

Ambassadors Provide New Opportunity to Serve



Bonnie Ekholm

Western Seminary's new team of Ambassadors is ready to be used of God in ways they've never imagined. We know that He can use small and even hidden acts of love and kindness to change lives. This group is ready to tackle projects on a long to-do list at Western, as well as to help people find their God-given niche by serving in

a way that utilizes their skills and passion, in a way that energizes and fulfills them.

Is there something you love to do more than anything else? Then we

TALENTS

Are you willing to talk with us about your professional experience, skills, and hobbies? We would love to see how your talent could be used to address some of our needs.

TREASURES

We often think of donating money to charitable causes, but treasure isn't just limited to cash. Do you have other assets that you would be willing to share?

At the seminary we are always looking for new ways to partner with others, whether they are individuals, churches, foundations or corporations. Some of our current creative partnerships include:

- One donor couple lives close to our San Jose campus, and invites visiting Western staff to stay at their home for free any time we're in town. If you look at the average cost of a hotel room, this adds up in a hurry.
- Another donor spent hours installing wiring and electronics at the new campus location, saving us money that would have been spent in hiring an outside contractor.

The transformational power of collaborations and partnerships is a win-win. If you're interested in talking further, I invite you to contact me at gmoon@westernseminary.edu or (503) 517-1800. I would love to brainstorm with you and see how you can invest your time, talents and treasures in God's work here at Western.

have a place for you to use that skill and passion for the benefit of others. As an Ambassador, you will not just "fill a slot" but will be enabled to serve in a special way, utilizing what God has gifted you to do, and advance the Kingdom of God.

By helping do the tasks that Western would normally pay to have done, you will be making a financial impact, as well as a spiritual impact. When we extend ourselves beyond our own lives and concerns, hearts always change. You have the God-given potential of making a difference in your corner of the world, so what do you have to lose? More importantly, what do you have to offer? To learn more about projects or how you might serve, please email Bonnie Ekholm at bekholm@westernseminary.edu. Someone needs your help today!



WESTERN SEMINARY

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Upcoming Events

The faculty and staff of Western Seminary appreciate your partnership and prayers for these upcoming events. If you would like to join us for any of these activities, please contact Julia Seal at 503.517.1816.

June 20 **Portland Campus Preview Evening**

Are you interested in seminary? Do you know someone who is? Discover how Western Seminary trains men and women to serve effectively in a variety of ministry contexts.

June 26 **San Jose Campus Commencement**

Join us as we celebrate the class of 2011 at Saratoga Federated Church. The commencement ceremony will start at 4:30 pm with a reception to follow.

July 1 – 31 **Open Registration for Fall Semester**

Do you have a degree from Western Seminary? If so, you are eligible to audit one seminary class for free each year. Call your local campus to find out what classes you can choose from with your alumni audit opportunity.

August 13 **Sacramento Campus Commencement**

The class of 2011 will walk across the stage of Arcade Church at 10:30 am. Come hear some student testimonies and join us afterwards for a reception.