warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 49

GRETCHEN E. ZIEGENHALS

Faculty Life and Seminary Culture

It's About Time and Money

It is no great surprise that each year the seminary teams participating in The Lexington Seminar go home to their theological institutions eager to replicate the kind of time they experienced at the Summer Seminar in Northeast Harbor, Maine. Coming off the frenetic pace of seminary life, the teams feel honored by the peaceful seaside setting, the balanced rhythms of morning worship and working sessions, followed by communal afternoon leisure, and the time to process teaching and learning experiences in informal conversation with diverse colleagues. They long to share this kind of time with their faculties at home, and many teams use a portion of the grant money they receive from The Lexington Seminar for a faculty retreat that offers to their colleagues the kind of time experienced in Maine.

In reflecting on what he felt to be the most important aspect of the Seminar, one participant wrote, "Thank you for the hospitality, for the incredible site of this event, for honoring time and space, for thoughtful balance of work and play, which we rarely get to do in our academic life." Another wrote, "The pacing, which presumed and demonstrated that 'down time' contributes to productivity, was significant as a means of helping us begin to reflect differently on the debilitating effects of the relentlessness of our work at home."

As a consultant for The Lexington Seminar, director of The Women's Studies Program at Georgetown College, and the mother of four young chil-

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 50

dren, I understand "the relentlessness of our work" to which the participant above refers, and I sympathize with the feeling of distress that such relentlessness creates. The distress we feel comes, in part, from the many expectations we face and from the guilt we feel when we pause long enough to admit that we cannot do it all. Throughout the meetings of The Lexington Seminar, a recurring lament has been the lack of time and money to accomplish multiple expectations.

As a direct result of increasing financial pressures, seminaries and their faculties are being pressed to take on more responsibilities and complete more tasks within time constraints that do not acknowledge the challenge of the increased duties. In addition, seminaries strain under the load of tense relations with the church; multiple campuses and programs; and students who, because of their diverse cultures, races, denominations, and educational backgrounds, require more time to acclimate and educate.

In an attempt to understand this quandary, the first section of this essay looks at the nature of time and money in seminary culture: How are seminary communities experiencing time? In what ways are seminaries diverging from earlier models? To what extent have diverse student bodies, more expectations of faculty, and increasing financial pressures precipitated this change? The second section examines seminaries' responses and questions: Can we gain more time and money through better time management techniques? What if we simply see the problems in new ways? If we set personal and institutional boundaries and limits, will we lose face, lose students, and lose much-needed revenue? The final section explores the implications of these issues for teaching and learning.

THE NATURE OF TIME IN SEMINARY CULTURE

Becoming a faculty member of a Protestant theological seminary may well be considered hazardous to one's health. Faculty of every denomination complain of being overworked, burned out, stretched to the limits professionally and personally, and unable to handle the multitude of needs that swamp their classrooms, mailboxes, phone-mail, email, and desks each day. While other professionals may experience the same busyness, many seminary faculty feel a sense of holy obligation, a sense of being called and accountable to both the church and the academy, that those in the secular world may not feel. Surrounded by this particular aura of dual obligation, work is never left at the office. The workload of seminary faculty is certainly not all in their heads. Rather, in the last thirty years the nature of that work has radically changed, because of three interrelated factors: a changing student body, increased expec-

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 51

tations of faculty members, and financial shortfalls for institutions of theological learning.

DIVERSIFIED STUDENT BODIES

During 1998–99, the first year of The Lexington Seminar, each of the five schools in the program was wrestling with the practical implications of increasingly diverse student bodies on their institution's teaching and learning. The narratives reflected those concerns: Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (1999)[1] described the need to find "a more effective and a more efficient delivery system" to serve a student body with a changing student profile and an increasingly complex community ethos. Calvin Theological Seminary (1999) sought to redefine a classical, Reformed theological curriculum to provide more effective professional training for contemporary pastors, having received a letter from four alumni who complained that the seminary was out of step with contemporary needs. Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (1999) presented the challenges of educating the varied constituencies they serve, including second-career commuters, Ph.D.-bound students, those committed to urban ministry, women, gay and lesbian students, and students of color. Regent College (1999) understood the difficulties of grading well all the various types of degree and non-degree students in their programs as a lens for larger issues of diversity, and Virginia Theological Seminary (1999) focused their narrative on the international students who are so vital to the mission of the campus but whose unique needs require an enormous amount of time and energy from faculty, staff, and administration.

As they describe the challenges precipitated by their diverse student bodies, these five schools are not alone. Rather, they reflect a broader trend that has affected theological student bodies across the United States and Canada. Almost 45 percent of M.Div. students are thirty-five years old or older (Briggs 2002a, 8). Nearly half the students at seminaries and theological schools are married, and 38 percent are women (Preheim 2002, 30). Seminary students also reflect a rich array of cultures, races, sexual preferences, religious backgrounds, and preparation levels. Each year of The Lexington Seminar, participating seminaries have shared both the opportunities and the conundrums presented by an increasingly diverse student body. Dormitories, schedules, programs, and curriculum that were designed for young, single, white males are now stretching and twisting to accommodate diverse students.

ONE SIZE NO LONGER FITS ALL

Seminary students now arrive in a rainbow of diversity. Many are older adults who bring with them families and the accompanying issues of spousal needs,

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 52

housing, and childcare. Christine, a single mother in the narrative of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, complains to her advisor, "I think I bit off more than I can chew. I tried to take three courses this quarter, and the many papers, teaching parish duties, and the kids' illnesses have really driven me crazy" (1999).

Seminarians now also have a wider range of religious training and backgrounds. Students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2002) represent sixty-five different denominations. Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (2000) focused its narrative on how to "teach the tradition and form students in it when students are at such diverse places with respect to the tradition." The students in the narrative converse about why they do or do not need to take the required course "Mission and Peace," given their varied backgrounds of Mennonite, Methodist, Anglican, and others.

Seminarians arrive with varying levels of proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English and with various cultural assumptions. At the end of the semester, the character Professor Jones, in Church Divinity School of the Pacific's narrative (2001), is visited in her office by a Japanese student who wants to ask "one small thing": "Could you just tell me what is exegesis?" "I'm not sure what you mean," Professor Jones responds in great surprise. "This whole course has been about exegesis. Part of every chapter has been about using the Greek tools for exegesis. Have you had an introductory scripture course at your school?" "Yes, New Testament," Kiyo replies, "but I didn't agree with professor. I believe it not right to criticize Bible." Multicultural backgrounds that enrich a campus community can also lead to insult and misunderstanding and require time for faculty and students to develop mutual, effective, cross-cultural dialogue.

Students bring outside work to seminary. Fifty years ago, a seminary student might work at a campus job to help support his or her educational costs. Now 40 percent work ten to twenty hours per week while going to seminary, while another 20 percent work more than twenty hours. And 10 percent commute to school more than an hour one way (Preheim 2002, 30). Many students are already involved in parish ministry. One faculty member from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School's narrative (2002) reviewed the church-related reasons that students were missing her class:

> "I can't be in class Monday," one student had e-mailed. "There's been a death in my parish, and the funeral is at 11:00 that day." An older man from a distant Episcopal parish had apologized for missing a lab session, having been unable to get excused from teaching the weekly confirmation class. Another had been so obsessed with pulling off a successful Bible conference at his church that he had completely forgotten the evening class session, until reminded (too late) by his wife. Another, after class, had begged off from the next week's session because of a revival at his church. Finally, a

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 53

woman student had pleaded her impending absence due to an unavoidable parish mediation session between her and her recalcitrant board.

The professor mourns, "What am I going to do with these postmodern seminarians? It's hard to argue the live demands of the very ministry in which we want them to excel."

Ralph W. Klein, former dean of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, reflected on the new student diversity and noted wryly in one of The Lexington Seminar's meetings that there were no more Lutherans coming over on boats. In the Lutheran School's narrative (1999), Klein's character remarks: "Thirty-one years ago when I started teaching, all the students were 21, white, male, fresh out of church college. They knew more Hebrew and Greek than the average student today does. I think they read more and wrote better. . . . There were no commuters, no 50-year-olds, no women, almost no part-time students. Teaching today is a lot more exciting—and a lot more work."

WANTED: FACULTY WHO CAN WALK ON WATER

Because of the increased diversity among students, faculty spend more time playing more roles to serve more needs. Barbara, a faculty voice in the narrative of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, describes their search for a teacher of Christian Education who will also run the D.Min. program. She jokes, "We want someone who can walk on water, play the guitar, work 60 hours a week, keep up with publishing, and start at a salary in the low 40s." Her statement is not far from the truth. Faculty are expected to stay current with their guilds, publish, teach, serve on multiple committees, lead worship, be multilingual, provide online courses, deliver PowerPoint lectures, be available to students for counseling and formation, grade effectively, tutor, support students through the transitions and crises of seminary life, and keep the scattered community from falling to pieces. At the end of the week, faculty are asking, "How can I offer attention to God and to other people in the midst of days that seem to be shredded into little fragments of time that I cannot control?" (Bass 2000, xii).

Seminary administrators are not immune to the new complications of seminary life. In addition to the duties listed above, one dean described to me the layers of paperwork on his desk produced by more procedural, legal, and state-mandated issues. A president of an urban seminary told me that his school had experienced three attempted suicides in one year.

"What is the procedure for handling that?" I asked.

"We're learning it as we go," he replied.

International students require an enormous amount of time from seminary administrators, even as they bring depth and breadth to the seminary. The

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 54

appendix to Virginia Theological Seminary's narrative (1999) outlined only some of the administrative duties involved in hosting international students, who make up 6 percent of the student body: "Hospitality to these strangers is no light matter. It is expensive in money. Sorting through the tangles of immigration, visa, taxation, family support, church support, community life, spiritual growth, and physical and emotional wellness call for a good deal of staff and faculty time and creativity."

The diversity of needs, interests, and preparation levels among students have created new markets, precipitating the rise of branch campuses for individual seminaries, leaving administrators juggling the demands of many campuses. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary is a multidenominational school of 1,650 students. Its campus in South Hamilton, Massachusetts hosts mostly younger students, mostly bound for pastoral ministry. The Charlotte, North Carolina branch serves mostly older, commuter students who have had much more experience in the church. The Boston branch is the Center for Urban Ministerial Education, serving a Hispanic population. Administrators and faculty at the different campuses spend time keeping the lines of communication open in part through video-conferencing. And all the while they strive to maintain a coherent vision while considering distinct needs.

Another time-consuming and complicating factor in the lives of seminary faculty and administrators is the phenomenon of housing other seminaries on one's campus. The Claremont School of Theology campus hosts other theological institutions, including the Disciples Seminary Foundation, The Episcopal Theological School at Claremont, and San Francisco Theological Seminary/Southern California. These institutions use the facilities of the Claremont School of Theology, including classrooms, office space, chapel, and library. Claremont School of Theology also has a branch campus in Tempe, Arizona, where it offers an M.Div. degree. Faculty who teach on the Claremont campus also teach courses in Arizona.

TIME IS MONEY

In addition to evolving student populations and increased expectations of faculty, the third factor that has so altered the nature of time in seminary culture is the financial picture that permeates and burdens institutions of theological learning. Seminaries are receiving less money from the church. Twenty-five years ago, 60 to 80 percent of a seminary's finances came from its sponsoring churches. The Reverend Dennis Anderson reports in his study of schools in four mainline denominations that that amount has shrunk to between 2 and 25 percent in denominations that offer any support at all (Briggs 2002b, 6).

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 55

Not only do mainline churches, with their own membership woes, have less money to give, but they have become increasingly estranged from seminaries. Many no longer believe that seminary graduates have "the practical education needed for sustaining and broadening today's parish ministry" (Briggs 2002b, 6). Some churches have begun to establish their own in-house training programs for ministry.

In addition, many churches no longer have the same respect for the theological endeavors of seminary education. Claremont's narrative describes the predicament of young "Wes," who, in preaching class, is exposed to many perspectives other than his own. Over Christmas break, Wes goes home to preach in the pulpit of the church that raised the money for his scholarship and preaches a sermon that stuns his United Methodist congregation. The pastor calls the associate dean at Claremont School of Theology in a huff.

"What do you think you are doing over there at that school?" he demands.

The best response that seminaries can give is to work more closely with churches so that both institutions can rebuild trust and re-engage in common mission.

Receiving less funding from the church, seminaries are relying more on tuition and endowments to sustain their work, and on extension programs that seek out new markets. Still, Anderson's findings show, "faculties are paid far too little and each year the president must scramble to cover a budget gap that averages about 25 percent of the whole" (Briggs 2002b, 7). Grants also sustain and enrich seminary work, but grants take time. Writing and implementing them along the guidelines provided, attending related conferences, processing results with faculty and staff, and remaining accountable to both the seminary and the granting institution add a load of time pressure undreamt of in earlier decades. Faculty often need assurance that a grant is vital to a previously articulated vision, not simply one more thing to do.

Financial shortfalls have a profound impact on faculty time as well. Modestly paid faculty whose schools do not offer faculty housing often cannot afford to live near campus or must live closer to a spouse's higher-paying job. Faculty who commute for an hour or more have little time for community-building activities such as corporate worship, a rally, or a chapel-choir concert. In addition, cultural expectations about the economic and social situations of families have changed. Increasing consumer demands (in addition to other factors, of course) often place both partners in the workplace. When both partners are employed outside the home, there are new implications for the institution regarding faculty time and availability.

Faculty teaching has also born the impact of a tighter budget. Admission standards at many schools have relaxed as financial needs drive schools to

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 56

open their gates ever wider. While many deserving students benefit from this trend, faculty are teaching more students who are less prepared for the academic rigors of theological education. Faculty spend more time explaining and tutoring, and redesigning courses, curriculum, and pedagogy to fit the needs of more remedial learners. In addition, most faculty have higher course loads or more students in each course because schools cannot afford to hire more faculty. Otherwise, schools solve the problem by replacing full-time faculty with squads of adjuncts.

At Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Interim Dean Elouise Renich Frazer listed what she called "a roll-call of losses," the number of faculty who, in the past two years, had either resigned or endured personal disaster and loss. Because of financial crisis, Eastern Baptist was unable to replace them, leaving existing faculty in an almost impossible situation. Their lack of time was a direct result of the school's lack of money. She explained how this financial crisis has brought them closer together, despite their exhaustion. "We have had to make individual and institutional adjustments," Frazer says, "to accommodate the exhaustion of our colleagues. Yet even when two are down, the others assume a huge burden. They are committed to this, body and soul." But the pressures can be tremendous. Frazer herself took a two-month medical leave (because of exhaustion) in the midst of what faculty called "fire, flood, and the sky falling in." Frazer describes the situation as having taught faculty a life discipline. "We learned that we must live within our means," she says. "We discovered that we have more than enough. It was as if God plunked us down in Eden and said, 'You can have anything you see except that money tree.'"

Ironically, the new part-time commuting students whom seminaries expect to constitute a significant source of revenue are the students who end up taking the most time because they do not match a one-size-fits-all mold or may not mirror the school's founding mission. General Theological Seminary, the oldest seminary of the Episcopal Church, was founded in 1817 and has been a New York landmark since 1826. It has a long history of residential students and residential faculty. Steeped in tradition, the seminary offers twenty-one services a week; the bells ring for chapel three times each day. The community studies, lives, and worships together. Five years ago the school was completely residential. Thus the school still feels monastic, more influenced by Oxford than by the city that surrounds it, and the campus architecture focuses the community inward, not outward, explains Bruce Mullin, sub-dean for academic affairs (Ziegenhals 2002, 1).

Associate Professor of Old Testament Judith H. Newman also spoke of the many legacies embodied in General Theological Seminary. In her closing remarks at the June 2002 Seminar, she described the elaborate rituals at chapel and the ornate architecture, and she noted the days in the not-so-distant past

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 57

when all faculty were male and ordained, and students wore Oxford-like gowns to class. But the school stands at the threshold of significant changes, she added, some of which are elaborated in General Theological Seminary's narrative (2002).

Entitled "Clashing Perceptions of an Institution," it is a tale of two students (one full-time residential, one part-time commuter) and their insights into their experiences of General Theological Seminary. What the full-timer, Theresa, cherishes is precisely what alienates the part-timer, Ward.

Ward's frustrations are about how "unwelcoming" the institution is for newcomers. He has trouble finding his way around the campus, he never knows what the daily schedule is, where to find his professors, or where to sit in chapel. Part-timers do not receive communications from the seminary, they do not have mailboxes, and they are not on the community email.

Theresa is exasperated with students like Ward. She argues: "That student just doesn't get it. This institution is built on formation. The process starts the very first day. My classmates have been together for every major class for almost three years. We have become a community. We have been arguing, laughing, praying, and hashing over the questions of faith and ministry for three years. Of course we are tightly knit! That is what the seminary process is for . . . communities are built, not bought."

Yet community is being bought. The dean in the narrative worries about the tension epitomized by the two students, which is further complicated by economics: "The budget people always said that the school 'lost' money on full-time students and made money on part-time students. But residential students had been the soul of the institution for well over a century. Where was the answer?" How do we grow without losing what we value: the formative rhythms of work, worship, and rest?[2]

The General Theological Seminary's narrative reflects a school straddling the homogeneous, monastic seminary cultures of the past and the demands of the diverse population of current students. Faculty who could once assume that all their students were young, male, white, Protestant, residential, and well-educated could also make certain assumptions about their time together, and thus while faculty were busy, they enjoyed a set rhythm of time—the bells peal and the group flows forward—a rhythm that most of us teaching today do not have. (Today the bells would more likely remind us of the bitterly contested *Werkglocken*[3] than of any sacred time.) To most of us this kind of homogeneity would seem not only incredibly boring but counter to our theological and personal commitments. Yet we cast furtive, longing glances back at a time when seminaries were less complicated by the dictates of the dollar.

In the future, predicts Daniel Aleshire (2002, 24), executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, the money for sustaining seminaries will

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 58

need to come from individuals who care about the church or who are loyal to an institution. But identifying and cultivating these relationships will take a little creativity and an enormous amount of time.

SEMINARIES REACTING AT THE LIMITS

Faced with the shortages of time and money that impact the workload and the cultures of so many seminaries, schools are beginning to acknowledge, define, and respond to the situation in a variety of ways. I recently telephoned a seminary dean's office and was greeted by the dean's assistant saying, "Thanks, good-bye!" While I quickly gathered that she was still addressing someone in her office, for a brief moment I thought that the dean had discovered a brilliant way of clearing away the workload.

Some schools, in the spirit of the Protestant work ethic, are working harder and faster, consulting time-management gurus, reshuffling personnel, and recommitting themselves to meeting the many needs required by their constituencies. Other institutions are attempting to see the situation in new ways, seeking blessing in the midst of what seems most days like chaos, accepting their fragmented experiences of time as a reality that cannot be altered. A few seminaries are learning painfully to set limits, to say no, to define new boundaries around faculty time and around what the institution can or cannot do for a given student or group of students. None of these responses are simple, nor are there any right answers. The remarkable thing is that so many faculty are simultaneously raising their heads out of their overwhelming workloads long enough to articulate the issues and attempt a response that is faithful to teaching, learning, and the missions of their schools and yet aimed at self-preservation.

TIME MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary has experienced significant growth in student and faculty numbers since the 1980s. Hispanic ministries have been a longstanding tradition, and Austin has committed to a cross-cultural focus in all of its courses. More than 25 percent of Austin's students are Methodist, and a large number of Lutherans attend the extension program, the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest. More than 25 percent of degree students live off campus. Among M.Div. students, 10 to 15 percent are minorities, and 40 to 50 percent are women. Presbyterian students are now in the minority, and even the faculty reflect cultural and religious diversity: Austin has hired several Hispanic professors over the years.

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 59

Discussions about Austin Presbyterian at the meetings of The Lexington Seminar ranged mostly around the question of how this diversity affects the campus: What are the gifts and challenges of such diversity? But another insight that rose to the surface was the understanding that time was the real issue. In Austin's effort to be family for everyone, to address multiple needs, the time factor was perhaps more challenging than diversity itself. Had Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, which is deeply committed to maintaining an ethos of community, created a model in which they had considered every variable but time? Are there parameters to diversity? Can hospitality be stretched too far?

Commenting on the Austin team's experience at The Lexington Seminar's conference in Maine, President Robert Shelton said, "We learned about what is not serving us well—even if it is a good thing: our willingness to be open to students around the clock—no limits or boundaries." He defined their institutional culture as an oral one, Southern style, where nothing is written down, "it's just the way we do things." In such a culture, work knows no limits and service no boundaries.

In an attempt to manage their time and their services more effectively, Austin has done several things. First, they are discussing putting more in writing, being more explicit about responsibilities and the setting of realistic and recognized boundaries. Second, they are reorganizing student services out of the conviction that teaching and learning suffer when they are compartmentalized and separated from the services students may need, such as childcare and support for commuters.

NEW WAYS OF SEEING

Seminaries are also asking themselves how they can see their work in light of what Robert Grudin calls the "larger presences" that surround us in time. Grudin (1982, para 1.4) writes:

> People with great projects afoot habitually look further and more clearly into the future than people who are mired in day-to-day concerns. . . . They stake out larger plots and homesteads of time than the rest of us. . . . They have something greater of their own, some sense of their large and coherent motion in time, to compare the present with.

Despite their best intentions, faculty are realizing that the quandaries of serving adult students with a host of needs on multiple campuses cannot be solved solely through better time management techniques. Rather, a transformation is required in the way that seminaries view their work, their ministries, and time itself. As Dorothy C. Bass writes:

> Henri Nouwen, a priest and author, was known among his students for his remarkable capacity of attention, an offering he gave to God in prayer and to them in friendship. Yet he could write with conviction about the passions evoked by days gone awry: "Doesn't this unending row of interruptions build in our hearts feelings of anger, frustration and even revenge, so much so that at times we see the real possibility that growing old can become synonymous with growing bitter?" (2000, 40)

Bass continues that Nouwen found "a remedy for the frustrations of interruption" in the comment of another professor who said that he had complained his whole life about interruptions to his work until he discovered that his interruptions were his work. For this professor, Bass notes, "aggravation about the limitations of time found its healing responses in his strengthened sense of vocation," what Grudin might call a "larger presence."

This new way of seeing is reflected in other seminaries as well. Bethel Theological Seminary (2001) spoke of needing "a completely different way of thinking" if they are going to take formation seriously and integrate it holistically. McCormick Theological Seminary (2000) asked, "How can we be both Reformed and ecumenical?" and then began reflecting on ways they are already living in that tension. Luther Seminary (2001) sought to "navigate uncharted waters" of institutional change, by first having a retreat where they honor what they do well, by lifting up their "collective pedagogical imagination" (those ordinary hallway conversations that are so full of extraordinary wisdom) and by "cultivating wonder." Bass reminds us that the Psalmist asks that we learn to count our days, not to increase their number, but rather to "gain a wise heart." Seminaries are learning that to be faithful in educating ministers for the church, we are sometimes required not to seek a way out of our situations but rather to learn to see grace in the midst of those situations.

This new way of seeing includes the way faculty see those students that they often identify as problems—the unprepared, the ungifted for ministry, the "Teflon student" who will not change. Faculty are coming to recognize the importance of liking our students for who they are and accepting them as they are, rather than wishing them to be what they are not. This does not mean that we are no longer responsible for forming our students but that we need to be hospitable to those who do not match our ideal of what they ought to be.

SETTING LIMITS

A third response to issues of time is that seminaries are learning—tentatively, painfully—to set limits on what they can and cannot do. This response is perhaps the most difficult one of all, because there are no models for schools setting the kinds of limits they crave or to the extent to which they need them. Further, setting limits brings with it a certain amount of guilt that we in the

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 61

church feel when we choose not to meet the needs of someone who asks for help. It can also bring with it financial repercussions.

Despite these concerns and the fact that setting limits runs counter to the prevailing culture in many seminaries today, faculty are recognizing that saying no can be formative as well as life-saving. Creating personal and institutional boundaries in seminary culture not only limits, it defines. It helps us create community; it helps us say, "This is who we are."

Church Divinity School of the Pacific has developed a project through The Lexington Seminar, to "change the ethos of interaction" on campus and to write what President and Dean Donn Morgan calls a *mishnah* of faculty expectations based on the faculty handbook. An ethos subcommittee is helping faculty think through and distinguish between negotiable and nonnegotiable duties and between those that are readily quantifiable (such as teaching two courses a semester) and those that are not (such as speaking and preaching in local parishes). Assistant Professor of Theology Marion Grau, one of the members of the ethos subcommittee, has noted that the *mishnah* will help faculty (and new faculty in particular) get a better sense of what is expected of them.

The seminary also intends to discern appropriate means of communicating with students and staff about their expectations of faculty. For example, says Arthur Holder, former dean of academic affairs, "because of our participation in the GTU doctoral faculty, research and publication expectations for CDSP faculty may need to be somewhat higher than for faculty at other Episcopal seminaries—and yet, our M.Div. students often expect us to be just as accessible and involved in community life as faculty at those other institutions."

Discussion about this "ethos of interaction" continued at the August 2002 faculty retreat in Healdsburg, California. One of the decisions made was to alleviate some of the office-hour crunch by establishing times when faculty are completely available to students. At present, this takes the form of a coffee hour before chapel. Linda Clader, dean of academic affairs and professor of homiletics, states that faculty are determined to take formation as seriously as they expect their students to. Faculty covenanted for the 2002–03 academic year that they would each take one half hour of exercise and one half hour of quiet time a day. They hold each other accountable to this at regular faculty meetings. Grau said a few faculty are starting to cycle to work, and she hopes a few more who are able will walk soon.

Faculty agreed not to worry if certain aspects of their work do not get done as a result of these commitments to health. "We are taking baby steps toward establishing limits," Clader explained. "We are all obsessive-compulsives here, but we don't have to do everything perfectly. We have yet to see how all this will work out!" Clader noted that because over half of the faculty are now women, they may be more receptive to questions of time and self-care.

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 62

Clader hopes that finding new ways of handling the overwhelming amounts of information exchanged on campus will also help change the ethos of interaction. She is considering ways to streamline the processes that cross her desk, from phone calls and emails to papers needing to be signed.[4]

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

At the closing session of the June 2002 conference of The Lexington Seminar, Melanie May, academic dean at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, listed the school's multiple commitments and goals and then said simply, "In light of all this, how do we teach?" May's words cut to the heart of one implication of the busyness in seminary cultures today: Less time for reflection impairs our teaching and learning. Fortunately, schools are recognizing this problem. Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary faculty made a list of "issues we hope will not get lost," which included, "Gain nonproductive time for the leisure essential to *schola*." Faculty and institutions are recognizing that good teaching takes time—for preparation, for focus, for contemplation, and for conversation.

While faculty cannot go back to the ordered time of the monastery, they also know that time and setting are vital for good teaching. Schools were built with the idea that there would be time for reflection. The task, therefore, is to find a means of reclaiming some sense of sacred time in our fragmented seminary cultures. All of our activity of teaching and learning for the church's ministries is meaningless unless we take the time to contemplate it.

The Benedictines speak of this kind of active reflection as "holy leisure," an essential part of Benedictine spirituality. Entire seminary communities would benefit from this sense of holy leisure. For Benedict, reflecting was as important a task as working. Benedict set aside four hours a day for prayer, six to nine for work, seven to nine for sleep, three hours for eating and rest, and three hours for reading and reflection (Chittister 1990, 98–99). While many of us consider the latter an impossible luxury, Joan Chittister reminds us that we do not have to be monastic or agrarian to find more balance in our lives:

> There is an idea abroad in the land that contemplation is the province of those who live in cloistered communities and that it is out of reach to the rest of us who bear the noonday heat in the midst of the maddening crowds. But if that's the case, then Jesus who was followed by people and surrounded by people and immersed in people was not a contemplative. And Francis of Assisi was not a contemplative. And Teresa of Avila was not a contemplative. And Catherine of Siena was not a contemplative. And Thomas Merton was not a contemplative. And Mohatma Gandhi was not a contemplative.
>
> Obviously, some of our greatest contemplatives have been our most active and most effective people. No, contemplation is not withdrawal from the human race. (Chittister 1990, 102)

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 63

Instead, contemplation can be a way of pursuing meaning right where we are, in the midst of the fragments of the day. It does not take us out of reality, but rather, "it puts us in touch with the world around us by giving us the distance we need to see where we are more clearly" (Chittister 1990, 103).

Recapturing the idea of holy leisure is one way of reclaiming the time that has slipped out of our control and left us grappling breathlessly with each crisis pounding on the door. No simple formula exists for attempting this commitment, but attempt it we must. Church Divinity School of the Pacific offers one solution in its "Quiet Days" program, a daylong retreat that occurs once a semester at a Franciscan monastery about forty-five minutes from campus. Occasionally during the program, participants gather for a meditation, but most of the time is spent in quiet—reading or walking on the grounds. Quiet Days are built into the curriculum, and no classes or chapel occur on those days. I have begun a similar practice with my elementary-school-age daughters. Once a semester I let them choose a day to call in "too well" to go to school. It is a way for them to learn, at an early age, how to listen to signals telling them that they need to slow down, to create time to think. Even at their age they feel the pressure not to miss a test, a quiz, or a special activity, but this "well day" teaches them that no one is too invaluable to take time for renewal.

Thus, a second pedagogical implication of the seminary's current relation to time is that, as educators and administrators, we let ourselves get caught up in the doing, implying through our ceaseless motion that we believe we are in control. Kathleen Norris asserts that "workaholism is the opposite of humility" (Norris 1998, 25). A healthy humility would trust God and our colleagues to accomplish what we, lacking time and money, cannot.

Faculty might also find themselves with more time if they would learn to trust administrators to do their share of the work. Could we learn to see a dean as an efficient "heavy lifter," asked one former dean, instead of someone who is "power hungry"? When distrust and suspicion flow freely, members of the community often feel the need to hover over every decision and serve on every committee, a time-consuming and frustrating process. The problem is exacerbated by a small faculty, often equivalent in size to a small department at an undergraduate institution. We've all witnessed the actual stalemate that occurs in these intimate situations in which people are constantly checking up on each other, exerting a kind of destructive control.

The faculty preference for group or consensus decision making, while democratic and honoring of diverse opinions, often eats up hours of time and energy. As we educate students for the church's ministries, perhaps doing less, better—by trusting others to do their work—would help us see the myriad ways in which God moves and works in our history. Our vocation as theological teachers needs to affect the quantity of what we do.

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 64

"Everything we do," concludes Walter C. Wright (Wright et al. 1999, 5), executive director of the DuPree Leadership Center at Fuller, "teaches what we actually believe, regardless of what we say in our classrooms. The curriculum of our schools is much more than the classes we teach or the programs we construct. We teach theology and spiritual formation with every action of the day, every policy, and every procedure of the community. Students are watching." He urges us to spend more time thinking not only about our teaching, but about our living together. "Are we workaholics? How do we manage time?" While we try to teach formation in our classes, "around our classes and in our organizational life together, we teach whether or not we really believe what we teach." In the midst of our frantic seminary cultures, perhaps doing less is more because it reflects the very faithfulness in our Maker that we strive to teach. It is not easy to accept the fact that modesty of goals is good. Schools walk an uneasy public ground here: if we lose our programs, will we lose our prestige? Seminaries need to wrestle with this quandary more and more.

Third, if we want to be better theological teachers, we must reclaim a certain mindfulness in the whirlwind, and then model that mindfulness in our classrooms. For instance, do we give students ample time to reflect on and respond to what they read in class, or is more better on our syllabi as well as on our personal calendars? The Reverend Anne Katherine Grieb, associate professor of New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary, writes:

> I am famous (infamous?) in my New Testament Introduction course for my sense of the urgency of the Gospel, planning everything to the minute and cramming an hour's lecture into 50 minutes. But late one fall, I sensed that the class needed to talk. The students were astonished when I donated most of an hour to inviting their doubts, and listening and responding to their concerns about the Jesus of history in the Gospels. We would have discussed that later, but the students needed that discussion immediately. My actions were simple, but I continued to hear about that day years later. It serves as a reminder to me that teaching the Bible means being taught by the Bible: my students and I are on this journey together. (Wright et al. 1999, 5)

In addition to the kind of flexibility Grieb describes, what else could we do differently in our classrooms to teach students that seminary time is a different sort of time? Could we lecture less and discuss more? Michael Oakeshott writes that conversation provides "a meeting place of various modes of imagining" (Brookfield and Preskill 1999, 6). While we often feel that we have too much material to cover to leave time for discussion, providing a setting and time for conversation is one of the most important ways in which we can help our students make meaning. Could we journal more in class around specific questions in order to teach students how to take the time to reflect on an important issue? Could we tolerate and even welcome and encourage moments of

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 65

reflective silence in class? Could we teach students the art of active listening to one another, an art that is lost in our frantic culture? Even how we enter the room and our own bearing in class can be instructive. Are we fragmented, forgetful, and rushed? Or are we focused and centered for a thoughtful hour together?

Fourth and finally, an implication of the new and complex demands on our time is that *institutions have to work harder to help faculty feel valued and honored in their vocations as teachers.* This could take several forms, including the kind of leisure time granted to honor the calling of teaching. But a more fundamental daily ritual would be for administrators to take on the crucial task of saying no for faculty, especially young faculty. "It's not good for you," "It's too much," and "It's not productive" have to be phrases that are heard clearly and then supported financially, as young faculty strive to make their mark on an institution, or as older faculty attempt to save the institution yet again. Veteran faculty often believe that they must have a hand in everything because they no longer feel valued in their teaching. A smart institution can help faculty navigate the ebb and flow of a teaching career, because teaching is what suffers when we are too busy with other obligations. At Georgetown College, for example, first-year faculty are not allowed to serve on committees, thus allowing them time to focus on teaching.

CONCLUSION

Before setting these kinds of limits, however, schools need to decide what defines a good faculty. If teaching is to take more time, what will we do less of and what will be the litmus test through which such decisions pass? How do we define what deserves a "no"? What will be our criteria? Seminaries will first need to reexamine their core identities and then locate good teaching within those identities in order to answer these foundational questions.

We have seen a commitment to this process among seminary faculty who have been a part of The Lexington Seminar. These faculties are learning that they must take the time to become faculty together in order to sort through these issues, to go on retreat together in order to know and trust one another outside the settings that besiege and distract them, and to form themselves as individuals with a sense of wholeness and vocation in order to better form their students for the church's ministries. Seminaries must reclaim time as a freely given and abundant gift of God. We must not hoard time nor grieve over it nor count its costs but rather invite it into our pedagogy, share it freely, and celebrate it daily.

warford.qxd 8/27/2004 11:40 AM Page 66

NOTES

1. All narratives cited in this book can be found in the Archives section of the Seminar's Web site: http://www.lexingtonseminar.org/.
2. In January 2003, the faculty of General Theological Seminary voted to develop an M.A. program for part-time lay persons, to be implemented in September 2003.
3. *Werkglocken* (Schor 1992, 49) refers to the clocks used by the fourteenth century textile factory owners to wake their workers at precise intervals. The workers came to hate the clocks that did not meld with the traditional and more natural rhythms of time with which they were accustomed to working.
4. Robin Lind (2002, 23) describes a technique that Wilson Yates, president of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, uses to reduce reading unnecessary e-mails: "All e-mail sent to him from within his own school is read first by his assistant and then forwarded to him for action or response as necessary. Given the amount of the e-mail that she could respond to, the messages he had to respond to declined dramatically." Wilson says, "The key to this process's success lies in the fact that a great percentage of the in-house e-mail that comes to me is information she will actually need to treat. Needless to say, anyone needing to convey information directly to me alone can do so by voice mail or by writing 'confidential' in the subject box."