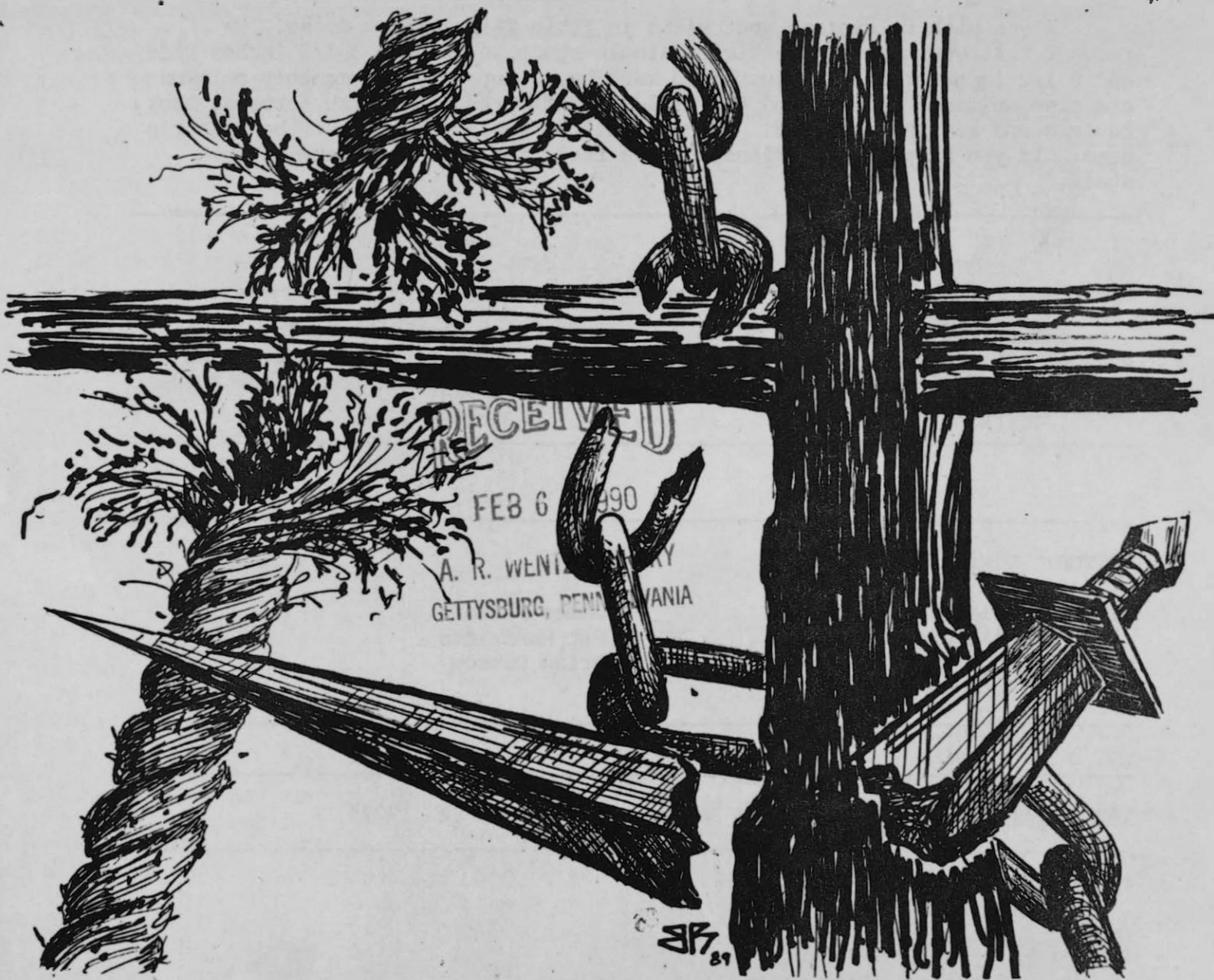


TABLE TALK

Volume XXV No. 4 February 1990



RECEIVED
FEB 6 1990
A. R. WENIGER
GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

25 YEARS OF TABLE TALK

News and Viewpoints of the Student Body
of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

FROM THE EDITORIAL STAFF

If you wish to express your views in Table Talk, please do so. We request that you type your articles single-space in columns 3 1/2 inches wide and 8 1/2 inches long with justified margins. Proposals for monthly columns are also welcome. Poetry and art will be considered along with letters, book reviews and feature articles. Nothing will be published without the author's name. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the staff.

TABLE TALK is published monthly by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Opinions reflected are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or editorial board, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

EDITOR: Viking Dietrich

STAFF: Kris Bell,
Bill Griffith
Phyllis Pelletier
Rebecca Russow

James Gilmore
Pat Hendricks
Brian Russow

TABLE TALK, 61 West Confederate Avenue, Gettysburg, Pa. 17325

A Sample of the Past

FROM NOV. 4, 1964

FEATURE EDITORIAL
by Ed Vogelsong

A recent article, "Our Eadly Educated Clergy", which appeared in a Sunday supplement magazine, has pointed out that a gap exists between the seminary curriculum and the type of work that faces the pastor when he begins his duties in the parish. There can be no denying that our education is not as good as it could possibly be and that there is an ever-recurring need to examine, evaluate and adjust our educational program in the light of the needs that it is called to meet. But we must be careful to avoid the hasty conclusion that the great weight of our curricular work should be placed on the "practical" courses, and that it is the responsibility of the seminary to train its students in all fields of ecclesiastical life.

One common misconception is that the pastor is called to perform all the duties and functions of the church, and that his education, therefore, should include the complete spectrum of training from business math to architecture. The fact is, however, that we have forgotten the basic Christian concept of the pastor and have expected our clergy to perform every ecclesiastical duty with dexterity. The pastor who allows himself to be thus manipulated and used by a congregation has no one to blame but himself, and he cannot help but feel that his education is insufficient.

One of the primary failings of the clergy today is that they have spread themselves too thin by trying to administer all aspects of the church life, and that they do not devote enough of their studying and time to the acts of

calling, preaching, teaching, and worshipping. This area in itself presents a diversity of tasks in which few men become proficient; and, to increase our responsibilities means that we will be even less competent for each additional phase of our work.

Let me make my point very clear: the pastor is not called to be an administrator, a psychoanalyst, a financial expert, or a recreational director. These offices in the church are (or should be) delegated to laymen. The pastor's primary role--the role for which he is educated--is that of being a shepherd to the flock. This does not exclude the pastor from becoming proficient in another area, but this specialization must be persued in post graduate studies.

The new proposed curriculum at Gettysburg is practical precisely because it places greater emphasis on the academic. To diminish our academic work by taking more time for practical training is to deceive ourselves if we seek to make our education a valuable tool for our ministry. Too often we hear the complaint, "This work can't be of any value in the parish, why do it?" and too seldom we remind ourselves that we are primarily students in an academic institution. The work of the pastor is not to be a jack of all trades, but the master of one.

This means that the cornerstone of our education must be in the areas of Biblical studies, theology, the tradition and heritage of the church, and the art of preaching. It is by neglecting a deeper knowledge of these fields, and not by advocating a broader knowledge of many fields, that our clergy will be badly educated for the primary job that confronts it.

President's Letter

Low Pay Ministry

Some years ago, I preached a chapel sermon on the subject "The Church and the Poor." In passing, I commented that the church's message with respect to its special option for the poor might be more credible if there were among us some clergy who perhaps through an evangelical set of vows of chastity, poverty and obedience would give themselves exclusively in service to the poor.

I had in mind at the time the possibility that from among those two or three students in every graduating class with high commitment to the ministry without regard for remuneration or personal comfort, some might be willing to give one or two of their early years in ministry to the service of poor people for whom the church has at present no facilitating structure. I remember that at the time, the dean of the seminary agreed. His special interest in evangelization led him to feel that such a service in the life of the church might be extended to include those who would give a couple of years exclusively to evangelization in those areas of the United States or the world where the message of the gospel had not been fully proclaimed or heard. We even dreamed up the idea of establishing an Order of Evangelists in the church which might have some stature and prestige and special character and purpose. It might be something like the Glenmary Order in the Roman Catholic Church, the members of which give themselves to the proclamation of the gospel particularly in the Appalachian mountain region.

I remember floating the idea among some of the executives of the hierarchy of the church. I was met with astonishment. The church wouldn't know, I was told, what to do with persons who did not have a regular call. How would their ordination be handled, I was asked. Wouldn't this undermine the attempt on the part of synods to guarantee minimum salary packages for pastors of all congregations?

cont.

Crossing Class Lines

Now that I am a senior, I guess I have some sense of what for years of Lutheran seminary education can be like, and I like to give each class a little warning.

To the First year students: There are going to be a lot of new faces around here next year.

To the Middlers: Internship is nothing but new faces.

To the Interns: Returning next year will almost be like your internship. I mean there are going to be a lot of new faces around here.

So maybe you do not need to be a senior to figure that out. The point is that each year the community changes. It becomes different and unique as classes come and go. I used to be troubled over this aspect of seminary, but lately I have begun to think of this continual state of flux as an opportunity.

It all started when I went to my senior approval interview. I was standing in the lobby of this rather large hotel in a somewhat large city in California. I was nervous. I was alone. Just when I needed it most, in walks a person I met and got to be friends with when I was a camp counselor nine years before. What was he doing in this large hotel in this somewhat large California city?? Why, he came for his senior approval interview!

There was no way I could have foreseen that Tom would walk in at that point in time. During the flight home, I reflected how the joy of an otherwise chance meeting had given me the boost I needed. It was just the right thing to set the tone for my meeting with the Multi-synodical Committee. Was it mere good fortune? Perhaps. Then again, it could have been an answer to a prayer. . .

cont.

President's Letter continued.

My concern was less with these institutional problems, as important as they might be. I simply felt that perhaps some highly motivated individuals committed to a sacrificial ministry might be willing to dedicate a couple of years of that ministry at the beginning of their careers in special service with modest remuneration, perhaps only basic maintenance.

At least one of my students at the time expressed interest in the idea and even made a proposal for fulfilling such a ministry to her synodical bishop. Again, she too, was rebuffed. The church simply did not know how to handle such eccentricity.

I was motivated, you can see, with the earlier model from Kennedy's Camelot days, the Peace Core volunteer. I still had fresh in my mind the time when Sergeant Shriver, then the director of the Peace Corps, had appeared at Columbia University and attracted a crowded auditorium of university students. They had responded with enthusiasm to his appeal that their nation needed highly committee people throughout the world to represent our nation in those communities where development was so desperately needed. Shriver got a lot of volunteers that day, and I suspect many of them served with enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction among Third World peoples.

Again, today, many of our students are beginning to consider calls to first parishes or assignments to official lay ministries. I suspect that again there are a few who are less interested in what the church can offer them than in what they can offer to the people of God. And without concern for remuneration, rank or prestige! They recall their initial motivation to study for the ministry and would like simply to be able to give themselves to wherever the needs might be. Perhaps an institutional church is not ready to respond to this kind of vocational commitment. I am sure these few would not demean the legitimate ministries of their brothers and sisters who feel that a servant is worthy of her/his hire. But, cannot there be a place for those who may sense a special calling?

I don't know quite how this might happen, if indeed it should. But, I still think it deserves wrestling with, some deliberation, and a bit of risk-taking on the part of an established church. What do you think?

J. Russell Hale, Acting President
January 17, 1990

Crossing Lines continued.

Our fellow students provide for each one of us the opportunity to gain a colleague in ministry. I know my relationships with those of my class are important, but I have discovered that I missed out by not "crossing class lines" more often. I do not know the members of other classes as well as I know my own. I hope this will not be so for you as well.

I discovered myself in kind of a cloud where I made those of my "class" more important than others. I devoted more time friendships with only that group. I operated under the fantasy that this group, who were my "peers," would remain so. The nearness of graduation has cleared that fog. One person is hoping to go such-in-such synod while another prefers some other region, some other style of ministry, etc.

It maybe that I will, through the course of time, come to a place where one of you who are now a first-year, or a middler, or an intern will be nearest to me. I hope we can share more than just a common alma mater.

In the meantime, I encourage everyone to "cross the class lines." Get to know some of the spouses and children. Oh yeah, that reminds me of something I forgot.

To the Seniors: Take some time to get to know some people from the other classes this semester. You never know when you might need to see an familiar face.

Brian Russow

FOCUS: Mark Oldenburg

There is probably little doubt around the seminary that Mark Oldenburg has an easy job. At least that is how he makes it seem. Mark really had given little thought to becoming a seminary chaplain. He had prepared himself to teach if the church called him to do that. One day while in the synod office the phone rang. It was President Stuempfle asking Mark if he would consider the position of chaplain and teacher of worship here at Gettysburg. "I think it's a good combination, because I think that worship is at the heart of pastoral ministry; and the way I prepared myself to be a seminary chaplain was the same way I prepared myself to be a hospital chaplain which was to be a parish pastor. And to do that as well as I could intentionally, and with theological reflection, and honestly."

When asked to compare college chaplaincy versus seminary chaplaincy, Mark feels some aspects are easier and others more difficult. Certainly it is easier because, "I assume that worship and theological life are central for the members of the community. It's not something that can be assumed in college... I'm further from being a congregational pastor than college chaplains are because really my parish and my congregation are coterminal. There aren't members of the geographical region that I serve that aren't part of my congregation. There are students at college who will never darken the door of the chapel. Certainly there were people a half a block from the churches I served who didn't know that the churches were there... Easier because certainly the people are already invested in the gospel. That's just assumable. Harder if I believed that I had a monopoly in the gospel. Because there are a lot of people with a lot of experience and different ways of proclaiming it, different ways of understanding it, different ways of experiencing it. And being a human being, I have blind spots. I try not to believe that I'm the only one to whom the gospel has come or at least I know all ways in which the gospel has come. I know that that's not true."

Dealing with problems, in this community, can be a real challenge. Getting to the root of some problems can be extremely difficult. "Because theology is so important it's very easy to hide behind. One can give all kinds of theological rationale for some pretty screwy behavior... Also especially for people who are here preparing for ordination or for being certified associates in ministry, there's an awful lot of perceived pressure to have your act together, not to have any problems, so that there is reluctance, I'm sure, to share areas of growth. Now it seems to me that there isn't as much pressure as there is perceived pressure." Mark has removed himself from the voting staff. He does not sit in when the synod and the faculty discuss endorsement or readiness for ordination for students. He feels this has helped some of the students come forward to discuss problems with him and Norma Wood.

Mark says the best part of his job is hanging out and the hardest is finding the time to do that. Amazingly he always seems to make the time. Whether in a hallway or on the street, one never senses that Mark is in a rush. He has the gift of presence which he shares with those of us who need a word. However when asked how the position could be improved he says, "I wish that there were more opportunities for collegial planning, with students and faculty both and other people in the community, for worship and a lot of the other things. I wish that I didn't have to worry in, for instance, planning retreats and other events about whether or not they are paid for, and how we are going to arrange for child care. I wish that that could be provided, simply just done... I wish that it would be possible to have more than a single planning session for worship. I don't know, in terms of stewardship of time, if that's possible. My guess is that it's not. And I wish that there were the opportunity for collegial reflection on an event such as worship.

And there is always conversation in the refectory, and not always healthy

cont.

conversation. Direct feedback rather than conversation about someone in the third person was going on. My guess is that to a large extent, that is what started to stifle an awful lot of creativity in expression. And I think that's tragic.

And that's something of which, my guess is, in different ways the students and the faculty and myself are all guilty of. That's why, for instance, for the last two years, one of the assigned lessons for the first week of chapel is the passage in Matthew about how you handle conflict in the community. First of all you talk with the person with whom you have the problem. And not anybody else. And following that is something I'd like to see done...It's a wonderful, healthy way to deal with conflict when you've got more than one person together."

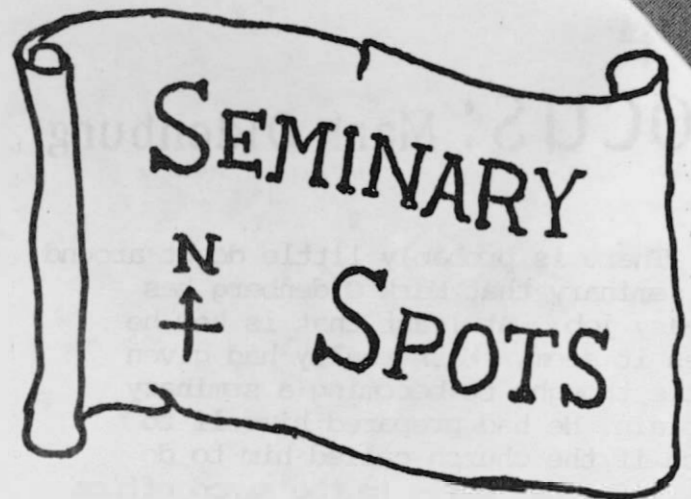
This community is important to Mark. He says that Gettysburg is the only seminary with which he has had dealings that, if the seminary would leave, the community would know it and feel it. As a community, we are invested in Gettysburg and vice versa.

I know that if Mark were to leave Gettysburg, we would feel it. His easy manner, openness, and congeniality, make him especially fitted for this post.

Phyllis A. Pelletier

...Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke



This being the beginning of my fifth semester on the hill, I would like to think that I am fairly well informed about any peculiar aspects of our campus. However I have just recently learned of yet another unique spot that I want to share with you: The Shrine of Jesus on the Bathroom Door.

The pattern in the wood grain bears an eerie resemblance to the face that is seen on the Shroud of Turin. While I realize that that relic has been proven false, its haunting image of a peaceful, bearded face still reminds us of Christ. In a surrealistic way, that image appears on the inside of one of the bathroom doors at East Hall.

Unfortunately, (?) this is not a sexually inclusive spot. I would highly recommend that the women have a male escort accompany them to this spot. Otherwise it could prove to be embarrassing for all concerned parties. Some people see Jesus in the clouds, we can see him in the first floor north bathroom. Check it out!

Miriam Nicholson

Seminary Silence

In the first three issues of our campus forum, we have published forty-five items including articles, poems and art work. Of those forty-five, more than half, twenty-five to be exact, have been entered by our staff. Twelve more have been solicited by staff and written by cooperative people to whom we as staff are indebted. Of the other eight unsolicited contributions, most have been poems, most were in the first issue and two were perhaps contro- versial.

I would like to thank Brian Russow for front covers. I would like to thank Phyllis Felletier and Kris Bell for their consistent contributions. I would also like to thank Matt Riegel, Miriam Nicholson, and President Hale for their time and cooperation.

Besides expressing my gratitude to these few and to those who have helped behind the scenes, I am writing this to express a deeper concern about the apparent silence on the part of our student body. Our campus forum, Table Talk, is to consist of the "News and Viewpoints of the Student Body." However, only less than ten percent of that Body seems willing to express any comment in the forum. It is my understanding, that this has been true for many years. Why are seminarians so silent?

I have a few suggestions, none of which are very satisfying. 1) Students are apathetic to the use and potential of such a forum. 2) Students do not know that they may contribute to Table Talk. 3) Students hold no opinions on issues relevant to the church or campus life. 4) Students avoid conflict situations. 5) Students are too busy. 6) Something in the seminary atmosphere stifles small fires just beginning to cast some light.

These first five ideas do not fit the profile of a person intending to enter the teaching or preaching professions within the church, so my attention is drawn to the sixth suggestion. This might be a hasty and over simplified conclusion, but it is done in hope and confidence. Could it be that the endorsement process has unnerved the students on seminary campuses? Is there such an emphasis on right answers that there is no room for individual opinions?

It will be obvious to the reader of this article, that in harmony with the silence of the seminary, I have not stated any strong opinion. I have offered a few facts, a lot of questions, and an appeal for greater participation in this forum.

Viking Dietrich

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

The December 1989 issue of Table Talk has moved me finally to express my frustration in public. It was a good issue, but....

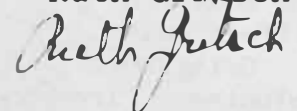
1)The imagery of a rather good poem was ruined by "Or you may never sew a seed," Does one cross-stitch it, baste it, or machine stitch it? I am sure Ms. Pourcho did not have this in mind, though she failed to check on the difference between sew and sow.

2)Ms. Pelletier initiated us into a new Peace Corps custom: cannibalism. Frankly, I would much prefer to eat the food they had prepared than the Christmas dinner that "consisted of Peter, the Englishman,..." etc.

These two examples were merely the most blatant; there have been many others. Please let us remember that the ordained ministry deals in WORDS. The gospel cannot be communicated "rightly" in sloppy formulations. I suggest we all use a bit more clarity--to say nothing of availing ourselves of dictionaries and grammar books--when we speak and write. Computers don't do it all!

Sincerely,

Ruth Gritsch



EDITOR'S RESPONSE. Thank you very much for your letter. You cannot know how much it means to me as editor of Table Talk. Your letter marks the first unsolicited contribution to this community paper, which contribution made comment on the content of any previous issue - proof that some in the community are both reading and interested in the success of this campus forum.

Seminarians Help Fill In The Gaps

The first Monday of J-Term, a heavy snowfall began during lunch which not only covered the campus with a pleasant whiteness but also wreaked havoc through the borough of Gettysburg. The events of that afternoon could have passed for an Old Testament military theophany. Within one hour, five different motor vehicle accidents occupied the attention of police, hospital emergency staff, firefighters, ambulance personnel, and tow truck operators. Shortly after dinner the first klaxon sounded: "Box 1, Chambersburg St. at the Seminary, 10-45 with injuries--Company 1, Ambulance from Company 1 respond!" Nothing unusual here except that the first person on location was David Peterson (2nd year M.Div.), EMT-Paramedic. Within two minutes three more seminarians arrived to find Peterson already inside the damaged vehicle stabilizing the driver's neck. One of the new arrivals, EMT Matthew Riegel (1st year M.Div.), began taking vitals and checking for injuries. As the patient was being extricated from the vehicle, Firefighters Mike O'Berg and Tom Young handled traffic control. Even before the patient had left the scene by ambulance, Peterson was in a second emergency unit responding to another accident across town.

Because of the time of day, personnel shortages posed a particular threat. That Monday's snow stressed the support structures to the point where the assistant borough manager had to be called away from his duties as the deputy fire chief to augment the police force. The addition of four seminarians made a difference.

Gettysburg is protected by a volunteer Fire and Ambulance service. Most of its members work day time jobs, and only those who work for the borough and school district in low priority positions are free to leave work for emergency calls. Seminarians helping fill in the gaps is not new. Several years ago a small group of seminarians joined the fire department and quickly became known as the "God Squad." Before

their graduation from the seminary, they were supplying eighty-five per cent of the day time staff for ambulance calls in the borough. Examination of the local newspapers throughout the nineteenth century indicates that for major fires in the town, seminarians would run down the hill and work side by side with townspeople. The established tradition seems ready for revival.

Some people become engaged in emergency services because of specific past experiences related to times of need; others inherit their positions. Admittedly some are sublimating while others are thrill seekers. Hopefully the seminarian can see another possibility. Hopefully the seminarian can see that helping people in this way can be a response to grace--a form of social ministry.

--Matthew Lynn Riegel

Call to Prayer

When I was in the Peace Corps, I learned a great deal from the Moslems, albeit I did not know it at the time. At various times of day, the call to prayer was issued from the mosque. Businesses closed and people stopped what they were doing in order to pray. It seemed strange to me then, even bizarre. Thinking as an American, I thought, "What a waste of time!" Today, however, that seems normal and natural.

One has to wonder how one person could live with another if they only communicated on Sundays. Or how could a relationship endure if good morning and good night were all that was communicated? Yet, how many of us do just that? If a relationship is built on communication, then we have to be open. I further suspect that those Moslems who prayed five times a day also added little prayers in between as well. It's a pity it took me so long to learn that little lesson.

Phyllis Pelletier