

**Western
Theological
Seminary**

Theotogs

The Theotog

Winter 2010

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Life at Western Theological Seminary

Welcome to this Winter 2010 edition of The Theotog. This publication is an open newsletter for theologically inclined photographers. The overall goal is simply to invite people to submit photographs on a specific theme, which then gives the reader a glimpse into how people “see” and experience the world around them.

This issue highlights **Life at Western Theological Seminary** in Holland, Michigan. The photos included in this issue were all taken at Western Seminary during the Winter of 2010. Students, faculty, and staff have all contributed to **“Life at WTS!”**

For those people who did not “take pictures”, or have your photo taken, your contributions to the life of WTS are no less significant.

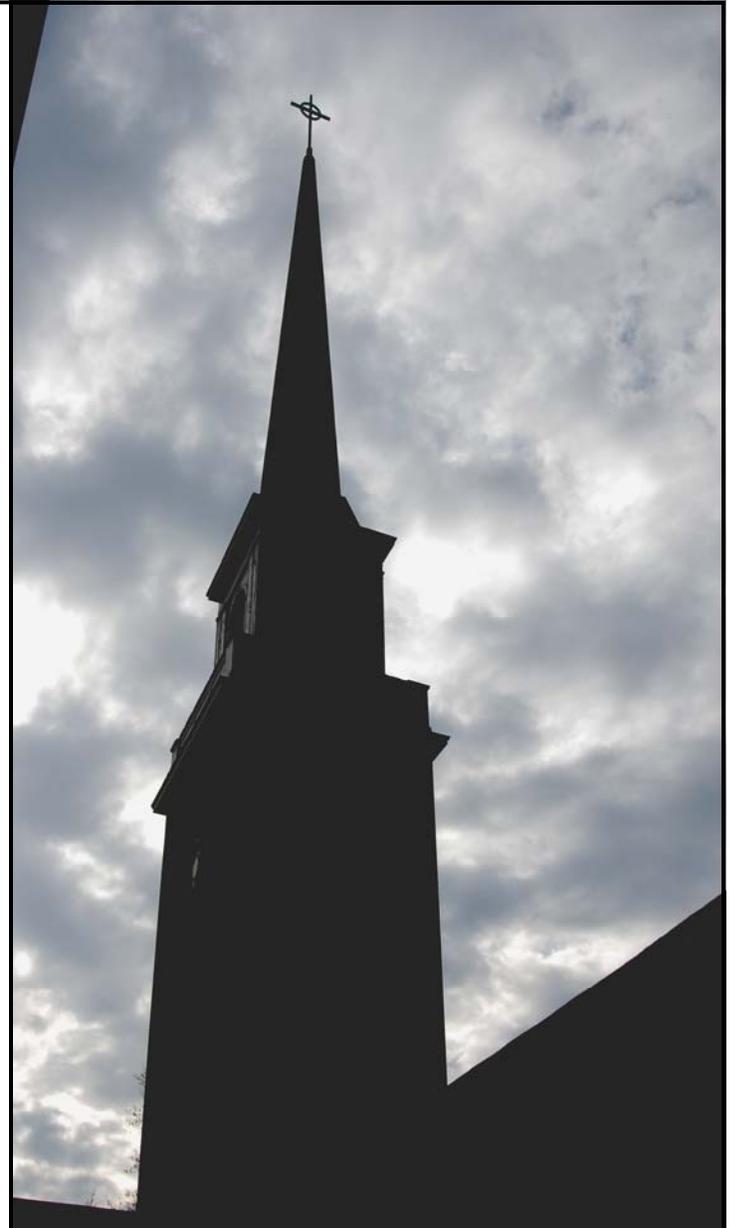
Welcome to **“Life at Western Theological Seminary”!**

Jaco and Keith

OUR MISSION:

“THE PURPOSE OF WTS IS TO PREPARE CHRISTIANS CALLED BY GOD TO LEAD THE CHURCH IN MISSION.”

HOPEFULLY THESE PHOTOS GIVE A GLIMPSE INTO THE WAYS WESTERN SEMINARY IS FULFILLING ITS PURPOSE.



Life (at WTS) is Never Brick or Mortar...



Empty Hallways or Classrooms...



Nor "Empty" Symbols!



Life at Western is...**Creative Worship**

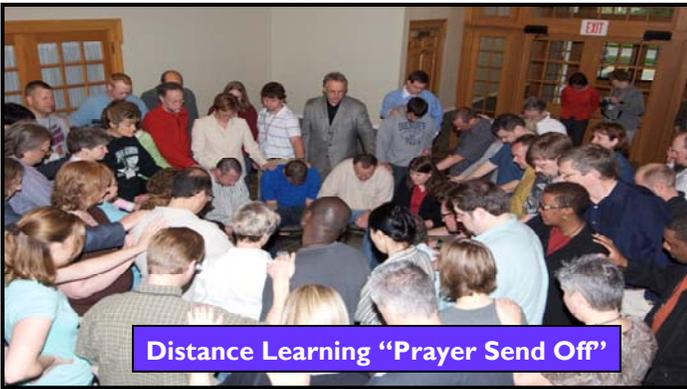


Word and Sacrament



**Liturgy
Singing
A Sign of
Peace**

Life at Western is...Caring Fellowship and Prayer



Distance Learning "Prayer Send Off"



WTS Community "Luncheons"



Community "Cheese Ball Fridays"



Community "Guest Introductions"



I believe that Jesus would heartily enjoy our **Cheese Ball gatherings** each Friday. In my own mind and heart, this unique time has come to symbolize the very essence of our lives together here at Western. I so appreciate the ones who have kept the 'Ball rolling; for extending hospitality to all who would join the feast; for creating monster-turkey-snowperson-thumb cheese balls with just that little "something" extra; for welcoming circles of friends and colleagues who graciously enlarge the circle of chairs and hearts to make room for whosoever comes. There always seems to be enough to go around – food, laughter, conversation – a lovely reminder of the heavenly banquet to come. No want, always plenty, surrounded by those whom we love and those with whom we long to connect.

Stephanie Croom, Theotog-wannabe

Broken Wing

At Western, we are wounded healers. The broken wing on this bird reminded me of this. The wounded healer deepens the pain by entering into it so that healing can come. It is the suffering servant (Isa. 53:5) who speaks "the language of wounds," rooted firmly in the crucified God (Col. 1:20; 2 Cor. 1:5). The wounded healer can admit personal vulnerability and invite the vulnerability of others by not being "a prophetic bulldozer." It is the pastoral leader who knows how loss has impacted her life, and has done the work of mourning so that she can help others grieve. It is the leader who has reclaimed an inner sense of security so that he can remain less-anxious in the midst of other's chaos. It is the person who worked through personal trauma, so as not to become traumatic to others. As such, wounded healers can live in the broken reality as they hopefully anticipate the coming of God's reign.

Jaco Hamman



Life at Western is...Theological Education



A rich context of space and time, students and faculty, resources and passions, learning during days, and sometimes long nights.



Solitude

Many at Western know loneliness well. Loneliness, Henri Nouwen argues, lies so deep in all of us that the most optimistic advertisement or even substitute love items cannot eradicate the feeling. It might even drive us to Messianic expectations. We continue to experience conditional love seeking all kinds of ways to fulfill ourselves inappropriately. Loneliness suffocates. It fuels violent thoughts towards self and others. Solitude-that inner quality that does not depend upon physical isolation-makes one receptive to God and others. It offers a creative response to life.

Jaco Hamman

Life at Western...Is Not Confined to WTS



"Voskuil Loco" -Even in distant places, we see remnants and reminders of our community here at WTS. In Chiapas, our dearly loved Dr. Voskuil was found at a pharmacy. A reminder of our sending community and the reminder that our community has become a part of us.

Bethany Popkes



"Face of Christ"- While we did not visit this beautiful young lady while she was in jail, we visited her family in the "holding" time between her father's release from prison and his time of relocation. In the visit, I am positive even though we could not speak to one another verbally due to a language barrier, we each spoke of Christ's love with the joy we shared in each others' presence. This picture is black and white, because in that moment, we both knew that all had faded except the face of God in the other.

Bethany Popkes



"...to lead the church in mission."

Whether that mission is "at home" (8th St., Holland- The Bridge or 13th and College in Holland- The Friendship House), or "in other contexts" (Chiapas, Cross-cultural Immersion Trip), WTS seeks to fulfill our Garden Level banner- "**Unto Others**".

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Jesus





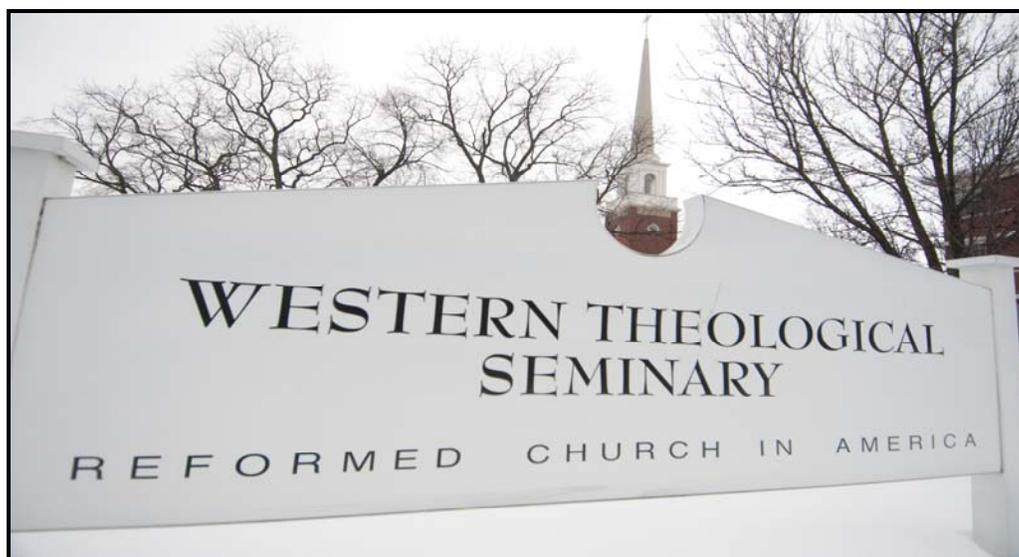
GATHERED AT THE TABLE By George Brown, Jr.

The Lord's Supper was celebrated monthly at Finkenwalde, a seminary of the Confessing Church in Germany. Life in this clandestine seminary included morning and evening devotions, daily meditation, morning lectures and discussion, hymn singing, and prayerful reading of the Bible. In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer stressed the importance of confession and Communion in the life of this seminary.

A circular letter describing the nature of communal life at Finkenwalde stated,

“It is the Lord's Supper, however, that has been the chief means of bringing us together.” (p. 35)

So, too, at Western Theological Seminary, it can be said that the weekly celebration of the sacrament is what brings us together as a community of faith and learning.



Western Seminary: Winter, 2010



The Essence of Western Seminary

If there come times when your mind grows so weary of the readings and the papers and the lectures that you're tempted to bag it all, and settle for an uninformed piety— walk out a north door of the Seminary into the college campus and then look back at this image. Let your eyes move-back and forth—from the chapel to the library— until the two together not only move you back to *love the Lord with all your heart and with all your mind*, but also move you more deeply into the essence of Western Seminary; to enable the light of learning to illumine the life of piety.

Dr. James Cook

Our Next Issues of Theotogs: Fall of 2010 and Winter/Spring of 2011 - “Water and Bread”

Think theologically, and take pictures over the summer, that give insight into how you “see” the good earth that God has created. We invite you to submit pictures that speak specifically about **water**, a water “that cleanses, purifies, sustains, and refreshes” (from our Baptismal Liturgy), and **bread**, which “has been gathered from many fields into one loaf” (from our Communion Liturgy). We believe these two elemental ingredients of life become a sacramental “sign and seal” of God’s grace in and through Baptism and The Lord’s Supper. These are the gifts of God, for the people of God!

Photos and theological reflections can be submitted to jaco.hamman@westernsem.edu or keith.derrick@westernsem.edu.

Thanks for your contributions to Theotogs!