

MINISTRY &

REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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LEADERSHIP



CHRISTMAS MYSTERIES

BAND OF

BY PAUL SCHWARZ

A partnership with a Washington, D.C.-area church helps

The shroud of trees surrounding McLean Presbyterian Church cannot block out the perpetual whoosh of traffic on the Washington, D.C., Beltway on the other side of that arboreal setting. In the same way, the handful of 20-somethings who meet at MPC on Mondays and Fridays as part of the Capital Fellows program know that the frenetic pace of Beltway life awaits them as they continue nine months of intensive instruction.

In reality, though, the 12 Fellows participating in this year's program cycle, like those who have gone before them, are learning that no such dichotomy exists. Just as God is sovereign over both greenery and concrete, He also exercises dominion over both church and vocational activity. A ministry of MPC in which RTS alumni participate prominently, the Capital Fellows program trains recent college graduates to internalize a biblical perspective on life, work, relationships, culture, community and the world.

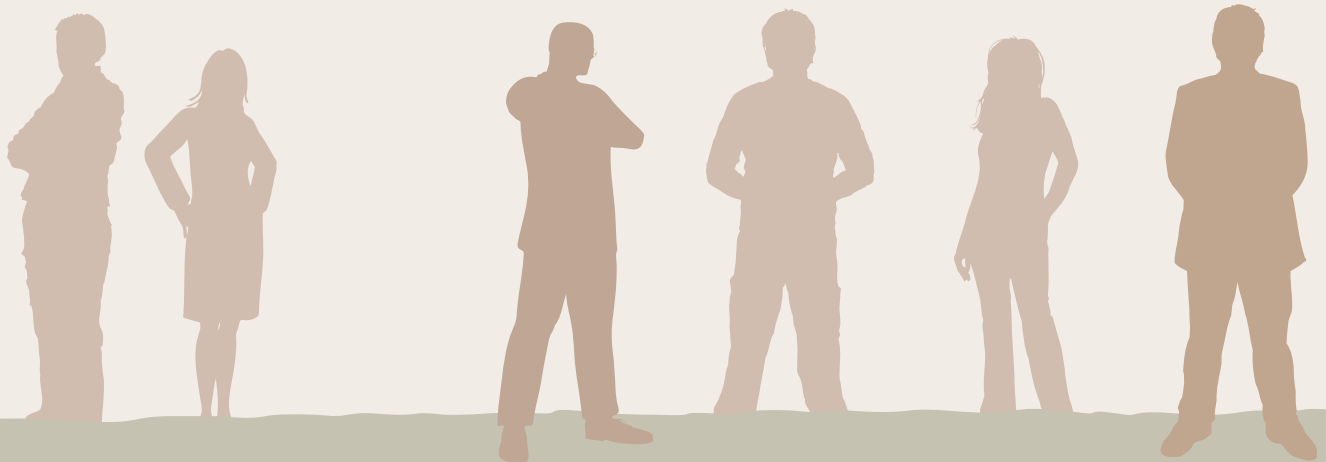
The Fellows Initiative is a national program that includes MPC, which also serves as the home for RTS-Washington, D.C. While each Fellows program has distinct features, Cap-

ital Fellows follows a fairly standard format. The students take classes together at the church on the aforementioned Mondays and Friday, work at professional internships the other three weekdays, participate in various hands-on ministry training opportunities, and live with host families.

The current crop of Fellows, like in the two previous years of the program at MPC, come to D.C. from as far away as California, being attracted by the unique professional opportunities inside the Beltway, not only in government but also the vast non-profit sector proliferating in the capital. Despite their diverse backgrounds, the Fellows are forging the sense of community that characterizes the program.

"We spent a lot of time together," Kristen Peterson, part of the first group of Fellows at MPC, recalls at a gathering of former Fellows at a McLean restaurant. "We saw each other six days a week minimum, and we talked about thought-provoking issues that people disagree on. When you spend a year with people, their personalities come out."

"Coming here you start discussing things you never thought about before," adds Regan Lackey, also a graduate of the first year of the MPC Fellows program. "Weighty theo-



FELLOWS

young adults learn a biblical worldview of vocation and calling.

logical, sociological and emotional things, and a lot of it may be contrary to what you previous believed, so there's a lot of chance for conviction. That opens someone up to thinking that maybe what they've believed all along was wrong."

Helping steer the Fellows through their experience is Bill Fullilove, assistant pastor at MPC and director of its Capital Fellows program. On one particular Friday morning, the RTS-Orlando graduate taught "Creation and the Image of God" to the Fellows as part of an ongoing Kingdom Seminar (Capital Fellows participants can receive RTS credit for their classwork). Bill encouraged group interaction, also employing devices such as showing a clip from the classic movie *Vertigo* in order to help illustrate the Israelites' demand for an earthly king in 1 Samuel.

In class sessions, the Fellows also hear from guest speakers with much experience in integrating the gospel into their professional experience. For example, later that same morning, MPC elder John Kyle talked about his life as a marketing consultant, sharing nuggets such as "Marketing works because it appeals to our idol-making tendencies." The Fellows also meet for Bible study, led earlier that morning by James

Forsyth, MPC assistant pastor and RTS-Jackson alumnus.

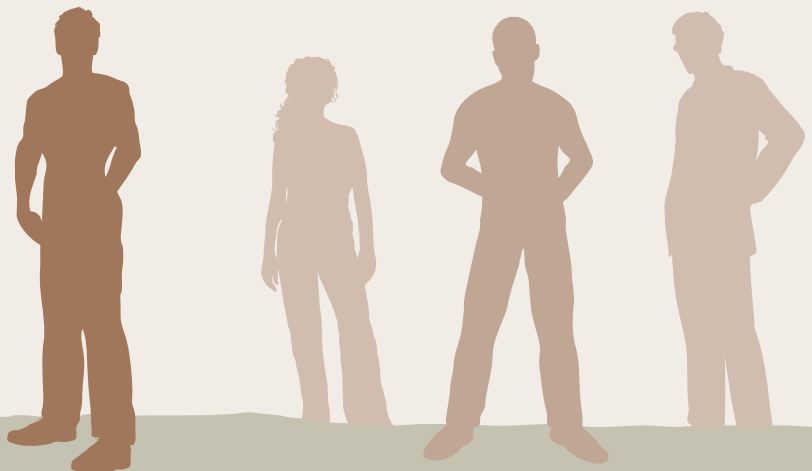
The current Fellows have arrived at MPC from a variety of locations and backgrounds. For example, Carrie Horton came from California after attending college in Oregon, while Lauren Black is a lifelong MPC attendee. Wherever they're from, the Fellows share a common goal, summarized by Pierce Babirak, a Maine native who graduated from college in Pennsylvania: "What I'm doing this year is setting a grounding intellectually and spiritually for the rest of my life."

The program comes at a strategic and yet too-often-overlooked time in the lives of the young adults. "There are two times when Christian young people's faith is at risk of being marginalized," explains Hugh Whelchel, RTS-Washington, D.C., executive director, who helped bring the program to MPC. "The first time is when they go to college, and there are millions of programs for that. But the other time is when they come out of college and go into the workplace. They move to another city and don't know anybody, and they're really at risk. So how do we minister to kids who are about to do that?"

"Then we ask, 'How do we get people to seriously integrate faith and work? We want them to walk out of here with a



Bill Fullilove



sense of what calling is and how God wants them to use that calling, whether it's a pastor, a missionary, a Fortune 500 company, homeschooling their kids — whatever that might be — to help transform culture. One of the ways the Lord transforms culture is through our jobs.”

For Hugh and Bill, the Capital Fellows program is essentially a recapturing of a needed biblical perspective. “This is an important part of a church that tends to get buried,” Bill says, “and it’s been exciting to unbury the classic Reformation doctrine of work and vocation.”

In the process, the program helps MPC accomplish its gospel mission. “One of the ways we’re looking to reach D.C. and the world is by equipping the next generation of leaders,” explains John Hutchinson, MPC senior pastor and an RTS-Jackson alumnus. “The Fellows Program is a significant part of that — it recruits dozens of young leaders and equips them for ministry in the local church and the community. The focus is on intentional discipleship and intensive discipleship.

“One of the visions of making a difference in the world is focused on the marketplace. Typically, church discipleship ministries equip Christians to use the means of grace, share their faith and engage in the church. But this ministry is equipping young men and women to be salt and light in the marketplace, to be effective in their respective callings, and that is a critically needed aspect of discipleship

that churches have largely ignored.”

Kristen Peterson testifies to the impact of the program in this regard. “It helped me transition out of the Christian bubble,” says the graduate of a Christian college. “It was a good stepping stone into the world, where I work with nonbelievers. The program was a safe place for me to get my feet wet.”

In her current work for a nonprofit child research organization, Kristen is the only Christian, rubbing shoulders daily with Muslims and people from many different religious traditions. “During Ramadan I’ve learned more in my lunchtime conversations than I have in all my religion classes,” she says. “The program helped me learn not to be afraid to talk about my faith.”

Bill describes the program as an effort to right a past wrong. “We asked ourselves,” he says, “‘What do we wish had been there for us coming out of college at 21 or 22 to help us make this jump?’ What we did was build a program we wished we’d had. If you can take away 10 to 20 years of false starts in the wrong direction, there’s a tremendous future payoff.” ♦

For more information about the Capital Fellows program at MPC, visit www.capitalfellowsmclean.org. More information about the national initiative, including how to start one’s own Fellows program, may be found at www.thefellowsinitiative.com.

FELLOWS PROGRAMS AND RTS

The Capital Fellows program at McLean Presbyterian Church is part of a national Fellows Initiative (www.thefellowsinitiative.com) preceded inside the Beltway by The Falls Church Fellows, also in Virginia. Both programs carry partnerships with

RTS in which students can receive seminary credit for their coursework. The other established Fellows programs are listed below, with those also having RTS partnerships highlighted in **brown**:

Colorado: The Rockland Fellows (Golden)

Florida: The Gainesville Fellows

Georgia: **First Presbyterian Church Fellows (Macon)**

Indiana: **Covenant Fellows (West Lafayette), The Heartland Fellows (Zionsville)**

Louisiana: NOLA (New Orleans Fellows)

Missouri: The Schaeffer Fellows (St. Louis)

New York: The Gotham Fellows — Redeemer Presbyterian Church (Manhattan)

North Carolina: **The Kinston Fellows, The Anglican Fellows (Raleigh)**

Pennsylvania: The Pittsburgh Fellows

South Carolina: The Florence Fellows

Tennessee: **The Knoxville Fellows, The Memphis Fellows**

Texas: Houston Fellows, Memorial Drive Fellows (Houston), All Saints PCA Fellows (Austin)

Virginia: **Trinity Fellows Program (Charlottesville)**

Each April, MPC hosts a national Fellows convocation. RTS co-sponsors the event, as Hugh Whelchel, RTS-Washington, D.C., executive direc-

tor, helps provide leadership for the national Fellows Initiative. Visit the Fellows Initiative Web site seen above for more information.

HOW THEN SHOULD WE WORK?

by HUGH WHELCHER

The arena was packed with over 5,000 business people attending a one-day motivational conference to listen to some of today's greatest inspirational speakers, including Gen. Colin Powell, Dick Vitale and Tony Robbins. One of the speakers began by asking the following question: "If you went home tonight and found that a long-lost relative had died and left you \$10 million, would you be at work tomorrow?" An audible "No" rang out from the audience.

Their sentiment is shared by many in our country today. A recent Gallup poll found that 77 percent of Americans hate their jobs. *Time* magazine reported in 2007 that Americans hate their jobs more today than in the past 20 years; fewer than half say they're satisfied with their current job. With 50-hour-plus workweeks and long commutes, workers are spending more and more of their lives at work, yet so many of them are unfulfilled and frustrated with their jobs.

This is also true for many Christians for whom work often seems only a "means to an end." Christians today have bought into the pagan notion that leisure is good and work is bad. They have also been misled by the sacred/secular distinction, which teaches that only working in the church is "real" full-time Christian service. This has not always been the case. The Reformers taught that all labor accepted as a calling and performed "as unto the Lord" was noble, yet this truth has slipped dramatically both in today's Church and our present culture.

As followers of Christ, we must address our failure to live as His followers in the workplace and to think theologically about how we integrate our faith and our work. We must learn not to work just to live, but to live to work for the glory of God.



What are the implications of this "biblical doctrine of work" for Christians today? We must:

- Rediscover that our primary vocation is the call to follow Jesus and realize that this call embraces the whole of our lives, including our everyday work.
- Rediscover the priesthood of all believers, seeing every part of our life — work, civic, family, recreational, church — as a "living sacrifice" to God (Romans 12:1ff; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Realize that our vocation/calling will be different both for different people and at different stages in our lives.
- Maintain a broad definition of work that encompasses not only paid employment but also domestic work and voluntary work.
- Be committed to the idea that we express our Christian discipleship through our employment, which is an important part of life.
- Understand the tension present in the Scriptures regarding work. You will not have a meaningful life without work, but you must not make your work the meaning of your life.
- Realize that through the Christian doctrine of work, God changes the culture.

As believers at the beginning of the 21st century, we stand in the same place as the Reformers. We have the opportunity to teach the truth of Scripture, including the biblical doctrine of work, and radically impact our culture, making a positive difference in our communities, cities, country and world for the glory of God and His Kingdom. If we are serious about making a difference, we need to help the church rediscover the biblical doctrine of work. ♦

Hugh Welcher is the executive director of RTS-Washington, D.C. This article is an edited version of a longer piece. To read the full-length version, visit www.rts.edu/site/resources/M-L.aspx.