Emmanuel’s Ministry Resource Center continues its First Friday Lunch Series this spring, focusing on the theme of *discipleship*. Led by a pastor and a professor, each lunch session explores a different space for discipleship.

Emmanuel alumna and adjunct professor Dr. Teresa Roberts (DMin ‘07) and Derek Sweatman, lead pastor of Atlanta Christian Church, kicked things off in February with a conversation around “Discipleship in Community.”

The March session, led by Naomi DeBord Bivins and Dr. Michael Woods, explored the theme of “Discipleship in Trauma.” Bivins is the senior pastor and co-founder of The Foundation Church in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, a church composed primarily of individuals in recovery.

Spiritual Director Dr. Michael Woods teaches in the Doctor of Ministry program at Emmanuel and serves as chaplain at the James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where he specializes in moral trauma.

Dr. Gary Selby, professor of ministerial formation at Emmanuel, and alumna Jane Wasem (BA ’06, MDiv ’10) will lead a discussion around “Discipleship in Joy” in April. Selby is the author of several books, the most recent of which is *Pursuing an Earthy Spirituality*, unpacking C.S. Lewis’ view of incarnational faith. Wasem serves as the director of youth ministries at Wesley United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee.

To participate in these conversations, log in to Zoom and enter Meeting ID #515 511 823.

**PRAY FOR MYANMAR**

Current seminary students San San Aye and Ngwa Cherry and May 2020 graduate Naing Htang are from Myanmar. The current political unrest in their home country has severely limited communication with family, and at the time of this writing, Naing is unable to return home to his wife and young daughter due to airport closures. Please lift these students, their loved ones, and this nation up in prayer.

Milligan has partnered with PCI to launch an oral history project that will allow us to memorialize the history of the campus through the years. Alumni will be given the opportunity to share their unique Milligan or Emmanuel stories.

**THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR AN ALUMNI VERIFICATION AND STORY SUBMISSION REQUEST THIS SPRING.**
THE VITAL ROLE OF CHAPLAINS

The restrictions put in place this past year in hospice, healthcare, and other public settings due to COVID-19 have shone a spotlight on the vital role of the chaplain. Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan has been preparing women and men for decades for this important work. On the front lines of the pandemic caring for staff and patients alike, chaplains provide not only spiritual support but also the physical comfort and connection that friends and family simply cannot.

Adah Hutchcraft (BA ’04, MDiv ’07), who has spent much of the past 12 months working directly with COVID patients, talks about wearing full PPE for five-plus hours “in order to maximize its use while being present with patients on the COVID wings.” Though the work is sometimes daunting, she is grateful that the hospital and retirement home she serves have allowed her to work alongside staff and patients.

Board certified hospice chaplain Anna Butler, BCC (MAR ’96) agrees: “While the donning and doffing of PPE initially carried such gravity, patients are still patients regardless of their diagnosis.”

In circumstances where the chaplain’s physical presence has not been allowed, technology and resourcefulness have been key.

“How much in-depth pastoral care can be offered over the phone or on a video call? More than I could have envisioned pre-COVID,” says Laura Beth Richardson, BCC (BA ’82, MACM ’15). “When you are isolated within a hospital room or desperate to see a loved one on a ventilator, you are wide open to connection with the Spirit in new and creative ways.”

Emmanuel’s Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program equips its graduates with the theological foundation and counseling expertise and experience necessary to help people navigate some of life’s most challenging moments. Regardless of the setting—whether it be the military, an intensive care unit, or a palliative care clinic—Emmanuel alumni serving in chaplaincy roles offer essential support to people at varying points in their faith journey whose needs are often acute. The role of chaplain requires attentiveness, compassion, and resilience.

Retired minister and part-time chaplain Art Sphar (MDiv ’74) recalls one of his first experiences as a chaplain working with a sheriff’s department. That encounter made a lasting impression on him and underscored the critical need for pastoral care in this setting. Throughout his career in ministry, he has been instrumental in supporting and training chaplains to work alongside law enforcement and first responders in what are often high-stress situations.

With a background in social work, Thomas Arbaugh (MDiv ’14) pursued a seminary degree because, he says, “I realized that the majority of my clients approached the world through their spiritual lens, and I felt ill equipped to provide appropriate care.” He found that chaplaincy provided “the bridge between the secular and sacred” that he was missing in serving his clients.

CHAPEL IN AN ERA OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Emmanuel faculty, staff, and students continue to use their creativity in the face of necessary COVID-19 restrictions. In addition to wearing masks and limiting in-person class sizes, the seminary’s chapel services have moved outside—even in the snow!—to allow for in-person gatherings and to ensure social distancing.
Recent Emmanuel graduate Isaac Williams (MDiv '20) describes chaplaincy as “a career of intentional active listening.” He says, “Chaplains do not just care for those in our tradition, but continue the work of the Church in tending to all. The work of chaplaincy gives me space to bring light and hope into an often desolate and lonely place.”

Chaplaincy is not for everyone. It is a calling. Hutchcraft discovered this while a seminary student. She says, “The work of chaplaincy required my all, but it required more—that is what drew me. It required complete reliance upon God, and this is how I have wanted to live my life.”

The weight and wonder of this calling is captured in a story Butler tells about working with a hospice patient.

She first met this woman when the woman’s husband died. Butler pastored the widow through her grief, and the two developed a friendly rapport. Then the widow, who had been reluctant to delve too deeply into spiritual matters, became the hospice patient. It was at this point that Butler says she “truly became the chaplain.”

“I represented God in a form she could work with, laugh at, cuss to, and believe in. I prayed for her. When I first made visits with her, I had asked if I could pray and she agreed, but there was the sense of hesitation, as it was out of the norm for her. In later visits, I clarified whether this practice of prayer would be okay with her, and she said, ‘I’d be disappointed if you didn’t.’ We knew it came from a relationship that made both of our lives better and brought each of us closer to the reality of God’s grace and love.”

This is what chaplains do: they sit with people in their most vulnerable moments and seek to bring them “closer to the reality of God’s grace and love.” For these Emmanuel graduates and others who have answered the call to chaplaincy, we are grateful.

For more information about Emmanuel’s seminary programs, visit ecs.milligan.edu or call 800.933.3771.

Dr. Thomas E. Stokes, Jr.

October 17, 1942–December 23, 2020

Dr. Thomas “Tom” Stokes (MDiv ’74, DMin ’02) passed away on December 23, 2020, at the age of 78.


While working at the seminary, Tom served as a chaplain for the Tennessee Army National Guard and was called to serve in Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield/Desert Storm (August 1990–June 1991) as chaplain, HHD, 176th Maintenance Battalion, TN. He served as state chaplain for the Tennessee Army National Guard until his retirement in October 2002 at the rank of Colonel.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Barbara Ann (Wise) Stokes, and sons Andrew Thomas and Ian Philip and their families.

Emmanuel alumnus and retired professor Dr. Robert Hull (BA ’65, MDiv ’71) officiated at Tom’s funeral, and alumnus Dr. Aaron Wymer (MDiv ’95) officiated at his graveside service at Mountain Home National Cemetery.
Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan is supported by the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ and provides theological education for men and women from across the United States and around the world. Emmanuel is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1110, phone: 412.788.6505. The following degree programs are approved by ATS: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Religion, Master of Arts in Christian Ministries, and Doctor of Ministry.

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ecs.milligan.edu/scholarships


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