Lately, I have been contemplating the importance of language. Without language, we are without communication, and without communication, we are without relationships. But, some language can be off-putting and some can be confusing. For example, my mom was in town this past weekend and we were talking about the language of texting. She thought “lol” meant “lots of love,” whereas I had learned that it was “laugh out loud.” Now, sometimes these interpretations can be interchangeable; in some cases however, it doesn’t work at all. Imagine the reaction you’d receive with the following text: “Fluffy, my dog died last night. Anyway, lol!” This is the same problem we run into when evangelizing. How do I describe the word “worship” to someone I am inviting to church on Sunday morning? Do I assume that my atheist friend thinks about judgment in the same terms I do? And, how does that shape our conversations about spirituality?

I have recently been challenged with this very task at school: to be able and ready to translate my faith and the Word of God into the language that the listener will relate to. I cannot believe how difficult this is. It is more than just coming up with analogies that draw in your listener, but it is defining words and people in a concise way that enriches them in the knowledge of God, encourages curiosity, and keeps the conversation moving.

One recent assignment was to write a ten-page testimony and present it to a fellow classmate. This was a relatively simple task. I was able to review my paper, highlight key words, and come up with definitions that would engage any potential nonbelievers. However in the everyday spiritual conversations I have with co-workers, I do not have that luxury. Though each of them has a general sense of Christianity, I must speak in a language that represents truth to them. This means not glossing over words, but taking time to reach a common understanding of the terms we use together.

Here’s a sticky phrase: “Christians should never judge.” Well, yes and no. We need to define “judge” first. Are we talking about an eternal sentence, or about exercising discretion?

My church recently had three confirmands participate in the worship service by public witness of their prayer life, reflections on mission, and worship. These teenagers were challenged with the same challenge I extend to you. God’s word will not go far if I explain it to you in Dutch, and though it has power of its own, we are ambassadors of Christ charged with proclamation of the Word of God. We are given Paul’s exhortation to become a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles to win them over. (1 Cor. 9:19-21). We must be aware of the Christian-ese we use so often. Never assume, always love.

One of my favorite aspects of seminary life (although it’s very hard to narrow it down!) is the Tuesday night family dinners and women’s classes. We feel so blessed each time our family of five gets to enjoy a full meal for a total of $6, without having to worry about meal planning, cooking, or dishes!

After dinner, I love the privilege of having my husband take my kids home, and I get to be stretched and challenged by brilliant professors, in the company of my sisters in Christ.

I have attended at least one of the two women’s classes every quarter we’ve been here, and I can’t wait to sign up for the next session.

If you haven’t been to the dinners and/or classes before, I can’t recommend them highly enough. I encourage you to participate in this tremendous blessing that the seminary offers us.

Winter session women’s classes start January 4th. Watch your inbox for all of the details!

~Darci Miller
SWA would like to thank Oh Lolli Lolli for their support of our scavenger hunt event. They put together a gift bag of yellow and green gummi bears for every participant, and provided them to us at no charge. Some of the comments we heard included, “these are the best gummi bears ever!”

Many of us who live in the neighborhood were already a fan of this “itsy bitsy candy shoppe.” But, we’re glad that we were able to introduce this little gem to other seminary women who may not have had a chance to stop by before.

Oh Lolli Lolli is located at 802 DeMun Avenue, across the park from the Luther Statue. If you have a chance to visit the shop, please thank them for being such kind neighbors!
Devotion on 1 Samuel 1:8-15
By Sarah Buescher, SWA Spiritual Life Chair

The story of Hannah is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. When we first meet Hannah we are told that she is one of two wives and she is barren. The other wife, Peninah, would provoke her because God had closed her womb. When her husband went to the temple to offer a sacrifice to the Lord she went away on her own to pray because she was so upset over what Peninah would say. She would go before the Lord while she was deeply distressed and she would weep bitterly. Hannah would pour her heart out before the Lord, tell Him her frustrations and her deepest desires.

God knew her situation, he felt her pain, and he loved that she went to him with fervent prayer. Just like God knew Hannah’s situation, he also knows ours. He wants us to come to him in prayer; he wants us to tell him our frustrations and our deepest desires, he wants us to pour our hearts out to him.

This image of pouring our heart out to the Lord is like a pitcher of water, we tip it and all that is inside comes out. The good, the bad, everything right before the Lord. There is no one better for us to bring this to. He can empathize better that anyone we know; He has felt our pain and our sorrow.

In Luke 22, we are told that right before Jesus was arrested he went to a place where he could pray alone. Luke describes Jesus being in agony as he prayed. In fact his sweat was like drops of blood that fell to the ground.

Jesus poured his heart out before his Father, he prayed in agony just as Hannah did. These are two great examples of how we are to come before the Lord. Not necessarily in agony, but in fervent prayer. We are to take anything and everything to Him, and He will listen and answer our prayers according to his perfect will. He loves to hear us pray. We are his children and he wants us to pour our hearts out to him. We don’t have to have “the perfect” prayer or anything that would be considered eloquent. Even if you can’t find the words to say, Jesus is praying on your behalf. Because of his death and resurrection the Father promises to hear our prayers. So, become a woman of prayer and pour your heart out to our Lord.

Flashback: 80’s Style!

Thanksgiving. Isn’t it sometimes a chore to think of things to be thankful for? There are days that feel like this seminar career of our husband’s will surely never end. There are days that the money won’t stretch to meet our needs (much less our wants). Through trials with sick children, and being separated from our relatives, it is often difficult to say, “Thank you Jesus for this time.” Yet, every day our Lord has promised to be with us—for us. Hard as it is to imagine, God will never give us more than we can handle.

After the rains of early October had passed, one afternoon I went for a walk with my two small children. After a week of rainy, dreary days, the sky was incredibly blue. The sun was so warm, I felt rejuvenated walking along with a little hand in each of mine. Ignoring me, Isaac, who is four, looked across at his three year old sister and told her, “God is very big, Margot.” “God is huge,” she responded. “He tells the rain when to fall,” he continued, “and the sun when to shine.”

The things children can teach us! I felt ashamed that I hadn’t been reminding my children about how very big and caring our God is for us.

In Philippians 4:6 Paul encourages us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

So, as late November comes and we celebrate Thanksgiving, remember that it is far more than turkey and dressing that we should be grateful for. Above all, do take the time to remember that we have a big God. Caring so much about us, He sent His son Jesus—for whom we can be ever thankful. And with that message in our hearts, we can truly enjoy the holidays ahead.

This article was written by Kim Wagner in November 1986 for “Lifelines for Seminary Wives.” Although a lot has changed over the years, the sentiment remains the same.
Lessons from the Birdfeeder: Cat!
Contributed by Teri Vogeli, First Year Sem Wife

One of the cats is sitting under the bird feeders again. Like a bad mood, he holds vigil, making the birds uneasy as they flit in and out of the surrounding bushes, hoping for quick snatches of breakfast seed. I love watching them; fire red cardinals, black capped chickadees, sunny finches, brilliant jays, tender brown nuthatches. They’re wary of his presence and soon stay away all together. I don’t blame them. They’re hungry, but they know he could be danger, so they dissolve into the bushes. I hear frustrated chirping, but not a speck of color shows through the leaves.

I’m mad at him! This is my morning quiet time! Thinking, reading, praying, watching the birds enjoy breakfast, all before my large family fills the house with need – stolen! He hunkers down in the grass and waits, hungry. I know he’ll eventually leave, hopefully unsatisfied. The birds are hard to fool. But I have seen him catch one. I know he can do it, and so do they.

Reminds me of Satan - lurking in the corners and long grass of my busy mind, waiting to pounce when I’m not guarded. He catches me more often than I’d wish he could. Sometimes I just don’t see him hiding there. Sometimes I know he’s waiting, like a cat with a twitching tail, waiting for me to get distracted by all the demands on my life and time – kids, school, laundry, babies, husband, house, meals...

If he sneaks up on me, I find myself losing patience with the kids, nagging at my husband, being lazy with housework, grousing about church, gossiping about a friend. I’m caught, and it surprises me.

I must be more wary next time. I must never forget that he wants to destroy me.
I must stand firm and be wise about my actions and thoughts.

“Resist the devil! And he will flee from you!” says God.

The cat finally got tired of waiting and skulked off, resigning himself to a bowl of dry cat chow. Within minutes, the birds return to feast, calling to each other that the danger has, at least for now, retreated to the distant porch. They know it’s safe to come out again.

“Be wary, and vigilant! Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

The birds have stopped their nervous twittering and are singing joyously again. I sing too, Lord, in thanks for wisdom, strength, and protection, under the shadow of Your wings!

Cooking Corner: Food Bank Feast!

I like to challenge myself to come up with meals that are made from ingredients that can all be found at the Seminary Food Bank. Here are a couple of recipes that fit that bill. Black Bean Soup is one of our family favorites. Paired with some Jiffy corn muffins, it makes a great chilly day meal.

You may remember that we got to sample these Buckeyes at the Fall Welcome Event. I was glad I got the recipe! Enjoy!

Black Bean Soup
1 lb. Polish Sausage, cut in pieces and browned
1 can bean with bacon soup
1 can water
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
3/4 c. medium salsa
Mix all ingredients and heat through.
Garnish with shredded cheese, sour cream, green onions, cilantro, avocado, or Fritos (my husband’s personal favorite!)

Buckeyes (Peanut Butter Balls)
1 pound powdered sugar
3 cups rice krispies
1 jar peanut butter
1 stick butter, melted
1 package chocolate chips
1/3 stick of paraffin wax
Mix powdered sugar and rice krispies. Work in the peanut butter, then stir in the butter. Roll into balls, cover with plastic wrap and chill. In a double boiler, melt the paraffin and chocolate chips. Use a toothpick to dip peanut butter balls in chocolate. Refrigerate until set.
The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

A. Lincoln
Ladies, please join us for a beautiful evening of song and meditation on the birth of our Savior.

In the President’s Room
Sunday, December 5, 2010
6:30-8:00 pm

Questions: Contact Sarah Buescher
at smbuescher@gmail.com