

A GOOD YEAR IN DAUNTING TIMES

by John B. Lindner

IN MANY WAYS 2008 WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR for the Divinity School, and we have had numerous occasions for celebration. One of the most recent was the establishment of the Leander E. Keck Scholarship for students in need of financial aid. Honoring Winkley Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology and former YDS Dean Leander Keck, the scholarship was made possible through a substantial gift by a member of the YDS Board of Advisors, who intended to recognize Keck's many years of faithful service, scholarship and leadership at the Divinity School.

Among the many achievements of 2008, YDS and BDS passed the halfway point toward their combined capital campaign goal of \$38 million. Thanks to the commitment and generosity of many alumni and friends, gifts in this campaign already exceed all previous giving initiatives in the history of the Divinity School. Under the leadership of Dean Harry Attridge, major advancements have been made toward meeting the financial aid needs of students. In less than a decade the average student loan debt of graduating seniors has been reduced by almost \$10,000. This represents major progress, but it is still a challenge to successfully complete the five-year campaign in 2011.

On the heels of the good news from the first half of the fiscal year, we are now in a deep economic downturn. Every week we hear tragic stories of churches and communities that are struggling. Getting through a difficult period like this requires collaboration, sharing, and support from friends and colleagues. At the Divinity School our primary concern during these hard times is for our students. We realize that the current economic uncertainty is producing some anxiety in all of us. But this is even more the case for current and incoming students who are trying to finance a rigorous yet spirit-filled theological education. We cannot let our support for these students falter. They are the future leaders of the church and the academy. This broken world needs them. They, in turn, need our prayers and our financial gifts.

In prior times of hardship, the community of YDS alumni and friends has rallied in support of many worthy causes. In the 1990s the community pulled together to "save the Quad," and a decade later we have much to celebrate. But in these



Leander E. Keck, Winkley Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology and former YDS dean

times of economic difficulty let us rally together again and do whatever is possible to support students and ministries in church and world that especially need our help.

We are realistic about the second half of the capital campaign and believe we can stay the course even through difficult times. We hope that every alum will consider a gift to the annual fund, 100 percent of which goes toward financial aid to students. It is an investment in the ministry both now and for the years to come. Additionally, we hope you will consider a bequest pledge or a planned gift that over time will build scholarship resources for generations to come.

We are most appreciative to YDS alumni and friends for this extraordinary community of support – people like Peter Marty '85 M.Div. who, with his wife Susan, stepped forward with a gift in support of the Divinity Tomorrow campaign. We are sure that many of you share the sentiments Peter expressed about their decision to make a gift: "Yale Divinity does more than lead you in good paths... The place also fosters initiative. I learned at Yale Divinity School what leadership in the Church means... I certainly feel that Yale Divinity School's role in American theological education is too important to neglect."

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