



Theology Fellow John P. Burgess (front row left), James Henry Snowden Professor of Systematic Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, with parishioners, monks and pilgrims of St. George's Parish near Kineshma, Russia.

PHOTO BY EVGENII LYIVADNYI, COURTESY OF JOHN P. BURGESS

Promoting Theological Scholarship

HENRY LUCE III FELLOWS IN THEOLOGY PROGRAM

Since 1994, the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology Program has provided sabbatical grants to faculty members at seminaries and divinity schools to explore a wide range of topics relevant to contemporary concerns. The resulting scholarship has expanded the public conversation about religion, enriched pastoral activities and advanced interreligious dialogue.

Judith Berling, a professor of Chinese and comparative religions at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, used her 2001–2002 fellowship to conduct research for a book that provides a systematic approach to teaching Christian theological students about other religions. *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education*, now widely used in theological schools, aims to prepare future religious leaders to engage more effectively with this country's growing cultural and religious diversity.

For Berling, the Luce fellowships provide a valuable opportunity to expand the scope and impact of theological scholarship. "The design of the Luce program encourages scholars to risk new questions and approaches and to consider the importance of their questions to the larger church and society."

Some Luce Theology Fellows have explored topics pertaining specifically to American culture. Yale University professor Kathryn Tanner, in a project called "Grace and Gambling," studied the 2008 financial crisis and subprime mortgage meltdown to explore how Christian thinking can be applied to economic issues; Otto Maduro, a professor of world Christianity at Drew University Theological School, used the fellowship to deepen his research on the growing appeal of Pentecostalism among Latino immigrants; Harvard Divinity School professor Diana Eck expanded her groundbreaking work on

American religious pluralism; and Grant Wacker of Duke Divinity School researched his upcoming book, *Billy Graham's America*.

Other Fellows have looked beyond the United States. For example, Khiok-Khng Yeo, a New Testament scholar at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Illinois, explored the moral and theological identities of Chinese Christians by comparing the political ethics of Confucius and the Apostle Paul. John P. Burgess, at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, is currently researching the role of the Orthodox church in shaping a new national identity for post-Soviet Russia.

Theology Fellows are also bringing religious perspectives to scientific questions, particularly concerning the environment. Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, used the Luce fellowship to conduct research on the relationship between global warming and current religious notions of the Apocalypse. At Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, Douglas Burton-Christie's Contemplative Ecology project applied the teachings of early Christian monastic traditions to modern ecological problems.

One distinguishing component of the Luce theology fellowships is the requirement that Fellows make their scholarship accessible to broader audiences. This focus on dissemination has yielded impressive results. Fellows have produced more than one hundred books to date, and many have published articles in scholarly journals, church publications and national magazines. Fellows have also become important voices in the media—writing blogs and giving radio and television interviews that provide a scholarly religious perspective on a range of pressing contemporary issues.

Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, believes the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology Program has achieved significant impact. "By supporting the research of top theological scholars, the program has generated work that is shaping the fundamental intellectual structures that communities of faith need today." ■