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BETHANY
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Empowering Christian Leaders

Imagining Ministry

Wonder & Word

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Imago Dei

RUTHANN K. JOHANSEN

Morning Grace

*Light emerges gingerly
pushing the mottled night comforter
aside.*

*Bending the stillness,
calling forth winds,
light, fully awake,
tosses trees behind my head
into alluring dances on the wall I face.*

*And I barefoot return
grateful salutations.*

At the first hints of dawn, each day the world is created anew. In that short space when light moves almost imperceptibly, we hover between the shroud of sleeping darkness and the light that will make recognizable the earth place of our habitation. How we greet both uncertain darkness and the breaking forth of the light depends on how we read the Genesis 1 account of creation, particularly verses 27 and 28. According to the creation story in Genesis, God created light from darkness, from nothingness. Following light came plants and animals and human beings made in the image of God. *Imago dei*.


What does it mean to be both creatures of the earth and endowed with the image of God? From the creation story, we perceive that God creates human beings for **relationship** with the Creator, one another, and other life forms. In the half-light of dawn, we realize the paradox of knowing our **centeredness** in God yet daily facing the dilemma of choice afforded us as the gift of **freedom**

to go our own ways. Forgetfulness, trials, and suffering abound in the dark nights, as Hebrew and Christian scriptures report. True and false prophets lure humanity toward or away from **reverence** for the Creator whose image we bear. Yet, when we wake fully into the daylight ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we recall that we “live and move and have our being in love” (Acts 17:28) and are made for love (John 13:35), which is as essential to our beings as light, water, and wind are for all life forms with whom we share the earth.

If the capacity for **love** is the most distinguishing mark of God’s image and creativity which, though rejected, is never lost, what does that reality have to do with imagining ministry? Those who minister are like weavers, quilters, scientists, and artists of all kinds who call upon the imagination to create and to serve in love. They draw upon and call forth the image of God by reverently handling and studying the raw materials of nature and cherishing the colors, patterns, and rent pieces of fabric from our lives. And from these they shape, and help others to form, works of beauty that point toward and open space for the redemptive creativity of God. To be created in the image of God is to look deeply into the creative power of the Creator eternally present in the multitudinous forms of earth and within ourselves. To minister in love is to welcome, serve, and offer grateful salutation to the new creation continuously forming in our midst, even though slumbering in darkness or barely perceptible in the half light of dawn.



Multiple Models of Ministry




What is your first-impression image of ministry? For many church-going Brethren, it may be that of a neighborhood or rural church with a pastor employed to nurture the flock and preach on Sunday morning. Some may recite the Brethren belief of the priesthood of believers and therefore note that all are ministers. But that recitation often comes with the expectation that the pastor still functions as primary ministry leadership and that ministry happens in a conventional congregational setting.

In this article, five writers share in their own words how they experience ministry. Woven throughout these descriptions are forms of ministry that may vary from what many typically think of as ministry.

As an experienced free minister in the 500-member Chiques congregation, near Manheim, Pennsylvania, Glen Faus describes what for the first several hundred years of the Brethren was the norm rather than the exception. Variations on plural nonsalaried ministry as it is formally called are finding renewed interest in some congregations these days as churches look for alternatives to what has been the traditional ministry model of the last half of the twentieth century.

Linda Lambert has served for over twenty years as a bivocational pastor of the Thurmont, Maryland, congregation. With average attendance of seventy, Thurmont has an extraordinarily active and creative social action ministry and is very intentional about pulling lay ministers into its leadership in the bivocational model.

Tim Button-Harrison is part-time district executive in Northern Plains, a smaller trans-Mississippi



district where the distance from one of its thirty-three congregations to another can be farther than it is from Philadelphia to Orlando. His personal journey through ministry has involved loving diverse sets of people, entering their hopes and pains, mediating difficult conversations, and helping the district and its ministry needs adapt to deepening changes around it and within.

Kathy Mack found herself in a geographical area without a local Church of the Brethren: Rochester, Minnesota. She and several friends solicited the help of the Root River church thirty-five miles away to establish Hands of Christ in their town. Meeting weekly in members' homes, they have established a spiritual family without the walls of a traditional church building.

Kathy Long is a medical doctor in North Liberty, Indiana, who with her husband Joe has made eight trips to Nicaragua on medical missions. As she has given a much-needed ministry to the people of small villages, she has learned what a two-way street ministry is, experiencing the spiritual uplift of the indomitable hope and witness of those she has served.

At Bethany, we find ourselves frequently exchanging the buzz words "multiple models of ministry." Buzz words or not, the phrase communicates a very current need for ministry by, and among, Brethren: to find many ways of sharing our witness within and beyond our congregations. As Bethany reaffirms its long-standing commitment to preparation of ministry leadership, we continue to search for how that task can be creatively expressed in new and different forms.



Free Ministry

GLEN FAUS

I have been an ordained minister in the Chiques Church since 1965 and served as moderator (coordinator of ministry) of the congregation from 1986 until 1994. I was placed on emeritus status at age seventy and have been an interim pastor at the Mohler congregation since April 2008. When I was the moderator at Chiques, we had two former moderators who were still active as ministers. Robert O. Hess and J. Becker Ginder were a great help to me in providing continuity to our ministry.

Over the years the congregation has had opportunities to evaluate our style of ministry, and every time there was overwhelming support for continuing the free ministry. There are a number of reasons why the people prefer it.

- They like the variety of preaching styles.
- Since we don't have to pay for pastor(s) and church staff, there is more money to be given to outreach. The Chiques congregation has consistently spent substantially more per year on outreach than on operating expenses.
- There is not a separation in expectations of ministers and lay persons. Lay persons realize that many of them must be involved in ministry if the programs of the congregation are to be successful.

There have been many changes at Chiques in the last twenty years. The congregation expects so much more of their lay leaders and set apart ministers, such as:

- The ministers are expected to be more involved in visitation at important times in the life of individuals and families (sickness, hospitalizations, graduations, birth of children, etc.)
- The ministers are involved more with individual, family, and premarital counseling.
- The ministers are expected to continue to grow as preachers.
- The ministers are expected to keep up to date by reading and studying.
- The ministers must spend more and more time together in study and discussion so they have a shared vision as to where the congregation is going.

Some free ministry congregations have been hurt in the past when one or a few ministers go their own way and bring division to the congregation. While the free ministry will not work everywhere, it has been effective in the Chiques congregation.



Bivocational Ministry

LINDA LAMBERT

Bivocational leadership eliminates the word volunteer and recognizes the calling of each person to be a minister of the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). Everyone is bivocational; living in this world and serving the kingdom of God as a citizen of heaven.

Ministry at Thurmont is defined and described by who we are in Christ more than what we do for Christ. We are disciples seeking first the kingdom of God. We are Christ's ambassadors striving to bring repentance, reconciliation, and restoration to God's creation. We are serving God, who through Christ has set us free from our sins and made us to be a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6).

Vitality for ministry comes through worship and prayer. We worship and pray in unity of the Spirit because we all love God and desire his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We focus on keeping Jesus Christ the head of the church. Under his authority and leading we establish ministry formation. When disciples mature to the point of readiness, there is a releasing to minister with God's anointing, direction, and timing. Our outreach ministries were developed after the ministers were prepared and equipped for service.

We have become a multicultural body through our ministry with women and children from a local drug rehab center. Through their receiving hope, help, and healing, they are a blessing to us. They become ministers of the gospel with us.

Through our ministry with the women and children in a homeless shelter, we are struggling together to deal with our prejudice and preconceived ideas about the homeless.

Our elder care ministry provides Depends (incontinence pads) and Ensure (health drink) to every eligible senior citizen in Frederick County who applies for supplies. Our church contributes when the funding is depleted. We have given an average of \$1,200.00 per month to this ministry for three years.

In each of our outreach ministries, we have not been able to use the excuse of separation of church and state and play it safe inside our compound of comfort. We have crossed class, state, and race boundaries, and we now know that nothing is impossible with God.

In my ministry, I personally am motivated by my love for God and witnessing growth and transformation in people's lives. We have seen prostitutes become powerful witnesses for Christ. They have overcome their difficulties through the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of their mouths (Rev. 12:11).

Our model is from Jesus Christ (John 10:9-10). We come to worship for refreshing, restoring, reflecting and revelation. We go out empowered to witness and serve.



Ministry as a District Executive

TIM BUTTON-HARRISON

Twenty years ago I moved from Bethany Seminary to my first pastorate. From general reading, classes, and papers, I turned to a particular community, relating to a unique set of people with concrete needs. Immediately, the link between my commitment and their trust was clear, and I made a deep decision to become part of the church's life and place. This was the first watershed or turning point in my understanding of ministry. Ministry is not an abstraction, but a concrete commitment and decision to become part of a people and place.

Then two issues arose. I was deeply committed, but the needs and demands of individuals seemed unlimited. I simply could not be all things to all people. Also, I had no exclusive claim to preaching, teaching, counseling, visiting, or planning. Others in the church had these gifts as well. What then was my special role? How was I "set apart"? The saying "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" now became instructive. A church body is more than the sum of its members, and a member is more than the sum of his or her needs. What if caring for the whole is the set apart role of a pastor and theologian? The many needs of individuals and the multiple tasks of ministry were still important, but now my primary concern was the health and mission of the whole church body and the quality of relationships within and to that body. This was the second turning point.

In the last five years, I have gone through a third watershed, seeing some pastors consumed by their congregation's internal issues and seeing some congregations drifting away from the wider church. For ministry to remain vital and congregational life healthy, relationships and commitments beyond the local church are essential. In the absence of collegial relationships, ministers become isolated and lack the tempering influence of peers. And without sisterly relations, churches become suspicious if not hostile toward one another.

The primary focus of ministry and congregational life may be local, but the church itself is trans-local. The church is a wide and interdependent community of disciples, joined by common identity, commitment, and relationship in cooperative mission and continual learning. As Paul writes, "If one suffers, all suffer together with it. If one is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Cor. 12:26) Here are my basic questions for ministers. Where is the concrete and local expression of your ministry? How are you caring for the whole of your congregation and people? What are you doing to foster relationships with ministry colleagues and to connect your people with the wider church? And the question I'm currently wrestling with: What is the nature of the reign of God, and given that, how do we share in God's mission and work in today's world? A vital and effective ministry can't ignore these questions.



House Church Ministry

KATHY MACK

Hands of Christ is a house church located in Rochester, Minnesota. The group was started by three individuals meeting for Bible study and with the desire to build a community among Christians wishing to integrate faith with action. We have seen members come and go, but have maintained a core group of members. Hands of Christ has been blessed with support and leadership from both the Root River and Lewiston congregations.

We are a support group for Brethren away from any established congregation and to others of like spiritual bent who wish to join us. We share similar Christian values and feel that we are all "tuned to the same pitch." We listen, encourage, and pray for one another in our endeavors, our trials, our joys, and our concerns. One of the many scriptures we hold dear is Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Study and prayer are at the center of our time together. We have recently studied Richard Foster's book, *Spiritual Disciplines* and observed a one-day spiritual retreat together. We are currently studying the New Testament book of Acts. We also worship with larger groups, sharing Love Feast, Easter, and outdoor Sunday worship services with sister Church of the Brethren congregations. In the greater Rochester community, we have participated in peace events with the Mennonite and Quaker churches, and on August 6, we commemorated Hiroshima Day by attending a lantern lighting ceremony at an interfaith celebration.

We gain our strength from our Church of the Brethren roots and our connections to the district and denomination. We each receive the *Messenger* magazine, and in 2008 we read and studied the *Fresh from the Word* devotional produced for the 300th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren.

Service is also an important part of our mission. Each week we contribute to our Heifer International quarter tube. We are active within the Northern Plains District, both as individuals and as a group. This year we created the banner for the Northern Plains District Conference and over the past two years have worked in conjunction with the Root River church's vacation Bible school to purchase, assemble, and deliver emergency clean-up buckets, school kits, and hygiene kits for Church World Service. We also connect with and support Global Women's Project.

We enjoy the informality and freedom the house church format provides. It allows us to be creative and dynamic with studies and uses of our monies. It also brings a deep level of commitment to the group and to each other. Each of us brings our own special gifts and everyone's participation is welcomed and valued. We are a spiritual family sharing our lives and our love of Christ Jesus.



Lay Ministry

JOE AND KATHY LONG

We made our first trip to Nicaragua in January 1994 with the Manchester College January Term Medical Practicum class. The course introduced premed and predental students to medicine outside the comforts of the United States. Physicians, dentists, nurses, and college students staffed a rural Central American clinic for two weeks. We treated hundreds of patients, practicing medicine without the aid of laboratory, radiology, surgical suites, electricity, and many more luxuries we all take for granted. We toured the hospitals located only in a few larger cities, hours away from much of the population.

It took us twelve hours via cattle truck to travel the 250 kilometers from Managua to Mulukuku that first year. We slept on cots or the cement floor of the local school and ran the clinic out of the school as well. Women of the village cooked for us and did our laundry. We showered by "dip and pour method" in outdoor plastic stalls by candlelight or moonlight. Bathrooms were outhouses with resident cockroaches and spiders as large as one's hand. Our level of medicine was pretty basic, but we gave out a lot of vitamins and made a few life-saving diagnoses that were then sent on to Managua for further treatment. We were blessed far more than we felt we had helped. The people were very welcoming and appreciative of our work even though we felt we had given so little.

The most striking impression that we experienced was the insuppressible hope of the Nicaraguan people. They had suffered through a dictatorship, a war financed by other nations, and for a good share of the rural population, loss of their husbands and fathers. The women learned brick

making, carpentry, furniture building, and other skills to provide shelter and income for their children. It was an amazing sight to witness. In observing their accomplishments, their never-ending hope, their desire to continue to provide and find ways to improve their families' chances to survive, we better understood Jesus's message to the poor as well as our role in that message. Our role is not to convert the discouraged to our brand of Christianity but to walk with them: helping them provide for their most basic needs, spending time with them, and being honestly interested in their plight and their need. It is about providing the opportunity for our young people to live with them, work with them, interact with them and witness their lives firsthand. It is about coming home and sharing their lives with others. It is about helping our privileged friends and families to understand how eighty percent of the world's population lives, and keeping alive the discussion of how our consumer-oriented life impacts developing countries.

In our seven additional trips to Nicaragua, we have observed that as more time has passed since the Contra War, the health care delivery has improved in much of the rural area. However, there are still remote areas from where people travel more than a day to reach clinics and even further to reach a hospital.

There are numerous other areas in our world whose peoples are suffering from human-directed wars and conflicts. How can we accompany them on their journeys? How does our lifestyle affect their lives? What can we do each day that will positively impact their lives?



Ministry Together

Reflections on Acts 20:17-38

STEVEN SCHWEITZER

The book of Acts is filled with stories and speeches that reflect rich theology. Acts presents its readers with clear statements about ministry and challenges us to think and act imaginatively in response. If we read Acts, we need to rethink how we imagine ministry. I will focus on one speech and its larger story as an example.

Acts 20:17-38 is commonly known as “Paul’s Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders.” This scene occurs just before Paul journeys to Jerusalem for the final time. Paul had spent nearly three years in Ephesus—more than in any other local congregation—and formed a deep connection to the leaders in the church there, as evidenced by the comments and emotions displayed in this text. The final verses especially describe a tender, intimate time of prayer and mutual blessing between Paul and these congregational leaders.

This passage calls these leaders “elders” (Greek, *presbyteroi*) in verse 17 and “overseers” (Greek, *episkopoi*) in verse 28, pointing to a group of individuals who share the responsibility for congregational leadership and blurring the lines between “offices of the church.” The New Testament consistently

In Acts, we see that ministry extends to multiple individuals working together in leading community.



distinguishes between elders and deacons, but not between elders and bishops/overseers/pastors.

The model of ministry reflected in Acts and in the letters of Paul is one of multiple leaders working together without a singular person being in charge. The common understanding of a senior pastor who exercises authority over the other “lesser” leadership positions in the local church with which we are so familiar is not the model presented in the New Testament. Even the so-called Pastoral Epistles are not really written to pastors as we think of the term. Timothy and Titus are Paul’s temporary representatives to the churches in Ephesus and on the island of

Crete. Their job is to train the leaders in those communities who will replace them after they rejoin Paul. I prefer to call these three writings the Leadership Letters that focus on ministry in the church rather than our narrow sense of the term *pastor*. In Acts, we see that ministry extends to multiple individuals working together in leading the community.



In verses 22-23, Paul acknowledges that he is unclear about the future, but knows that he is being led by the Spirit toward something difficult. I am challenged to think that the Spirit does not lead me or us along the easy

road or the safe path, sheltering us from the storms. Of course, this does not surprise us, and yet we should not ignore its reality.

In verse 24, Paul states, "I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace." This reflects Paul's understanding of his identity, his role, and his mission. He exhibits humility in recognizing what his calling will require: the struggles, imprisonment, shipwreck, and hard times that await him. He focuses on God's call, on living out what God has been doing in his life, in communicating the gospel to all who will hear. I have always been deeply challenged by Paul's words and their perspective—even to the

point of sometimes not being able to say them aloud when reading—as I have reflected on my own sense of call. In these words, Paul knows himself, knows his God, knows his call and his mission, and knows what following God may require of him even in the midst of uncertainty about how the future will unfold.

However, Paul takes courage and draws strength to press on. What are the sources that help Paul in this moment of ministerial crisis? From this passage, a few can be named: a concern for those coming after him, a personal relationship with God, a sensing of the Spirit's presence and guidance, a commitment to follow God's call, the recognition of God's plan and God's protection for himself and the community, a deep connection to other ministers that is spiritual and emotional and honest, and a belief in Jesus as the example for ministry: Christ's own sacrifice and Christ's own humility in giving instead of receiving. As Paul often does in his letters, he connects his own life, words, and example to the life, words, and example of Jesus.

As we imagine ministry, we should hear Paul's words and see his example in Acts 20: Ministry is a reflection of Jesus, being led by the Spirit to fulfill God's purposes, contending that the Kingdom of God plays by different rules than the systems of power in the world around us. Imagining ministry means embracing priorities that resist the individualistic and self-preservationist mentality so common in our contemporary culture. Paul seems to take seriously a ministry in which the last shall be first, and all the losers win. What if we did? What would it cost us?

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Steven Schweitzer is academic dean at Bethany Theological Seminary.



Shaped For Ministry

JOSEPH TOLTON AND SUE ROSS

In order for a plant to grow healthy and strong, it needs soil that holds enough water, but not too much water. Sandy soil will not flood plants because water flows right through it. Soil full of clay will not leave plants thirsty because when rain comes the water stays. For strong, healthy plants, soil must be neither too sandy nor too full of clay.

Some of you may come from soil full of clay where you have not been encouraged to reflect deeply, but have been surrounded by water that is easy to reach. For you, religion may seem easy. Others of you may come from sandy soil, and the need to find water has caused you to sink your roots deep. Your reflections on religion have been difficult and have taken so much energy that you have not been able to spread your branches and flower.

This summer I completed a unit of clinical pastoral education. There I found that the wounds of my past form the source of my compassion for others. Rotting, failed relationships provided the fertilizer for me to reach out to help people who

themselves have problems with relationships. My pain helped me to understand their pain.

Before this summer, these dynamics in my caring relationships were there, but I did not know them. I was not aware of them. I was with people in rich and painful experiences. I was there for more deaths this summer than I have experienced in my entire life. I sat with people who felt lonely and ignored. My supervisor and my peer group helped me to handle the flood of experiences as they wound their way through the decaying remains of my past.

My peers offered me sand. Sandy soil lets the water flow fast. Their sand gave me distance from the heady mixture of my new ministry mixing with my personal history. By giving me just enough sand, I was able to grow without being burned.

My peers offered me clay. Clay holds water close. Their clay helped me to focus and reflect on the most important aspects of my new ministry and my personal history. By giving me just enough

At Bethany, I found teachers who helped me stay with difficult issues and struggle through them.



sand and just enough clay, my peers helped me to grow stronger. Their sand and clay mixed together with the compost of my past to create a rich soil. In that soil I have grown in my compassion and ability to help others.

At Bethany I found clay in teachers who helped me to stay with difficult issues and struggle through them. My friends here have given me sand—space to breathe.

About eight years ago, everywhere I turned, I felt a nudge and heard a voice to study and learn about God. I would hear it in discussions with friends, in sermons, in song, in prayers, and in silence. I wanted to ignore that voice because I had a full-time job in the business world that I enjoyed. However, God's voice never stopped, so I enrolled at Bethany Theological Seminary. It all started as a very personal reason with no expectation of using a degree but simply a way to experience God.

I was scared because I had not been in class for twenty-five years. I was nervous because I was not an expert on the Bible, and I had very little knowledge of the great theologians that I would

study. I was apprehensive because I lived two hours away from Richmond and had a full-time job. Overall, I felt unqualified and unprepared.

However, God had amazing things in store for me. I loved the challenging classes and discussions. I read books that inspired me. I learned from professors that had great passion and knowledge. I was hooked when I experienced the challenge to dig deep in my understanding of God. With each class, I had to take old beliefs I learned as a child, examine them, discuss them, and finally either own or discard them. The whole experience helped me to find the living God and provided me a journey of richness, wholeness, and healing.

Perhaps the best part of my seminary journey was the transformation of the reason that I attended Bethany. It was not about the degree nor was it about becoming a pastor or a theologian, but it was about integrating faith and work. I am currently using my experience as a businesswoman and a seminary graduate to develop workshops and resources that help business leaders bring spirituality into their workplaces. The personal reason that I took the journey has become public, and I am continuing to learn how to bring the love of God to my own corner of the world.



Perhaps the best part of my seminary journey was the transformation of the reason why I attended Bethany.

Joseph is a senior MDiv student at Bethany Theological Seminary, and Sue is a 2008 MA graduate. For more student stories, visit www.bethanyseminary.edu/stories.



Forming Scholars as Ministers

MALINDA ELIZABETH BERRY

The word ministry has two primary contexts for usage. First, there is ministry understood as work and service done as an expression of one's spiritual and religious vocation. Second, there is ministry in the sense of a government body charged with administrative responsibilities related to a specific social concern or service—think of the United Kingdom's ministry of education, health, defense, and so forth.

Christians in the United States of America live in the nexus of church and state even as those structures are separated to ensure religious freedom. How does the matrix of living and working and exercising religious freedom that shapes us and our society invite us to think



a student. When I look back on my MA experience at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, I recall that I did not sign up for classes like Foundations of Worship & Preaching or Principles of Pastoral Care. I was not sure how they would be relevant to me as a student who was preparing to walk the path of the professional theologian.

While I believed teaching to be a form of ministry—a conviction that had helped me choose a denominational seminary over an Ivy League divinity school—I had not realized that after finishing seminary I would be called upon to preach. I was also ignorant about how often I would find myself walking with students who were at various stages of faith development or seeking my advice and input about big life

about the unexpected places where ministry happens?

Bethany is the third seminary with which I have been acquainted. As I learn about the dynamics of a seminary's curriculum from a faculty point of view, I find myself also reflecting on my experience as

questions. I am not saying that taking a class in worship or pastoral care would have instantly solved the problem of my ignorance about preparing a sermon or how to speak pastorally when ideas and emotions collide. Rather, I see in hindsight that for me and many MA students across denominational seminary campuses, the missing piece of theological education for MA students is focused attention on our formation as scholars who are also ministers.

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Ministry formation is Bethany's curricular core, and we have to tend to the fact that being a minister is the way we express our commitment to pursue a career that self-consciously joins with God's shalom-making activity in the world regardless of context. As a faculty we are beginning to explore ways to weave ministry formation into the MA experience rather reserving it only for MDiv students.

In my role as MA director at Bethany, I am inviting us to open up spaces for MA students to reflect on what kind of scholars they want to be, what kinds of communities they want to walk with and participate in, and how they want to mentor others in the pursuit of loving God with the intellectual strength of our minds as well as the passionate strength of our hearts and souls.

What does the formation of scholars who are ministers look like? While there are all kinds of models and traditions for combining the practices of research, writing, study, and Christian service, there are at least three dimensions to how I hope we can approach this question here at Bethany.

1. *Ask MA students to identify their significant intellectual and spiritual mentors.* What kind of scholarship have those mentors produced and what makes their work and lives so meaningful? How might our students emulate the best of what their mentors' legacies offer them?

2. *Learn to practice and facilitate spiritual and communal disciplines that are part of the Anabaptist and Pietist traditions.* This dimension of scholarly ministry formation can help lay leaders assist pastors in nurturing congregational life using practices that range from discernment to



I hope we fully embrace the gift of the MA program: tending to the unexpected places where ministry happens.

giving and receiving constructive counsel in times of conflict and beyond. It can also help

graduates be effective organizational leaders who do not rely on hierarchal decision-making practices.

3. *Create opportunities for MA students to reflect on what kind of ministry settings are best suited for them in terms of their interests, intellectual abilities, and temperament.* Imagine Bethany graduates becoming college, seminary, or university professors; working as grant writers or program administrators for non-profit organizations; developing a spiritual direction practice as a ministry within a local congregation.

As we imagine ways to make scholarly ministry formation a reality, I hope that as a seminary, as faith communities, and as supporters of theological education, we fully embrace the gift of the MA program: tending to the unexpected places where ministry happens.

Malinda Berry is instructor in theological studies and director of the MA program at Bethany Theological Seminary.



Keeping Ministry Vital

JULIE MADER HOSTETTER

Think about the ministers that have influenced you. Was he a well-read theologian and creative teacher? Was she a sound biblical scholar and persuasive preacher? Did he walk with people during times of crisis and respond to others struggling with faith issues? Did she assist others with planning and implementing programs in the congregation and outreach to the community? How was this person able to model what it means to be pastor, priest, prophet, and/or poet?

On January 22, 2004, Dr. Craig Dykstra, vice-president for religion at Lilly Endowment, Inc., made a presentation at a Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Forum. In a follow-up article titled "Keys to Excellence: Pastoral Imagination and Holy Friendship," Dr. Dykstra outlined what he meant by each of these foci.

- The pastoral imagination is a way of seeing into and interpreting the world which shapes everything one thinks and does. It is the capacity to see deeply and realistically into what is going on in the world and to do so with eyes of Christian faith. The unique confluence of forces and influences, impinging on people who engage deeply and well in this work, shapes them so powerfully that they become people of peculiar virtues, sensitivities, and skills that are largely distinctive to really good pastors. Neither ministry nor the pastoral imagination is an achievement; they are gifts.
- Lilly funding has provided resources to create opportunities for pastors to find and sustain friendships in faith with one another.

These holy friendships have allowed pastors to receive from one another the gift of respect. When asked what sustains them in their ministries, hundreds of pastors in all denominations across the country answered "friendship." When asked what made them leave ministry, the answer almost always was isolation, sheer loneliness.

Since 2004, the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership has distributed funds from a Lilly Endowment, Inc. grant for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. In the Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership program, a small cohort (eight to ten pastors) gathered quarterly for two years to worship, study, and reflect on leadership theory and practice, relate to each other in formal and informal contexts, and explore ways they can effect personal and professional change. The Vital Pastor program invited small cohorts of pastors to meet and formulate a theological question that would focus their research and travel and to participate in post-immersion meetings over the course of two years. Pastors from each program continue their friendships and support each other's ministries.

In 2008, the Academy and its ministry partners, the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Theological Seminary—with input from the district executives—undertook a Pastoral Study Project. Its purpose was to better understand the needs, concerns, and effectiveness of Church of the Brethren pastors. All pastors and a sampling of congregational leaders were invited to participate.

Christian Community, Inc. conducted the survey, compiled the information, and analyzed the results.

Steve Clapp, director of Christian Community, Inc., stated that the study revealed:

- Overall clergy morale in the denomination is higher than reflected in previous studies.
- There are reasons to be concerned about our congregations relative to membership/attendance, hospitality, and stewardship matters.
- Clergy rate their effectiveness relatively high in preaching, worship leadership, pastoral care, and knowledge of the Bible and theology. They do not give themselves high ratings in handling conflict, stewardship, work as change agents, evangelism and church growth, or dealing with sexuality issues.
- Clergy have a close connection with their districts but do not feel as connected with church entities beyond the local level.
- The majority of pastors felt that ministry has been a blessing to their lives, but a significant minority note that it has not been a blessing to their spouses or children.
- Most rate their physical health as good or excellent, but a significant number do not exercise on a regular basis and do not have the healthiest eating habits.
- The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program has had a positive impact on those who participated in the two tracks (Vital Pastors and Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership) and on the denomination as a whole.

Areas covered in the Study Project included compensation, insurance, and sabbath rest; clergy role and morale; concerns about the future; skills for ministry; health and well-being;



Vital Pastor program participants Dennis Webb and Christy Waltersdorf enjoy a time of singing at a group gathering.

denominational connections; the Sustaining Pastoral

Excellence program; and concluding observations. To peruse the 2008 Pastoral Study Project Final Report, visit the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership Web site at www.bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy.

With funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Academy has been able to partner with the Brethren Journal Association to publish a double edition of *Brethren Life & Thought*. Articles written by participants in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence programs focus on pastoral excellence, leadership theory and praxis, pastoral revitalization, team ministry, Brethren core values that would influence postmodern Christians, and the importance of cross-cultural experiences. This resource will be made available to all pastors in the denomination.

The Brethren Academy, Bethany Seminary, the Office of Ministry, district staff, denominational agencies, and groups of pastors will use the 2008 Pastoral Study Project to determine future direction and programming for addressing pastoral needs and continuing education. These partners will continue working together to provide opportunities for ministers to explore pastoral imagination, nurture holy friendships, and sustain pastoral excellence.

Julie Mader Hostetter is director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.



An Alum's Perspective On Making Disciples

OLDEN MITCHELL

I have been blessed to serve the Church of the Brethren as a pastor and district executive. I was called to the ministry by my home church and the district elders in Virginia during my first year as a student at Bridgewater College. Now, at age ninety-seven, my ministry continues as chair of the Chapel Committee at the Timbercrest Senior Living Community in North Manchester, Indiana. We plan and arrange speakers for 312 worship services a year, and I present the message on average of about once per month.

Over the years I have observed that the pastor's ministry shapes the church. This requires that the pastor be involved in a lifetime of learning, including a broad and continuing education, training in pastoral counseling, and a joyous congregational involvement in disciple making. In all of the four congregations I was privileged to serve as pastor, each received more than twenty new members every year. I rejoice that in each of these churches we had a continuing program of education in Christian discipleship.

For decades I have been deeply concerned about the changes that have shaped the Church of the Brethren in the past 100 years, and especially in the decades from 1910 to 1960. This is a time of unwritten Brethren history and a time of radical changes in the faith and life of the Church of the Brethren. To see these changes more clearly, it is urgent that there be a clear focus on the

Evangelism and disciple making is the work of the entire congregation.



previous sixty years (1850-1910), when the entire Church of the Brethren seemed to be excited and involved in a disciple-making ministry and there was a 700 percent increase in church membership, even though about one-third of the members left with the Progressive Brethren and the Old Order Brethren.

A fervor for evangelistic meetings with a guest minister swept across our country in the nineteenth century. The tone and theology of these meetings was largely set by the renowned preacher Jonathan Edwards, who is reported to have preached the same sermon, or a variation of it, on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" more than 3,000 times. On three occasions, Annual Conference gave the Brethren a warning that "powerful ministers are winning many converts, but we are convinced that this is not the Brethren way of fulfilling Jesus's Great Commission." The Conference stated: "Evangelism and disciple making is the work of the entire congregation, every member, and not just a powerful preacher, and it is done year-round and not just a few weeks once a year." (Emmert Bittinger, *Heritage and Promise*, p. 60) Even so, many congregations followed the trend and had a series of meetings for two weeks or more with the most "powerful" preacher they could get. This practice was repeated a few times over the next decade or more, and many were baptized at the end of the series with no preparation for Christian discipleship or church membership. Most of the evangelistic crusades had run their course by mid-century.

I have come to the following conclusions about our denomination's experience with these evangelistic meetings:

Every church and every member that takes Jesus's great commission seriously are richly blessed.

1. Our God of love was largely replaced by an angry God who hated sinners and approved of sending them to hell for all eternity.
2. We ceased being a New Testament church and took on the Jewish scriptures as being equal—one Bible, all of it "the Word of God."
3. Following Jesus in disciple making has almost totally ceased.
4. For about fifty years we have had an annual decline in church membership, worship attendance, and Sunday school attendance. According to Church of the Brethren Yearbook data, it seems the Church of the Brethren will reach zero in about thirty years.
5. We have largely ceased our church and personal devotion to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 account for item 4.

As a pastor and district executive for more than seventy years, I have observed that a church usually gets done, by the grace of God, about what it sets out to do. Also I have observed that every church and every member that takes Jesus's great commission seriously are richly blessed.

Olden Mitchell received his MDiv and DMin degrees from Bethany Theological Seminary.



Reading Utopia in Chronicles

A Conversation with Author Steven Schweitzer

W & W: Can you share a brief synopsis of your book?

My book looks at three major themes in Chronicles (genealogy, politics, and temple) through the lens of utopian literary theory. This approach uses the methods of scholars who work with utopian literature (like More's *Utopia* and ancient examples like Plato's *Republic*) and applies them to Chronicles. Chronicles has been read in two main ways: it reflects the historical events of the past; it reflects the present situation of the postexilic community by projecting them into the past. My reading suggests a third way: Chronicles presents an alternative history in order to create a different future. In other words, the details in the book reflect neither past or present, but potential for the future. In this sense, it is prophecy cast as history. Just like other utopian literature, the descriptions of society in the book do not reinforce the status quo, but rather serve as social and theological critiques of the present. For example, in More's *Utopia*, the society is a commentary on and criticism of More's present day, sixteenth-century England, and not a reflection of it.

So too, I think, Chronicles is speaking prophetically to its present audience, the people of Israel in the fourth century, by creating pictures in Israel's past of what could be in their future.

I find Chronicles to be a rich theological text, which draws heavily from other biblical texts.

W & W: What drew you to the study of Chronicles?

My focus in college and in my master's program was on the postexilic period of Israel's history, with most of my time spent in the Prophets and Wisdom Literature. In a seminar at Notre Dame, I found an opportunity to write a research paper on a text written during this same period and discovered that I knew little about Chronicles. As I continued to research, I thought I had something to contribute to the study of this "neglected" book. As I looked for a dissertation topic, Chronicles was the thing that excited me most.

W & W: What do 1 & 2 Chronicles have to say to today's church?

Chronicles, originally one book and not two, creates a model for doing theology: how to remain faithful to the tradition and the past while promoting innovation and authentic theological development as the people of God move into new historical and cultural situations unlike those of their past. Chronicles contains a different history of Israel than the one presented in the book of Kings. Kings presents a negative history: how the people got into this mess (the exile) and what to avoid so it will not happen again. Chronicles, on the other hand, is written to give hope by presenting a positive example of how to go forward in productive ways. However, throughout the book, the notion of simply replicating the past in the present for an assured result is flatly rejected. Authentic theology requires adaptation without completely leaving the past

behind. In fact, Chronicles celebrates innovation, commends creativity, and extols the virtue of change. Rather than say “this is how it’s always been” or “the tradition teaches” or even “the Bible says,” Chronicles invites its readers into a world where continuity and innovation work together in unresolved tension, in the messiness of reality, in the formation of theology in the midst of uncertainty, and in the shifting realities of the present. Sound familiar? As the church tries to work through many difficult, complex issues, Chronicles may help us to appreciate the values of dialogue, knowledge of our own heritage, and sensitivity to the working of the Spirit among us. Chronicles does not give us all the answers to our theological questions, but the book offers us a means, a method, a model as we work together in pursuit of truth.

W & W: What do you mean by “temple cult”?

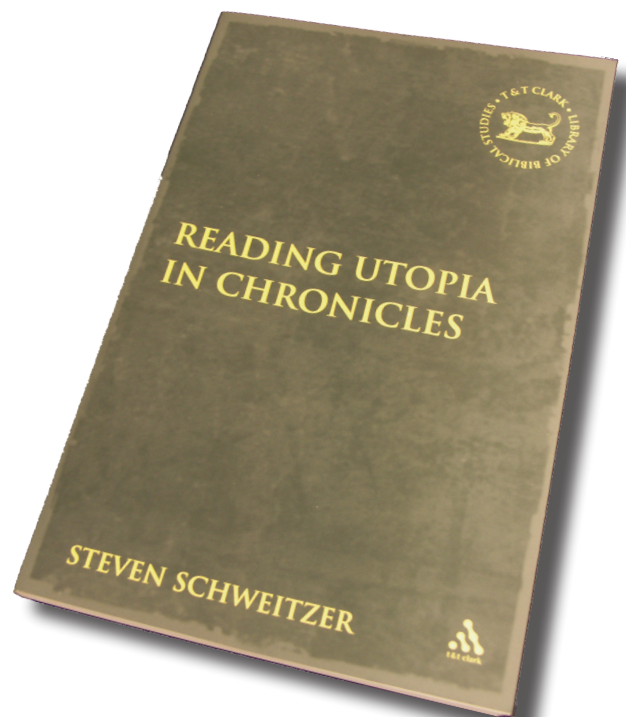
“Temple cult” is the technical term often used to describe what happens at the temple: its rituals, personnel, procedures, and underlying theology. So, the “cult” refers not just to the building, but to everything that happens there, who does it, and why.

W & W: How would you recommend using this book in personal or biblical study?

I could see someone sitting down with this book as a commentary/resource while doing a study of Chronicles. I don’t know that I would recommend reading my book in its entirety in one sitting, although I would suggest reading the entire first chapter first, as it lays out the issues and provides helpful introductions to the method and to the biblical text. The second and third chapters move mostly through the narrative of Chronicles in sequence, with some thematic asides, focusing

on identity formation and the Davidic dynasty. So, these could easily be read as a commentary alongside Chronicles. The fourth chapter is much more thematic, focusing on the temple cult; the Scripture index would be helpful to find where specific passages are discussed. Also, knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary to read this book—very few Hebrew words or phrases are used, and they are always glossed in English when they do appear. I find Chronicles to be a rich theological text, which draws heavily from other biblical texts; as a result, when I’m in Chronicles, I am constantly turning to other parts of the Old and New Testament and discovering new connections.

Chronicles celebrates innovation, commends creativity, and extols the virtue of change.



Steven Schweitzer is academic dean at Bethany Theological Seminary.

Part-Time Pastor, Full-Time Stewardship

When Bethany received a sizeable check several years ago from the widow of a part-time pastor of apparently ordinary means, it naturally prompted the question, is there a story in this? Yes, there is, and it seemed appropriate to this issue of *Wonder & Word* in which we've profiled different models of ministry.

After graduating from Bethany in 1952, Delbert Smith spent his entire career of forty-plus years pastoring small western churches on a bi-vocational basis in Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Kansas. In fact, Delbert's father, Harry, and his brother, Harold, also were ministers. Together they gave 140 years in ministry to the Church of the Brethren.

The other side of Delbert's bi-vocational life included TV sales and repair and teaching and guidance counseling. At mid-career, he returned to school for a second masters degree, this in school guidance, a pursuit for which he was temperamentally so well suited. He was an accomplished listener, nonjudgmental, and "could get along with anybody," according to his son, David.

Delbert's spouse and partner in ministry was Barbara, one of a family of thirteen from Oklahoma. Barbara also loved teaching, especially elementary reading. In the recent years since Delbert's death, she has written a book,



Dawning of Hope, which focuses on developmental issues leading to reading difficulties and other learning problems.

In their giving and in their living as a married couple, Delbert and Barbara Smith understood stewardship in belief and in practice. They managed well, they were frugal, and they gave away. It is almost certain, David recounts, that in Delbert's lifetime, his parents gave away more to their church and its institutions than he ever earned from his pastoral positions. He was

a good manager of resources and bought farms in several of the communities where he did ministry work.

It was the sale of one of those farms that, five years after Delbert's death, provided the large gift Barbara made to Bethany. As had been their habit all their lives, Barbara directed a generous portion of that sale to her commitment to stewardship. The gift provided additional support for a family scholarship endowment in honor of Delbert's father, Harry.

As Barbara said recently about their interest in giving, "This is just the way we were taught. We didn't have much, but we wanted to give back as much as we were able." This simple but elegant statement exemplifies the service that is such an important part of ministry as we would ideally like to know it.



Resources for Congregations

Congregations have the opportunity to learn more about Bethany's mission and ministry through two creative opportunities:

- **DVD:** "Vines, Grapes, and Wineskins: Bethany Seminary's Mission and Vision" is a twenty-two-minute skit that was presented as the Seminary's report at the 2009 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. The skit features Church of the Brethren and Bethany personalities from the past and present as they meet around the trolley stop, engaging in conversation about elements of Brethren history, exploring pertinent questions Brethren are facing, and pondering the meaning of another way of living. To request a DVD, contact Jenny Williams, coordinator of congregational relations, at 800-287-8822 ext. 1825 or willije1@bethanyseminary.edu.

- **Guest Speaker:** The Rev. Jabani Adzibiya from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN - the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) is currently enrolled in Bethany's MA degree program. He has been the pastor of three churches in Nigeria and most recently served as the district church council secretary, overseeing fourteen congregations and nearly 9,000 members in his care. The Seminary and the Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren are working together to make Rev. Adzibiya's study possible, including substantial financial support from both agencies. Rev. Adzibiya is available to speak in Church of the Brethren congregations, primarily during the summer months or over the Christmas holiday. Please contact Amy Ritchie, director of student development, at 765-983-1806 or ritcham@bethanyseminary.edu.



*The cast
of "Vines,
Grapes, and
Wineskins"*

Faculty News

Scott Holland, professor of theology & culture and director of peace studies and cross-cultural studies, presented five lectures for the Menno Simons Lectures at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, addressing the topic, "Prophets, Poets and Pragmatists: The Historic Peace Churches and Public Theology." He also presented a paper on theopoetics at an international theology conference at Louvain University in Belgium and is giving a paper at the American Academy of Religion convention in Montreal on "Pragmatism, Richard Rorty and the Social Gospel." He also is editing a special issue of *Cross Currents* journal on theopoetics. Holland was appointed as a member of the World Council of Churches international committee of theologians writing the document for the culmination of the Decade to Overcome Violence. The manuscript is titled "An Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace."

With funding from a Rohrer Grant through Bethany Theological Seminary, **Ken Rogers**, professor of Brethren history, spent three exciting weeks in July in Marburg, Germany, meeting with professors from the Theology Department of Philipps University and pastors from the Protestant (national) church. The goal was to prepare for a Bethany-Marburg joint seminar in May 2010. Bethany students will participate in a seminar in the world's oldest department of Protestant theology. The instructor will be Professor Emeritus Dr. Hans Schneider, an expert on German Pietism. In addition, the Bethany participants will talk with other professors of religion, local pastors,

church social workers, and groups of laity. Host families will provide housing. Two service projects and special opportunities for worship are also being planned. There will be excursions to sites significant in Christian history, including locations in Laaphse, Berleburg, Schwarzenau, Büdingen, and of course the beautiful city of Marburg itself.

Dan Ulrich, professor of New Testament studies, is on the Steering Committee of the Matthew Section of the Society of Biblical Literature. The Matthew Section is currently working to publish a collection of essays from recent sessions with themes of Matthew and Mission, Reading Matthew in a Time of War, and Global Perspectives on Matthew. Elaine Wainwright and Dan have agreed to serve as coeditors of this volume, which is tentatively titled "Reading Matthew in Our Time: Hermeneutical Issues and Global Perspectives." In addition, Dan served on the coordinating team for a conference on online pedagogy sponsored by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion with the theme "Reflecting on the Pedagogy of Online Theological Education." Theological educators who have participated in training through the Wisconsin Certification for Distance Education program and have experience in teaching in an online environment considered the nature of online pedagogy and the teaching and learning outcomes associated with it. **Tara Hornbacker**, associate professor of ministry formation, also participated in the conference.



Seminary News

Bethany Theological Seminary's 105th academic year began at the end of August. Thirty-two new students are enrolled—including twenty-eight in degree programs and four with non-degree status—the largest incoming class in more than a decade.

In her remarks at an orientation breakfast, President Ruthann Knechel Johansen encouraged new students to become more curious about and deeply acquainted with their particular gifts and how they express love for God, for others, and for all creation. "There is no more important work than the inquiring study of Scripture and other texts, reflection on the nature and purpose of life, and the disciplining and commitment of your own life," she said. "I say that there is no more important work because the longing for love, justice, and peace in our families, churches, meetings, and societies throughout the world is profound. Because this hunger for love and meaning is pervasive, keep what you study here always in close conversation with what is happening beyond: in Afghanistan and in Richmond, in the Sudan and in Washington, in your home communities and in Jerusalem."



President Ruthann Johansen speaking at this year's orientation breakfast.

Dr. Steven Schweitzer, Bethany's new academic dean, spoke at the opening convocation on the topic "Doing Theology in Community," based on II Chronicles 30.

A Webcast of the service can be viewed at www.bethanyseminary.edu/webcast/convocation2009.

Bethany's Web site now includes easily accessible web pages for Seminary course listings according to category: online; two-week intensives; weekend intensives; courses offered at the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center; and hybrid, block, and traditional courses. The gateway page for the listings can be found at www.bethanyseminary.edu/educational-opportunities. The listings will receive regular updates so that the information is always current.

The educational opportunities information serves current occasional students as they plan their next classes or the prospective student who wishes to review some of the courses that the Seminary offers. The listing also includes cross-cultural travel classes and courses that meet the ministry credentialing requirements of several districts.

Imagination and Opportunity

LOWELL FLORY

On a recent trip to visit donors, I had the same experience twice in three days. I was celebrating the fact that this fall Bethany has more new students than in any other fall semester in a decade. Twice I was interrupted in mid sentence and asked “but how many of them are going into pastoral ministry?”

That’s a fair question.

For decades, education of those called to pastoral ministry has been at the core of Bethany’s mission and curriculum. It still is. It occurs to us, however, that we may be able to extend that core Bethany strength to additional purposes, to different kinds of ministry. This issue of *Wonder & Word* has, in fact, been devoted to the exploration of multiple models of ministry.

Opportunities for ministry are more varied and more unconventional than they might have been a quarter century ago. Effective ministry speaks differently to some generations than to others. Ministry can happen in settings outside conventional churches. Even in traditional congregations, ministry staffing may be different than in former times, and opportunities for the church to be missional are unfolding in new ways. Bethany can and should be equipped to help students prepare for the multiple kinds of contexts they may encounter in their ministry. Theologian Walter Brueggemann once quipped that “the world for which you have been so carefully preparing is being taken away from

you, by the grace of God.” Bethany needs to train not just for what we have known ministry to be, but also for what it may unexpectedly and delightfully become.

When thirty-five years ago Annual Conference declined a proposal for Bethany to sell off land from its Oak Brook campus, several faculty observed that an endowment that would have resulted from such a sale might be a mixed blessing—that “an institution that depends upon month-by-month support of its constituency remains close to the people.” In today’s world it takes both an endowment and the month-by-month contributions of constituents to support ministry education for the church, but the basic idea is well founded nonetheless.

Bethany and its constituents need to stay close together, not just because of funding, but because of the partnering work we have to do giving voice to our beliefs and witness. Bethany needs to continue to focus on preparation of ministry leadership for congregations. In so doing, it needs to help those who would minister to understand and serve the church as it is today, but also to have a perspective and a vision of what the church can be tomorrow. With this kind of preparation, ministry leadership can be a catalyst and a resource for helping the church imagine its way into its own best future.

A FINAL WORD

Lowell Flory is executive director of institutional advancement for Bethany Theological Seminary.



Wonder & Word

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Our Mission

Bethany Theological Seminary equips spiritual and intellectual leaders with an Incarnational education for ministering, proclaiming, and living out God's *shalom* and Christ's peace in the church and the world.

Our Vision

Incarnational education at Bethany Theological education is:

- Grounded in Jesus Christ, as the Incarnation of God's reconciling love
- Founded on Scripture, read in community, guided by the Spirit, for discerning wisdom, ethics, and theology
- Rooted in distinctive Anabaptist and Pietist traditions of the Church of the Brethren
- Experienced in a curriculum that explores the comprehensive gospel of Christ's salvation using multiple communication formats
- Practiced in spiritual disciplines, intellectual inquiry, Christian discipleship, and cross-cultural engagements that bear fruit where God is working toward *shalom*
- Committed to preparation for ministry in a variety of models and settings: congregational life, pastoral leadership, theological education, each engaged locally and globally at the intersections of the church and the world
- Embodied in transformed and joyful service that integrates the values of simplicity, community, reconciliation, and care for creation.

Our Mission and Vision are enhanced by partnerships that make educational opportunities accessible in other locations: graduate courses through the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and nongraduate study and continuing education through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and SVMC.

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Rachel W. N. Brown of Mt. Sidney, Virginia, designed and created this quilt for Bethany Seminary's centennial celebration in 2005. Titled "Lead on . . . The Journey is our Home," Rachel gives this description of the quilt:

One fabric, hand-dyed batik, represents one God, Creator of all.

One hundred different prints and colors represent one hundred years of theological education in the Church of the Brethren.

Two thousand, five hundred sixty-four individual pieces were assembled to make the quilt; they represent all of the graduates in one hundred years.

