

Wonder & Word

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PSALMS 136:20

"and O, King of Babylon,
for his steadfast love endures for
ever;
and gave their land as a herit-
age;
for his steadfast love endures for
ever;
a heritage to Israel his servant,
for his steadfast love endures for
ever.

"It is he who remembered us in our
low estate;
for his steadfast love endures for
ever;
and rescued us from our foes,
for his steadfast love endures for
ever;
he who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures for
ever.

"O give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his steadfast love endures for
ever.

137 By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.

"How shall we sing the Lord's song
in a strange land?
How shall we play the lyre upon
the harp, when we remember
Zion, our home, our land?
For there we stood when we
sang, and we were glad;
there we sang, and we danced,
and we bore our harps.
How shall we sing the Lord's song
in a strange land?
How shall we play the lyre upon
the harp, when we remember
Zion, our home, our land?
For there we stood when we
sang, and we were glad;
there we sang, and we danced,
and we bore our harps.

The Exiles in Babylon

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my tongue cleave to the roof
of my mouth;
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy,

"Remember, O Lord, against the
day of Jerusalem,
how they said, 'Bless it ever,
Dowry to its foundations!'
O daughter of Babylon, you daughter
of the Chaldeans!

Happy shall he be who testifies
your
faithfulness, O Lord, against the
day of Jerusalem,
how they said, 'Bless it ever,
Dowry to its foundations!'
O daughter of Babylon, you daughter
of the Chaldeans!

A Psalm of David

138 I give thee thanks, O Lord,
with my whole heart,
before the gods I praise
thee.

"I bow down toward thy holy tem-
ple,
and give thanks to thy name,
O Lord, for thy steadfast love and
thy faithfulness;
for thou hast exalted above every
name that is called upon,
and thou hast said, 'I called, and
they answered me,'
and thou hast said, 'I called, and
they answered me.'

God's Omnipresence and Omniscience

my strength of soul thou didst in-
crease.

"All the kings of the earth shall
praise thee, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of
thy mouth.

"And they shall sing of the ways of
the Lord,
for great is the glory of the
Lord.

"For though the Lord is high, he re-
spects the lowly;
but the haughty he knows from
afar.

"Though I walk in the midst of
troubles,
thou dost preserve my life;
thou dost stretch out thy hand
against the wrath of my
enemies,
and thy right hand delivers me.

"The Lord will fulfil his purpose
for me;
the Lord's steadfast love, O Lord, en-
dures for ever.
Do not forsake the work of thy
hands.

To the choirleader. A Psalm of David.

139 O Lord, thou hast searched
me and known me;
thou knowest when I sit
down and when I rise
up;
thou discernest my thoughts
from afar.

PSALMS 139:13

"Thou searchest out my path and
my lying down, with all my
ways.

"Even before a word is on my
tongue,
thou knowest it al-
together;
thou dost beset me behind and
before.

"Thou dost lay thy hand upon me,
and thy right hand shall hold me;
such knowledge is too wonderful
for me;
it is high, I cannot attain it.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy
presence?

"If I ascend to heaven, thou art
there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, thou
art there.

"If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts
of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.

"If I say, 'Let only darkness cover
me,
and the light about me be night,'
even the darkness is not dark to
thee;
the night is bright as the day;
for darkness is as light with thee.

"For thou didst form my inward
parts;
thou didst knit me together in
my mother's womb.

BETHANY

Theological Seminary

Empowering Christian Leaders



Wonder & Word

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Meet Bethany's New President

The last issue of Wonder & Word included the news that Ruthann Knechel Johansen had been called as Bethany's new president. This article gives an opportunity for friends of the Seminary to learn to know Ruthann and discover her devotion to education, spirituality, and the testimonies of our Anabaptist/Pietist tradition.

W & W: Why did you accept this call?

I responded affirmatively to the call to the presidency of Bethany Seminary because of the ways my whole life has been formed by the testimonies of the Church of the Brethren: simplicity, integrity, equality, service, peace and reconciliation. The lives of family, teachers, and friends—including those who have guided Bethany Seminary over the years—were also significant examples of faith and service. I responded because I felt a call of God through the community of faith, despite my own inner resistance and preference for the quieter life of contemplation and writing. I have come to Bethany because I am committed to the Believers Church tradition and because I believe that the spiritual disciplines of contemplation; open, trusting communication; and transparent ways of governing our human institutions are essential to living Christ's Way of love and to wise study. In addition, because I have loved learning and teaching all my professional life, I hope I can serve students, faculty, and the denomination by joining with others in Bethany's vital educational mission.

W & W: What excites you about Bethany's mission?

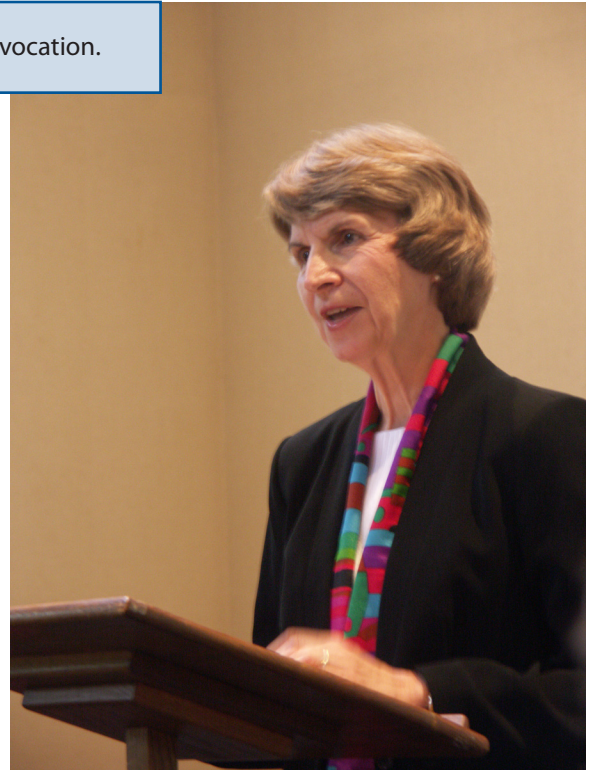
Bethany Seminary has a rich history as the Church of the Brethren's only seminary. The decision of Bethany's founders—A.C. Wieand and E.B. Hoff among others—was a bold one. To establish a training school for a faith tradition that arose in part as a protest against intellectual and ecclesial elitism and as an invitation for direct study of the Scriptures and experience of God by all believers and a belief in free ministry, seemed paradoxical, if not outright contradictory. This tension between learning and faith has been part of Bethany's 102-year history and the denomination's relationship to the Seminary. For me, Bethany Seminary is the place where faith and learning, the heart and the intellect are brought into vibrant harmony; it is the place where we seek to know, study, and live with the mind of Christ. I am excited by Bethany's mission to empower Christian leaders, especially as we renew and revision what discipleship means in the 21st century for our understanding of church and for our relationship to the world.



W & W: What do you hope to accomplish?

Preaching at Opening Convocation.

My vision for Bethany Seminary grows from the challenges I think we all face as human beings, and particularly human beings who profess faith in Christ's Way of love. Those challenges include the perpetual temptation to be ambivalent or judgmental; to be overextended because we are unclear about priorities or easily distracted by many things; and to be driven by our fears and prejudices. Throughout its history Bethany has been a rich resource for the denomination, even though its educational purposes have sometimes been regarded with ambivalence. Behind attitudes of ambivalence may lie mistrust or fear. I hope to address mistrust by increasing dialogue with all parts of the denomination. If within our diversities we can find common ground in our commitment to Christ's Way of love, I believe we open ourselves to Christ's transforming power, leaving behind fear and judgmentalism and living with courage and confidence into the kingdom of God in our midst.



& W: You served on the Bethany Board of Trustees during Bethany's move from Oak Brook to Richmond. That was a challenging time. How do you describe the state of the Seminary as you become president 12 years later?

"If within our diversities we can find common ground in our commitment to Christ's Way of love, I believe we open ourselves to Christ's transforming power, leaving behind fear and judgmentalism and living with courage and confidence into the kingdom of God in our midst."

The ten years (1985-95) that I served on the Bethany Board were indeed critical years for the Seminary. The rising costs of education combined with the high cost of living in the Chicago area, deferred maintenance on a large but beautiful physical plant, and a declining Brethren enrollment created a financial crisis that threatened the Seminary's continuation. At the same time, Bethany also confronted anxieties about an insufficient number of adequately educated pastors for local congregations. Some people felt that the theological education Bethany students received did not prepare them or the congregations to which they were called for mutual ministry. Despite



Conferring with Academic Dean Steve Reid.

strong feelings for and against the decision to relocate the Seminary and multiple preferences for a new location, the Bethany Board's decision was rooted in a fresh and bold Partnership Vision of Theological Education (adopted in July 1990) that was strongly informed by the Anabaptist and Pietist traditions that shape the Church of the Brethren. The Partnership Vision turned the locus of ministry preparation toward local congregations and encouraged congregations and districts to share in the opportunities and responsibilities of ministerial leadership. In addition, it made provision for students to pursue both graduate degree programs as residential students and non-degree training programs through the Brethren Academy at the first site which eventually became the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center. The Academy programs are jointly supported by Bethany Seminary and the General Board and have grown significantly during the last twelve years.

The survival and financial and educational health of Bethany Seminary seventeen years after the creation of the Partnership Vision is due to the commitments of many people: from the loyal

and fiscally responsible leadership of Eugene Roop, from a dedicated faculty who moved with the Seminary and those who have been hired after the relocation, to devoted students and contributors who believe in the importance of educated Christian leadership. The Church of the Brethren is the beneficiary of such vision and faith.

I think the Partnership Vision remains a strong statement which has provided direction for Bethany during the last decade and a half, but it faces unanticipated changes and challenges in the church and culture today. For example, how shall we fulfill a partnership vision as denominational membership continues to decline, when small congregations cannot afford well educated or full-time pastors, and as churches close? How must our models of church change? How shall our congregations be educated in Brethren beliefs if they are pastored by ministers not trained in or familiar with, and sometimes even hostile toward, basic Brethren testimonies? How shall the Seminary and congregations respond to deepening ambivalence toward graduate theological education and declining enrollment at our one denominational seminary? Can we have a vital partnership in empowering Christian leaders cross-culturally or globally if we refuse to respect the diversities within our local communities of faith? How do on-line or distance education programs affect intellectual and spiritual community that have been central to the Brethren? The de-centralization of theological education combined with the decreasing size of our congregations and the proliferation and ascendancy of secular values requires both the Seminary and the denomination to review and revision the meaning

of partnership in this time, lest fragmentation and disintegration overtake us.

Such questions are on my mind as together at



Taking a moment to chat with students.

Bethany and throughout the denomination we consider what discipleship to Christ means for the church and the world today, and how we can renew our understanding of Anabaptist-Pietist testimonies and re-vision theological education not simply for professional clergy but also for lay leaders and congregations as a whole. The challenges for Bethany, the Christian church, and the Church of the Brethren today are different than they were in the late 1980s and early 1990s. To address these as opportunities requires our deepened faith in God's gracious presence, clarity to discern the leading of God in community, and courage and creativity to choose faithfulness to Christ's Way of love as expressed in the Anabaptist-Pietist testimonies.

W & W: How would you describe the relevance of

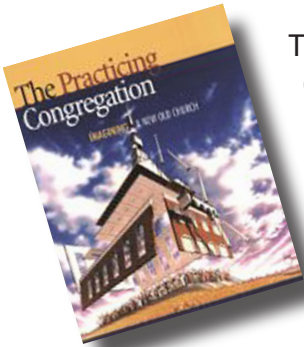
Bethany's mission for the world today?

The Anabaptist-Pietist testimonies, which lie at the center of Bethany Seminary's educational mission, offer the world another way of being, seeing, and believing with the following characteristics. Faithful to the testimonies, Bethany presents the vibrancy of living faith that is not confused with ideology. The belief in the priesthood of all believers guides us to study the Scriptures reflectively rather than to resort to dogmas and creeds. As did our Brethren forebears, Bethany emphasizes both personal religious experience and the importance of community in discerning God's continuing activity rather than coercive obedience to political or ecclesial authority. Taking its example from the life and teachings of Jesus, throughout its 300-year history the Church of the Brethren has been committed to justice and to peace and to protecting creation and the poor, rather than recklessly exploiting the earth or its inhabitants. Education in and commitment to these testimonies is as urgent today as it was following the Thirty Years War out of which our own religious heritage arose.

"Bethany presents the vibrancy of living faith that is not confused with ideology. The belief in the priesthood of all believers guides us to study the Scriptures reflectively rather than to resort to dogmas and creeds."



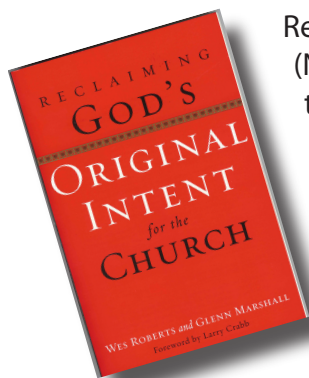
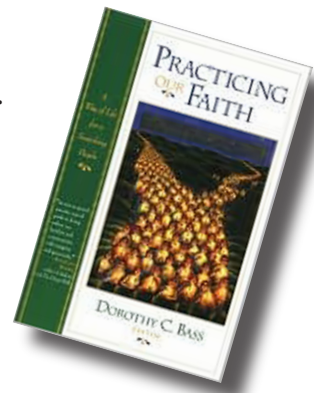
Book Reviews



The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church, by Diana Butler Bass (Alban Institute, 2004). This book is a result of a three-year project on Congregations of Intentional Practice, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc, carried out by Virginia Theological Seminary that researched fifty mainline congregations with diverse perspectives and traditions. Looking for the narrative of previously uncharted territory of congregational life, Bass looked for those practices that sparked a renewal of vision, imagination, and a passion for mission that led to some change in the congregation's identity. She identifies those intentional practices that help move a congregation beyond some of the common polarities in mainline

congregations. This book will spark an internal conversation, if not one with a pastoral colleague. -Glenn Timmons

Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, edited by Dorothy Bass (Jossey-Bass, 1997). Brethren have a practical faith, one that is embodied into a way of life. This book with its composite authors, grounds that way of life in inner and outer practices of faith that address one's inner yearnings and result in a re-membering with God, oneself and one's neighbor. An incarnational faith brings with it the challenges of an embodied faith, a deep faith that is both experienced and practiced. For the creative congregational leader, this book provides excellent biblical grounding and theological reflection on twelve practices of faith. For the intentional Christian, these practices provide rich soil for learning and spiritual growth. -Glenn Timmons



Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church, by Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall (Navpress, 2004). The tone of the book is clear in the first chapter—that it is not about the old ways, but about the much older ways. Roberts and Marshall invite us to think back to what the church was like before it became institutionalized, when it was on the margins of society, either suspect or irrelevant in the eyes of the mainstream. In a day when our social context is moving closer to what it was in centuries past, should we also be reconsidering what the church once was? They urge us to evaluate church not in secular terms but against biblical standards. In a dozen chapters they focus on such issues as authenticity of faith and community rather than numbers, on discipleship rather than recruiting, on making

ministry a calling not a career, on character not credentials, on servanthood rather than power, on trusting God rather than trusting technique. Though themselves apparently not from an Anabaptist-Pietist tradition, these authors make a good case for some threads that run deep through our Brethren rootage. It is worth a read for a church interested in assessing where it is and what it is called to be. -Lowell Flory

On Waters, Yokes, and Authenticity

Ruthann Knechel Johansen

Seven centuries ago there was a story told by Shams, a friend of Jalal-al-Din Rumi, a Persian writer of the 13th century. According to Shams, once there was a group of travelers taking an arduous journey through the desert. They had been on the move for many months. Their food and water were nearly depleted, and they had not come upon a water source for several days.

Some in the group were beginning to panic as the last water was consumed. Others, keeping anxious watch on the horizon for signs of water, began to see mirages that from a distance appeared to be wells as heat and anxiety combined to distort their perception. After many false alerts, the travelers came to a large hole in the ground. Although there were no ropes or implements for drawing water, they were confident that this had been a well at one time. With revived hope they pulled buckets and ropes from their carts, attached the ropes to the buckets, and lowered a bucket into the large hole. It went down fairly far until it seemed to hit an obstruction, and the traveler holding the rope felt a slight tug on the other end of the line. Curious and hopeful at the same time, the traveler began to pull the rope from the hole, only to discover that the bucket had been torn from the rope.

Puzzled by this, the travelers decided to try again. They carefully lowered another bucket, and a similar thing happened. One of the less patient and highly curious travelers volunteered to go down into the well hole himself to analyze the problem. His companions waited eagerly for some word

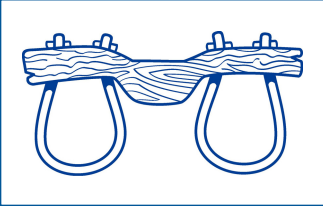
from him. They waited and waited, but no signal arrived nor did he return. A second anxious traveler offered to pursue the mystery and so descended into the hole. Those above again watched and listened for some sign. The second traveler also did not reappear. Finally, a third traveler who had been wisely observing the disheartening events volunteered to enter the hole in the earth. Down

and down he went. When he suddenly

hit what seemed to be a bottom, he was startled by the appearance of the most hideous monster he had ever seen. Trying to stave off desperation, he thought to himself, "I don't know what is going to happen to me, but at least I want to stay awake."



The ugly monster cackled with wicked glee as it danced tauntingly around the wise traveler. "Well, well, my wise one, I have just one question for you. If you are so smart, tell me where is the best place in all the world?" The wise traveler, perhaps stalling for time, pondered the question thinking to himself, "If I say Baghdad or Teheran and the monster is from some other place, I will surely be in trouble." Growing impatient, the monster cackled again, "Come on, come on, answer." Finally, the wise traveler responded: "The best place in all the world is where one feels at home." The monster fell back in shock and finally exclaimed, "You are indeed a wise one. And for your answer I will release my prisoners and the waters of the earth."



I return repeatedly to this story because of its images—the desert journey, the absence of water, mysterious obstructions and disappearances, the

importance of being awake, the monster, and the question and the answer—all invite interpretation and reflection. When I think through these images about seminary study, the church, and our world, I am led to fuller understanding of Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened...Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:25-30).

The first image that speaks to me is the desert journey. Perhaps as human beings we are always prone to live in desert times, occasionally searching for living water but frequently ignoring thirst. Desert conditions arise from ignoring that which is essential for living and allowing obstructions or poisons in the well to accumulate, thereby threatening survival.

I am as curious about the obstructions in the well as are the travelers in the story. Obstructions to the living water which Christ offers are often buried in our personal habits and prejudices and beneath our institutional surfaces. Three perennial obstructions—what Shams might have called monsters—that afflict individuals, the church, and the world are fear, greed, and ignorance. Throughout his ministry Jesus warned about these monsters. We find them succinctly presented in familiar parables. He addresses anxiety about what to eat, drink, and wear, about sowing and reaping, and about fruitfulness. He

exposes human greed when those who work a full shift complain about those who come late but get the same pay. And he unmasks ignorance about God's providence by asking his listeners to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air when thinking about their own place in the universe.

The seminary is a place of faith journey and formation. One cannot make such a journey without encountering unnerving obstacles. According to Shams' story, the way one responds to obstructing monsters makes all the difference in the water supply, the spiritual health, and survival of travelers, both individuals and religious communities. The seminary journey, however, is not simply for those women and men preparing for professional or lay leadership in churches. It is a journey to which Jesus Christ invites us all as individuals, congregations, and denominations. Like the wise traveler in the ancient story, Jesus answers the question about "the best place in all the world." Feeling at home means to have the living waters released in one's life; it means to awaken or to stay awake to one's authenticity and to welcome the authenticity of others. Jesus invites weary individuals and beleaguered institutions, any threatened by fearsome monsters to return to the Source for rest and renewal. He who suffered bitter ridicule, rejection, and gave his life for others knew himself to be "uttered" by God. From that experience and knowledge of authenticity, Jesus promises that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. When we realize that we also have been created or uttered by God, then Christ's yoke becomes our authenticity; it fits easily and rests lightly. It transforms and empowers those who accept it and releases living water on the earth.



Ruthann Knechel Johansen is President of Bethany Theological Seminary.



Listen, Plan, Act

I Samuel 25:2-42

Amy Gall Ritchie

This text is a rich telling of self knowing, power, bloodlust, feasts, donkeys, and many servants. We start by meeting a wealthy man. We are to know him by his vast accumulations as we receive a tally of his possessions, wife and his tribe. Thousands of sheep and thousands of goats belong to this Calebite. We are invited to see the immense chasm between the intelligence and beauty of the woman Abigail, and the surly meanness of the man Nabal. David is certainly part of the story as well. For many it is his story of unfolding drama of impending kingship.

This story serves an important purpose in the Davidic narrative, and provides us with tantalizing archetypes. We have Nabal the fool, David the headstrong warrior, and Abigail in the form of Godly wisdom. As foolishness interacts with wisdom, it is brought to a dead halt. As the warrior interacts with wisdom, it is brought to a higher level. Wisdom and Warrior are both set to take charge on behalf of many, as the Fool thinks only of himself. Wisdom magnifies what is good and what is foolish within the other characters. Wisdom holds steady throughout. It is unwavering and does not change its character.

Take note of the literary movement between detail and big picture in this text. Notice exactly what Abigail places on the backs of donkeys to be given to David and his men. Step back and see that in the end she places herself upon the back of a donkey. Notice that Nabal refuses even bread and water for David's men; yet stepping back we see

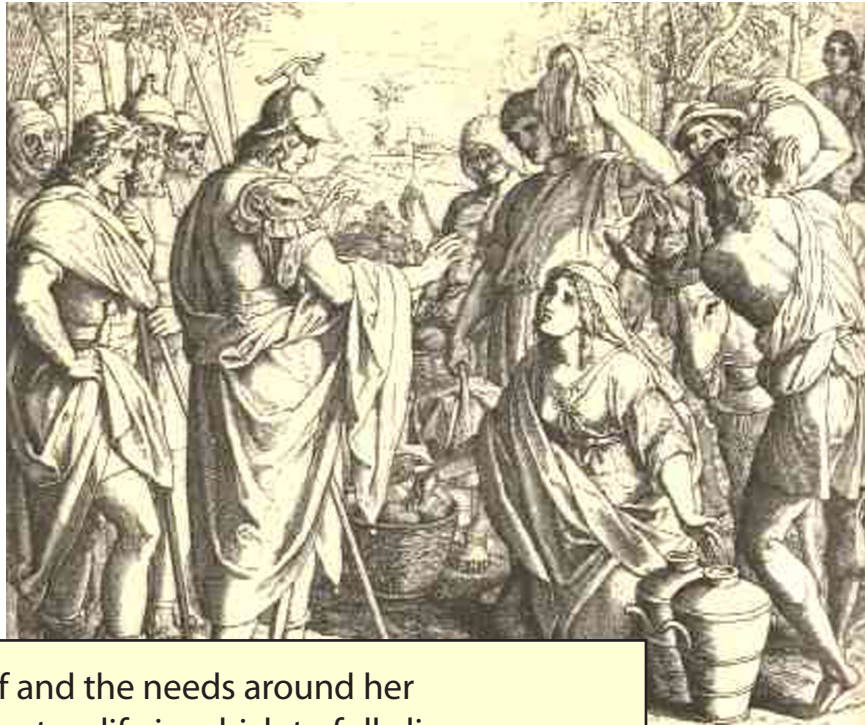
him gorge himself with meat and wine in a feast fit for a king, the same feast denied to a future king.

Notice how Abigail speaks to David in humble tones of the servant's station, and step back to see the power that God has granted her. Notice that David asks Abigail to be his wife when he learns of Nabal's death. Stepping back, we know that he gains her wealth, the tribal loyalty of the Calebites, and a beautifully intelligent wife. Stepping back further, we see that Abigail says yes not because she has no other options, but because she can and it serves her well. Wisdom's message is of God and is timeless. This wisdom gives us a model of being ready, taking action, being bold. God is at the heart of this story, as we see the Divine revealed in word and deed.

Abigail knew what resources were at her disposal and could devise a plan on the spot. It could be argued that these items had been prepared and set aside for the shearing feast that Nabal was planning. Yet, he had his feast, not missing this enormous quantity of food. Abigail had called for the food, sent it on ahead, went out herself, and didn't tell her husband. What would have happened if she merely sent the food? Or, if she went out without food? Or if she had pulled her plan together and then on the way out told Nabal? Disaster would have been the result. Without a doubt, the entire household would have been slaughtered by a bloodthirsty, act-before-you-think warrior.

Abigail listened, planned, and acted.

Abigail's intelligence is a rock solid force in this story. Wisdom is steady and sure. God is in these details. Abigail was ready to act, perhaps because she had cultivated a sense of self and integrity that already had her life in order. Abigail shows herself to be a woman of God who knew her authentic being, skills, desires, and abilities. When the time came to take action, she could. No self doubts or second guesses. The remarkable thing is that her wise character remains the same. Abigail knew herself and the needs around her and knew how to create a life in which to fully live.



Abigail knew herself and the needs around her and knew how to create a life in which to fully live.

In this story, Holy Wisdom moves back and forth on the path of human interaction, inviting others into the living. Wisdom allows Nabal to walk his own path, which led to him being stilled, silenced and ultimately stone cold dead. Wisdom invites David to walk a new path, leading him to act from his nobler self—the part of him worthy of his future crown. Beautiful Wisdom overcomes reckless arrogance. Steady Wisdom bows before the blood-thirsty warrior and provides another way to be.

Curiously, in this story of powerful action, the reader notes that twice Abigail's encounters with David take the shape of abject humility and powerlessness. But wisdom is never powerless.

In the mountain pass, she saves an entire household with her choice of action and words. That is power. In her statement of acceptance of

the marriage proposal, she claims what centuries later Christ will teach: that there is good and holy power when one kneels to wash the feet of another.

David is lifted up into a self that he was only learning to know: a royal self preparing for God's purposes, and a noble self brought to notice by a noble woman. With his bloodlust abated, opportunity to praise God abounded. David touches true power as he shifts from the quest for blood to the lifting of praises to God: praises for blessings of God's wisdom and presence in the form of this intelligent and beautiful woman whose good sense made all the difference.

It's the Best!

A Look at Bethany's Ministry Formation Curriculum From the Professor and Student Perspective

Tara Hornbacker and Paula Ulrich

If anyone asks, I am quick to say, "I have the best job at the Seminary!" As the Ministry Formation professor, I visit congregations and ministry settings, observe students in their "natural habitat," and walk with them as the Holy Spirit shapes and forms them as the ministering persons God would have them become. It just doesn't get any better than that, at least not for us. That "us" is Tara Hornbacker, the Associate Professor of Ministry Formation, and my colleague, Dan Poole, the newly hired Coordinator for Ministry Formation. We share in teaching the classes,

The Master of Divinity (M.Div.) curriculum at Bethany presupposes the centrality of Ministry Formation, to which the rest of the curricular program contributes in various ways. The Ministry Formation process provides opportunities for students to bring together ministry experience in multiple contexts, with supervised reflection designed to enhance that experience, and academic course work informing this reflection.

Ministry Formation is rooted in the process of learning ministry by doing ministry. Students participate in two required ministry experiences in two different contexts. These practical experiences, combined with coursework, lead to an integration of personal and professional identity, spiritual formation, as well as academic and practical proficiency. The process also enhances the student's ability to articulate faith within concrete life experiences and the changing dynamics of today's world.



Dan and Tara meet with a spiritual formation group.

placing students in settings, observation of students in the placements, training and cultivating teaching congregations and ministry settings for Ministry Formation.

In Exegeting the Call & Culture of Ministry, students explore the call and identity of the minister, the cultural context in which specific ministries take shape, and various aspects of Christian ministry with particular attention to pastoral/congregational ministry. They also participate in a spiritual formation group. The Ministry Formation course consists of class time and an eight to nine month, part-time ministry placement in an approved ministry setting. Ministry Formation Elective, a

second required Ministry Formation placement, is usually fulfilled during the summer between the Middler and Senior year. Some students participate in a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education or a full year internship. Finally, M. Div. Review is a capstone course designed for the student to synthesize and reflect upon the cumulative course work and Ministry Formation experiences.

Ministry Formation is a place of synthesis, integration, and application for our students: where the rubber meets the road for ministry. From placements in the National Park system to internships with denominational agencies and innovative congregations—the Ministry Formation office is an exciting place to serve...and that's why I say, "I have the BEST job at the Seminary!"

for my growth as a pastor.

My second experience was as a summer chaplain intern in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at a small hospital. Again, I was forced out of my comfort zone by responding to emergency situations, and by visiting patients in their rooms. I was especially delighted with my experience in a nursing home facility on the hospital campus. One of my learning goals focused on ministry to patients with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia, and I believe I was blessed as much if not more than the patients to whom I ministered. CPE has the additional advantage of inviting us to examine ourselves deeply—our attitudes, our beliefs, our pain, our joy, and our reactions as they impact our ministry. At age 46, I think I know myself pretty well, but CPE helped me to know myself even better. At Bethany, we are offered the gifts of intellectual engagement, spiritual discipline, emotional depth, and practical

I chose two very different Ministry Formation experiences in preparation for ministry. The first was a year long, part time placement in a local Presbyterian Church in which I could practice pastoral ministry by preaching, leading worship, and visiting the membership. It took me out of my "comfort zone" in the Church of the Brethren and stretched me as I lived into an ecumenical experience. In a beautiful, historic sanctuary with Tiffany stained glass windows, a far cry from our Brethren ideals of simple meeting houses, I found warmth, encouragement, and the same need for hearing the good news of the gospel that we have in the Church of the Brethren. I appreciate the way that this practical experience is combined with classroom reflection in which we are encouraged to grow even deeper as Christians and as ministers, and in which we share our experiences with one another. It was a rich and rewarding year



ministry experience as we become pastors. I am grateful for these blessings!

Tara Hornbacker is Associate Professor of Ministry Formation at Bethany Theological Seminary.
Paula Ulrich is a senior student.



Travel Morphs Into Journey

Linda and Glenn Timmons

Accumulative rains were in short supply this summer in some parts of Southern Ohio. As early as June, nature was under stress. The lawns turned brown, water was restricted in some counties and the leaves on the field corn curled up.

Nature, however, has its own rhythms. It has ways of dealing with, in this case, the stress of a lack of rain. Plant life, like corn, goes into a stage of dormancy. This “rest” is a time when the plant no longer takes its cues from the external environment but from within. The leaves on the corn curl up, slowing down, even stopping the growth process of the plant and the demand for water. It is nature’s way of preserving the hardiness of the plant and its purpose.

What is true of nature is also true spiritually. There comes a point in ministry when effectiveness can be diminished if the waters of the Spirit dry up. When Jesus drew aside for rest and prayer, he was not just taking a break; he was honoring the rhythms of nature and of God’s created order that includes rest.

Scripture calls it Sabbath rest. Congregations and church leaders, like Jesus’ disciples, do not always understand the need for Sabbath rest. For Jesus, there were people to be healed, the hungry to be fed. For the pastor, there are hospital visits to be made, meetings to attend, sermons to prepare. When Jesus heads for the hills, a place of solitude, the disciples do not realize the good work being done through rest. It is a rest where one’s vision and mission are again brought into focus, a rest where prayerful discernment ignites the passion of



BRETHREN ACADEMY

When Jesus drew aside for rest and prayer, he was not just taking a break; he was honoring the rhythms of nature and of God's created order that includes rest.

the Spirit
in Jesus for continued engagement.

For the ever-increasing pace of life and ministry, pastors involved in the Vital Pastor program of the Brethren Academy are discovering the value of honoring those practices that restore the body, mind and spirit for ministry. Sabbath rest comes in the form of a cohort meeting regularly for spiritual development and shared learning in the safe-space of a high level of trust. We are in the middle of our five-year Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant. Cohorts who have completed their two years of study and meeting say, "We have only begun. We are going to continue to meet for study, to reflect on our ministries and for spiritual development." We also have cohorts beginning their two years, who have just returned from their Immersion Retreat and say, "It was a great time apart, a time of coming together as a pastoral group, and a time to engage in conversation with resource people around our study question. Our travel became something of an inner journey. We look forward to our time together over the next two years."

At the Brethren Academy, we believe pastors are being sustained in ministry when they find ways to become connected with their colleagues and the greater whole. We believe pastors are being sustained when they have opportunity to identify the "signs of the times" and learn to provide creative, transforming responses in their ministry context. We believe pastors are sustained as they are given permission and opportunity through the VIP program to name the spiritual ferment within themselves and engage in those practices that

feed the soul. All of this supports excellence in ministry.

When Jesus drew apart, he was nurturing the spiritual, relational, emotional, intellectual and physical aspects of ministry. As those called to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength, church leaders can do no less. Pastors need healthy and safe environments where they can connect and learn. Such environments provide a place and space where vision is cultivated, where the dominant culture is "read" critically, where the dispirited can find support and where new paths for a more creative response to ministry are imagined.

The leaves on the corn curl in the dry heat, but a lot more is going on than meets the eye. The plant is responding with a quiescence that will sustain it through a difficult period. This lesson from nature is true also of the rhythm of engagement and the solitude of Sabbath rest. In the Sabbath rest of the Vital Pastor program, pastors are finding where and how to be sustained, even thrive, when conditions in the outward journey are not always life-enhancing.

April 2008 is the date of the final orientation for pastors interested in facilitating a Vital Pastor Cohort. Contact Glenn or Linda Timmons at 800-287-8822 for more information or if you wish to be a part of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence journey.

Linda and Glenn Timmons are Coordinators for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence.



Turning Our Vision Around

Bethany Alum Leads District in a Transformation Initiative

During the past five years there has been major change in the life and vision of Western Plains District. There was a sense of discouragement and desperation at district gatherings and in many congregations. Even though the work is not yet done, a new spirit of hope and excitement is being born. Recently a pastor said, "In my 15 years of ministry in this district this is the first time I've sensed real possibility for a bright future here." This new spirit seems to be pervasive.



Worship circle at a Western Plains district training event.

This turnaround began to happen after Ken and Elsie Holderread moved to Kansas in retirement from positions as District Executive Minister of Illinois/Wisconsin District and as Manager of Human Resources for the General Board respectively. Retirement, however, lasted only one year. God had other plans in mind for the Holderreads.

Elsie and Ken were named interim Co-District Executives of the Western Plains District for a two-year term. Soon after, Elsie attended a workshop and returned with a book and excitement. The book, *Reclaiming the Great Commission: A Practical Model for Transforming Denominations and Congregations* by Bishop Claude Payne and Hamilton Beazley, described a vision of transformation experienced by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. After reading the book, Ken shared Elsie's enthusiasm. "If Episcopalians in Texas can experience transformation, why not the Brethren in Western Plains?" he thought.

Ken began testing his ideas with Martin Gauby, District Moderator. Martin affirmed the direction, and together they purchased 10 copies of the books for sharing with district leaders. Eventually 55 more books were circulated. Discussion was spreading. Interest was growing. What should happen next?

"We embraced many principles from Bishop Payne's book, such as the importance of changing congregational mindset from maintenance to mission, and that transformation can begin anywhere: with pastors, laity, judicatory and denominational leadership," Ken says. "The book was a guide for us. However, as Brethren finding our own way is important." Seeking that way began with intentional, prayer-filled meetings. Glenn Timmons, former Executive Director of Congregational Life for the Church of the Brethren General Board, served as their coach/consultant for a series of monthly, day-long meetings that began with an hour in prayer. "We found ourselves looking forward to that time of prayer," Ken recalls. "It really energized us and shaped the tone of our meetings. As we continued to discern what transformation means for us, we didn't devise a

list of answers. Instead, we focused on a central question: 'God, what are you calling us to do and to be?' This question is central for all our work and our congregations."

As the process continued to develop, and as suggested by Bishop Payne, Ken and Elsie saw their role of holding up the vision as central. Their district's leadership structure facilitated that process. "In Western Plains, the work of the district executive actually is shared by 10 people," says Ken. "I am one of those ten and I supervise the others. Each person has two to five congregations within a 50-mile radius under their care. This is a very helpful design for a district that encompasses such a wide geographic area. It gives congregations much more personal contact with district staff." Others were called as coaches and were trained by qualified persons, including staff from the General Board, Bethany Seminary, and others.

Three major aspects of the transformation movement include: 1) Inviting congregations into a formal covenant with the district to work at congregational transformation. The district provides each covenanted congregation with a coach. A total of 22 covenants are anticipated by this fall. One congregation from Missouri/Arkansas and one from Southern Plains are invited. 2) Offering a Gathering event each fall for five years modeled after Bishop Payne's "big tent meeting." This is for all persons with workshops, storytelling, inspiration and fellowship as well as youth and children's activities. 3) Regular transformational training and worship for pastors and other district leaders. So far they have offered nine 2-4 day workshops.

In a district where congregations are broadly scattered, and a culture where resources for church renewal are widely available, why has this

initiative generated such a strong commitment? Ken believes it to be a spiritual movement. Persons and congregations are invited to share their faith stories at district gatherings and in congregational settings. "By raising the question, 'To what is God calling us?' we hold up the vision of miraculous expectation. We seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. We try to remain open and flexible. We sense our excitement and seek to share it with each other. We sense God calling us to foster an attitude of including others and drawing them in. We work at inclusion rather than exclusion."

Ken continues, "For example, we have a diverse group of pastors in our district. Yet we find that their participation in small spiritual direction groups is cultivating a real sense of spiritual unity. We are seeking to say, 'I'm not responsible for changing you—I'm responsible for loving you and praying with you.' We are learning to allow the Holy Spirit to draw us together as we together discern the mind of Christ."

During the initial two-year interim period of service, Ken and Elsie got excited about the possibility of renewal in Western Plains District. Because of the positive response of folks and in order to give the transformation movement a good chance to flourish, they extended their term five more years to the end of 2009. "The ministry here has been a real blessing to us, and hopefully also for the district. We moved to The Cedars in McPherson to retire, be with our families and grandchildren, and for Ken to do spiritual direction ministry. Maybe in 2010 we'll get to this—unless some other unforeseen calling appears."

Ken Holderread is a 1968 and 1979 graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary.



President's Associates

In each issue of Wonder & Word we like to highlight a donor. This time we feature several dozen donors from last year, who for the moment, remain anonymous. They are part of a group we hope will continue to grow, a group of donors we call Bethany's President's Associates.

Educational institutions often have a donor society they call President's Associates or some similar name. Many of those donor societies have a decades-long history. At Bethany, we introduce this as a category of annual giving to emphasize the value of regular annual support of the Bethany Fund. Bethany Fund is our name for unrestricted giving to support the core mission and operations of the Seminary.

We have discussed whether a more "seminary-specific" name might be found for this giving group. For now, we are introducing the concept as the President's Associates because that is a familiar model many people probably recognize with other institutions.

The threshold giving level for our President's Associates is \$2,500 per year, given to the Bethany Fund. Those who give at the \$5,000 level will be President's Associates Sustainers, and those giving at the \$10,000 and above level will be President's Associates Benefactors.

How did we arrive at the \$2,500 per year beginning level for President's Associates? We know that many institutions have had such a category for years, often benchmarked at the \$1,000 level. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' consumer price index tells us that

\$1,000 in 1970 is equivalent to \$5,359 today, and \$1,000 in 1975 is like \$3,865 today.

A \$1,000 gift in 1980 translates to \$2,523 today, and that is the comparison we chose to adopt. A \$2,500 President's Associate level today is equivalent to what a \$1,000 level would have been in 1980.

Those who choose to be part of the President's Associates will be featured in a separate section of our annual report each year, beginning with the 2007 report. They will receive a personal call from Bethany's President to thank them for their financial support and to dialog with them about Bethany and ministry leadership. They will also receive a lapel pin with the new Bethany logo, crafted in a color unique for President's Associates members.

If you have interest in joining those who already are Bethany President's Associates, we would be delighted to welcome you. Regular, reliable, annual fund support is critically important to a strong ministry education mission that Bethany holds central to its being. Your recognition of that importance through your Bethany Fund support is very much appreciated. If your response can be at the President's Associate level, we thank you for giving that your deepest consideration.



Strengthening the Relationship

Seminary Launches Ambassador Program

It's no secret that most members of the Church of the Brethren think of themselves as "relational" people. Our church family is very important to us. We support and encourage each other as we share joys and concerns in worship, as we converse around the table at a potluck dinner, and as we complete service projects in our communities.

Throughout Bethany's history, Church of the Brethren congregations have expressed their belief that a relationship with the Seminary is important, through their affirmation of the importance of ministry education that embodies our beliefs and heritage, calling persons to ministry, and financially supporting Bethany's mission. We know that relationships are strengthened with frequent, personal and meaningful conversation that increases knowledge, understanding and trust. Even in this electronic age, relationships that have a "face to face" element remain important. This begs the question, "How can Bethany maintain quality relationships with this large, geographically dispersed church family?"

So we're on a search—a search for people who are willing to be Bethany Ambassadors—who serve as the local face and voice for Bethany in the congregation, and for the congregation to Bethany.

Bethany Ambassadors will

- Receive information from the Seminary and stay current about mission and program, upcoming events, and giving opportunities;

- Encourage the congregation to nurture and seek pastoral leaders who have benefited from a Bethany graduate or Academy level educational program;
- Encourage utilization of Bethany resources;
- Encourage congregational support for Bethany through prayer and financial gifts;
- Stay in dialog with Bethany about how the congregation-seminary partnership can be made more productive from the congregation's perspective;
- Finding whatever other ways are available to be a conduit between the congregation and Bethany and Brethren theological education.

The Seminary pledges to support Ambassadors in their important role by

- Providing communications and resources in a variety of venues, print and electronic;
- Providing opportunities for dialog with the Ambassador about his/her work;
- Developing a way for Ambassadors to network with each other in fostering exchange between congregations and their supporting seminary.

Maya Angelou said, "Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning." Are you interested in serving as the Seminary's voice in your congregation as a Bethany Ambassador? If so, please contact me at Bethany (800-287-8822; shetlma@bethanyseminary.edu.) I will be delighted to discuss this possibility with you!

-Marcia Shetler, church relations



Faculty News



Elizabeth J. Keller of Richmond, Ind. has been named Interim Director of Admissions for Bethany Theological Seminary from August 23, 2007 until September 30, 2008.

Elizabeth is currently enrolled in Bethany's Master of Divinity program and

intends to graduate in May 2008. She has served as the Seminary's Chapel Coordinator and on the presidential search committee. A 1997 graduate of Manchester college, Elizabeth was Senior Admissions Counselor there from 1997 - 2000. During her time as a Bethany student, she served the Northview Church of the Brethren as student pastor, and as a summer intern with Bethany's Institutional Advancement office.

"Elizabeth brings an enthusiasm for Bethany's mission and a strong background in educational recruitment. Her work is informed by her faith, commitment to the church and vocational development," says Brenda Reish, the Seminary's executive director for student and business services and treasurer. "We are pleased that she has accepted this call."

Daniel L. Poole of Bradford, Ohio, has accepted the



half-time position of Coordinator of Ministry Formation beginning August 1, 2007. He will work closely with Tara Hornbacker, associate professor of Ministry Formation, in the administration and teaching of the ministry formation component in the local and

Connections programs. "Dan will be a wonderful addition to the Bethany community," said Academic Dean Stephen Breck Reid. "He brings sixteen years of pastoral experience and has served as an adjunct faculty member for the past several years." Dan is a 1991 Bethany graduate. He will continue to serve as pastor of the Covington, Ohio Church of the Brethren in a half-time capacity.

Kathy Royer resigned as Director of Admissions effective September 3, 2007. She plans to expand her spiritual direction practice through teaching and individual counseling. "Kathy worked determinedly to enhance enrollment, to increase Bethany's exposure in areas beyond Church of the Brethren realms, and deepen connections with our Church of the Brethren college students," said Brenda Reish, executive director of student and business services and treasurer. "We also benefited from her gift of assisting persons in discernment. Her skills in spiritual direction brought a unique aspect to her work."



Alumni/ae News

New Academy Alumni/ae:

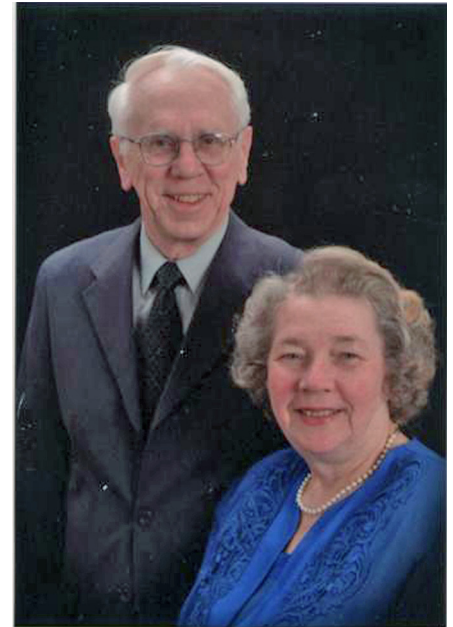
Philip Adams, Independence, Kansas
Ruth Aukerman, Union Bridge, Maryland
Ronald Bashore, Annville, Pennsylvania
Jeremy Dykes, Jonesborough, Tennessee
Carol Mason, Christiansburg, Virginia
Martha Shaak, Myerstown, Pennsylvania
Richard Troyer, Middlebury, Indiana

Published: an interview with David S. Young (1970, 1976) titled "Springs of Living Water! Church Renewal and the Anabaptist Tradition" appeared in the July 2007 issue of *Renovare*' Perspective. Springs! is a church renewal initiative that David founded. He writes, "The old Bethany D. Min. program, which has been updated, is the basis upon which we build. The renewal team reflects the Congregational Supervisory group and the renewal plan of the D.Min. units of renewal. What I find is that as I teach right out of the old project thesis that I get the best response. I imagine this is because we had to apply all we learned and document the growth both in us and in the church."

Education: Sara M. Young (1990) received her Doctor of Ministry degree from Iliff School of Theology, Denver, on June 1.

Anniversary:

Ron and Shirley Spire (1958) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on September 2.



Serving: John and Mary Mueller (2006, 2005) have committed to two years of service with the Church of the Brethren Emergency Response/Service Ministries and have moved to the Louisiana/Mississippi area to help rebuild the area devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Alums: Send your news to the Alumni/ae Office
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or E-mail to contactus@bethanyseminary.edu

Above the Noisy Din

Lowell Flory

I've been thumbing through the book of Ezra. "A novel thing to be doing on a Friday afternoon," you may say.

It's the story of the people rebuilding the temple. The foundation had just been laid. We're not told how it was done, but we are assured there was a lot of shouting that followed. The writer picks up the action with the report that many "... who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy. No one could distinguish the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away." (Ezra 3:12-13)

Hmmmm ... interesting.

There's nothing wrong with remembering what was. There may be learnings from the past that are worth reminding to those who don't appreciate nor even comprehend them. There may be destroyed temples of the past worth weeping over, worth trying to rebuild. There are new visions in the present that are worth shouts of joy, new understandings that must be celebrated with a loud cheer.

But it is rather ironic, is it not, that we can all be so busy either weeping or cheering that we don't hear each other, that indeed, sometimes our noises can't even be distinguished one from the other?

We all experience losses—literal or

figurative loss of temples, loss of relationships, loss of organizational focus, loss of stability and security that a waning heritage once provided. Loss presents us with the opportunity to review what it was or is that really matters. Review presents us with an opportunity to renew that which is still central to our being and gracefully let go of that which is not. Renewal presents us with the opportunity and, yes, perhaps the inspiration, to re-vision what the new temple for a new day may look like.

When we are called to review, renew, and revision, we don't do well when we're drowned out by the noise, unable to distinguish the weeping from the cheering. We are called to listen as much as to shout, to collaborate as much as to lament, to contemplate the merits of legacy as much as to forge ahead oblivious to a sense of history.

We follow a Christ who in his day was very much a force for renewal and revisioning, doing so with a deep respect for the heritage from which he came. We understand him to be a living Christ, who invites us in our day to renew and revision not in a noisy

ruckus, but in a spirit of understanding, a spirit of respect, a spirit of love, a spirit of reconciliation to each other and to him.



A FINAL WORD

Lowell Flory is Executive Director of Institutional Advancement for Bethany Theological Seminary.



Wonder & Word

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MISSION STATEMENT

Bethany Theological Seminary as a graduate school and academy seeks to prepare people for Christian ministry and to educate those called as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the cities and communities of the world.

Bethany's educational program bears witness to the beliefs, heritage, and practices of the Church of the Brethren in the context of the whole Christian tradition.

Among its values and goals, Bethany Theological Seminary:

Grounds its education in the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the world and in the acceptance of the New Testament as our guide to faith and practice.

Features the historic Brethren testimonies of community, peace, justice, reconciliation, service, and simplicity.

Advocates a learning process that grounds theological education in spiritual formation within the life and ministry of communities of faith.

Affirms a style of education that brings us into close relationships with congregations, the world-wide church, the peoples of the world, and God's creation.

Seeks to equip the whole church to better discern its faith and calling.

Invites into the community persons of both genders, and of all races, nations, and confessions.

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- Make a financial gift through our secure donation page.



You'll still find the resources with which you've become familiar, such as news items, webcasts, faculty lists, upcoming course listings, and links to entities such as The Brethren Academy, Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center, and Brethren Life & thought.

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