



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Seminary hosts symposium to “Follow the Fire”

Syracuse, Ind. (AMBS) –To answer the question, “What is God’s preferred future for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary?”, representatives from across the continent and the church gathered for 24 hours of prayer, worship and imagining.

The symposium, from noon on May 4 to noon on May 5 at Oakwood Conference Center near Syracuse, Ind., was called “Follow the fire,” to remind participants to pay attention to where God is leading.

“The church and society are changing so rapidly that we need to hear from different perspectives about what God is calling AMBS to be in the years ahead,” Nelson Kraybill, AMBS president said. “We need to listen to the church as we build on AMBS’s strengths for the future.”

The fifty-six participants included students from Mennonite colleges, people from different racial and ethnic groups in the church, seminary students, denominational executives, AMBS board members and pastors from other denominations in the Elkhart area. Jack Suderman reported on his visit to Mennonite churches across Canada and consultant Patrick Keifert shared results of the Church Member Profile, documenting changes in Mennonite Church USA. Other presentations explored issues among youth and young adults, and ministry and theological education needs among racial and ethnic groups in the church.

Then in each of three working sessions, participants imagined the future of pastoral and theological education with four combinations of factors, including serving traditional and non-traditional congregations, offering residential and dispersed learning, and balancing academic disciplines and practical skills for ministry.

The event was not intended for decision-making, but is one stream feeding into the seminary's longer-range strategic planning. Board and administrators will combine what emerged from listening to these discussions with what they are hearing through the seminary's Engaging Pastors project and through work with 20 other seminaries in a project to strengthen the missional emphases in their programs of study.

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Mary E. Klassen



Photo caption:

At a 24-hour symposium to explore where God is leading the seminary, each table group consisted of a diverse group representing the church. Looking at issues such as serving traditional and non-traditional congregations, offering residential and dispersed learning, and balancing academic disciplines and practical skills for ministry, the groups imagined what God's preferred future for the seminary might be. This table group includes Lars Akerson, Eastern Mennonite University student (back to camera); Noreen Neufeld and Randall Miller Jacobs, board members; Gilberto Flores, administrator of Spanish-language theological and ministry programs; John Esau, board member; and Gayle Gerber Koontz, AMBS faculty member; and two others not included the photo: J. David Yoder, associate director of Mennonite Education Agency; and Bob Yoder, Goshen College youth ministry instructor. Photo by Mary E. Klassen