



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Seminary graduates must say “yes” and “no”

Goshen, Ind. (AMBS) – With stories from his own ministry, Kyle Childress, pastor in Nacagdoches, Texas, challenged graduates of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary to discern what to support and what to resist in his commencement address on May 24.

Twenty-six students graduated in the afternoon ceremony at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. Eighteen of these received a Master of Divinity degree, which prepares people for pastoral ministry in congregations and other settings. One received the Master of Arts: Peace Studies; four the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, and three the Master of Arts in Christian Formation.

Childress, who has been pastor of Austin Heights Baptist Church since 1989, began his address saying, “When you say ‘yes’ to God, you had better be prepared to say ‘no’ to the powers.” As a new minister 28 years ago, he was told that every day he would need to say “yes” to God, “yes” to God’s people and “yes” to the Bible. He also would sometimes need to say “no.”

To be successful at discerning what to support and what to resist, Childress told graduates they must be immersed in Scripture. Then he added an additional step: “You better know God and you better know the Bible. To be a minister, you need to know your people, too.” He encouraged the graduates to get out of their offices and get into people’s lives. He continued, “Listen to them, pray with them. Over time you will help grow a people who say ‘yes’ to God and who are learning how to say ‘no’ to powers.”

Childress is active in the Ekklesia Project, a network of Christian groups focused on discipleship, primary allegiance to the Kingdom of God and peace-making. He also is a frequent contributor to the *Christian Century*, *Christian Reflection*, and other journals and serve in local leadership positions with Habitat for Humanity, and the AIDS project. He has a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Of the 26 graduates, ten have pastoral ministry assignments and five are seeking pastoral ministry assignments. Seven are involved in mission and service agencies as overseas workers, administrators or staff members. Others are pursuing chaplaincy and further graduate studies.

Twenty graduates are from the U.S., two are from Canada, two are from Australia, one is from Indonesia and one is from Guatemala and came to AMBS from Canada.

This year, the commencement service honored not only the 2008 graduates, but also graduates from 50 years ago and earlier. These special guests included graduates from both Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago and Goshen College Biblical Seminary with the earliest graduation date of 1947. These graduates, like the 2008 graduates, each received a brass replica of the seminary's bell which came to AMBS from the Wadsworth Institute, the first Mennonite institution of higher learning in the U.S.

AMBS is a seminary of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, preparing pastors and other leaders for the church.

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