

Call to prayer

In the past weeks, several alumni who are living in areas of conflict have sent requests for prayer to AMBS. It seems good, in this season of celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace, to share these here as a call for all of us to join in prayer. In addition, reflecting the theme of Joe Kotva's article at right, let us pray that those present in places of violence and unequal power will continue to find ways to model the vulnerability of a God who came as an infant.

Ed Nyce who serves with Mennonite Central Committee in Jerusalem and AMBS alumni for whom Palestine is home have requested prayer for the conflict in that region. The sanctions that Israelis have placed on Palestinian travel and activities are creating severe hardships. "Keep praying for genuine peace in the 'Holy Land,'" is the plea.

From Bogotá, Colombia, Peter Stucky along with Ricardo Esquivia writes, "We need to transform the message of destruction and death sent by the war and drug-trafficking into the message of dignified life, love and peace that we have as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace."

Oh Lord, hear our prayers.

- Mary E. Klassen, editor

Clergy ethics as modeling vulnerability

Joe Kotva, MATS 87

With hands shaking wildly and heart pounding like a drummer trying to excite the crowd at a ball game, I sounded my first notes as our new music trio began to play. That beginning was two years ago. Our organist had moved to another church and our congregation was not responding well. Instead of challenge and opportunity, this change was experienced as a crippling loss. Attendance was falling. A subtle heaviness began to settle in the worship services.

Although confident that we had diverse musical talents, I could not convince people to acknowledge their musical gifts, let alone use them for the church. After much prayer, I determined to take the risk that others found themselves unable to take. Accordingly, I began to practice my trumpet, which I had not played for 13 years, and I coaxed Carol (my wife) into joining me on the piano, which she had not practiced in more than a decade. We subsequently invited a member who recognized her own abilities on the violin to join us.



Taking that risk opened the gates: our trio grew into a ten-person ensemble with seven instruments; others now play for preludes, offertories, and special music; two members are taking organ lessons; and, surprisingly, our a cappella singing is much improved.

Many pastors have similar stories. I begin with this story because it illustrates key aspects of clergy ethics. When we hear the phrase "clergy ethics," we likely think about complex moral quandaries or the need to keep clergy free from troubling behavior such as plagiarism and sexual infidelity. But clergy ethics also involves the pastor's character and moral leadership within the congregation or parish.

We typically discuss such leadership by insisting that the prophetic task is part of pastoral ministry. But framing moral leadership this way is too narrow. Moral leadership involves much more than is captured in the image of a prophet. One facet of moral leadership not captured by that image is the need to model behaviors and dispositions with an implicit invitation to imitation.

The importance of role models and imitative behavior should not be understated. As children and adults, we learn many skills, including the dispositions and skills of the moral life, through a kind of intelligent copying or intentional mimicking of examples and role models. The apostle Paul knew the importance of imitation. Paul did not hesitate to call on Christians to imitate Christ (Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 15:1-7), other churches (2 Cor. 8:1-15, 24), and himself (1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17).

In this attitude, Paul is reflecting an honored tradition among teachers, rabbis, and philosophers who implicitly and explicitly invited their followers to imitate them. They understood that just as we apprentice with someone to learn a craft or skill, we also learn how to think, feel, and behave by imitating the style of those whom we admire. The importance of role models and

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Have you seen Vision?

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology, copublished by AMBS and Canadian Mennonite Bible College, made its debut in November. If you would like a free introductory copy, contact:

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Nominees affirmed

Marilyn Rudy-Froese and Douglas Hostetler Kaufman received unanimous affirmation to join the executive committee from the 133 alumni who sent in ballots.

AMBS Alumni News is published three times a year by the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary Alumni Association. It is intended to keep alumni informed about each other and AMBS. Please send suggestions for articles or information about alumni activities, honors, publications, etc. to:

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imitation was a standard part of ancient pedagogy. So too, it remains inherent in pastoral moral leadership, whether recognized or not.

This story illustrates such modeling. In particular, it illustrates modeling the kind of vulnerability—I was visibly nervous and my playing was clearly open to criticism—necessary to the life of the church. Where verbally calling people to use their gifts had failed, our example challenged others to take similar risks and gave them permission to use skills and gifts not yet fully developed.

I chose this example in part because moral leadership typically takes place in such seemingly mundane and everyday matters. It is in such simple matters as nervously playing imperfect music that we help inculcate those characteristics necessary to the church's life. But I also chose this example because it is a story of vulnerability. Vulnerability is not a characteristic esteemed by our society, but it is essential to those who believe that God's strength is found in human foolishness (1 Cor. 1), who view children as a symbol of greatness (Matt. 18:1-4), who measure stature by humble service (Matt. 23:11), and who two thousand years later still proclaim a woman's shameful anointing of Jesus as good news (Mark 14:3-9).

When I talk to clergy about modeling vulnerability, often the initial response is that parishioners do not want vulnerable pastors; they want perfect ones. I believe that clergy frequently self-impose this viewpoint. That is, the fundamental problem is not that parishioners discourage visible vulnerability in their pastors, but that pastors are afraid that showing weakness will undermine their already limited authority and professional stature. Yet, contrary to this fear, congregations often respond well to genuine examples of vulnerability in their pastors.

For example, the first time I made a public apology to the congregation (the need for which I was never taught in seminary), the youth could hardly wait to

tell me afterward "how cool that was." Another example concerns when I hurt my back so severely that the only way for me to participate in church was to spend the majority of several services laying on the floor with my legs propped up. Rather than disdain for the pastor's undignified position and weakness, several members with other physical limitations said that my example authorized them to be in church even when they "didn't have it altogether."

Admittedly, some congregations do want perfect, invulnerable pastors. But this desire for strong, perfect pastors only demonstrates that their vision and inclinations are being misshaped by the world. In the face of such malformed desires, the pastor as moral leader is not called to meet the congregation's expectations but to challenge them to the way of Jesus. And it is hard to deny that he modeled vulnerability.

Joe Kotva is pastor of First Mennonite Church of Allentown, Pa. He is author of The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics, Georgetown University Press, 1996. In 1994 he earned a Ph.D. in theology and ethics from Fordham University, Bronx, New York. He is a frequent instructor in ethics during AMBS Summer School.



Loren L. Johns was installed as dean of AMBS on November 12. His message, "Consuming God's Word," pulled together the invitation to consume God's word and the function of prophesy. Like the biblical prophets, we need "to listen, to consume, and perhaps be consumed" that we might embody God's word for us in our various contexts. Loren concluded by offering his vision for the church: "God is calling people, both prophets and other Christians, to...become one with the mind of God today."

Alumni news

Orlando Redekopp (MDiv 1975), pastor at First Church of the Brethren, Chicago, completed a DMin with Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Dietrich Rempel (BD 1967, MDiv 1970, former board member) and Dorothy, his wife, concluded a five-year assignment in Berlin, Germany, ministering among Aussiedler and working with the Berlin Mennonite Church. In January they returned to Abbotsford to begin a pastoral ministry assignment with Clearbrook Mennonite Church.

Tim Schmucker (MAPS 1988) and Jacqui, his wife, announce the birth of Christopher Allen Barreto Schmucker in March 2000. Tim has started his ninth year as head teacher of the ESL program for refugees and immigrants at the Toronto Mennonite New Life Centre.

Ingrid Schultz (MDiv 1992) is part of the pastoral team at First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C. She began there in March 1999. Her primary responsibility is with the English congregation but there are lots of opportunities to interact with the German and Spanish congregations as well. She writes, "First Advent we had a joint communion service in the three languages and it was a wonderful celebration. We live in a very multi-ethnic neighbourhood, have English classes and a refugee office in our education building. We are excited to see our church begin to mirror some of the ethnic diversity of our community."

Tim Schultz (MATS 2000) began as pastor of the Harris Hill Mennonite Church (NY) in October 1999. Several songs he composed were recently included in the songbook, "Seasons of the Spirit," published by Pinecrest.

Earl Sears (BD 1964, MDiv 1971) works with a victim offender program at OVM Newton after having served 33 years as a pastor. He anticipates retiring in 2000.

Ken Seitz (MDiv 1979) pastors First Mennonite Church, Reedley, Calif. Stephen Penner (1976-1977) serves as an association pastor. Ken chairs Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference Pastoral Leadership Committee.

David A. Shank's (BD 1953) 1996 lectures at the University of

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, have been published by Groupes Bibliques Africaines at Abidjan Cote D'Ivoire. In its special number of Pentecostalism, the Archives de Sciences Sociales of the French National Center for Scientific Research has published his study, "The Pentecostalism of Prophet Harris." For the third consecutive year he has become "Rabbi David ben Yitzhak in the Bethlehem inn," for his congregation's Christmas pageant.

Ezra Sigwela (CTh 89) is a new member of the national Parliament in Capetown, South Africa. His assignments are the committee of public works and the committee of water affairs and forests. Prior to this he was assigned to organize several smaller districts into one district government and earlier he had been provincial minister of agriculture.

Stan Smucker (BD 1960, MDiv 1992) and Marlene, his wife, have concluded ten years of ministry at Arvada Mennonite Church and 39 years in all. They have moved to North Newton, Kan., to be near children and grandchildren.

Michel Sommer (MAPS 1992) and his family live and work in Strasbourg, France. Ruth is in charge of a Mennonite student home and Michel is pastor of the Strasbourg Mennonite Church and editor of *Christ seul*, the French Mennonite publication.

Muriel T. Stackley (MDiv 1994) is coauthor with Edgar Stoesz of *Garden in the Wilderness: Mennonite Communities in the Paraguayan Chaco 1927-1997* (CMBC Publications, 1999).

AMBS news notes

Emeritus faculty member named

Marcus Smucker was named Professor Emeritus in recognition of his contributions to AMBS as a faculty member from 1982-1998 and as adjunct faculty member from 1998-2000.

Invite a friend to Seminary Sampler

The spring Seminary Sampler open house is set for March 4-5. If you know of someone who is curious about seminary study or who might need a nudge to consider ministry, let the admissions department know: <admissions@amb.sedu>.

AMBS positions open

AMBS is seeking an **associate dean for leadership education**. For details, see www.amb.sedu/jobpostings.htm or contact the dean's office at AMBS.

Diane Zaerr who is serving as associate dean, has accepted a position with Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries as Minister of Congregational beginning early in 2001.

ministry, with the possibility of full-time employment shared with Goshen College. This person will provide leadership and instruction as AMBS strengthens its offerings in youth ministry.

AMBS also is seeking a **registrar**, an eighty percent position.

For more information on any of these openings, contact the dean's office at AMBS, <ljohns@amb.sedu>.

Alumni call night successful

On November 14, eight AMBS faculty members participated in an "alumni call night." They were able to make contact with 25 alumni for two purposes: to check in on alumni activities and to seek recommendations for prospective students.

Alumni who were missed in this effort (obviously a large majority) are invited to let AMBS know if they would like to talk with a specific member of the faculty or if they have a recommendation for a future AMBS student. Contact <admissions@amb.sedu>.

AMBS will soon announce a search for a halftime **professor in youth**

Reunion, retreat, renewal all in one



AMBS hosted a weekend event on Nov. 10-12 for pastors who have been serving between one and three years. With the theme "Clarifying the call," the event was an opportunity for these new pastors to share with each other and with seminary professors the issues they are facing in ministry as well as to have retreat time away from responsibilities.

What made this event unique was that all participants were at a similar point in their ministry experience. It gave participants an opportunity to focus on issues that are important to



them while AMBS could receive guidance in shaping the educational program for the future.

The event was coordinated as a pilot project of the AMBS Church Leadership Center which will work to respond to needs for continuing education for pastors and other church leaders.

Participants included (at left): Tanya Ramer Wenger, Jennifer Davis Sensenig, Patrick Preheim and Neil Amstutz; and (at right) Ken Quiring; Yolanda, his wife; and Adriana, their youngest daughter; who are visiting with Gayle Gerber Koontz.

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