



a l u m n i n e w s

A M B S

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AMBS enters 50th year

The 2007–08 school year is the 50th year of seminary education at AMBS. Groundbreaking on September 3, 1957, launched an intense year of construction, relocation for Mennonite Biblical Seminary to Elkhart from Chicago, Ill., and anticipation of coordinating theological education between MBS and Goshen Biblical Seminary.

AMBS Alumni News asked people who were here in 1958 to reflect on those beginnings. We asked: What were the surprises? the challenges? the outcomes of MBS and GBS coming together? the learnings you hope we won't miss?

The issue and the next will include these reflections and more will be posted on the AMBS web site. If you have something to share, please send us your stories.

As you read these reminiscences, give thanks for God's faithfulness through these 50 years and pray that God will use AMBS to continue preparing people to serve God's mission in the world.

- Mary E. Klassen, editor

The beginning of AMBS in Elkhart

Surprises, challenges, things we should not forget

Peter J. Neufeld
Student in fall 1958, BD 1960

I was married in the summer of 1958 and brought my wife, Onalee, with me to Elkhart in the fall. My first view of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary campus was a bit of a surprise. I saw a large expanse of grass that looked more like a cow pasture than an institution of learning. This was quite a contrast to the seminary campus in Chicago.

When I saw the seminary buildings, my impression was, "They're nice but seem a little small for a seminary." There is a vast difference in the campus 50 years later. (Just look at the trees.)

At Elkhart, I did miss a couple of the professors from Bethany Seminary in Chicago, such as Dr. Mallott and Dr. Ziegler. I, however, felt truly enriched by the professors gained in our relationship with Goshen Biblical Seminary,

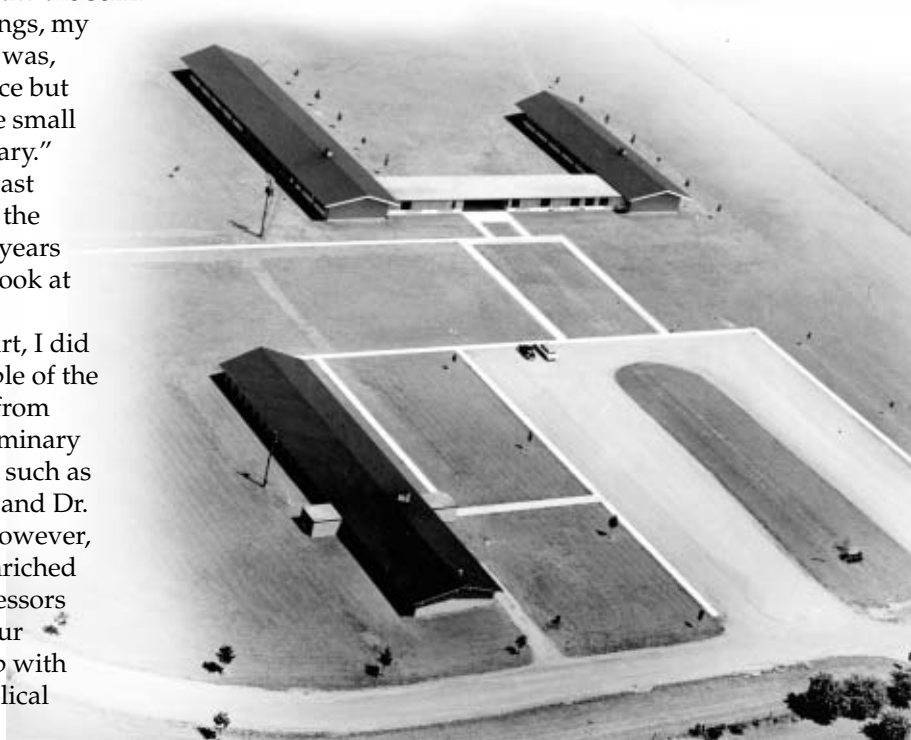
such as H.S. Bender, John Howard Yoder and others. Erland Waltner had been my teacher at Bethel College so I was happy to again have him as my teacher as well as president of the seminary. There were other teachers that I appreciated at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, such as William Klassen, Jacob Enz, Leland and Bertha Harder and others.

Another new dimension

was a group of fellow students—the bus people from Goshen. I learned to know and appreciate many of them. I wonder, "How much influence these inter-seminary relationships had on the later merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church?" At lot—I think.

My biggest class challenges were studying Old Testament Hebrew

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Archive photo

Ministry roles for women grow from early beginnings



Archive photo

Women in Church Life was a noncredit evening class begun by Bertha Harder during the early years of AMBS. Bertha, who was instructor in Christian education, is seated to the right of the fireplace in the lounge in this photo from 1965. Bertha, who had earned an MRE, and Leland, her husband, who had earned a BD from Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago, were among the first faculty at AMBS in Elkhart.

Bertha Harder Faculty in fall 1958

When Leland and I arrived in Elkhart on our move from Chicago with our few belongings and two young boys, we settled in a rental house on South Sixth Street. The next day we were introduced to the new seminary within walking distance of our house. There it was, brand new brick buildings with a sign. Inside the buildings were new offices and classrooms, a large long room with shelves ready for the library books. Sidewalks were temporary board walks. Inside the building we met faculty and staff with smiling faces, greeting each other with eager and yet somewhat fearful anticipation. What would it be like?

Students came, some single, but mostly married men from all parts of the United States and Canada. I was scheduled to teach a credit course called, "The Christian Education of Children." As classes started I came to realize that only a few of the

women on campus were enrolled for classes. Many did not have the academic prerequisites for formal seminary study. Many of the wives were confined to their small apartments, keeping house for their husbands and caring for babies and children. How could these women get involved in learning?

I had an idea that was accepted and implemented, even during that first year in Elkhart. I designed an evening course called, "Women in Church Life." This was a noncredit course for women of any level of educational achievement. A goodly number of women came and enrolled. We studied and practiced effective committee work, planning programs in the life of the church, and working in the Sunday church school for various age levels. We even worked on preparing and presenting talks on topics of individual interest.

I remember that toward the end of those class sessions, I said to these women, "Now if you are ever asked to perform a leadership function or maybe even asked to give a talk in front of the congregation, do the best you can and you may be given another opportunity to lead out again sometime!" ●

Muriel Thiessen Stackley Student in fall 1958

The surprise in autumn 1958 was that the dozen-or-so new students included only two single men (Marvin J. Zehr and Oskar Wedel) and the rest of us were single women!* Shock waves! What do to? Marvin and Oskar were dispatched to Bertha and Leland Harder's basement apartment, and we women spread out in the dormitory, complete with its shiny new urinals.

In spring 1958, Mennonite Biblical Seminary commissioned Virginia, Cornelia, Martha and me for work in Women in Church Vocations (an about-ten-year "successor" to the Deaconess Movement). All this was a harbinger of later proliferation of women seminary students and women ordained to the pastoral ministry. Virginia and Martha became career mission workers in Japan; Nellie and I joined the staff of the Commission on Education of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

*Virginia Claassen, Hedy Sawadsky, Martha Giesbrecht (soon to get engaged to George Janzen), Sadie Dyck, Cornelia Lehn, Cay Snyder (later (Siebert), and several others. ●

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**Read more reflections about early years of AMBS:
www.ambs.edu/anniversary-dedication**

Watch for the winter issue of *AMBS Alumni News* with reflections from William Klassen, Leland Harder and others.

1958 move to Elkhart Gains and losses

Nicholas Dick
Student in fall 1958, BD 1959

As pending seniors we were somewhat disappointed about the move to Elkhart from the exciting urban setting of Chicago where I attended lectures by Paul Tillich, Martin Buber and Hulda Niebuhr, and could stay overnight at the home of Reginald Fuller, translator of *The Cost of Discipleship*, or shake the hand of Martin Luther King. Nevertheless, the opportunity to attend classes with John Howard Yoder, Jacob Enz, and Harold Bender partly compensated for the loss. Obviously the move has brought the two institutions together which is a distinct advantage. ●

Peter J. Neufeld
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with Jacob Enz and the New Testament Greek with William Klassen. These courses, however, were very helpful in my pastoral ministries.

As to what should a focus be in the future? Our seminary is a "biblical" seminary and it is a "Mennonite" seminary. Our church people want to hear, "What does the Bible say?" from their ministers. It appears to me, however, that fewer Mennonites today want to hear of our Anabaptist Mennonite history and our interpretation of Scripture. They need to hear both from our seminary graduates. ●



Mary E. Klassen

The grand opening of the new AMBS Co-op Bookstore was held the week of September 24. On the evening of September 26, AMBS hosted a dedication service for *Take Our Moments and Our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book* followed by tours of the new library and bookstore.

Bookstore staff includes Christina Litwiller (right), manager, and Andy Alexis-Baker. Frances Ringenberg, AMBS student, was one of the customers on the evening of the celebration.

To find out more about the AMBS bookstore, see information on the AMBS web site: www.amsb.edu/bookstore. To purchase books from the bookstore, send a message to bookstore@amsb.edu.

Celebration planned

April 25–26, 2008, is planned as a celebration to look back at the last 50 years and to look forward. Events will focus both on the 50th anniversary and on dedication of the new building at AMBS, which houses the library and bookstore.

The theme for the weekend will be "Our hope is in God," with Friday emphasis on "The hope to which we are called" (Eph. 2:8) and Saturday emphasis on "The hope beyond what we can imagine" (Eph. 3:20).

Here are some of the activities planned:

Friday, April 25

- Anabaptist Colloquium (scholarly conference,

focus to be determined)

- Exhibits
- Evening Banquet
- Worship service

Saturday, April 26

- Morning activities, such as storytelling, singing and lighthearted fun for all ages
- Continuation of Anabaptist Colloquium
- Choir performances
- Dedication of new building

All who have studied at AMBS and all who wish to celebrate with AMBS are invited to attend. More information will follow with specific plans and times. Refer to the AMBS web site: www.amsb.edu/anniversary-dedication, to keep up-to-date with plans. ●

Alumni News

Michael Gladfelter (MDiv 1998) is pastor of Muncie Fountain Square Church, Muncie, Ind.

Catherine Koziatek (MDiv 2004) began June 17 as pastor for Bethel United Methodist Church in Elkhart, Ind.

Garry Jost (MDiv 2000) received a Doctor of Ministry from Drew University, Madison, N.J. His project was "Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength: An Authentic Encounter with the Bible in its Original Languages."

Faith M. Weedling (MDiv 2003) was ordained an Elder of the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church on June 11. She is currently serving the Mt. Pleasant and South Covington United Methodist Churches in Covington, Va.

Karen Jane Weldy (MDiv 2003) was ordained on September 30 at Southside Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind.

Kevin (MDiv 2005) and **Rochelle Drudge** are spending most of 2007 in Menno Colony, Paraguay, where Rochelle is teaching music.

Ingrid Friesen Moser (MACF 2002) is author of *Body Talk: Speaking the Words of Health*. The book is the fourth in MMA's Living Stewardship study series. Ingrid is MMA's stewardship of health manager.

Phil Bergey (MATS 1993) ended his position with Franconia Mennonite Conference at the end of August to begin a Ph.D. program through Fielding University of Santa Barbara, Calif., in Systems Transformation with a concentration in leadership coaching.



Mark Shephard

Rebecca Slough, associate professor of worship and the arts, was installed as dean on October 19. During the service, she was presented with gifts by Judy Yoder, receptionist, and faculty members Daniel Schipani and Gayle Gerber Koontz.

Installation service honors Rebecca Slough

Rebecca Slough, Ph.D., received two gifts as she was installed as academic dean of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary on October 19, gifts that signify the combination of scholarship and worship that come together in her role and in her life.

First she was robed in an academic gown, representing the educational mission of AMBS as well as the scholarship she brings to the position. Second, she received several volumes of

The Saint John's Bible—a project to reproduce the Scriptures with hand lettering and illuminations commissioned by Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn. These represent the centrality of the Bible at AMBS and the emphasis on worship and the arts which are the focus of Slough's teaching.

Rebecca began as dean in July 2007. Loren Johns, previous dean, has shifted to full-time teaching in the Bible department. ●



Mark Shephard

Six AMBS deans—all the deans who served since 1964—gathered at the installation service of Rebecca Slough on October 19: Gayle Gerber Koontz (1990–1995), Loren L. Johns (2000–2007), Ross T. Bender (1964–1981), Jacob W. Elias (1981–1990), Willard M. Swartley (1995–2000) and Rebecca Slough.

Call for nominations

The AMBS Alumni Association Executive Committee invites all alumni to nominate graduates for the annual Alumni Ministry and Service Awards. The purpose of the award is to recognize and celebrate outstanding ministry and service by graduates.

The enclosed nomination form gives detailed criteria. Please note that all graduates of Goshen Biblical Seminary (GBS), Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS) and AMBS qualify. The executive committee is encouraging



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nominations of both women and men.

Send in your nominations by January 1, 2008. Awards will be announced in May.

Recipients receive \$500 toward registration fees for AMBS courses or continuing education events. ●

Don't pass up these opportunities

Pastor-Faculty Study Group:

The Pastor as Caring Sage will be facilitated by Daniel Schipani, and will meet for eight two-hour sessions in spring 2008. The focus will be on pastoral counseling in the congregation. Apply by November 30. See www.amsb.edu/studygroup.

Listening Project:

Pastors who have graduated from AMBS in the last ten years are invited to apply. In this program, an AMBS professor comes for a weekend to listen to the pastor and members talk about their challenges and hopes of the congregation. See www.amsb.edu/listeningproject.

Funded Pastor Sabbatical:

If you have a sabbatical coming in fall 2008 or spring 2009, consider applying for this program. See www.amsb.edu/pastorsabbatical.

You also may contact the Church Leadership Center, 574.296.6269 or churchleadership@amsb.edu, for any of the three programs above.

Conference on technology and worship

AMBS extends an invitation for proposals for presentations to be given at the conference, "Upgraded? The influence of technology on Christian worship," August 7–9, 2008. See more at www.amsb.edu/news-and-publications/events-and-news/upgraded. Coordinators are Rebecca Slough, academic dean, and Craig Neufeld, MDiv student.

Israel/Palestine tour:

Nelson Kraybill will co-lead a TourMagination tour to Israel and Palestine, May 25–June 4, 2008.

More information at www.tourmagination.com.