

Two genders...one pastor

Jim Loepp Thiessen, MDiv. 1991
Pastor, Shantz Mennonite Church,
Baden, Ontario

Joe Kotva's article on pastoral ethics in the last issue of the AMBS Alumni News scratched where I have been itching—modeling. Much pastoral leadership is modeling: risking true vulnerability, caring that does not belittle, challenge that does not berate, planning that is flexible, prayer that is authentic, conversion that changes the heart.

Awareness of modeling deepens my character and pushes my humility. Perhaps you have heard that many pastors enter the ministry ready to change the world, but after a few years discover they are lucky if they can change the color of the paint in the nursery. I know the tension of that statement!

Nevertheless, pastoral leadership is not a series of huge decisions. It is built on many small actions held together by the pattern of the pastor's character.

We continue the discussion of pastoral ethics this month with contributions by Nancy Kauffmann on confidentiality, and by Jim Loepp Thiessen on ministering across genders. We hope they contribute to your ongoing reflection.

As you celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection this spring, may you know the life of the risen Christ empowering your ministry.

Daniel Z. Miller
Association chairperson

One of the challenges that I face, in the small congregation that I pastor in, is ministering to both genders as a male pastor. I have read the fences that some leaders have set up, like "I don't ever meet one on one with anyone of the opposite gender," and find that ideal in terms of boundaries, but difficult to put in practice in a small congregation. Given my situation, here is what I have done:

- I am extremely careful to guard my heart and thought life. I follow the statement Job makes to God "I have made a covenant with my eyes...(Job 31:1). I have places in my own life, where I am accountable for what I think and do. I cannot underestimate how important this is for me.
- If I meet with a woman, I always tell my spouse who I am meeting with, and I let them know my spouse knows we are meeting. I simply don't make confidentiality into some sacred cow to be followed at all costs. No one has ever seemed to care that my spouse knows we are meeting.
 - Physical contact is limited to a handshake.
 - I meet in public places with women for one on one connections. I go for coffee, or lunch. If that isn't possible, I have set up people to be in the church building, if I am meeting with a woman alone. An elder. Or, I have meet with them while the secretary is here.
 - I do not share with women, what should be shared with my spouse.
 - I tell my elders, with whom I am accountable, what my practice is in meeting with women, and we talk about our understandings.
 - I have a large window in my office door, which gives me peace of mind when the door is closed.

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Patty Friesen (MDiv 1996; Minneapolis, Minn.) and Edna Dyck (Newton, Kan.) were two of more than 250 participants at Pastors' Week, Jan. 29-Feb. 1, 2001. This was the largest participation ever in Pastors' Week, which this year celebrated its 30th anniversary.



Mary E. Klassen



Alumni gatherings

Gatherings of alumni are planned at the summer meetings of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada:

Mennonite Church USA,
Nashville, Tenn.:

AMBS Alumni and Friends
Dinner, Friday, July 6,
6-8:30 p.m.; hosted by AMBS
President Nelson Kraybill and
Dean Loren Johns.
See Nashville 2001 registration
form to register.

Mennonite Church Canada,
Abbotsford, B.C.:

Thursday, July 12, 8:30-10 p.m.

If you attend either of these conferences, please join us for fellowship.

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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- I follow the rule that I learned from Marcus Smucker. That is, I would tell my spouse if there is someone that I find attractive in the church or outside of it. I find that naming defuses any potential problem created by secrecy.
- I use my own intuition. Having been at my congregation for ten years, there are people that I trust, and have a clear sense about. There have been times, when meeting with someone who I did not know well, I would not, based on my own internal flags, meet again with them alone.
- I do no ongoing counseling with women. If there is counseling that needs to happen, I refer. Fortunately, where we live there are many counselling resources available in our area.
- I guard my heart (yes, I know I said that already). I assume ministry is risky and not always straight forward, and that being a solo pastor is less than ideal. However, given adequate structure and accountability, ministry can happen with integrity to all in my church.

How far does confidentiality go?

Nancy Kauffmann
MDiv 1982
Regional Minister
Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

People in the congregation expect and trust their pastor to keep confidentiality. As a pastor, I have the privilege of entering into a person's "holy of holies" to hear their secrets of pain, joy, struggle, and confession. They make themselves vulnerable, trusting that they will not be hurt, but listened to with a compassionate heart.

In the "Ethics of Ministry" section of *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, it states that confidentiality requires vigilance. It goes on to encourage pastors and elders/deacons to develop an understanding of what is appropriate sharing in an elder/deacon meeting. This assumes the expectation to share responsibly some information so that they may carry out their duties in the congregation.

The polity though says nothing about whether sharing with a spouse is breaking confidentiality or not. I have heard some pastors say, "My spouse is my biggest confidant, and I need somewhere to unload." Others say, "My spouse and I don't keep any secrets from each other." I have chosen to see it differently. Although my spouse is my biggest confidant and I have committed to not keep my personal secrets from him, sharing someone else's confidential information is another issue. The individual who shares has not included my spouse in that confidence, nor have I asked for permission to share it with him. It has been a good discipline for me that if I don't share such confidences with my spouse then I am all the more certain not to share it inappropriately with others. My husband has expressed appreciation for my not loading him with confidential information that he then has to worry about keeping private. He has shown how one can be very supportive without knowing, which has been valuable to me.

Reunions of more than one kind happen during Pastors' Week. During this year's event, three members of a musical group reunited: Gary Martin (MDiv 1982; faculty 1986-95; Goshen, Ind.); David Foncannon (MDiv 1993; Pueblo, Colo.) and Richard Wineland (MDiv 1996; Goshen, Ind.)



Mary E. Klassen

Alumni news

Harlan Steffen (BD 1967) was honored in June 2000 by being named commodore for the 37th annual Syracuse-Wawasee (Ind.) Flotilla. He is pastor of Wawasee Lakeside Chapel, a position he has held for the past 34 years.

John Stahl-Wert (MATS 1987) received his Doctor of Ministry in the Renewal of the Church for Mission from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He graduated "with distinction" in May 2000. John was appointed president of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation. He pastored the Pittsburgh Mennonite Church from 1988-1994, then founded the PULSE program (now called Mennonite Urban Corps-Pittsburgh). He served as an overseer in Allegheny Mennonite Conference and is a member of the Board of Education.

Elno Steiner (BTh 1951) served as interim co-pastor of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio. Next year it will be 50 years since Paul Mininger ordained him as minister and J.C. Wenger as bishop at Olive Mennonite Church, rural Goshen.

Fred Unruh ('64) retired from active ministry in October 1998. He and his wife Virleen retired to Lethbridge, Alb., where they served in the

Lethbridge Mennonite Church for six years. Fred is pursuing his hobby of building rocking horses.

Marie-Noelle von der Recke (1974-76) and her husband, Ernst, live in an international ecumenical community called the Larurentiuskonvent. The community actively works in the areas of peace and mediation and provides assistance to refugees from Turkey and countries in Africa. She also serves as chair for Church and Peace, a group that has worked for the past 50 years at building connections with traditional peace churches and newer communities and organizations working for peace in Europe.

Dorothy Jean Weaver (MDiv 1977) coled a study tour to the Middle East in May 2000. The tour was cosponsored by Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Bernie Wiebe (BD 1965) retired in August 1999 from Menno Simons College, Winnipeg, Man., where he served as coordinator and associate professor of conflict resolution studies since the beginning of that college in 1989. Bernie also was the last associate moderator of the General Conference Mennonite Church, 1992-1999. His wife, Marge, died October 27, 1999, of brain cancer. They had been married 43 years.

Doug and Wanda Roth Amstutz are in their fifth year co-pastoring at Mennonite Church of Scottdale. They have twins, Amani and Abigail who are two and a half; and Sophia, who is one.

Neil Amstutz (MDiv 99) was ordained for pastoral ministry at First Mennonite Church, McPherson, Kan., on February 18, 2001.

Wilma Bailey (MDiv 79) is associate professor of Hebrew and Aramaic Scripture at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Ind. She was a featured presenter at the tenth annual contemporary issues conference at Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, Pa, in March 2001.

Roy Bender (MDiv 1987) is beginning his sixth year of a pastorate at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., and works part-time at the Mennonite Information Center in Lancaster.

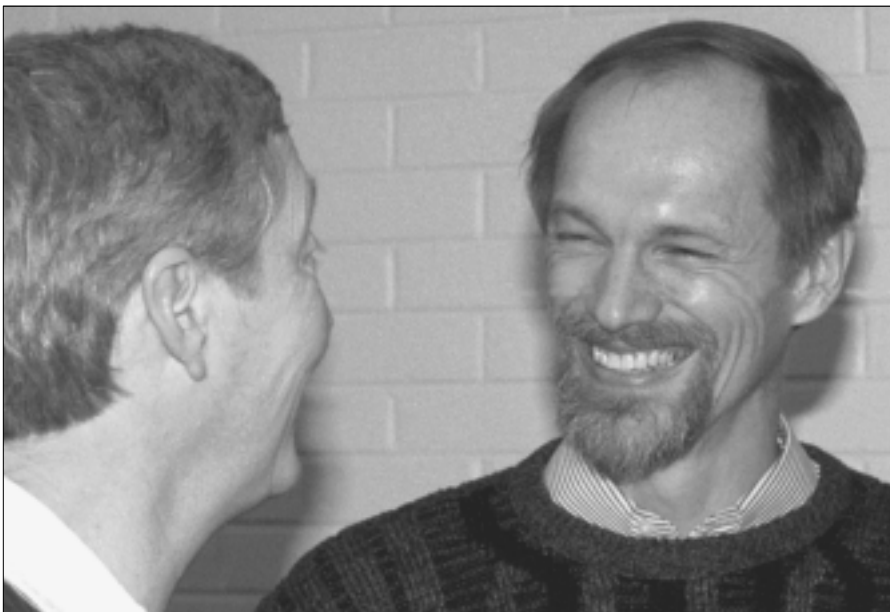
Brian Burkholder (MDiv 1998) and Linda Martin were married October 28, 2000. Brian continues to serve as program director of Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Mich.

Virginia Claassen (MRE 1959) retired from mission work in Japan in May 1999. She went there in 1959 after graduating from Mennonite Biblical Seminary. She now lives at Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Kan.

Alma Coffman (MDiv 76) is back again at Madonna House in Magadan, Russia. Prior to leaving she wrote from Combermere, Ont., "In August on a Sunday I was walking down the road from our farm. I heard a crack of a branch on the forest floor. I said out loud, "Mr. Bear, is that you?" I got no answer; just another crackling of a branch. So I walked across the road and looked into the woods. About 30 feet below me beside a little creek as a little bear cub walking away from me. Obviously it wasn't Mr. Bear but Mama bear and her cub(s). "

Arnold Dietz (BD 63; MDiv 86) began semi-retirement in August 2000, while still serving part-time at Baugo Church of the Brethren, Wakarusa, Ind.

John Drescher (BD 54) was invited to spend a month in Japan in 2000. The invitation came from Word of Life Publishers, who have published seven of his books in Japanese, the Church



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Donna Kampen Entz and Rodney Hollinger-Janzen (MDiv 1990) enjoyed the time for fellowship at Pastors' Week. Both served with their families in Africa with Mennonite mission boards: the Entz family in Burkina Faso and the Hollinger-Janzen family in Benin.



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Janice Yordy Sutter and her husband, David Sutter, spoke at a recent AMBS forum on pastoring business people. They are pastors of Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., and had made a similar presentation at the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) convention when it met in South Bend. The Sutters were part of a series of fora on topics such as what business people want and need from their pastors and how pastors and business people minister to each other. The series began with speaker Peter Wiebe (BD 1952, MDiv 1982); and also included a variety of business people.

Alumni news (cont.)

of God, the Tokyo Mission Research Institute, the Mennonite Education Committee, and the Mennonite churches of Japan.

Paul Dyck (MDiv 1984) is pastor of Poole Mennonite Church in Ontario after serving as pastor at Steinbach Mennonite Church in Manitoba for 15 years.

In November 2000, **Eldon Epp** (MDiv 1981) completed a term as part-time interim pastor at First Congregational Church, Manhattan, Kan.

Menno Epp (MDiv 71) is retired from leadership ministries, but is available for preaching and teaching. He recently taught a four-session course on Loss, Grief and Growth at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

Lowell Gerber (MDiv 1980) bean a nine-month term as halftime interim pastor at Stoner Heights Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio, in September 2000. He continues on a halftime basis at Brenn-Field Nursing Center.

Anna Stutzman Janzen (MATS 91) was ordained on September 17, 2000, at Warwick River Mennonite Church, Newport News, Va.

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