



A M B S alumni news

Reflections on Pastors Week, January 23–26

Exploring rituals; worshiping together

Spring 2006
Volume 11 Issue 3

To quote more than one participant in this year's Pastors Week, this was the best one yet. The focus on practical issues surrounding baptism, communion, funerals and weddings helped participants explore both the theology and the practice of these congregational rituals.

In this issue of *AMBS Alumni News* we have asked three participants to reflect on the week (January 23–26). In these very brief articles you can find personal reflections and an invitation to further discussion.

Arthur Paul Boers set the stage for the discussion with his opening message at Pastors Week: "We are embodied beings, not ethereal, celestial creatures able to commune through spirit, soul and intellect. No, we need bread, baptism and the body broken for us; we need taste, texture, and touch; we need water, word and wine; we need sight, sound and singing."

— Mary E. Klassen, editor

Returning to AMBS for the first time since leaving studies in 1987, I was pleased to see how well the seminary has done in its efforts to integrate academic learning and professional development with personal faith vitality and spiritual formation. Pastors were offered interesting lectures on practical ministry issues coupled with deeply spiritual worship services that provided opportunities for "the shepherds of God's sheep to be shepherded," as expressed in the communion call to worship.

Arthur Paul Boers called us to see that rituals have the power to convert us by reorienting us to God's

face, agenda and priorities, and can be the means by which God's power is tangibly unleashed in our lives.

In the worship service focused on baptism I experienced this as, kneeling before the baptismal font with my hands in the water, I found myself weeping with joy at the memory of my baptism, with gratitude for being named a beloved child of God, and with sorrow for the pains and cost of the journey that began with my baptismal vows. The ritual of this worship service had indeed taken me to spiritual pastures of worship, comfort and empowerment which I

could not have found on my own.

Dave Tiessen, student from 1985 to 1987; currently between pastorates, having held pastorates in Winnipeg, Man.; Guelph, Waterloo County, and Leamington, Ont.

Many planes, buses and automobiles later, I arrived in northern Indiana for Pastors Week. The sky was grey. I was exhausted. I had just arrived from Albuquerque, New Mexico. I came to the week more weary in my soul than I knew.

Each day the worship
(continued on page 2)



Pastors Week presenters Alan Kreider, AMBS; and Irma Fast Dueck, Canadian Mennonite University

Pastors Week reflections

(continued)

In his Pastors Week presentation, Alan Kreider emphasized catechesis as a serious, disciplined preparation for baptism, and baptism as a climax in the journey of faith. "There is a quest for baptismal integrity," he said. "The practice of baptism is getting wetter, getting messier, getting more like birth."

Irma Fast Dueck emphasized the role of the congregation in weddings, saying the service should be a gift from the congregation to the couple. "We need to be interested in weddings that wed," she explained. "In a wedding ceremony we declare that love, fidelity, permanence, self-giving and receiving are possible because of God."

was vital—filled with the many-colored, multimedia, scriptural enthusiasm of Psalm 150. I was deeply stirred by the teachings of committed hearts and creative minds in the Mennonite Church today.

By the end of the week, after experiencing daily rituals of prayer, worship, teaching, fellowship, fun, food, anointing, communion, hand washing, I was filled to the brim and overflowing!

The thing that left a lasting impression upon me was how the daily immersion in these mundane and spiritual rituals with one's community is like a satisfying, healthy meal or long nap. The regular experience of the "communion of saints" (those who have died and those with us) became like a great feast for my body and soul. I realized that we live in a time when, as a contemporary people, we taste a steady diet of the bad news from TV, newspapers, e-news and telephones, rather than

supping with this communion daily.

I left this place, grey skies and all, soaring with the good news. I was reminded to "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. 34) in these ritual feasts. Do it as often as possible!

Anita Amstutz, student from 1991 to 1992; pastor, Albuquerque Mennonite Church, Albuquerque, N.M.

I found my mind stimulated by a question regarding the focus of our rituals. I want the rituals practiced in the congregation to be biblically based, and faithful to what we believe to be Anabaptist.

The methods we use in our rituals need to be thoughtfully examined. Sometimes we simply react to the pressures we experience, rather than being led by the biblical texts and our community

discernment.

The early Anabaptists experienced many pressures as they explored new ways of being the church. I know they intensely desired to be biblical, but it appears there was also a large dose of reactivity involved, especially in regard to the mass and Holy Communion.

As Mennonites, we pride ourselves in seeking a third way. Yet many times we find ourselves simply in opposition to prevailing patterns of thinking, whether it be the eschatology of the Left Behind novels, or Jerry Falwell's geopolitics. We need an approach that is faithfully thoughtful and principled. I believe we can find a third way that has integrity.

I think it would be fruitful to explore this in more detail. Anyone interested?

Wayne Hochstetler, MDiv 1979; conference minister, Illinois Mennonite Conference ●

Spring 2006
Volume 11 Issue 3

AMBS Alumni News is published three times a year by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. It is intended to keep alumni informed about each other and AMBS.

Please send suggestions for articles or information about alumni activities, honors, publications, to: Mary E. Klassen, editor
574 296-6229
mklassen@ambs.edu

Alumni Director: Ron Ringenberg

Alumni Association Executive Committee:

Tim Lichti, president
Louise Wideman, vice president
Marilyn Rudy-Froese
Jill Wright
Myron Schrag



Pastors Week presenters: John Rempel, Eleanor Kreider, Gayle Gerber Koontz, AMBS

Katrina took valuable memorabilia Do you have replacements?

Leslie Norris is an alumnus of Mennonite Biblical Seminary who was living in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina struck last August. "I lost just about everything," he says, and he is asking for help to replace two items from the time of he studied in Elkhart in 1962.

Leslie would like a replacement for an MBS catalog from 1962 and the issue of *MBS Bulletin* from fall 1962. "Those were very precious to me," he says.

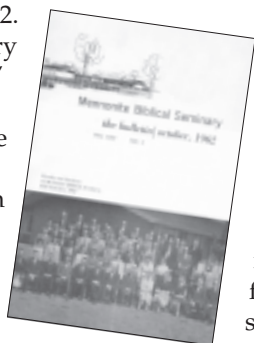
Leslie was the first exchange student between MBS and the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Ga. The other half of the exchange that first year was Tony (Anton) Enns.

During his year at AMBS, Leslie began building his library, taking advantage of the discount at the bookstore. When the hurricane hit in 2005, he

had 3,000 books—all of which are now lost.

Leslie retired in 2001 after serving the United Methodist Church in a number of ministries and locations. He was pastor of five congregations in Louisiana, was director of Christian education for the United Methodist Church in Louisiana, and was district superintendent for United Methodist churches in Baton Rouge. In addition, for a period of time he was a college chaplain.

Leslie is now living in Texas and called AMBS in the hope we could replace the two items of memorabilia from his time of study in Elkhart. If you have either of these items that you could give to Leslie, please send an e-mail message to Mary Klassen (mklassen@ambs.edu), and you will be put in touch with him. ●



AMBS Notes

A ground-blessing service for the new AMBS library and campus center is scheduled for April 21, at 3 p.m. If you are able, please join the AMBS community for this service. For more information about the project, see the AMBS web site: www.ambs.edu/NextGeneration.

AMBS dedicated the new Chapel of the Word, the chapel devoted to teaching preaching and worship arts, on March 3. See photos and a news story at www.ambs.edu/php/welcome/wel_news_ChapeloftheWord.php.

Two new sections of the AMBS web site give information about how pastors and congregations can draw on the expertise of AMBS faculty and can have opportunities to collaborate with faculty.

See information about Engaging Pastors programs: www.ambs.edu/php/EngagingPastors/ep_index.php

To invite a professor or administrator to speak to your group, see the new Speakers Bureau web pages: www.ambs.edu/SpeakersBureau

Alumni News

Wendy Janzen (MDiv 2002) was ordained on Feb. 19, 2006, at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

Theo Odhiambo (MATS 2002) was ordained Jan. 29, 2006, by the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

Richard Patton began a new assignment with Bluffton First United Methodist Church, Huntington, Ind., in November.

Death

Hanno Klassen (BD 1957) died December 2, 2004. Born in Germany, he accepted a scholarship to Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago in 1948. He served as a pastor in the United Church of Canada, and taught in several schools. From 1960 to 1985, he taught at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Send your news notes for *AMBS Alumni News* to Mary E. Klassen, editor, at mklassen@ambs.edu.



Mary E. Klassen

Pastors Week participants: (left) David Elkins, Paula Snyder Belousek, Anita Mast Christian; (right) Sally Youngquist, Weldon Nisly



Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary

3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517-1999
574 295-3726
www.ams.edu



Mary E. Klassen

Dean Preheim-Bartel (student 1978–1979, 1987–1988) became director of Elkhart’s Church Community Services in fall 2005. Just before Christmas, he brought a supply of products from the organization’s Soup of Success job skills program for the seminary community to purchase for holiday gift-giving. Talking with Dean (left) are Ted Koontz, professor of ethics and peace studies, and Joe Kotva, adjunct faculty and director of the Anabaptist Center for Healthcare Ethics. Dean took over the director position at CCS when Jeni Hiatt Umble (MDiv 1993), previous director, moved to Indianapolis.



Mary E. Klassen

Xiyi Yao (MATS 1992), who teaches in Hong Kong, shared information about the rebirth and growth of the church in China at a mission conference hosted by AMBS in November 2005. At this conference Wilbert Shenk, former faculty member of AMBS, was honored with the announcement of a Festschrift, as he retired from teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif. See more at www.ams.edu/php/welcome/wel_news_mission_conf.php.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PLYMOUTH, IN
PERMIT #29

3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, Indiana
46517-1999

Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary