



a l u m n i n e w s

Sabbatical renewal

Scott Brubaker-Zehr
MDiv 1988

Summer 2003
Volume 9 Issue 1

2 Making habits

3 What gives me renewal

4 Alumni Ministry and Service Award announced

I received the gift of a sabbatical study leave during the first four months of this year. I am grateful to my congregation of Rockway Mennonite and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada conference for allowing me this time away. As I was preparing for it, I was aware that I was tired in an accumulated sort of way. Thankfully, the fatigue melted away like the snow over the course of the winter. However, it needed some time.

A large measure of the renewal I experienced came simply as a result of a slower pace. Slowing down is a healthy tonic in and of itself. We tend to live an unnatural tempo in North America. Did God really intend for human beings to do so much at such speed? It seems that our technology has deceived us. Holding out the promise of more leisure, it has engulfed us in an anxious frenzy. What a relief it was to take a break from e-mail

and the telephone! A highlight of my time was an eight day silent retreat at a Jesuit Retreat Centre. I experienced the grace of moving in tune with the natural rhythms of the Spirit.

Worship has also been a source of renewal. I visited various non-Mennonite congregations and experienced different styles. It was a blessing to enter into worship as a participant and not a leader. It was a joy to go home, humming the final hymn, free from post service church business.

As a counterpoint to worship and retreat, I participated in a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation to Colombia. I wanted to purposely engage the active as well as the contemplative dimensions of faith. The time in Colombia was intense and moving. The people and politics continue to live in my prayers.

I'm discovering that I feel most alive when I am connected to both the active and contemplative poles of the faith. If the Holy Spirit is like a battery, then I feel the current when I stretch to hold prayer and worship with one hand and the work for peace and justice with the other. ●



Scott Brubaker-Zehr and his wife, Mary, worked with the Mennonite Church in Colombia from 1990 to 1994 and now Scott is pastor at Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario. He and Mary live in Waterloo with their three children.

Making habits

Jane Stoltzfus Buller, MATS 1994

As a pastor of a medium-to-small Mennonite congregation, I find habits and practices which renew my spirit, soul, body and mind to be of utmost importance.

Some of my practices seem to me to be rather perfunctory or common but have the most power, such as a commitment to an exercise routine. I walk or run every day, sometimes for 20 minutes, sometimes for 40. Those minutes, though, have a renewing effect on my body and mind as I often find myself wrestling through issues needing attention within me while my oxygen and blood levels get a workout! My husband and I make it a practice to walk an hour or so as many Sunday afternoons as possible to refresh and renew our marriage relationship. Such practice has become precious and holy for us.



Jane Stoltzfus Buller

Other practices take more time and effort. An important one for me over the last 12 years has been spiritual retreat and direction at The Hermitage, a place of prayer located in Three Rivers, Mich. I have

to drive 45-50 minutes to get there, make sure I have scheduled in advance, checked with my spiritual director for time, and then commit to not allowing anything else to take

precedence over the appointment note in my calendar. I commit to this once a month and rarely cancel, although I did cancel more often in the beginning years. Now it is too precious a time to not honor. For me, retreating is renewing. No one talks to me, unless I want them to. I spend some of the time outdoors, drinking in the beauty of God's creation. I seek the presence of God

time and time again through listening prayer, journaling and communing with the gifts given through books, writings and especially the Scripture. And I am not at home or in the office where other demands are a constant invitation to be busy.

For my mind's renewal, I invest time into seminars and clinics which I find interesting and helpful to my everyday work. My mind is stretched, I hear new things which challenge old wineskin thinking and I can practice discernment—is this good or is it ridiculous? Is this helpful to me and what I do or is it something that might work for others, but I have no interest? Reading is also an important way for me to renew my mind.

Yes, sometimes practices are easy—open the door and run. Others are more challenging to continue. It's the experienced value I receive that makes the practice a habit. ●

Jane Stoltzfus Buller is associate pastor of Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. She and Jim, her husband, have three children.

Summer 2003
Volume 9 Issue 1

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: Mark Weidner

Alumni Association Executive Committee:

Douglas Hostetler Kaufman,
president

Tim Lichti, vice president

Mary Lehman Yoder

Marilyn Rudy-Froese

Jill Wright

Vision explores beginning of life

The spring issue of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* explores issues related to the beginning of life.

Contents include:

- "Does God care that we make babies?" by Bible scholar Dan Epp-Tiessen
- "Reflections on prenatal diagnostic testing," by nurse-educator Sherry Wenger, mother of a child with Down syndrome

- "Family by adoption," by Brenda Srof, nursing professor
- "Exploring promise and problems in embryonic stem cell research," by physician-administrator George B. Stoltzfus
- "Bioethics and the church: Technology,



martyrdom, and the moral significance of the ordinary," by ethicist Chris K. Huebner.

Copies are available on request for \$6 plus \$2 shipping. Contact *Vision* at AMBS:

visionsubscribe@ambs.edu or at the address on page 4. ●

What gives me renewal

Art Smoker, BD 1968, MDiv 2000

I have learned during the course of active ministry that personal and spiritual regeneration do not happen automatically. By nature, I am easily given to discouragement and even depression. Before I know it, I am slipping into the valley of “the dark side” of things. I discover that I must be **intentional** about seeking regular renewal. Here are ways that help me cultivate life in the meadows and hills of “the bright side.”

1 I try to begin the day—four to five days a week—with both **physical and spiritual exercise**. As I walk or slowly jog outdoors, or on an indoor treadmill, I pray in the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer. Spending several minutes consciously putting on each article of “the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6) as I pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” often provides more than usual energy and focus to face the demands of the day. I also pray through the Psalms each month, reading five psalms a day. And I write in my journal four or five times a week, spilling my guts to God, seeking forgiveness and direction, noting God’s loving presence and answer to prayer.

2 Once a week during fall and winter-spring, I take an evening away from the congregation to rehearse with the Goshen Community Chorale. **Singing the great choral music of the church** is a deep experience in worship, a foretaste of heaven!

3 Approximately once a month, I take a day of **personal retreat** at The Hermitage. I arrive in time to participate in Morning Prayers, then spend until late afternoon in solitude—reviewing my journal, praying, reading, writing, resting, walking the wooded trails. I also meet with a spiritual director.

4 Each year I take several days for **ministry enrichment**, participating in AMBS Pastors Week or shorter workshops and seminars.

5 I have been able to arrange with two congregations I have served for a three-month **sabbatical** approximately every four years. These planned, extended times give me relaxed time away from the demands of ministry to renew family relationships, seek deeper spiritual renewal and engage in learning that equips me to return with new vision and energy.

I am profoundly grateful for the encouragement I have received to cultivate life with God, and the rich rewards of ever deepening intimacy with the One to whom I owe all I am, all I have • been given and all I offer.



Art Smoker is pastor of North Goshen Mennonite Church. He and Nova, his wife, have two adult children.

Alumni News

Brian Martin Burkholder (MDiv 1998) will become campus pastor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., this fall. He has been program director of Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Mich., since 1998.

D. Richard Miller (ThB 1955) received two Service to Mankind awards, one each from the Fort Dodge, Iowa, Sundowners Sertoma Club and the Sertoma Western Iowa District.

Mark Diller Harder (MDiv 1993) was ordained at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., on May 11, 2003.

Ron Ropp (BD 1962) received the Retired Chaplain Award from the Association of Professional Chaplains.

Michel Sommer (MAPS 1992) will move this summer from Strasbourg, France, where he has been pastor and editor of the French Mennonite monthly publication, to a location near Basel, Switzerland. He will teach part-time at Bienenberg, the Franco-phone and German training center of the Mennonite churches. “I am still very thankful for the times at AMBS,” he writes, “... and the decisive turn to ministry in the Mennonite churches that it brought to me.”

Sherri Martin (MDiv 1998) and James Carman were married Feb. 15, 2003, at Tavistock Mennonite Church where Sherri is pastor. Sherri Martin-Carman serves on the board of directors for AMBS.

Kathy Colliver (MDiv 2001) was ordained at First Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., on June 1 2003.

Margaret Sawatsky (MATS 1996) was ordained June 15, 2003, at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind. She is a chaplain at Greencroft Retirement Communities, Goshen.

Births

Kerry Atkinson (MAPS 2001) and her husband Rob, Petaluma, Calif., announce the birth of Tobit Flynn Atkinson, June 17, 2002.

Bev Baumgartner (1997–2000) and **Joel Ewy** (staff 1997–2000), Newton, Kan., announce the birth of Henry Daniel Ewy on Dec. 27, 2002.

Ken Beidler (MDiv 2002) and Elaine Shenk, Iowa City, Iowa, announce the birth of Tobias Aaron Beidler-Shenk on Jan. 23, 2003.

Maribeth (Longacre) Benner (MDiv 1998) and Darin Benner, Hatfield, Pa., announce the birth of Laura Evelyn on Nov. 27, 2002

Raúl Bogoya (MDiv 2000) and **Lisa Enns-Bogoya** (MDiv 1999), Winnipeg, Man., announce the birth of Natasha Fe on February 13, 2003.

Eric Buller (MDiv 1997) and Ruth, his wife, of Ransom, Kan., announce the birth of Peter Valentine on Nov. 20, 2002.

Willmar Harder (MDiv 2001) and Hannah Neufeld, Inman,

Continued on Page 4

Alumni Ministry and Service Award announced

A new award, the Alumni Ministry and Service Award, has been established by the Alumni Association Executive Committee and AMBS.

The purpose of the award is to recognize and celebrate outstanding ministry and service by AMBS graduates. Alumni who show excellence and faithfulness in a variety of ministries will be considered for this award.

The Committee members note, "We lift up the realities of contemporary ministry as a continuation of the ministry of Jesus and the mission of God in the world today. We want to honor both those whose ministry has been marked by distinguished accomplishment and those who have served their Lord

faithfully and effectively over the years."

Criteria for award nominees include:

- AMBS Masters degree program graduate
- Ministry/service of ten years or longer
- Congregational leadership, specialized ministries (e.g. chaplain or urban service) or missional ministry (e.g. church planting or church growth)
- Long-term fruitful commitment
- Visionary and creative leadership
- Peer affirmation

The Alumni Association Executive Committee invites all alumni to nominate AMBS graduates for the award. Nominations should be sent to the

Alumni Director by January 1 of each year. Award recipients will be selected by the Committee and the Alumni Director in consultation with the AMBS Administrative Cabinet. The awards will be announced in May each year and presentation of the awards will happen in each recipient's setting of ministry. One or two awards will be given each year.

The award will consist of a certificate of recognition and \$500 toward registration fees for AMBS courses or continuing education events.

To nominate an AMBS graduate for this award, see the enclosed form. Please complete it and send it to Mark Weidner by January 1.



Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary

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

Alumni News

Continued from Page 3

Kan., announce the birth of Elias Neufeld Harder on Dec. 11, 2002.

Lee Pfaler (MAPS 1992) and Karen, his wife, Goshen, Ind., announce the birth of Miranda Rose, Jan. 8, 2003.

Anita (MDiv 1998) and **Byron Schroeder Kipfer**, (volunteer 1996-1998), Cambridge, Ont., announce the birth of Markus Richard Schroeder Kipfer, March 17, 2003.

AMBS News

John Rempel to join faculty

John Rempel (MDiv 1974) will join the faculty as assistant professor of



theology and Anabaptist studies this summer. John holds a D.Th. from St. Michael's College, University

of Toronto and most recently has served as Mennonite Central Committee liaison to the United Nations. He was pastor of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship, New York, from 1989 to 2000, and was ordained in Mennonite Conference Eastern Canada in 1982.

Alumni gatherings

Major church events this summer will include alumni gatherings:

- **Mennonite Church USA:** Monday, July 7, 6 p.m. If you have not preregistered for the meal, you may come for the program that follows; watch for location announcement.
- **Mennonite Church Canada:** Saturday, July 12, Tower Cafeteria.

Faculty writings

Check the AMBS web site for a list of faculty writings from the 2002-2003 year. Follow the link on the opening page or go to *Academic Information*, then *Faculty Writings*.

Note especially new books by Arthur Paul Boers, *The Rhythm of God's Grace: Uncovering Morning and Evening Hours of Prayer* (Paraclete); by Willard M.

Swartley, *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Herald Press); and by Daniel Schipani, *The Way of Wisdom in Pastoral Counseling* (IMS).

AMBS Window available on request

AMBS Window, the newsletter with stories and information for a broad readership, is available on request. It is published as an insert in *The Mennonite* and *Canadian Mennonite* three times a year. If you do not receive one of these publications and would like to receive *AMBS Window*, please inform Mary E. Klassen, director of communications, mklassen@ambs.edu, or at the AMBS address above. The summer issue features the 2003 graduates.