



a l u m n i n e w s

Who is sufficient for these things?

Peter Stucky, MDiv 1971, Bogotá, Colombia

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Israel/Palestine ... Philippines ...
Northern Ireland ... Guatemala ...
Indonesia ... Korea ... Bosnia.

Just the names bring to mind images and reports of conflict. But it is in the heart of these places where some AMBS alumni minister—not only encountering immense needs but also discovering the presence of God and a spirit of hope.

This issue of *AMBS Alumni News* carries stories from several alumni who responded to our invitation to write about ministering in places of conflict. Some alumni who were asked were not comfortable responding at this time; some may not have even received our invitation to write.

As you read these reflections, pray for each of these people and their work; then pray for the alumni in each of the other places listed above. May they feel a clear sense of God's presence and calling as they use their gifts and training in difficult situations.

The question the Apostle Paul poses in 2Cor 2:16 seems like an appropriate beginning for reflections on living and ministering in the situation of conflict that engulfs us in Colombia.

Cecilia's (not her real name) husband, a journalist, is out of the country. He was threatened by one of the guerrilla groups. She and her son have not been admitted to Canada, so she's waiting, moving from one house to another, trying to stay a jump ahead of her persecutors.

About a week and a half ago, her husband wrote me from Canada saying that Cecilia's sister had been kidnapped by the same armed group, in order to pressure him or Cecilia to turn themselves in. Not wanting to add to her anguish, nobody had told Cecilia.

After church on Sunday I asked her how she was doing. She said that in general terms okay. "But pastor, I've felt something strange inside of me this week. Like a general uneasiness. I don't know what it is."

"Maybe God has placed that feeling in you to ask you to pray," I answered her. But I didn't tell her what I knew.

By Wednesday she knew. Her mother from

another city and her husband from Canada had told her. Our Justice and Peace Committee met with her that day, to try to encourage and comfort her, pray with her and advise her. The drama continues. She is feeling desperate for her sister, but desperation isn't a very good counselor. But **who is sufficient for these things?**

Our local congregation, the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church where I pastor near downtown Bogotá, has a Justice and Peace Committee. It organizes a weekly Moment for Peace, on Wednesday noon where people who work in our institutions are joined by displaced people to pray and reflect on Scriptures (continued on page 3)



Mary E. Klassen

Ed Nyce (MDiv 1998) is a peace development worker in Bethlehem on the West Bank under Mennonite Central Committee. During Forum in November he shared stories of his own experiences and those of others during the recent tension and conflict there.

He told about a Palestinian family whose home in Bethlehem had first been shelled and then looted. In spite of this, the husband had said, "We aren't the only ones who suffer. Israeli parents also suffer when their children have to go into the military."

Ed continued, "He repeated returned to his love for Jesus as the foundation that helps him not only stay as a Palestinian Christian in the land where Jesus was born but also to keep from hatred."

The family's 11-year-old daughter had gone on a trip to Japan and stayed with an Israeli girl in the same Japanese home. Sometime after this she drew a picture of an Israeli girl and Palestinian girl standing together holding hands. "It's obvious she has models who see their faith in God as what allows them to act and react in a given way," Ed said.

Take this fear away!

Janet M. Breneman, MDiv 1986, Guatemala City, Guatemala

David Augsburger to lecture at AMBS

David Augsburger, Ph.D., former professor at AMBS, will present the Theological Lectureship, Feb. 19–20. His theme will be “The Pain and Pleasure of Hate: From Antipathy to Empathy,” and the lectures will be based on a new book to be published this year.



Alumni are invited to attend or to borrow the audiotapes of the lectures from the AMBS library. See www.ambs.edu or call the dean's office, 574 296-6297, for a detailed schedule of Dr. Augsburger's presentations.

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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

Twelve years ago when I moved to Guatemala from Honduras, several people told me to be careful, to always look around me as I walked, to not go on public transportation alone at night, to not speak certain words or topics on the telephone or write them in e-mail or in regular correspondence. This country was emerging from the internal violence of the 1980s, but Honduras had been at least superficially more peaceful at that time.

I remember walking home from the office one time, looking behind me frequently, feeling uneasy about the nebulous sense of violence everywhere: armed guards in front of banks, businesses, even McDonalds; indigenous people who changed their traditional dress because they didn't want to be detected; the need to make phone calls to certain organizations from public phones so as not to implicate personal or office phones; having friends who'd left in exile those years and still lived fearfully ... when I suddenly realized, “I cannot live like this! I cannot walk and work and sleep in fear!”

I remember praying as I walked, “God, I believe you have called me here, and I believe you will be with me and care for me, so please take this fear away.” And God did! I remember thinking that if something happened, it would happen, but I still believed God called me here. I would be as careful as I knew how to be, but I wouldn't live in constant



Janet Breneman talks with Mario Higueros, AMBS adjunct faculty member in peace, justice and biblical interpretation, outside SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala. Photo courtesy Mennonite Weekly Review, September 2000.

fear and suspicion.

I think I can honestly say I haven't lived in fear in spite of many experiences over these years here. I also have to say God doesn't always answer my prayers this specifically! (I have prayed many similar prayers to be relieved of fear of earthquakes, and I still tremble every time the earth shakes!)

There are numerous ways the reality here, full of many levels of violence, affects our work. In our seminary, SEMILLA, and in the Mennonite churches in general in Central America, we identify with the peace, justice and nonviolence emphasis of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist church, because their reality seems so similar to ours here. This emphasis is not secondary, but is part of the essence of the message of Jesus Christ.

In this context, warlike language in hymns and the currently popular emphasis on spiritual warfare seem very inappropriate, even though these images are used widely in some of

the larger mega-churches here. In this context it feels so much more important that we should be known as persons who live and teach peace and justice, who care about people's well-being, have an emphasis on reconciliation, teach conflict resolution in the schools, work in health and community development, raise awareness about women's issues, prepare educational curriculum from a biblical Anabaptist perspective, and others.

What keeps me going here? Being involved in the above. Loving the people with whom I live and work! Seeing them living hopefully in even worse situations than I've ever experienced, believing the hard experiences are not in vain. They love God and I do too, and that makes a difference. Nurturing my own soul in prayer and reflection—both in community and on my own. Meeting regularly in retreats with another friend to share and pray. Continuing to believe God has called me here, and that is sufficient.

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and then to consider a topic related to the war and its effects and the peace efforts. It's a time for people like Cecilia to find strength and comfort from the Christian community and to lay her pain and anguish before God who is merciful and who hears the cry of the people. It serves as a forum where we can talk together about concerns and issues that affect us, helping to break down the walls of loneliness and fear.

The Justice and Peace Committee also serves as a discernment group for people who are being

threatened by any of the several armed groups. We listen to them and help them sort through their options. Usually they are very frightened. Sometimes they cry. We pray with them, and decide whether they need to leave the country or whether there are ways to help them within Colombia.

Our role here in this conflict situation is always changing, but at least should remain constant in this sense: "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved" (2Cor. 2:15a) ●

In Memoriam

John D. Duerksen, director of development, died unexpectedly in his



home in Goshen, Ind., on January 3.

John came to AMBS in 1992 as director of the Partners for Ministry campaign and later became director of development.

He is remembered for his strong commitment to the church and to AMBS; his gentle, caring spirit; and his sense of humor. Tributes affirmed what John himself had written several years ago: "I believe life is to be lived in joyful response to God's unconditional love. I serve God by serving others."

Nelson Kraybill, AMBS

president said, "For John, fundraising was not primarily about dollars. It was about relationships and vision for the church. He genuinely cared for others, and that made him treat people with dignity and respect."

Mark Weidner, AMBS vice president, added, "We will miss John's experience and his willingness to go a second mile for AMBS. John was committed to the church and was always seeking a new way to strengthen the tie with AMBS."

He is survived by Belle, his wife; two children and their spouses and three grandchildren; along with his father and sister.

Before his death, there were four living John Duerksens in his family, part of a direct line of ten generations with males carrying that name. ●

Alumni News

James E. Horsch (BD 1966) recently retired from the Board of Directors of the Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union after 20 years on the board. He had served as chair for 18 years. This credit union serves all Anabaptist groups in Pa., Ohio and Ill.

Ryan J. Ahlgrim (MDiv 1983) has had his book on preaching, "Not as the Scribes: Jesus as a Model for Prophetic Preaching," published by Herald Press. Also one of his sermons will appear in a sermon collection due out in the spring, *Keep the Faith: Indiana's Best Sermons Since 2000*, published by Guild Press.

Myron Schrag (BD 1967) retired from pastoral ministry on June 1, 2002. He served Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen from 1992 to 2002. Before that he pastored Faith Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minn., served as chaplain at Woodstock School in India, and served as pastor at Faith Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.

Anna Janzen (MDiv 1989) earned her Ph.D. from St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, in 2001. The topic is peace in Luke's doppelwerk on the background of Pax Romana. The publisher is Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main. She teaches theology and communication in various settings and is doing some pastoral work at the Mennonite Church in Munich. She is engaged to be married to Dr. Hans Kaufmann.

Obed (MDiv 1990) and **Phena** (MATS 1991) **Dashan** teach at Gindiri College of Theology in Nigeria. Their recent letter to AMBS said, "We find ourselves working for peace where war is the talk of the day. I can understand the loneliness of the Mennonite foundations. I can feel their lone voices in hard times."

"Things have been difficult lately. The crises have meant that we spend time trying to mediate conflicts between tribal communities. Praise God, our efforts have not been in vain, here in Gindiri. We can now talk face to face with Muslims and Christians here in Gindiri. We have been building bridges of trust and making the gospel very relevant in the relationship."

"Phena and I continue to train pastors for our churches. This is the opportunity we have to impact our church with peace theology. Phena is registrar and doing a good job. We have a total of 250 students."

Carol Sue Hostetler Borkholder (MDiv 1995) was ordained in June 2002 for her work as chaplain at Battle Creek Health System. Her ordination was through the Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA.



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



Mary E. Klassen

Approval expected for extended study at AMBS—Great Plains

Following a recent site visit by the Association of Theological Schools to AMBS—Great Plains, the site visit team has recommended to the ATS Committee on Accreditation approval of an extended proportion of seminary work done at Great Plains. AMBS expects to hear within a month if this is approved so that students can take up to two-thirds of the M.Div. degree at AMBS—Great Plains.

See the AMBS web site: www.ambs.edu/GreatPlains for information about course offerings.

Erland Waltner, longtime leader of AMBS and in the Mennonite Church, quipped that he was honored with three Bs during the day of special activities on November 15.

It started with a building: The main administration-classroom building on the AMBS campus was named Waltner Hall in honor of his groundbreaking work in establishing the seminary in Elkhart. Winifred and Erland are shown above in the brief service naming the building.

The second B was the enhancement of the endowed chair of Bible named after him. The third B was a book published in Erland's honor. *The Work is Thine, O Christ* includes chapters about his work with the seminary, with Mennonite World Conference, with Mennonite Medical Association and as a spiritual director. Successive sections include writings of Erland's and sermons by a number of his students. The book is available from the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS for \$10 plus \$3 shipping for the first copy. To purchase this, contact IMS at 574 296-6239 or bngingerich@ambs.edu. See more at www.ambs.edu/IMS.

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