



alumni news

A M B S

Winter 2009
Volume 14 Issue 3

Part 2 of a series

What we've learned about retiring

Interim president named

Dr. George Brunk, III, will begin in July as interim president and will serve for six to twelve months.

The appointment was announced on February 19 by Ray Friesen, chairperson of the AMBS board.



George has served as academic dean, vice president and professor of New Testament at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va. He also has taught occasional courses at AMBS.

For more information about the appointment, see www.ams.edu/interim-president.

A search committee is seeking a long-term president to begin in early 2010. Members of that committee are Randall Jacobs (chair), Ray Friesen, Kathy Koop (MATS 1999), Jane Thorley Roeschley (MACF 2007), Loren Johns (faculty, MDiv 1984), Sue Steiner (MDiv 1982), Jose Ortiz, Jonny Gerig Meyer (student), Tony Brown and Jennifer Davis Sensenig (MDiv 1998).

Martha Smith Good
M.Div. 1977

"Retirement is just a word until it happens." At least, this is my story. My only preparation in advance of retirement was to make financial contributions into retirement savings. While that was certainly essential, it did not prepare me for retiring earlier than I had anticipated.

While being interviewed for a pastoral

position at age 60, I was asked whether I saw myself working beyond 65. Since I was still excited about ministry, I indicated a desire to work as long as there was mutual agreement between myself and the congregation.

At age 64 a health crisis necessitated an extended health leave. A year later, following recovery from two major surgeries, and approaching age 65, the question arose, "What

should I do?" Excellent transitional pastoring during my absence meant the congregation was in a healthy situation. Following discussions with congregational leadership, I decided to retire upon my 65th birthday. An affirmative celebration, including persons from my 30 years of pastoral ministry settings, followed and I felt ready to retire.

Our move from an
(continued on page 2)



Mary E. Klassen

June Alliman Yoder, professor of communication and preaching, retired at the end of December and was honored during Pastors Week. Here she is flanked by Sharon Kennel of Strang, Neb., and Rebecca Slough, AMBS dean, in front of a display of her collection of crosses.

In 27 years at AMBS, June taught a generation of students and also led workshops and the Preaching Institute across the U.S. and Canada. Although what is expected in sermon delivery has changed over time, the key element of sermon preparation remains the same. "What the Holy Spirit says and how we communicate that has changed," June notes, "but the teamwork of the preacher and Holy Spirit has not changed."

"If the preacher is going to say something, the preacher must first listen—listen to the Holy Spirit, listen to the text, listen to the congregation," June emphasizes.

For more of June's reflections, see the AMBS Web site: www.ams.edu/news-and-publications/news/june-alliman-yoder

What we've learned about retiring (continued)

urban setting to a rural retirement community led us to a small congregation where we took up membership. I have chosen not to be seen as a pastor, carefully choosing my involvement in the congregation and the broader Mennonite Church. Mentoring beginning pastors is a privilege I enjoy.

How do I feel about retirement? I am experiencing an inner joy and contentment with life. Hobbies, adult children and grandchildren are filling my time. My contentment is grounded in this: I carry no regrets. I feel blessed to have achieved my commitment to be a compassionate, loving presence to the many persons I have had the privilege of pastoring. The Spirit of God has been my companion, and I am grateful.

*Martha Smith Good and
Gerald Good live in New
Hamburg, Ont.*

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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: Ron Ringenberg

Alumni Association Executive Committee:

*Darrell Fast, president
Mandy Yoder, vice president
Myron Schrag
Catherine Koziatek
Pamela Yoder*

Wally Jantz M.Div. 1985

One of Chaim Potok's novels begins with the main character telling a Jewish boy, "All beginnings are hard." My observation is that when it comes to ministry, endings are also quite difficult. In more than forty years of serving in the church, I have seen that the number of pastors and church leaders who end well is sometimes overshadowed by those who cross the finish line with feelings of frustration or deep woundedness. Ministry has taken more life than it has given to them.

The Apostle Paul did not claim a flawless ministry but he did say, "I have finished the course." That statement implies a positive ending.

During a sabbatical, I enrolled in a course at AMBS entitled *Life-long Learning*. I discovered that had a bias toward being a learner as long as I lived. What I needed to do was to work on the specifics of my life planning.

My beginning discipline was to be more focused in listening to what God was saying to me. I felt called to meet with a spiritual guide who would help me listen to my life. I have learned that there is often something about me that I do not know. The need to have a "soul partner" has followed me into my retirement.

I have found it helpful to observe how ministers deal with retiring and to give special attention to those who are finishing

well. Retirement is an opportunity for growth.

My long-term ministry has been as a pastor and a conference minister. I served as an interim pastor on a part-time basis in several congregations. As a couple, Sylvia and I have led marriage enrichment events and spiritual formation groups and were involved in adult Christian education. I helped one congregation organize a men's fellowship group and also served as a resource person in our district conference.

In retirement I have the time to pay more attention to nurturing my physical, emotional and spiritual self. I exercise on a regular schedule. I enjoy time to read a variety of materials. I keep a personal journal. Over the years I have developed an affirmation file, which I rarely consult but can access at any time I am needing an emotional recharge. My sisters and brothers in Christ have blessed me with words of

affirmation and support. That helps me to keep my focus on God's grace and goodness.

I have chosen to not remain in the congregations where I pastored. This includes interim assignments as well as longer-term pastorates. My ecclesiology informs me that it should be possible to be a part of a congregation when a ministry has ended. However, in actual experience, the risk is beyond what I would take. Physical presence is powerful. For parishioners to invest in a new pastor requires a shift in loyalties. There are exceptions to most guidelines. If we choose to be the exception, it is crucial that open dialogue and processing be followed.

Being retired is a radical shift in personal identity. I am grateful that I have lived to be in the retired category.

*Wallace (Wally) and
Sylvia Jantz live in
Hesston, Kan. •*



Bock Ki Kim, pastor of Vision Mennonite Church, London, Ont., and Joel Miller (M.Div. 2006) were among the more than 200 people who attended Pastors Week at the end of January. Presenter Diana Butler Bass helped participants consider practices that can bring renewal to congregations. For more information, see www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/news/pastors-week-2009.

Mary E. Klassen



Mary E. Klassen

During Pastors Week at the end of January, AMBS Librarian Eileen Saner helped alumni sign up for subscriptions to ATLAS, the online journal service of the American Theological Library Association. Leonard Wiebe (BD 1960) was one of several to take advantage of this gift from the Alumni Association and AMBS. Currently the service is available to graduates only; watch for information later this year that extends access to others. Contact Sharon Baker at AMBS, sbaker@amb.edu, for information if you wish to subscribe.

Alumni News

Jennifer Davis Sensenig (MDiv 1998) began as lead pastor of Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on November 1. **Kent Davis Sensenig (MATS 1998)** is writing his dissertation in Christian ethics for a degree from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Matthew Hickman (MDiv 2008) is associate pastor of youth and family life at Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.).

Craig Oury (MDiv 2005) was ordained September 21 at Mount Zion Mennonite Church, Boonsboro, Md.

Birth

J. Micah Fast was born on August 2, 2008, to **Melissa Fisher Fast (MDiv 2006)** and David Fisher Fast, Elkhart, Ind.



Mary E. Klassen

During a Leadership Clinic at AMBS on January 26, **Rachel Miller Jacobs (MDiv 2000)** explained how *Take our moments and our days: An Anabaptist prayer book* and a series of beads like a rosary help in her prayer life.

Rachel, a member of the pastoral team of Kern Road Mennonite Church near South Bend, Ind., is teaching an AMBS course on family spirituality this semester.

Become a "fan" of AMBS

AMBS has set up an institutional Facebook page and we invite you to become a fan. You'll find other alumni who also are fans, and you will receive notices of new information posted there, such as announcements of upcoming events. You also will find links to AMBS videos on YouTube.

If you have your own Facebook account, log in and search for "Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary."

Reunion set for May

Graduates from the years 1949, '59, '69, '79, '89 and '99 are invited to a reunion that corresponds with commencement on May 22 and 23.

Friday evening will be time for reminiscing and a banquet at AMBS. On Saturday afternoon, the alumni will be recognized at the commencement service in Goshen.

Invitations have been mailed and alumni are asked to RSVP. If you graduated in one of the years named above but did not receive an invitation, contact Rosemary Reschly, rreschly@amb.edu.

Alumni giving

Donations from alumni this fiscal year are up 18 percent over this time last year, and the number of alumni donors also has increased. Gifts from 338 alumni since July 1, 2008, total \$77,834.

"We are grateful for those who have contributed, but we especially need support from alumni in this challenging year," Leroy Saner, director of development, said.

Total giving is 25 percent behind what is needed for this point in the year, Leroy notes. Already last year AMBS used reserve funds to cover some expense shortfall, so we will need more gifts this year than last.

The percentage of alumni who have donated since July is only 20 percent of the total number of alumni households in Canada and the U.S. We invite all alumni to add their support. Each gift is valuable, even if it is small.

Please send a gift to AMBS before June 30. You may give online at www.amb.edu/giving/give-online. Or, if you wish to give with a non-U.S. credit card, go to the Mennonite Church giving site: <https://giving.mennoniteusa.org/organization/detail/1623>

For other ways to give, consult with the development staff: Ken Hawkey, Sherri Martin-Carman, Ginny Martin, Ron Ringenberg and Suzanne Huffman (administrative assistant), in addition to Leroy. Call 800-964-2627. ●



Mary E. Klassen

Erland Waltner, president emeritus, and Nelson Kraybill, president, join in singing Erland's favorite hymn, "The Work is Thine, O Christ" at a chapel service on January 9, marking the move of Erland and Winifred to Goshen. Until early November, Erland continued to work daily in his office in Waltner Hall.

Erland and Winifred Waltner honored

In early January, Erland Waltner, president emeritus of MBS, and Winifred Waltner, his wife, moved to a retirement facility in Goshen, Ind. A chapel service on Jan. 9 focused on giving thanks to God for their 50-plus years of contributions to the seminary and the lives of students and faculty.

Erland served as president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary from 1958 to 1978, and continued his involvement in the seminary and in leadership of other Mennonite organizations through the successive 30 years.

Until the move, Erland continued to work daily in his office in Waltner Hall and to serve as a spiritual director. He and Winifred



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had lived in their home across Benham Avenue from the entrance to campus since the first AMBS buildings were constructed.

Alumni who wish to communicate with Erland and Winifred may request his address by sending a message to mklassen@ambs.edu. ●

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