

# Every student a peacemaker

Mary Yoder Holsopple

First, a story from inside the war zone of Uganda. They set up their roadblock in front of our house. I watched as they extorted milk from a child delivering the family's only source of income to the market. I was filled with righteous anger. I confronted the soldiers. The child was allowed to pass—minus a glass of milk.

Fast-forward fifteen years to North Side Middle School in Elkhart, Indiana. A twelve-year-old girl pleaded with me to support her decision to stay in the gang that she had joined two years previously. As she so eloquently said, "They are my only family, the only ones who will always be there for me. The only people who will love me no matter what I do." Why do kids need to join a gang to find love and a sense of belonging?

Now in 2001 we are faced with a "war on terrorism," as the U.S. tries to confront a faceless enemy.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." For me this means bringing the presence and peace of God to everyday situations, no matter where I am or how difficult the situation. It means listening to the pain of others, and rejoicing with those who are rejoicing. It means being a messenger of Good News in a world sometimes torn apart and in seemingly hopeless situa-

tions. It means listening to people grapple with why God allows "bad things happen to good people."

We are all called to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God—no matter what our profession

the number of people who supported this effort and welcomed an opportunity to make their voices heard.

We also heard from people who did not agree with us. One man made his way into my office at AMBS.

I welcomed him and assured him that I wanted to be in conversation with people who have a different view. We spoke for an hour and a half. Neither of us worked at changing the other's position. I worked hard at understanding his. As he left he sighed and said, "I feel so much better."

Is this what it means to be a peacemaker?

What would happen if every student who graduates from AMBS,

and from Goshen College and Andrews University sees herself or himself as a peacemaker, firmly rooted in the biblical teachings of peacemaking, no matter where they live or what their profession? Imagine.

*Mary Yoder Holsopple, M.S., is director of the Peace and Justice Collaborative of AMBS, Goshen College and Andrews University.*



or where we are living. That's why I'm involved in the Peace and Justice Collaborative,\* a joint effort of AMBS, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind., and Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. These three schools are drawn together by a common commitment to the biblical teachings of shalom.

Soon after the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., the Collaborative helped to sponsor a paid advertisement in our local newspapers calling on our government to respond to the terrorist attack with love rather than hatred. We were overwhelmed by

*\*See p. 2 for more on the Collaborative*

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AMBS  
**Window**



Associated  
Mennonite  
Biblical  
Seminary

# Peace studies in the context of a seminary

Ted Koontz

## Peace and Justice Collaborative formed in 2000

The Peace and Justice Collaborative is a joint initiative of AMBS, Goshen College, and Andrews University, drawn together by a common commitment to shalom in our communities and in the world. The vision is to promote a culture of peace through countering the violence that plagues our communities and our world in order that our children and grandchildren can be nurtured in a world free of violence and injustice.

The mission of the Collaborative is

- to energize individuals and communities for social change especially as it pertains to peace and justice;
- to further articulate a biblical theology of practical peacemaking that empowers groups to effect change in their communities;
- to facilitate academic research into the efficacy of peace-building efforts;
- to disseminate information about the best practices in practical peace-building.

Mary Yoder Holsopple serves as the director; David Fast as administrative assistant. The Collaborative may be contacted at 219 296-6273; mholsopple@ambs.edu.

AMBS Window  
Fall 2001

It is an odd thing for someone whose doctorate is in international relations to teach at seminary. Perhaps it is doubly odd for a Mennonite to do this, given our historic aversion to “politics” and to the main subject of study in international relations—war. And perhaps it is triply odd for such a person to teach at a *Mennonite* seminary. Yet, here I am. Why?

My early interests in questions of war and peace came in the context of the war in Vietnam and the threat of nuclear weapons. They combined theological/ethical interests sprung from my Mennonite roots with analytical interests in questions of why and how. Why do wars occur, and how, practically, might they be restrained or eliminated?

After seminary study focusing on ethics and working in Mennonite Central Committee’s Peace Section, I became convinced that Mennonites had given much attention to the normative questions concerning war and peace, but that very few Mennonites had studied the subject seriously from a descriptive (or social science) perspective. How can we make relevant ethical judgments if we don’t understand the subject we are evaluating? Hence my doctoral work in international relations and political theory.

My plan was to teach political science, I hoped at a Mennonite college. I spent three years testing that option, along with two other options, as I taught one course each semester at Goshen College, the University of Notre Dame, and AMBS.

During those years I found my AMBS teaching clearly the most satisfying,

largely because Christian faith was always the center of attention. I still try to insist on careful description and analysis of the realities of the world in which our faith must be lived. But especially in the Government Department at Notre Dame, I felt myself in a straightjacket, focused too narrowly on *description*. I care about war not mainly as an interesting subject to study, but as a problem to solve—and as a problem to understand not

philosophical basis a kind of secular, liberal, humanism.

Peace Studies at AMBS, in contrast, finds its primary disciplinary home in biblical, historical, and theological study, supplemented with social scientific perspectives. Peace Studies here finds its institutional home in a seminary, a context formed by worship and serving the church. **Peace Studies here finds its basis in the explicit affirmation of Christian faith, and a Mennonite**



Ted Koontz, professor of ethics and peace studies, was interviewed in the spring 2000 class, “Thinking Ethically,” taught by Gayle Gerber Koontz.

only in light of social science, but especially in light of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

What, you might ask, does this have to do with the AMBS Peace Studies program? Our Peace Studies program is different from the vast majority of such programs because it combines the interests I have described. Most peace studies programs have as their “home” disciplines the social sciences—politics, economics, social psychology, etc. Most such programs have their institutional home in a university. And most such programs have as their (often unstated)

understanding of that faith. I believe this gives us roots that are far deeper and far more life-giving, than those of much that has become known as “Peace Studies” over the last several decades.

I have found AMBS to be an liberating place, a place where I can put my passion for understanding and applying the faith together with my desire to understand the world accurately, assisted by the tools of social science. No straightjackets here!

Ted Koontz, Ph.D., is professor of ethics and peace studies at AMBS.



Members of the AMBS community made a commitment to peace as they sang the hymn, "I bind my heart this tide to the Galilean's side, to the wounds of Calvary, to the Christ who died for me. I bind my soul this day to the neighbor far away, and the stranger near at hand. . . ." They then pounded 6,800 stakes into the lawn next to the chapel as a symbol of mourning for the lives lost on September 11.

"May these thousands of stakes remind us of the enormous human cost when trust and understanding break down between people," AMBS President Nelson Kraybill said at the beginning of the service. "As Christians called to Jesus' way of peacemaking, we commit ourselves to work for healing of the nations."

As the stakes are removed this fall, a crocus bulb will be planted in each hole, so spring growth will be a reminder both of the loss and the promise of new life.

## Add a social work degree to peace studies

"It's the only dual-degree program combining peace studies and social work that we know of," Loren Johns, AMBS dean, says.

This unique program is offered by AMBS together with Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. In this program, students can earn a Master of Arts in Peace Studies degree from AMBS and a Master of Social Work degree from Andrews University in **three years**, instead of the four years it usually would take to earn the two degrees.

"This combination makes sense for people pursuing either degree," Loren explains. "Social work is the local expression of what peace studies students are committed to on the larger scale. Peace studies students

are interested in the peace and justice issues with which social workers are directly affected."

For AMBS, adding the dual-degree option represents bringing together two equally important facets of study: The best of the biblical, theological foundation of peace studies with the practical, hands-on expressions of this theology of peace for people who are suffering or experiencing difficulties in their local settings.

Students apply the required courses of one degree to the electives of the other degree, thus completing the two degrees in three years. For students who pursue the combined program, a wider range of employment options is available.

For more information about this and the second dual-degree option, Master of Divinity and MSW, see <http://www.ambs.edu/Dualdegree.htm>

## Collaborative offers conflict transformation workshops

"Mediation as a Life Skill" kicked off a series of five workshops on conflict transformation, coordinated by the Peace and Justice Collaborative.

The workshop at AMBS the last weekend of September gave participants practical skills in responding to conflict. The presenters were Carolyn Schrock-Shenk, associate professor of peace, justice and conflict studies at Goshen College; and Karl Shelly, member of the pastoral team of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, who also is a lawyer, mediator and AMBS student.

The four remaining workshops in the series, called "From Bystander to Bridge Builder," are:

- **Disagreement and Discernment in the**

**Congregation: A Leader's Role,** Dec. 6-8, 2001;

- **Communication and Conflict Resolution in Intimate Relationships,** Jan. 4-5, 2002;

- **Basic Family Mediation,** Feb. 14-16, and Feb. 21-23, 2002; and

- **Leading a Conflict-Healthy Organization,** May 9-11, 2002.

Continuing Education credit is available from AMBS. For information, contact the Collaborative, 219 296-6273 or to go [www.ambs.edu/conflicttransform.htm](http://www.ambs.edu/conflicttransform.htm)



Carolyn Schrock-Shenk of Goshen College and Karl Shelly (in background) were presenters at the first in a series of five workshops, "From Bystander to Bridge Builder," coordinated by the Peace and Justice Collaborative. Fifteen people participated in this first event, including professors, college and seminary students, a pastor and a clinical social worker.



When a local newspaper interviewed me for a Mennonite response to recent terrorist attacks, I confess that I too much accented political analysis. I highlighted policies and behavior of Western nations that may have generated hatred from people elsewhere on the planet. Such analytical statements need to be made, but they are not enough.

Two weeks after Terrible Tuesday, students and faculty at AMBS knelt to drive thousands of stakes—one for each attack victim—into the ground to form a 120-foot cross on the lawn (see p. 3). We brought the brokenness of our world to Calvary. We hammered out anger, grief and hope around the empty cross of our risen Lord. Kneeling signaled our desire to be obedient to Jesus' way of suffering love even for enemies. It also was our confession that the empty cross represents God's first act of New Creation that some day will restore the world.

In October I was a Mennonite representative to a gathering of many denominations. Something within me resisted being introduced (kindly) as a "pacifist" and a member of a "Historic Peace Church." My commitment to nonviolence and peacemaking is unwavering. But I want to be known as a follower of Jesus whose hope for peace is grounded in far more than pacifist political strategies or denominational reflex.

Calling Mennonites a "peace church" could make it sound as though peacemaking is an odd trait of a small sect. It is not. Peacemaking is at the heart of the gospel, and nonviolence was the norm of the Early Church. I want others to know Jesus, to be transformed into witnesses and reconcilers by Holy Spirit power. Unless our peacemaking is rooted in Jesus and a careful reading of the Bible, others too easily can patronize us or dismiss our convictions as "just what you would expect a Mennonite to say."

At this time of international conflict, Mennonites need to be more than just a "peace church." We need to be gospel people for whom peacemaking grows out of a confession that Jesus is Lord.

— J. Nelson Kraybill



### Flocking to AMBS

Like these fall visitors, you, too, can drop in for some nourishment at AMBS. Explore the possibilities: vigorous study, deepening spiritual growth, and enriching friendships—all at an affordable cost. We'll welcome you for a continuing education event, a January course, a semester, or a full program of study.

## AMBS Panorama

### Spring online course

Two courses are available online during spring semester, Feb. 4–May 22, 2001: **Pauline Theology and Ethics**, taught by Jacob Elias; **Biblical Foundations of Peace and Justice**, taught by Mary Schertz and Perry Yoder.

For information, see: [www.ambs.edu/olcourse.htm](http://www.ambs.edu/olcourse.htm).

### Spring weekend courses

For those who cannot come to campus for a full semester, AMBS offers several courses in intensive weekend sessions. Spring classes which meet on four weekends during the semester are: **Biblical Foundations of Peace and Justice**, taught by Mary Schertz and Perry Yoder;

**Christians and Political Order**, taught by Dan Wessner, assistant professor of history and international studies at Bluffton (Ohio) College.

For information, contact the AMBS registrar at [registrar@ambs.edu](mailto:registrar@ambs.edu).

### New Church Leadership Award recipients

Two students who entered studies at AMBS this fall received the full-tuition Church Leadership Award. These new recipients are:

*The purpose of AMBS Window is to invite Mennonite churches to further the work of God's kingdom by calling people to leadership ministries and helping to support their training for ministry.*

*Editor and designer: Mary E. Klassen  
Photos: Ryan Miller-p. 1; J. Tyler Klassen-p. 2; The Elkhart Truth, used by permission-p. 3 top; Steve Echols-p. 4 top; Mary E. Klassen-p. 3 bottom, p. 4 bottom.*

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(Robert) Eugene Brenne-man, a student in the Master of Arts in Theological Studies program. Bob has most recently been in Guatemala, serving with Mennonite Central Committee.

**Bryce Miller**, a Master of Divinity student from Orrville, Ohio.

### Leadership Clinics offer in-depth resources

On Friday, Feb. 1, 2002, AMBS is offering five leadership clinics:

- A. Preaching clinic**, led by June Alliman Yoder
- B. Bible study software for the pastor**, led by Loren Johns
- C. Worship planning for Lent**, led by Marlene Kropf and Karmen Krahn Fehr
- D. Paul's family legacy**, led by Jacob Elias,
- E. Pastoring the large congregation**, led by Dorothy Nickel Friesen.

For information, contact the AMBS continuing education office, 219 296-6207, or [www.ambs.edu/ContEd/pastors.htm](http://www.ambs.edu/ContEd/pastors.htm).

### Balanced budget again for AMBS

Contributions during the 2000-2001 fiscal year, including several large estate gifts, resulted in a balanced budget for AMBS for the year ending June 30, 2001.



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