



w i n d o w

A M B S

Congregation and classroom

Bridging the gap

"For a long time I have noticed the kind of community that develops when a group studies Scripture together," Mary Schertz, professor of New Testament, says.

So Mary has been testing this process recently with pastors—in addition to students. Through the AMBS Engaging Pastors program, professors and pastors come together for ongoing collaboration, not just now-and-then encounters. For Mary, Engaging Pastors has meant engaging the Bible.

The contemplative study she and the pastors do together is "studying the Scripture as though one is really hungry for it, as though it meets a desperation in us—and it does. It changes us and helps us grow in Christ," Mary says.

Collaboration like this is at the heart of Engaging Pastors, which involves faculty with pastors and conference ministers across North America. Interactions among these groups happen from time to time, but Engaging Pastors gives more structure to bridging what can be a gap between classroom and congregation. The goal is to support and nourish pastors, to expand our understanding of pastoral ministry and so to strengthen the church. (See more on pages 2–3.)

Daniel Schipani, professor of pastoral care and counseling, also met with a group of pastors over several months. He wanted to test a model of pastoral ministry he has developed, and Engaging Pastors provided a framework to do this with experienced pastors. "Pastors are doing fresh things in the congregation," and keeping in touch with them helps AMBS prepare new pastors, Daniel explains.

Steve Schweitzer, assistant professor of Old Testament, participated in the Listening Project of Engaging Pastors. This took him to two different congregations for conversations with pastors, members and community representatives. "I could learn more than if I showed up on a Sunday morning to preach," Steve concludes.

Steve also worked with his pastor in a course revi-

sion project and then invited his pastor to teach with him. "By taking something I was passionate about and making sure it was relevant to people going into ministry, I saw new connections and insights I might not have had otherwise," Steve says.

For both the pastors and professors, the unhurried pace and the retreat settings are affirming and renewing. However, the benefits go beyond this. "The things we do in preparing people to be missional must be informed by the variety of congregations in the church and the variety of leadership gifts needed," Rebecca Slough, academic dean, says. Engaging Pastors helps the faculty better know the church for which we are preparing leaders, she adds. "We are being enriched by very wise and committed people." ●

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Mary Schertz opens a study group session that focuses on the theme of release in Luke. Tyler Hartford, member of the pastoral team of Pleasant View Mennonite Church, is one of the participants.

Pastors, professors, conference ministers Participants reflect breadth of the church

A first-year pastor from a Canadian congregation ... a conference minister from the west coast ... a Hmong congregation in the south ... the pastoral team of a city congregation ... a cluster of pastors from different denominations in a region ... Hispanic pastors in a Dallas, Texas, class. All of these have become partners with AMBS professors through Engaging Pastors.

The program includes ten components that give pastors and professors different ways to learn from each other. Now four years into a five-year plan, Engaging Pastors has a significant record both in the variety and in the number of participants. (See page 3.)

The program brings pastors to campus and professors to congregations; it brings pastors and professors together both in groups and in pairs. It has

reached congregations in rural and urban settings of Canada and the U.S. The directors are taking steps to assure that diversity of racial and ethnic pastors and congregations is included. Involvement has ranged from people who are very new to ministry to those who have a lifetime of learning to share.

Nina Bartelt Lanctot, assistant director, said, "We are more able to keep the variety of pastors and contexts of the church in our minds. Each congregation has a unique culture—a mix of character, gifts and stressors. Engaging Pastors is helping us experience more of this first-hand."

"These encounters have given us a heightened awareness of how important it is to be in conversation with people in ministry," Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, director, said. "The program allows a wider range of opportunities for faculty to get into ministry settings than they would otherwise have."



Mary E. Klassen

José Elizalde, pastor from Goshen, Ind., and David Bergen, representing Mennonite Church Canada, serve on the Engaging Pastors Oversight Committee, along with Cyneatha Millsaps, pastor in Markham, Ill.; and Arthur Paul Boers, Nelson Kraybill, Mary Schertz and Rebecca Slough from AMBS. Staff for the program are Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, associate dean for leadership education, and Nina Bartelt Lanctot, assistant director of Engaging Pastors.

Participants for the final summative conference in December 2009 will include pastors and conference ministers who have experienced the program as well as ministry educators and denominational leaders in

MC Canada and MC USA.

"We want to see if our findings resonate with conference ministers, pastors and people working with leadership in the church," Jewel said. ●

Engaging Pastors projects

- Clarifying the Call
- Pastor-Faculty Colloquy
- Pastor-Faculty Study Group
- Pastor Sabbatical
- Listening Project
- Seminary Course Revision
- Seminario Bíblico Anabautista
- Pastoral Habits Research Project
- Connections with conference and denominational leaders
- Summative Conference

For descriptions of these projects, see www.ambs.edu/engagingpastors.



Mark Shephard, Shephard Imageworks

This view of the 2005–06 Pastor-Faculty Colloquy shows the mix of pastors and faculty who participate (clockwise from center front): Carolyn and Keith Collins, pastors of the Church of the Overcomer, Ridley Park, Pa.; Rebecca Slough, AMBS faculty; Samuel Lopez, overseer of the Spanish Mennonite Council in New Holland, Pa.; Mag Richer Smith and Bob Smith, pastors of First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa; Jacob Elias, AMBS faculty; and Doug Luginbill, pastor of Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kan.

Projects support pastors, foster collaboration

Engaging Pastors is a five-year program that makes pastors and professors into colleagues as they learn from and teach each other. This program extends to pastors, conference ministers and congregations across North America.

According to its mission, “Engaging Pastors will transform seminary-church connections through sustained interaction between professors and pastors. Our learnings will feed into our formation of pastors and serve as a primary vehicle for AMBS strategic planning even as we support the ecology of ministry.”

Begun in 2005, the program will conclude in December 2009. It is funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., whose goal was to help seminaries strengthen relationships with their sponsoring churches. ●

Engaging Pastors by the numbers

- 202** participants have been involved **264** times (some people have participated in more than one project). This does not count congregations or AMBS professors.
- 33** from Canada, **1** from Japan, **168** from the U.S.
- 17** professors (every member of the AMBS teaching faculty)
- 23** conferences (Conference ministers for all conferences have participated, along with pastors and congregations in these conferences.)
- 7** congregations in **5** denominations other than Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA



Mary E. Klassen

Arthur Paul Boers, (left) associate professor of pastoral theology, is a facilitator for the Pastor-Faculty Colloquies, along with David Wood, (right), pastor of First Baptist Church in Gardiner, Maine.



Mary E. Klassen

In January, seven pastors were at AMBS in the Pastor Sabbatical program of Engaging Pastors: Margaret and Gary Peters, Hanley (Sask.) Mennonite Church; Henry Krause, Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Church; Hugo and Doreen Neufeld, Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alb.; and Roy and Loretta Kaufman, Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Invitation to comment on AMBS

AMBS will have a comprehensive evaluation of our programs Feb. 16–18, 2009, by a team representing The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. AMBS has been accredited by the Commission since 1974. Its accreditation is at the Master’s degree level.

AMBS has been engaged in a process of self study over the last year and a half. The evaluation team will visit AMBS to gather evidence that the self study is thorough and accurate. The team will then make a recommendation regarding continuing accreditation to the Commission for final action.

You are invited to submit comments regarding AMBS to:

**Public Comment on Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
The Higher Learning Commission
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60602**

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Written, signed comments must be received by January 15, 2009. Comments should include the name, address and telephone number of the person providing the comments.

President's Window

A sidewalk at AMBS bears testimony to half a century of links between the seminary and the church. "July 25–Aug. 10 1959 / Teen-Age Work Camp," an inscription reads. The teenagers who laid that sidewalk now must be retirement age! How many became leaders in the church? How many became visionaries for Christian witness in business, agriculture, education or other vocations?

When I started seminary thirty years ago, I was sure I did not want to become a pastor. But I did internships where I encountered exciting models of ministry and had inspiring mentors. I found so much joy in connecting classroom learning to the mission of the church that I accepted a call to ordination soon after seminary.

Linking seminary edu-



cation with practical ministry in the church and the world is like connecting to both poles of a battery. The church needs leaders with broad theoretical knowledge of biblical studies, ethics, theology, church history, counseling and other disciplines. But when students immersed in these studies also do internships in congregations or other practical contexts, high-voltage learning happens.

It can feel daunting for new seminary students to think of assuming the spiritual and moral responsibility for leadership in the church. But

AMBS faculty members have lifelong experience in congregational leadership, service assignments, peace witness and mission work. With the Engaging Pastors project, teachers at AMBS have collaborated with pastors to ground curriculum in practical realities of ministry in the church and the world.

That connection between theory and practice, between theology and ministry, is the most transforming part of education at AMBS. Whether addressing issues of racism (see photo below) or helping congregations understand their own vocation, this generation of seminary students will leave an imprint on the church and world, to the glory of God.

— J. Nelson Kraybill

Alumni News

Steve Ratzlaff (Master of Divinity 1998) is author of *7 Steps to End War and Save the Planet*, published by Xlibris.com.

Krista Dutt (Master of Divinity 2002) is national program director of DOOR (Discovering Opportunities or Outreach and Reflection).

Craig Oury (Master of Divinity 2005) was ordained at Mount Zion Mennonite Church, Boonsboro, Md., on Sept. 21.

Troy Osborne (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1998) is assistant professor of history at Bluffton (Ohio) University.

James Horsch (Bachelor of Divinity 1966) is chair of the committee on the Uniform Series adult Bible study materials.

Dorothy Jean Weaver (Master of Divinity 1977) co-led a work group to Nazareth and Bethlehem with a program of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

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The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

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Mary E. Klassen

AMBS helped to coordinate Community Solidarity Day on September 13, an effort to demonstrate a commitment to peace and justice in Elkhart following racially-motivated incidents in spring. A two-mile walk began on the campus of AMBS and ended in downtown Elkhart with a program.

"Participation in this event helped students and the seminary as an institution because it was an opportunity to live our theology out loud and collectively," Sarah Thompson, AMBS student on the planning committee, said. "It was an opportunity to be brave, to take risks for peace and justice, to organize."



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