



# w i n d o w

## What are we learning?

When congregations, conferences and other groups in the church call on AMBS faculty members to preach and teach, the benefit is two-fold: professors learn what issues and experiences are important to others in the church, and the groups learn from the professors. Here are reflections on what three faculty members have learned in recent speaking engagements.

*Lois Barrett, Ph.D., assistant professor of theology and Anabaptist studies; director, AMBS–Great Plains*

People in our churches are hungry to consider profound theological issues. But they want to talk about these issues in language they can understand. I've learned that it helps to use images, metaphors, and examples. I don't consider this as diluting the truth. In fact, many times we can describe our deepest spiritual experiences only in metaphors—direct description just isn't possible.

The place for doing theology is not just in seminaries, but also in congregations. Theology must remain faithful to the gospel and, at the same time, be context-specific. So congregations are excellent locations for doing theology. Congregations will do theology when they:

- Feel they have permission to do so.
- Are equipped.
- Realize that, because theology must consider the context and the context is often changing, theology is never finished.

*Ben C. Ollenburger, Ph.D., professor of biblical theology*

The Bible continues to engage congregations and their pastors, and they respond to the gospel. This has been my impression, and a great encouragement, teaching Bible studies, preaching revival sermons, and leading workshops.

At the same time, we face challenges—good ones, I believe. We confront something of a divide between members of our congregations who both retain a store of “biblical knowledge” and a deeply ingrained sense of Scripture’s authority, truth, and efficacy, on one hand, and...those who don’t. Regardless of this divide, we have been known, as a

seminary and as a church, for our peace witness and our “ethical” reading of Scripture. In this we have borne good witness. Among our challenges is to root our witness firmly in Scripture and in the gospel, which we must not reduce to ethics. Christian obedience—Christian worship in every dimension—is a response to God’s grace, attested in the election of Israel and at great cost in Jesus Christ.

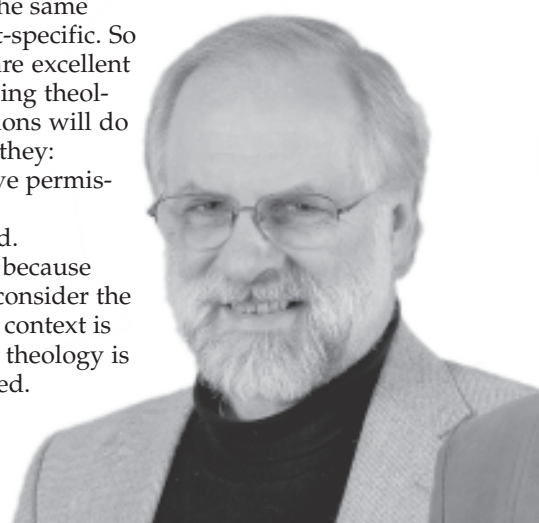
*Gayle Gerber Koontz, Ph.D., professor of theology and ethics*

I was both sobered and encouraged while interacting with Mennonites and other Christians in

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# Fostering collaboration and communication

**“T**ransform seminary-church connections through sustained interaction between professors and pastors.”

This goal is at the heart of a new program initiated by AMBS in 2005. **Engaging Pastors includes ten projects** which will give seminary professors and pastors opportunities to collaborate in a variety of ways. Engaging Pastors will continue for a five-year period with the intent that through it, both the seminary and the church will be strengthened.

One component which will bring professors into congregations is the **Listening Project**. Any congregation whose pastor is a graduate of AMBS from the last ten years may request a visit from an AMBS professor. The goal is for the faculty member to listen and take the learnings back to the seminary where they will help to shape the curriculum that prepares future pastors.

**Clarifying the Call** is a program for new pastors—pastors who completed seminary study in the last five years and who are in their first assignment. During a weekend on the AMBS campus, these pastors can reflect on their ministry and get support. Leaders for the event are staff from the Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada ministerial offices and AMBS professors.

Another program is **Seminario Bíblico Anabautista**, a Spanish-language ministry program in Dallas, Texas. Designed collaboratively by Mennonite Hispanic pastors and

AMBS faculty, this program brings seminary resources to pastors and congregations who often are not able to participate in the seminary.

Already, as a result of the first offering of several Engaging Pastors programs, faculty are reevaluating the way they teach some courses or are getting affirmation for the ways they bring ministry and scholarship together in their classes.

For a complete list and descriptions of Engaging Pastors programs, see the AMBS web site: [www.ambs.edu/php/EngagingPastors/ep\\_index.php](http://www.ambs.edu/php/EngagingPastors/ep_index.php). Several



Mary E. Klassen

Arthur Paul Boers (right), AMBS professor, led a discussion on pastoral imagination during the weekend event, **Clarifying the Call**, designed specifically for new pastors. Participants were Pieter Niemeyer (left), Stouffville, Ont; Amy Nissley (second from left), Mountain Lake, Minn.; and (not pictured) Allan Friesen, Rosthern,

Sask.; Dick Barrett, West Liberty, Ohio; Rod Miller, Plain City, Ohio; and Tim Kuepfer, Richmond, B.C. The event is an opportunity for pastors to reflect on their experiences and gain new insights for their ministry.

programs have spring deadlines for pastors and congregations to apply, so explore the web pages carefully if you are interested in participating. ●



Mark Shephard

The **Pastor-Faculty Colloquies** take professors and pastors to a retreat setting for three sessions, each lasting two days. Together the participants focus on issues of leadership in the church. The 2005-2006 Colloquy included (left to right) Arthur Paul Boers, AMBS professor; David Wood, facilitator; Carolyn and Keith Collins, pastors of the Church of the Overcomer, Trainer, Pa.; and Rebecca Slough, AMBS professor. Other members were Samuel Lopez, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Lancaster, Pa.; Mag Richer Smith and Bob Smith, First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa; Doug Luginbill, Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kan.; and Jacob Elias, AMBS professor. The 2006-2007 Colloquy will explore teaching the Bible in congregations. See more: [www.ambs.edu/php/EngagingPastors/ep\\_news\\_colloquies\\_theme.php](http://www.ambs.edu/php/EngagingPastors/ep_news_colloquies_theme.php)

# Invite a professor to speak to your group

**R**ediscovering Sabbath ... Psalms ... What do we believe about the Lord's supper ... Toward a gospel of peace for the 21st century ... Ministry and leadership in the New Testament.

Sermons, workshops and discussions on these topics and many more are offered by AMBS professors and staff through the seminary's Speakers Bureau. Any group—congregation, conference, Sunday school class, retreat center—may invite a speaker to preach, present a workshop or lead a discussion.

Newly established, this effort to link seminary resources with church groups is spelled out in the AMBS web site: [www.ambs.edu/SpeakersBureau](http://www.ambs.edu/SpeakersBureau).

On the web pages you



will find all the needed information:

- a list of topics and presenters
- contact information
- financial expectations
- print-quality photos of speakers for use in the group's publicity

Also, "Faculty on the road" web pages report where faculty and administrators are already scheduled to speak. If you can link

your group's request with that of another group in your area, you may save on travel costs for the speaker. See [www.ambs.edu/php/speakersbureau/sb\\_faculty\\_travel.php](http://www.ambs.edu/php/speakersbureau/sb_faculty_travel.php) for this information.

If you have any questions, you may contact the Church Leadership Center at AMBS, [ChurchLeadership@ambs.edu](mailto:ChurchLeadership@ambs.edu). ●

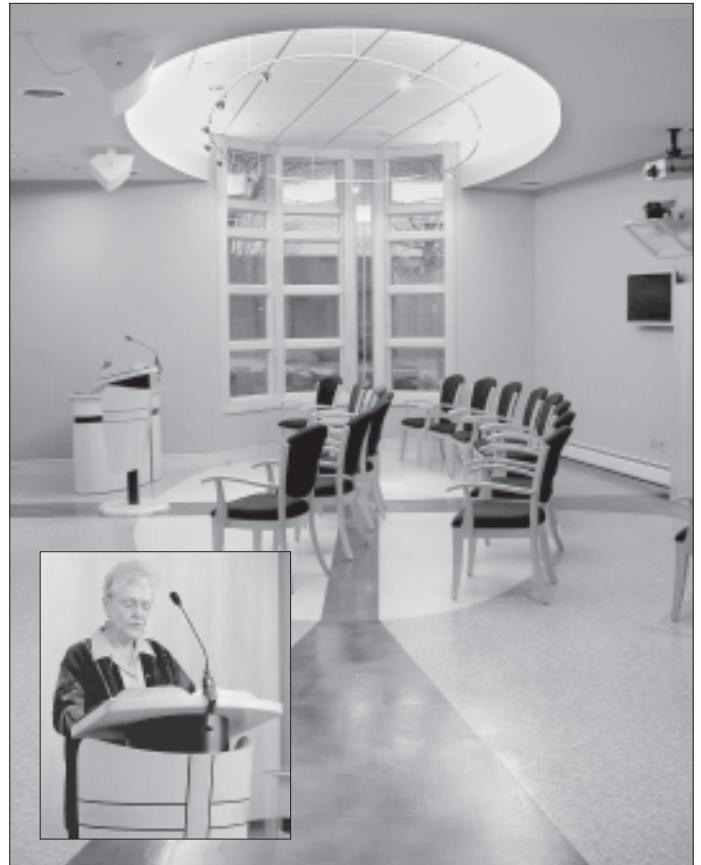
## What are we learning?

(Continued from page 1)

Gayle Gerber Koontz, Ph.D.,

Manitoba this past semester. I was sobered by the profound pain many in our communities carry because of mental illnesses in our families—and the often inadequate response of congregations. Grief was palpable in groups where families had lost children in death by suicide, where the stress of illness had broken relationships, and where the silence of the church

was deafening. I was encouraged by the perceptiveness and creative responses to this reality of MCC Canada, local volunteers and a number of health service providers and pastors I spoke with. I left with a deeper sense of call to develop aspects of my theological reflection and teaching ministry that can speak with spiritual depth and integrity to those who live with chronic illnesses in the family. ●



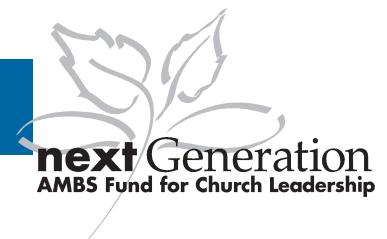
Mary E. Klassen

**Sharon Baker (inset photo), full-time volunteer at AMBS since 2002, was the first reader during three days of reading the Bible in the seminary's new Chapel of the Word. The March 3 dedication service for the small chapel was preceded by three days of Bible reading from its pulpit.**

The worship-like space and the small size make the Chapel of the Word ideal for classes in which students learn how to preach, to lead worship and singing and to conduct rituals such as communion and baptism. It is equipped with state-of-the-art technology so students can learn how to use technology in worship and so they can learn from video recordings of themselves in leadership roles.

Funded through the Next Generation campaign, this project extended a classroom into the quadrangle at the center of campus. Major donors were Peter and Helen Redekop and Peter and Charlotte Wall of British Columbia.

### Campaign Report



The current emphasis in the Next Generation campaign is to complete funding for the new AMBS library and campus center. To find out more, see [www.ambs.edu/NextGeneration](http://www.ambs.edu/NextGeneration).

	Goal	Received (US dollars)
Library and campus center	8,000,000	\$6,100,000

## President's Window

Important as seminaries may be, congregations are the primary setting for theological education. Pastors, Sunday School teachers and caregivers serve as theological educators every week through word and action. Weddings, funerals and life passage events generate deep questions: What really matters in life? Can I know God? What happens when I die?

When I started seminary twenty-six years ago, I declared I was going to be an academic, not a pastor. I thought being a pastor was too modest a goal. But a required pastoral internship threw me into the deep end of life's most persistent questions. I had deathbed conversations with a cancer patient the same week my daughter was born. Spiritual mysteries of life, from



womb to tomb, utterly engaged my imagination.

When I answered a call to pastoral leadership, a friend lamented that I would "waste" my abilities in such a mundane role. What a misunderstanding of pastoral leadership!

I have the "terminal" degree in New Testament studies, have taught and published, and now have been president of a seminary for ten years. But my primary identity remains that of pastor. The biggest and most interesting challenge I can imagine is helping individuals and

congregations deal daily with the joys, doubts and fears of real life.

If most theological education happens in the congregation, how do pastors and other congregational leaders gain depth of knowledge and experience to educate others? It is impossible to provide everything such leaders need in two or three years of seminary study. But if seminary faculty themselves are immersed in the life and mission of the church, they will help a new generation of congregation-based educators develop a life-long pattern of tapping into a vast reservoir of biblical and theological insight—and using that to nurture the people of God.

— J. Nelson Kraybill

## Panorama

### New book by Jacob Elias

*Remember the Future: The Pastoral Theology of Paul the Apostle*, by Jacob W. Elias, was released by Herald Press in February. Jake is AMBS professor of New Testament and is co-pastor, with Lillian, his wife, of Parkview Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Ind.

### Ground-blessing for AMBS library and campus center

A ground-blessing service is planned for the seminary's new library and campus center on April 21. This project is the major component of the Next

Generation Fund for Church Leadership (see page 3). AMBS still seeks contributions to complete funding for the project. For more information, see [www.ambs.edu/NextGeneration](http://www.ambs.edu/NextGeneration).

### Consultation set for Confession of Faith

How well has *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective* served the church over the last ten years? That question is the focus of a three-day consultation at AMBS, June 8–10. Leaders and scholars in the church

will gather to reflect on the impact of this confession on the church and its members. See more at [www.ambs.edu/php/ims/ims\\_confession\\_consultation.php](http://www.ambs.edu/php/ims/ims_confession_consultation.php).

### Pastors Week 2007

Rodney Clapp, author, speaker and editor, will be the featured presenter at Pastors Week 2007, January 22–25. His recent books are *Tortured Wonders: Christian Spirituality for People, Not Angels* and *Peculiar People: the Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*.

## Alumni News

**Wendy Janzen** (Master of Divinity 2002) was ordained on Feb. 19, 2006, at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

**Theo Odhiambo** (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2002) was ordained Jan. 29, by the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

Fourteen AMBS alumni are writers in the 2005–2008 cycle of the Uniform Series study guides and teacher guides: **Wilma Bailey, Leonard Beechy, James R. Engle, Willmar T. Harder, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, David M. Morrow, Linda Gehman Peachey, Raymond H. Reimer, Dale E. Shenk, Sue C. Steiner, Anne Stuckey, Don Unger, Duane Yoder, Elizabeth Yoder, Perry B. Yoder**, professor emeritus, also is a writer.

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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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