

The Scroll

*Notes and News
from the
Brethren Academy for
Ministerial Leadership*

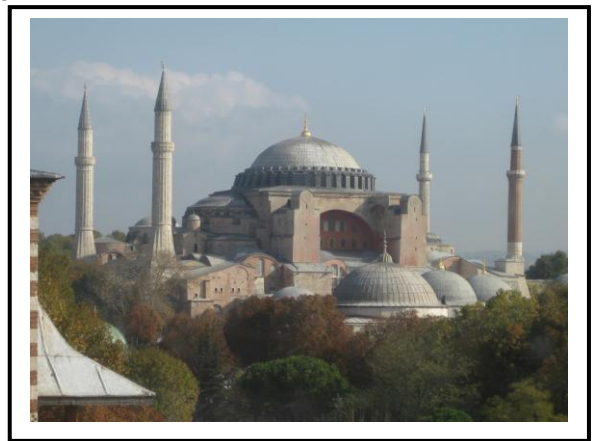
February 2012

“Globe Trotting Professional Growth”

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” Mark Twain

“Wanderlust” the Germans call it. “Being at home in God’s global village” I call it. I was born to travel and have been blessed with a number of international experiences that have enhanced my ministry. While many travel electronically these days, connecting with others around the world in a way that until recently was unheard of, having an actual feet-on-the-ground, hands-on experience impacts the memory and the spirit in a much deeper way. To be awakened, as I was recently from a nap after a long flight to Istanbul with the Muslim call to prayer drifting in my hotel window; to stand on the bank of the Sea of Galilee and picture Jesus in a boat just off shore teaching; to gaze at the stele in a museum in Cairo that biblical scholars believe indicates that the Hebrew people were in residence there; to be present as the Anglican Church and the Russian Orthodox Church celebrate 1000 years of Christianity in Russia in Canterbury Cathedral—these kinds of experiences enliven my sense of being a part of something much bigger than I am. For all these ways in which I’ve been able to extend the classroom of my life into the world, I say, “Thanks be to God!”

A trip I took last fall added greatly to my spiritual life. Over the years, Deanna Brown, ordained clergywoman in the Church of the Brethren, has taken groups of women to India through a program she founded called “Cultural Connections: Women Weaving Worlds.” When I heard that she was planning a trip to Istanbul, a city I have wanted to visit for years, I began to strategize how I might be a part of this trip. When Deanna wrote, *“In addition to learning about and experiencing the city’s grand culture and history, this particular sojourn will look at women’s roles in today’s Turkey as well as provide opportunities to exchange dialogue and life with Turkish women from various backgrounds and religious communities,”* I began to check airfares! For some reason this cradle Brethren (me) developed an interest in icons while in seminary. My dream was to stand in the Aya Sofya (Hagia Sophia) in Istanbul taking in its magnificence first hand. This building, in which the Statue of Liberty could easily do jumping jacks, was the center of the Christian church before the Ottoman Empire conquered the city and Islam became the ruling faith. Never one to let well enough alone, I also began to plan a week in Paris following this time in Istanbul.



Once I was confirmed as a part of the group, I prepared by spending every spare moment reading. It wasn’t long before I realized my American education provided me with little knowledge of Turkey, so everything I read helped me enter a new world. I was particularly interested in becoming more knowledgeable about Islam, feeling that since 9/11, many Americans have been steeped in fear and

distrust about anyone from the Middle East. My preparation as well as my experience led me to the discouraging realization that the Christian church also had encouraged our prejudices. Why had we been taught to fear and ignore our cousins in the faith? It was interesting to learn that the Koran tells the story of Abraham obeying God's voice to kill his son, his oldest son, Ishmael, at the site we now call Mecca. Ishmael's life, like Isaac's of our Old Testament, was spared. I was fascinated to watch men carefully wash their feet at an abundance of spigots outside a mosque to be clean before worship and wondered how this practice might be connected to our feet washing. My observation is that most Americans breathe a sigh of relief that Turkey has worked so hard for the past century to have a secular government, while at the same time, American Christian fundamentalists decry our government moving in the same direction in order to protect the freedom of all religions we have in this country. As is often pointed out, it is only when faced with an idea different than your own that you begin to think more deeply about what you believe. Time in both Istanbul and Paris caused me to reconsider the way I live. After a lovely one-hour train trip from Paris, you arrive in the quaint village of Chartres, where the floor of the cathedral contains the original labyrinth that so many of us are familiar with in this country. Our guide, who for fifty years has been helping visitors learn more about the Chartres Cathedral, told of the damage done to the cathedral by the Puritans, who "thankfully all packed up and moved to America." I began to see my Thanksgiving celebration in a different light! When there was danger of the cathedral being bombed in World War II, all of the beautiful stained glass windows were removed to protect them. Hearing this, I wondered what effort we put forth to be sure our faith is not destroyed by the forces of this world.

I make it one of my travel goals to be an ambassador for peace and understanding. I make it known that I am American, even though I am aware that others in this world often do not see our country in a favorable light. Just as I learn when traveling, I want those I converse with to know that not every American is supportive of some actions our country has taken in this world. I had the privilege to learn from a retired Turkish government worker who now runs a program in an earthquake-stricken part of Turkey, which gives widowed women with children a way to earn a living, and from a couple about to return to the United States to retire who have worked for the church in Turkey for years in education and refugee resettlement. Having talked with them, my life is not the same.

The Prophet Mohammed is remembered as saying, "Do not tell me how well educated you are or how old you are; tell me how much you have traveled, and I'll tell you how much you know." As I studied Islam, I discovered that one of the purposes of a pilgrimage to Mecca is the belief that it is important to get out in the world and see things. I would heartily recommend that for Christians too, particularly those who are in set-apart ministry. We need the broad perspective that travel brings to better see the big picture of God's world. So, if you have a chance to travel anywhere, consider making your trip a pilgrimage. Jerusalem and Mecca are only the beginning of possibilities for destinations. God is everywhere, and so is the spiritual wisdom that comes from meeting God far from home.

Marilyn Lerch,
back in Bedford...



Photo:
Anita Smith
Buckwalter

Trip to Iona Community Scotland

Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, professor of preaching and worship at Bethany Seminary, will be leading a trip to the Iona Community in June 2013.

This course can be used for 2.0 units of credit in Ministry Skills for the TRIM program, 1.0 learning unit in the EFSM program, or for 4.0 CEUs for ordained clergy.

In a future edition, please check the Upcoming Academy Level Course listing for more information.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence - Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership – Pastors Cohort



First Row: Lowell Flory, Mary Fleming (Prince of Peace, PSD), Robin Wentworth Mayer (Anderson, S/C IN), Martin Hutchison (Community of Joy, Mid Atl), Julie Hostetter.

Second Row: Mike Martin (Glendora, PSD), David Hendricks (Prince of Peace, N IN), Martin Doss (Dayton, Shenandoah), and Roland Johnson (Live Oak, PSD).

Photo: Jenny Williams

Seven pastors began their continuing education program with a retreat at the Quaker Hill Conference Center September 26-29, 2011. This cohort will meet quarterly for two years. They will worship together, study and reflect on leadership theory and practice, relate to each other in formal and informal contexts, and explore ways they can effect change personally and professionally.

Lowell Flory and Julie Hostetter will provide the ongoing leadership for this learning experience. For this session, Tara Hornbacker, associate professor of ministry formation, provided a focus on the spiritual life of a pastor and facilitated the group in its sharing of their spiritual autobiographies.

The SPE-AFCL-Pastors group visited Wayfarer's Chapel (southern California) during the January 16-19, 2012, quarterly meeting at the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Left to Right: Mary, Mike, Martin, Marty, Robin, David, and Roland.

Photo: Julie Hostetter



Sustaining Pastoral Excellence - Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership – District Executives Cohort

This group of ten District Executives met in Scottsdale, Arizona, November 14-17, 2011, for their fifth session on leadership issues. Del Keeney, pastor of the Mechanicsburg CoB, was the resource person for a focus on the Leadership Practices Inventory. Each DE received feedback from four district representatives, two pastors, and two DE colleagues to provide information and insights regarding their leadership. Julie Hostetter and Lowell Flory served as staff representing the Brethren Academy.



All photos this page:
Julie Hostetter

Above: John Ballinger (Northern Ohio) and Martha Beach (Atlantic Southeast) enjoying breakfast together.

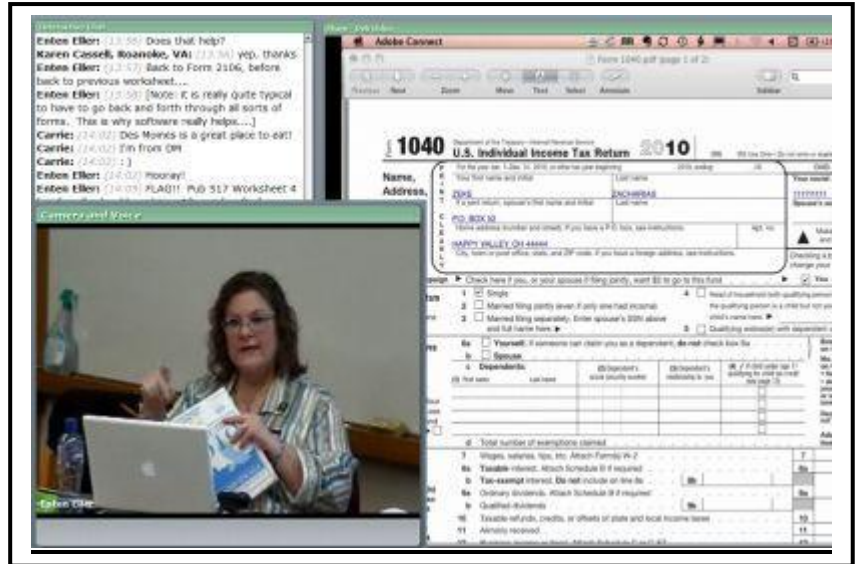
Right: Herman Kauffman (Northern Indiana), Lowell Flory, and Kevin Kessler (Illinois/Wisconsin) in one of the gardens at the retreat center.



Clergy Tax Seminar Offered In Person or Online

A tax seminar for clergy will be held on Monday, February 20, 2012. Students, pastors, and other church leaders are invited to attend the seminar either in person, at Bethany Theological Seminary in classroom 20, or online through a collaboration of Bethany's Office of Electronic Communication and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

The sessions will cover tax law for clergy, changes for 2011 (the most current tax year), and detailed assistance as to how to file the various forms and schedules that pertain to clergy (including housing allowances, self-employment, etc.).



Greatly appreciated by Bethany Seminary students, this seminar is being opened up to clergy and others across the denomination for the first time. It is highly recommended for all pastors and other church leaders who wish to understand clergy taxes.

Schedule for Monday, February 20, 2012:

- * Morning session: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Eastern
(Lunch on your own)
- * Afternoon session: 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Eastern

Sponsors: This event is sponsored by Bethany Theological Seminary, the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, and the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry.

Registration and Cost: Registration is \$15 per person (nonrefundable to keep your fees and our overhead low). Registration fees for current Bethany, TRIM/EFM, or Earlham School of Religion students are fully subsidized (*free!*). Registration is necessary so that we may plan for your attendance. If you will be attending online, your registration will allow us to provide you with proper access to the online seminar; instructions will be sent a few days prior to the event. Registrations are not complete until payment is received. Please note: in person participation is limited to the first 24 registrants, and online participation is limited to the first 100 registrants.

Leadership: Rev. Deb Oskin, EA, NTPI Fellow, has been doing clergy tax returns since 1989, when her husband became pastor of a small Church of the Brethren congregation. She has learned the problems and pitfalls associated with the IRS's identification of clergy as "hybrid employees," both from a personal (pastor's wife) and professional (H&R Block agent) perspective. During her twelve years with H&R Block (2000-2011), she achieved their highest level of expertise certification (master tax adviser) and teaching certification (certified advanced instructor) and has earned the status of enrolled agent with the IRS (qualified to represent clients to the IRS). Deb was called by the Living Peace Church of the Brethren (Columbus, Ohio) to be their peace minister to the wider community in 2004 and served as Southern Ohio District's board chair from 2007-2011. She also works closely with several interfaith peace organizations in central Ohio. **Please join us for this informational and instructive seminar! [Register online now!](#)**



Changing World, Future Church, Ancient Paths



Urban Expression North America and Congregational Life Ministries Church of the Brethren are sponsoring an event with Stuart Murray and Juliet Kilpin in collaboration with Pacific Conference Brethren in Christ, Pacific Southwest District Church of the Brethren, and Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference USA.

Date: March 10, 2012, from 10am-4pm (Pacific)

Location: Madison Street Church, 3991 Madison Street, Riverside, California

People can attend onsite in Riverside, California, or by webcast.

Description: *What does it mean to follow Jesus in a changing culture in which the Christian story is no longer familiar and the church is on the margins? Post-Christendom is well advanced in most Western societies, and this is the emerging reality in the United States too. How do we respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities? What role does church planting play as we search for relevant ways of being church in this emerging culture? And what can the Anabaptist tradition offer – a tradition with centuries of experience on the margins in which many are finding inspiration and fresh perspectives?*

Presenters: Stuart Murray Williams, author of *The Naked Anabaptist and Post-Christendom*, and Juliet Kilpin, coordinator of the church planting agency, Urban Expression UK, will be exploring the following issues in this one day conference.

Session 1: The challenges and opportunities of post-Christendom

Session 2: Anabaptism – a movement whose time has come?

Session 3: Church planting – a vital response to post-Christendom

People have two registration options:

1. Mail-in registration forms will be sent to Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120. Payment by check or credit card;
2. Online registration for onsite and online attendance will be at www.brethren.org/webcasts. Credit card payment accepted.

Registration fees:

\$40.00 for onsite attendance. Lunch and CEU included for onsite participation.

\$35.00 for webcast attendance. CEU included with online registration. Online attendees will need to complete a few questions for the CEU. Webcast attendance link will need to be sent by e-mail to persons who register for webcast attendance.

0.5 CEUs will be provided by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership/Bethany Theological Seminary.

Bethany Seminary to Hold 2012 Presidential Forum

“Joy and Suffering in the Body: Turning toward Each Other” is the theme of Bethany Seminary’s 2012 Presidential Forum, to be held April 13-14 at the Bethany campus in Richmond, Indiana.



The title of the Forum refers to experiences both within individual bodies and our faith bodies. Ruthann Johansen, president of Bethany, describes the development of the Forum theme: “For people of faith to be created in the image of God calls us to embrace the gifts of our sexuality and our spirituality and to treat our own and one another’s lives with reverence. This Forum topic will explore the intersections of human sexuality and spirituality openly to increase our understanding of ourselves and one another and to help us live in Christ-like integrity with compassion and justice toward all people.”

The Forum is also a response to the call stated in Standing Committee’s report from the 2011 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids—“to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process”—and to the recommendations of the original 1983 statement “Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective.”

Dr. James Forbes will be the keynote speaker for the Forum, with an address titled “Who for the Joy Set before Him.” Dr. Forbes is senior minister emeritus of Riverside Church in New York City and the Harry Emerson Fosdick Adjunct Professor of Preaching at Union Theological Seminary. He is also president of the Healing of the Nations Foundation, which draws its mission from Revelation 22:2: “And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Panelists representing the fields of medicine, ecclesiology and sexuality, Christian history, religion and psychiatry, and biblical studies will round out leadership for the Forum. They include David E. Fuchs, MD; David Hunter, Cottrill-Rolfes Chair of Catholic Studies at the University of Kentucky; Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology and ethics at Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Amy Bentley Lamborn, assistant professor of pastoral theology at General Theological Seminary; and Ken Stone, academic dean and professor of Hebrew Bible, culture, and hermeneutics at Chicago Theological Seminary. Each panelist’s presentation will incorporate opportunity for audience discussion.

As a complementing event to the Forum, a Pre-Forum Gathering is planned for April 12-13, sponsored by Bethany’s Alumni/ae Coordinating Council. “The Gathering will bring alumni/ae and other interested persons together for educational presentations by faculty as well as the opportunity to reconnect and meet new friends,” says council member Greg Davidson Laszakovits. “Rooted in the Presidential Forum’s theme of spirituality and sexuality, this event will take a practical approach toward equipping participants to work with these real-life issues in their ministries and lives.”

Attendees of the Gathering will hear four sessions presented by faculty from Bethany and Earlham School of Religion: Julie M. Hostetter, director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership at Bethany; Russell Haitch, associate professor of Christian education and the director of the Institute for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults at Bethany; Jim Higginbotham, assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at Earlham School of Religion; and Dan Ulrich, professor of New Testament studies at Bethany.

Continuing education units are available for both events. Those attending the Pre-Forum Gathering can earn 0.5 CEUs, while Forum attendees can earn up to 0.6 CEUs. Participants must attend all sessions on a given day to receive credit.

The 2012 Forum is the fourth in a series begun in 2008. “The Presidential Forums were inaugurated to develop substantive topics that thoughtfully and prophetically address issues of faith and ethics and that enable the Seminary to provide visionary, educational leadership for the church and society,” states Johansen. In fall 2010, Bethany received a generous grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to endow the Presidential Forums.

Forum and Pre-Forum activities will include worship services and a concert by the band Mutual Kumquat. The Forum will also feature the artwork of Earlham School of Religion graduate Melanie Weidner, whose painting *Between Us* is serving as the feature piece of the Forum. The Pre-Forum Gathering will begin with dinner and fellowship on Thursday, April 12; the Forum will likewise begin with dinner and worship on Friday, April 13. Discounted rates are available for students. For a complete schedule and session descriptions, registration information, and housing options, visit www.bethanyseminary.edu/forum2012. For further questions, contact forum@bethanyseminary.edu. Registration will be capped at 150 participants.

New Church Development Conference

Bethany Theological Seminary (Richmond, Indiana) May 17 - 19, 2012

“I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”
1 Corinthians 3:6



Keynote leaders are [Tom Johnston and Mike Chong Perkinson](#) of [Praxis Ministries](#). Worship, prayer, workshops, and networking are key features of the event. Sponsored by the Church of the Brethren New Church Development Advisory Committee and Congregational Life Ministries and hosted by Bethany Theological Seminary.

General Conference Information

Dates: The conference begins officially at 8:15 a.m. on Thursday, May 17 and concludes at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 19. Onsite registration and pre conference activities begin at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 16.

Pre Registration (required): Registration opens January 17, 2012, at 12 noon cst at <http://www.brethren.org/churchplanting/events.html>

Fees: An early registration fee of \$169.00 is available through March 15, 2012. After March 15 and until the conference begins, registration is \$199.00. Students registered for either the Brethren Academy course or the Bethany Seminary course M245 Foundations for Church Growth can register for \$129. Lodging is not guaranteed for registrations received after May 5.

Housing: Lodging for the nights of May 16, 17, & 18 is included in the registration fee. The Quality Inn provides double occupancy accommodations. Single rooms are available for an additional fee. Rooms are non smoking unless requested otherwise.

Meals: A full breakfast is provided at the Quality Inn on Thursday, Friday & Saturday. Lunch is provided at the conference on Thursday and Friday. Dinners are on your own.

Transportation: Please make your own transportation arrangements. The nearest airports are Dayton, OH (DAY), (40 minutes) and Indianapolis, IN (IND), (90 minutes).

Location: Conference registration and daily activities are held at Bethany Theological Seminary. Evening sessions on Thursday and Friday night are held at the Quality Inn.

Participants: The conference is for church planters, those considering church planting, core team members, district leaders, churches planting churches, and anyone interested in considering how to further God's mission through new communities of worship and service. Workshops for Spanish-speaking leaders are also offered, and Spanish translation is available.

Sponsorship: The conference is sponsored by the Church of the Brethren through Congregational Life Ministries and the New Church Development Advisory Committee and is hosted by Bethany Theological Seminary.

Questions: Please direct your questions to churchplanting@brethren.org or Randi Rowan in the office of Congregational Life Ministries at 1-800-323-8039 ext 208.

TRIM Celebration



Photo: Marilyn Lerch

Mark Muthler receiving his TRIM certificate from Betty Ann Cherry at the Middle PA District Conference held October 21, 2011.

Linda Banzak, Susan Bollinger, and Cheryl Mishler received their TRIM certificates at their district conferences and were recognized at the Bethany Theological Seminary/Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership Luncheon at the 2011 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

District TRIM Coordinators

Welcome to new District TRIM Coordinators Lerry Fogle and Brad Bohrer!

The staff of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership is constantly reminded that the Training In Ministry (TRIM) would not have existed for the past twenty-five-plus years were it not for the generosity of those in our Church of the Brethren districts who helped carry out of the guidelines of this program. Our faithful District TRIM Coordinators are both administrators and mentors to our students. They share their time as well as their wisdom. We are grateful for the caring hearts and the dedication to the church of Jesus Christ that shines through the work of our District TRIM Coordinators.

During the past year, It has been a pleasure to welcome two outstanding new District TRIM Coordinators to their positions. Both of these new coordinators have worked extensively in the life of the church over the years and now share their experiences and their commitment with those preparing for ministry.

It is with gratitude and enthusiasm we welcome:

Lerry Fogle, the now-retired Executive Director of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Office, is the new District TRIM Coordinator for Mid-Atlantic District.

Brad Bohrer, recently a member of our denominational staff, worked both in Nigeria and with the Global Missions Office. Brad is now is the pastor of the Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend and the District TRIM Coordinator for Northern Indiana District.

The students of these districts are blessed to have the opportunity to work with such fine leadership, as are we at the Brethren Academy!



Upcoming Academy Level Courses:

2012 Courses:

* *****"Seeing Things through John's Eyes: A Study of Revelation"**, McPherson College, McPherson KS
Instructor: Rick Gardner, Bethany Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies, April 26-29, 2012, (BT)
Registration Deadline: March 25, 2012

Directed Independent Study Unit: Walter Brueggemann, Contemporary Biblical Scholar and Theologian The Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann will be the guest speaker at the Ministers' Association Conference, a twenty-four hour event (noon July 6 - noon July 7) prior to Annual Conference in St Louis, Missouri. This directed ISU will be planned and led by Marilyn Lerch. It will include pre conference reading, a one-hour session before and after the Ministers' Conference, and attendance at both the Ministers' Association Event and the Saturday evening worship service where Brueggemann will preach. A follow-up project will be expected. If interested, please contact Marilyn Lerch directly at lerchma@bethanyseminary.edu. There will be no tuition fee for this ISU.

***"Planting, Partnering, Producing, and Persevering"** Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Indiana,
Instructor: David Shumate, District Executive of Virlina District, *May 16 – 20, 2012 (includes the CoB Church Planting Conference)*
Registration Deadline: April 13, 2012

"Defining Set-Apart Ministry within the Bivocational Reality" *Online*, Instructor: Sandra Jenkins,
June 6 – August 14, 2012 (one week off for Annual Conference) (MS) Registration Deadline: May 4, 2012

*****"Church of the Brethren Polity and Practice"** Young Center, Elizabethtown College, Instructors: Warren Eshbach and Randy Yoder, July 20-21, Aug. 3-4, 2012 (MS) **^SVMC**

** **"Religions of the World"**, McPherson College, Kansas, Instructor: Kent Eaton, **Fall 2012** (BT)

* **"Brethren Studies Course"** *Online*, **Fall 2012**. Details to be determined.

Projecting into Spring 2013:

January Intensive at Bethany Seminary

February course in Florida

"Introduction to New Testament" *Online*

*****"Evangelism"** *Online*, Instructor: Tara Hornbacker, Assoc. Professor of Ministry Formation

Course at McPherson College, Kansas

Trip to Iona Community, Scotland, Instructor: Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, professor of preaching and worship

Please note: While we continue to accept students beyond the registration deadline, on that date we determine whether we have enough students to offer the class. Many courses have required pre course readings, so students need to be sure to allow enough time to complete those assignments.

*Bethany Experience **Brethren College Experience Courses noted as **^SVMC** need to be registered through the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center at SVMC@etown.edu, or call 717-361-1450

Courses are open to TRIM students, pastors (earn 2 CEUs) and all interested persons.

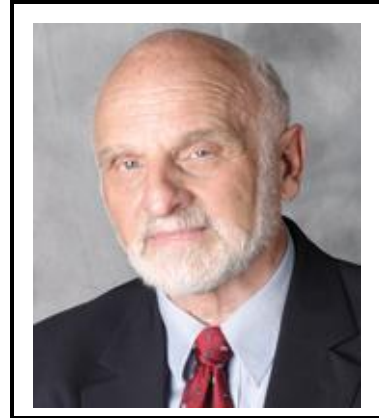
TRIM designations: BT (Bible/Theology credit), MS (Ministry Skills credit)

Registration brochures for these and other training opportunities are available through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership at their website:

<http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/academy> or by calling 1-800-287-8822, ext 1824.

Recommended Books

The Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann will be the guest speaker at the Ministers' Association Conference, a twenty-four hour event (noon July 6- noon July 7) prior to Annual Conference in St Louis, Missouri.



Academic Dean and Associate Professor Steven Schweitzer, PhD offers the following list of his favorite Brueggemann texts for your consideration:

Brueggemann, Walter. *Journey to the Common Good*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010.

Brueggemann, Walter. *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Great Prayers of the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.

Brueggemann, Walter. "Vulnerable Children, Divine Passion, and Human Obligation." Pages 399-422 in *The Child in the Bible*. Edited by Marcia Bunge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Worship in Ancient Israel: An Essential Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Spirituality of the Psalms. Facets Series*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Revised edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

Brueggemann, Walter. "2 Kings 18-19: The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 7, no. 1 (1985): 1-42.

Observations of an EFSM Minister-in-Training

My experiences as an analytical chemist and a pastor in training rarely overlap. In one role I use technical skills to analyze and process data, while working primarily with instruments. In the other role I turn my attention to people working with the Spirit to draw individuals into God's story. These two seemingly unrelated experiences were brought together during our EFSM Congregational Training Group's Old Testament Survey unit. One unit objective was to understand how oral tradition played a part in the development of the Old Testament. While reading about oral tradition was an important part of this, I wanted us to experience it as well. This was the perfect opportunity to use some of my experience as a scientist to perform an oral tradition experiment.



The primary objective of the experiment was to determine how well stories and information are passed from individual to individual versus within a group. Our hypothesis was that stories and information are passed along better within a group. A synopsis of our experimental design to test this hypothesis was as follows:

- The group comprised the youth and adult Sunday school classes.
- Five storytellers were chosen from the group. Two fun & obscure historical stories were chosen that were similar in length and number of details.
- Every week for five weeks, one of the storytellers would share story "A" with the group and story "B" just with the next storyteller.
- The group was allowed to ask questions and encouraged to correct the storyteller if details were omitted or inaccurate.
- No writing was allowed!
- At the end of the experiment, it would be determined if the main story was still intact and how many of the details were retained for each method.

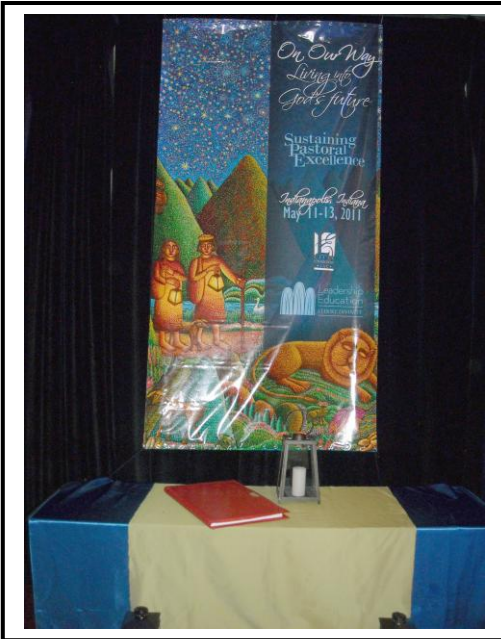
We confirmed our hypothesis that the group retained the story better than the individuals. The scientist in me cannot help but share some numerical results. The group retained 63 percent of the story details, while the individual storytellers only retained 21 percent of the story details, making the original story almost unrecognizable. Some additional observations were made during the course of the experiment:

- Our group did not have years of hearing the same stories over and over again as people of biblical times would have had.
- The younger members of our group remember better.
- It is easier to omit a detail in the group setting than state an inaccuracy.
- Coming from a visually trained culture, the stories would have been retained better if we could have at least read them once.

A frequent observation made during the course of the experiment was that we were not considering the Spirit's involvement. Here was the same disconnect that I experience as a chemist and pastor. One man perhaps summarized it best: "We can't measure the Spirit's influence in this experiment." We were just sharing fun stories and didn't expect the Spirit to guide us in telling them, but the comment was aimed at something deeper. I think he was saying, "The Spirit guided the early storytellers and authors of the Bible; it wasn't up to faulty human memory." However, sharing a story in community helps prevent an individual from altering the story and passing it on as inspired. As we learned while studying oral tradition, the story belonged to the people and they would not tolerate adulteration. Further, if the Spirit is present in one faithful individual, how much more in a community of faithful believers!

Joshua Leck
Monitor CoB, Western Plains District

From the Director's Desk



On Our Way: Living Into God's Future was the theme for the closing Sustaining Pastoral Excellence gathering held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 11-13, 2011. At this event, representatives from forty-three projects were invited to set up displays, publish synopses of their work, and celebrate the ministries accomplished over the past several years.



While reviewing the past and focusing on the present, attendees were also challenged to envision the future. Based on information, ideas and insights gleaned from the Vital Pastors and Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership tracks, Brethren Academy staff are planning for the next stage of our Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program. Please keep us in prayer as we continue *On Our Way: Living into God's Future*.

Lynn Myers (BTS board), Mary Jo Flory-Steury (CoB office of ministry) and Joel Kline (Ministers' Association) at the BAML display, which included a listing of desired outcomes of the SPE program as well as pictures, publications, and a PowerPoint® relating to the VIP and AFCL tracks.



Photos this page: Julie Hostetter



A ministry training partnership of the
Church of the Brethren and
Bethany Theological Seminary

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