

A Moment in Mission ❖ from Bethany Seminary

At the close of Bethany Seminary's academic year last June, President Ruthann Johansen shared a celebratory message with faculty and staff. It was an invitation for the Bethany community to reflect on and give thanks for the highlights and accomplishments of the past year. Along with Bethany's employees, the Bethany community really includes all those who give time, talent, and resources to the Seminary. You, therefore, are also invited to reflect on and take joy in the ways that Bethany continues to serve our denomination and the world beyond.

- ◆ The fall 2009 semester ushered in more energy and activity than usual with the **arrival of the largest incoming class in more than a decade**. Forty-five new students enrolled at Bethany over the course of the year. Among them was Vivek Solanky from India, strengthening the international presence at Bethany. Jabani Adzibiya, in his second year at Bethany, comes from our sister church in Nigeria, the EYN.
- ◆ **Bethany's faculty was fully staffed this year after a period of transition**. Dr. Steven Schweitzer arrived as the new academic dean and in his first year, as stated by President Johansen, "won the hearts and minds" of those at Bethany. Steve came to Bethany from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., where he served as assistant professor of Old Testament. Malinda Berry joined the faculty as instructor of theological studies and director of the master of arts program. A doctoral candidate at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Malinda was previously a visiting scholar at Goshen College, Ind., and interim minister at Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship in New York City.
- ◆ **The Bethany board of trustees took action on some major initiatives last year**, beginning with the approval of Bethany's new mission and vision statement in the fall.** This was followed in the spring with approval of a five-year strategic plan. The goals of the plan focus on the educational environment, curriculum, integration and expansion of the educational program, and funding for new initiatives.

One example of program expansion is already in process. Since 2003 Bethany students have been able to earn a master of divinity degree through the Connections distributed education program. A proposal to offer a parallel distributed education track for the master of arts program has been sent to the Association of Theological Schools for approval.

- ◆ Do you know that **Bethany houses a rare book collection of more than 5400** theological works, Bibles, and hymnals, some more than 450 years old? To preserve this valuable resource, Bethany undertook a major restoration and cataloguing project in 2001, funded by a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. Last fall, a celebration was held to mark the completion of the project. You can view the entire collection on Bethany's Web site, along with the story of how Bethany acquired the collection and the Webcast of the celebration.
- ◆ Speaking of Webcasts . . . **Bethany has expanded the number and variety of Webcasts on its Web site** during the past year, some of which were created with the cooperation of other Brethren agencies. Along with special Bethany events are continuing education presentations and district and denominational events, including all worship services and selected sessions from Annual

Conference 2010. Bethany hopes that many individuals and groups will enjoy and benefit from these Webcasts!

- ◆ **Many guests pass through Bethany's doors:** prospective students, meeting attendees, church and youth tour groups, denominational leaders, students' families, and audiences of special events. Bethany's third Presidential Forum, "When Strangers Are Angels," attracted a capacity crowd in April. Renowned theologian Dr. Martin Marty was the keynote speaker for this two-day forum, which explored the traditions and relationships among the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers. Bethany also hosted a weekend of events highlighting the poetry and pacifism of William Stafford and in May welcomed Brethren from across the denomination for the Church Planting Conference, "Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully."
- ◆ **Among the year's significant events was, of course, Bethany's 105th commencement.** Of the ten graduates, three are currently in ministry, four plan to pursue a vocation in ministry, and two will continue studies at Bethany. As President Johansen noted, "It was a wonderfully joyous day to witness the growth of these students during the years they have been at Bethany . . . and to send them forth to minister to a church and world in need of God's love and Christ's peace. At each commencement time, I think about the vision of the founders of the Bethany Bible Training School, now Bethany Theological Seminary, and how the roots of that original vision continue to bring forth nourishing fruit over a century later."

Serving a world in need of God's love and Christ's peace is a mission for us all. Bethany joins sisters and brothers like you in living out this mission through the Church of the Brethren.

*** Note to readers: If you are using the Bethany Sunday bulletin insert stating Bethany's new mission statement, you are encouraged to bring the congregation's attention to it.*

- ◆ “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit neither can you, unless you abide in me.” (John 15:4)

“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.” (I John 4:13)

What does it mean to abide in God? In Jesus? As Bethany Seminary students devote spiritual and intellectual gifts to preparation for leadership in the church and world, they experience what it means to abide *in* the Creator and *for* creation through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

As stated in its new mission statement, “Bethany Theological Seminary equips spiritual and intellectual leaders with an Incarnational education for ministering, proclaiming, and living out God’s shalom and Christ’s peace in the church and world.”