

# Wonder & Word

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**BETHANY**  
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*Welcoming the Stranger*



# Wonder & Word

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## Welcoming the Stranger

RUTHANN K. JOHANSEN

*“But [the lawyer], desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (Luke 10:28)*

Jesus’s teaching about neighbors in the parable of the Good Samaritan continues to speak to twenty-first-century churches and societies as they wrestle with political conflicts, economic inequities, and environmental exploitation sustained by systems of greed that lead most of us, intentionally or unwittingly, to cross over to the other side of the road. Created or manipulated suspicion and fear daily increase the ranks of strangers and turn even neighbors into strangers or enemies. In contrast, Jesus counsels us to welcome strangers and love enemies. This counsel requires a radical reorientation of our relationship to creation and Creator, to ourselves, and to other human beings.

Failure to acknowledge the beauty and order of the God-created world and the desire to justify our greed and exploitation make it difficult to see the stranger. The sin of affirming only oneself; one’s friends; or one’s own species, race, ethnicity, or religious group arises from refusing to understand that the intricate beauty and biodiversity of the universe is not merely an attribute of matter but that every human body and soul lives on the beauty of that order. All life forms are valuable evidence of God’s infinite beauty. Not appreciating this reality permits human beings to ignore our interdependence; deplete the earth’s nonrenewable resources; exploit and oppress people; poison soil, water, and air; and contribute to the persistent extinction of ever more species. And such behaviors widen the gap between those who live in abundance and those strangers who are ostracized or die of disease, malnutrition, and war along our roadsides.

As societies and faith communities confront twenty-first-century challenges of poverty, ecological destruction, immigration, and militarization of the planet, the call to live as neighbors is clear. To break the bread of relationship extended by the Creator in the creation of the world with strangers as well as friends requires a rebirth of compassion. Such radical transformation cannot be achieved by individual will alone but is a gift of divine grace nurtured in faith communities. Bethany Seminary offers an educational context and resource for reorienting lives and values. Jesus Christ, as the Incarnation of God’s love and beauty, continues to reveal the path for turning stranger into neighbor. The human longing to love the beauty of the world in another human being, to be loved as a human being, to be treated justly and to extend justice, to live on nourishing bread and rest from endless toil, to be protected from persecution, and to forgive and be forgiven express the longing for the Incarnation. Recognizing and embracing that longing at the heart of creation restore relationship and make hospitality possible.



Bethany Theological Seminary hosted its third Presidential Forum on April 8-10, 2010. This year's theme, "When Strangers Are Angels: the Spiritual and Social Movements of Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites in the Twenty-First Century" was celebrated through lectures, discussions, drama, and worship. The story of Jacob wrestling with the stranger from Genesis 32 was invoked in a variety of ways. Dr. Martin Marty, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago and columnist for *The Christian Century*, was the featured lecturer.

## Dimensions of the Stranger in the Old Testament

STEVEN SCHWEITZER

The Old Testament has much to teach us about the stranger, both on its own and in comparison to the commands and perspectives of the New Testament. We can see a direct link between the Israel of David's day and Abraham, between Christians and Abraham, the common recognition that our lives are fleeting, and the necessity of hope beyond this existence.

In the Old Testament we find four categories of strangers: the *ger* (plural, *gerim*)—a sojourner, resident alien, noncitizen, or stranger; the *zar* (plural, *zarim*)—a foreigner or stranger; the *nokri* / *bene nekar*—a foreigner, or stranger; the *toshav*—a foreign settler. All of these definitions for the stranger appear in the Greek New Testament as well.

The scriptures identify Abraham as a stranger (Gen 12:10) and Abraham gives himself this definition (Gen 23:4). In both of these texts, the meaning of the word *stranger* refers to the temporary and marginal nature of the person in relation to the settled community and who is typically of another tribe or culture.

In the New Testament we find many examples and admonitions encouraging positive action when encountering a stranger, such as, "I was a stranger and you *welcomed* me" (Matt 25), *pursue aggressively* hospitality to strangers (Rom 12:13), and don't forget to *love* strangers (Heb 13:2). While some texts in the Old Testament warn against foreigners, the dominant view of strangers is positive, inclusive, and one that promotes action by the majority on behalf of these individuals.

God commands the Israelites to care for the stranger, based on both God's example and their experience. A simple search of the text finds more than eighty references connecting the stranger and the need for social justice. God exhorts the people of Israel to remember their sojourn as strangers and how their ancestors were treated and that they should treat strangers among them in a different way. Living as aliens and exiles ourselves (1 Pet 2:11) does not remove us from the responsibility to seek God and to live righteously. It also does not remove the responsibility to promote social justice on behalf of the strangers who live among us.





## Surprised by Emmanuel: Mission with Jesus in Matthew

DAN ULRICH

Mission in Matthew's Gospel has several characteristics:

- It is *universal*. Jesus's words in Matthew 28 say to "go and make disciples of all nations." In Jesus's time, this refers to ethnic groups, not nation states, as well as groups beyond the Roman Empire.
- It is *catechetical*. Teaching and training, or discipleship, is important.
- It is *communal*, emphasizing relationships with God and other believers. Matthew's Gospel begins with "Emmanuel, God is with us" and ends with "Lo, I am with you always," and we find "where two or three are gathered" in the midst of the text.
- It is *hospitable*, encouraging and welcoming people, travelers, and those in need.
- It is *vulnerable*, with little emphasis on personal comfort.
- It is *political*, requiring public testimony and engagement in the world.

I believe our mission efforts today fall short of the ideals in Matthew's Gospel because of several stumbling blocks that I identify as "isms:"

- *Reductionism*, or settling for less than the whole gospel and not meeting both physical and spiritual needs. I call this a "sound byte Christianity" and see it as a current problem in today's church.
- *Triumphalism*, or focusing on the triumph of Christianity. This was especially prevalent in the early twentieth century.

- *Paternalism* and *colonialism* are related to triumphalism.

Matthew's admonition to love and his emphasis on vulnerability, service, and hospitality counteract these stumbling blocks.

The early Christians were viewed as strangers and aliens. They shared the gospel not from a position of dominance but of a small community passionately sharing its story. Our Brethren theology gives us a similar advantage as we attempt to practice another way of living and because it encourages a holistic approach—attention to body and spirit, education and health care—all of it wrapped up in caring for people.

If we "go to make disciples" like Jesus—like sheep among wolves—with a commitment to love our enemies, not claiming power over others but accepting the role of the servant, and with a vulnerability like the least of these, we can avoid the stumbling blocks as we share the good news.



*Dr. Martin Marty greets Forum participants.*

*Dan Ulrich is Professor of New Testament Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.*





The events began with a dinner and worship service Thursday night, followed by a first-ever Pre-Forum Gathering for alumni/ae and friends on Friday, featuring lectures presented by Bethany faculty members. Academic dean Steve Schweitzer shed light on “Dimensions of the Stranger in the Old Testament.” “Surprised by Emmanuel: Mission with Jesus in Matthew” was presented by Dan Ulrich, professor of New Testament studies. Through story and song, Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, associate professor of preaching and worship, presented on the prophetic and pastoral distinctives of Anabaptist-Pietist preaching. Tara Hornbacker, associate professor of ministry formation, and Russell Haitch, associate professor of Christian education and director of the Institute for Ministry With Youth and Young Adults, invited participants to share in small group discussion on the topic “How Is Today’s Church Living Out Brethren Values?”

## Brethren Ways of Preaching: Talking to Ourselves, Not for Ourselves

DAWN OTTONI-WILHELM

An important characteristic of Anabaptist preaching is its blend of pastoral and prophetic elements. Sermons reflect care for personal and interpersonal needs and relationships and for all that creates or sustains ministries of compassion to neighbors near and far.

A striking feature of twentieth-century Brethren preaching which is found in Brethren worshipping bodies of all types is a focus on Jesus Christ as normative for our interpretation of scripture. Brethren preaching has not only focused on the death and resurrection of Jesus but also on his life. Jesus's teaching, healing, and outreach to others help us to understand the realm of God, to identify God's purposes throughout scripture, and to pursue God's will in our daily living.

Several key elements permeate Jesus's prophetic ministry and are worthy of consideration for preachers today:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These elements are examined in greater detail in Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, “God’s Word in the World: Prophetic Preaching and the Gospel of Jesus Christ” in David B. Greiser and Michael A. King, *Anabaptist Preaching: A Conversation between Pulpit, Pev, and Bible* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Pub., 2003).

### *Prophetic preaching voices God's passion for others.*

The passion of Christ's prophetic ministry suggests that the language of lament is crucial to the prophetic voice in preaching. Before we resort to despair or vengeance, lamentation turns us in the direction of a powerful, loving God whom we trust with our sorrows and by whose wisdom we begin the process of discerning that for which we also hold responsibility in our present calamity.

### *Prophetic preaching proclaims the promises of God.*

For Jesus, the present and future realization of God's promises are most fervently articulated in preaching the parables. Just as the language of lament gives voice to human and divine passion, the language of parables asserts God's subtle and dramatic intrusions into our expectations and dares to voice God's promises amid corrupt and selfish interests of church and world.

### *Prophetic preaching points the way to new possibilities.*

Prophetic preaching is not only concerned with witnessing to God's passion and promises but also to the possibilities of God's love and power among us. The prophetic preacher views the world through God's eyes, calling forth creative responses amid the most challenging circumstances.

More than railing against others, the prophet rallies others for God's loving purposes and actions. Whether through lament, parables, or positing new possibilities, the prophetic and pastoral preacher hopes to open the way for the Spirit of Christ to move and energize God's people for ministry and mission.

Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm is Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship at Bethany Theological Seminary.





## The Gift of the Stranger

MARTIN MARTY

How do we respond when a stranger knocks? Do we see strangers as a gift?

The strangers whom we call angels in our traditional religious literature are often described as invoking a sense of awe. This important attribute prepared the person visited by the angel to receive significant messages or gifts.

Can we take this traditional image of angels—who sometimes are entertained unawares—and apply it to our world? The answer to that question is yes. When the angelic presence is accepted by the other, openness occurs, leading to receipt of gifts, such as, liberation, reconciliation, and tolerance. The gift of tolerance needs additional explanation, because the term *tolerance* usually is used in a context that puts one in power over another. For example, in our culture tolerance usually means: "If I can get you to believe as little as I do and as lightly as I do, we will get along very well." Effective change comes about through people who believe and care very deeply.

The gift of liberation leads to a changed spirit and a changed inner self. The gift of reconciliation allows us to have a better relationship with others. The gift of hospitality provides the means for liberation and reconciliation to occur.



*Sharing insights through group conversation*

Most of the inhospitality that is shown is based on our ignorance of the other and theirs of us. Our beliefs, comfortable faith traditions, and religious symbols can be either barriers to others or the beginnings of hospitality. For the historic peace churches, that "strangeness" from others may be evident through emphases on peace and justice, discipleship, church as community, mutual aid, and a counter-cultural focus. As you share your faith stories with others to increase their knowledge, the strangeness disappears, gifts are exchanged, and each one's understanding grows and faith is strengthened.

How do we respond when a stranger knocks? When there is a knock at the door and we open it, there is an opportunity for hospitality and mission.

*Martin Marty is Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago and columnist for The Christian Century.*





Friday evening marked the beginning of the Presidential Forum with worship and a plenary session on “The Demands of the Stranger” by Dr. Martin Marty. He challenged the crowd to consider three aspects of the stranger: the stranger within ourselves and our own faith communities, the stranger beyond our faith communities, and finally the global stranger. Friday evening’s activities concluded with a play titled *Man from Magdalena*, written by Earlham School of Religion student Patty Willis. Described as a story of a stranger who reveals himself as an angel in our midst, the play chronicles the journey of Manuel Jesús Córdova Soberanes, a Mexican migrant who rescued a nine-year-old boy in the southern Arizona desert whose mother had just been killed in an automobile accident.

## ***Man from Magdalena: A Stranger Becomes an Angel***

PATTY CHRISTIENA WILLIS

In November of 2007, a migrant crossing the border, Manuel Jesús Córdova Soberanes, rescued a nine-year-old boy in the southern Arizona desert whose mother had just been killed in an automobile accident. Only eight hours from reaching his destination in Tucson, he said that he was thinking of his own four children when he halted his walk to help the boy. He told reporters that he was the father of four children. For that, he stayed. He never could have left. Never. Manuel’s act of kindness far away from the eyes of the world was an answer to my prayers.

Almost three years to the day before this incident, we bought ten acres of that desert that stretches from Tucson into the Mexican state of Sonora. At the time we were living in western Japan surrounded by emerald green rice fields and cedar forests. When we showed our neighbors photographs of mesquite trees, spiny ocotillo, cholla, and barrel cactus against the

backdrop of the rocky Santa Rita Mountains, they were mystified. “There is nothing there,” they said. What we loved about the land was invisible to their eyes. The Sonoran Desert has one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, but not everyone’s eyes can see its beauty. Mine did. The clear desert light illuminated a world of plant and animal life that took hold of my heart. My feet firmly in that hard, rocky soil, I fell in love. The peregrine falcons nesting in our small grove of tall trees were a sign that this land was the destination of a pilgrimage that had spanned two decades and taken us all around the world. The night sky studded with uncountable brilliant stars, and a swath of Milky Way was our Compostela. The full moon rising from behind the Santa Rita Mountains was a manifestation of the Holy.

When did we find out what else was happening in the beauty? Our real estate agent warned us of the rattlesnakes that hid in our rosemary bushes but she did not tell us that under that star-filled sky, tragedies were enacted each night in a migration of mythic proportions. The greedy United States economic policies of decades ago and other complex internal problems were pushing many people of Central America and Mexico to walk north into the dangerous borderlands, looking for ways to feed their families. Unequipped for the harsh realities of the journey, people were dying in this desert that had stolen my heart. We met a retired nurse in her eighties who drove the back roads with her retired professor husband to search for people who had run out of water or whose feet were so injured that they could not



move ahead. They washed and bandaged feet of people who had been left to die. They gave water to those struggling to continue in 110 degree heat. With my sun-sensitive skin and lack of nursing skills, I could not join these expeditions of mercy and began to pray. I prayed for the starry sky to protect the unprotected. I prayed for hands to reach out and catch them when they fell. As we watched the setting sun cast its pinks and reds and purples on Baboquivari, the sacred mountain of the Tohono O'odham, the stars appeared one after another, and migrants emerged from their hiding places under mesquite trees, river drains, or abandoned buildings and recommenced their trek in the darkness. Invisible to them as well, I prayed for their safety and for something more illusive; I prayed for a story to tell that would shed light on what was happening around me in the darkness and that would move hearts to action. Manuel Jesús Córdova Soberanes's act of compassion was an answer to my prayers.

For a year, I kept his story in my heart and prayed for a way to tell it. Mary Lou Prince began writing the music for songs. As I meditated on the lyrics, characters emerged. In Magdalena, as a man is readying himself for the crossing, his mother goes to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe to pray. In the voice of mothers all over the world whose children are setting out into the unknown, she sings, "Watch them on their way. Keep them safe." When I sat down to write the libretto, the rancher emerged telling of her love for the land and her desire for hands that will catch the sparrows in such danger. Manuel's wife tells her fears to the Virgin of Guadalupe and sings to her husband: "From where you are, do you think of me as you watch the moon ascending? Ever upward on wings of stars, I would hover by your side." The coyote (leader of the migrants) cracks the whip; he will

keep his group to their path. Manuel finds the boy and sings to him to look up at the stars.

As I wrote, an intricate web emerged that joined all of us: the rancher who loves her land, the mother, wife, coyote and Manuel and the boy. In the darkness, out of sight, Manuel reaches his hands out in compassion and saves the life of the child. I want to believe that all of our prayers and good intentions hold them as Manuel sings to the boy: "Never fear!

Let the moonbeams and the stardust  
Gather round you through the night."

From our first sold-out performances in January 2010, we have felt the stirrings of compassion in our audience. A man with politics aligned with the border vigilantes said, "I guess that there are some good people crossing." That was an enormous step. Our vision is to help create a more compassionate atmosphere for immigration debates and to direct people to participate in healing the economic roots of the migration in Mexico and Central America. Eventually we hope for a nationwide movement that will direct millions of dollars towards empowering people to stay in their beloved homelands. In our current dilemma about immigration, can we find a chance to restore what we have taken? If we forgive can we be forgiven? Could the Man from Magdalena urge us to approach difficulties with an eye to restorative justice?



*Breaking bread together at closing worship*

If you would like information about performances of *Man from Magdalena*,  
you may contact Patty Willis at [willipa@earlham.edu](mailto:willipa@earlham.edu).

*Patty Willis is a student at Earlham School of Religion.*





Saturday morning began with a panel discussion, in which representatives from each of the historic peace churches (Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites) responded to the questions, “What defines someone as a stranger in your faith community?” and, “How are we strangers to each other?” This led to a lively discussion on both the particularities as well as the deep points of connection among the three traditions. As a Mennonite teaching at Bethany, Malinda Berry, instructor in theological studies and director of the MA program, spoke of her experience on the Church of the Brethren campus as “coming to spend time with the cousins and getting to know the extended family.” Jay Marshall, dean at Earlham School of Religion, noted that today Quakers may have few external identifying markers such as unique dress, but “many orientations still matter, including the inner light, spiritual disciplines, and a commitment to equality.”

## Comments from a "Fishbowl Conversation" among Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites

### John Rempel (Mennonite):

Mennonites' "radical break" from religious tradition may be perceived as less radical than the Quakers and Brethren because we kept the doctrine of the Trinity more central. Our highest authority is scripture, and we don't place as much emphasis on personal experience. We have a Messianic ethic and claim to be walking in the resurrection. But we question whether we can share it or if others need to come to it.

Brethren and Quakers have taken more risks. But with that admiration comes the question if the other two have given up some of their christological grounding.

**Jay Marshall (Quaker):** Outsiders may identify their differences from Friends through romanticized myth. Quakers currently are grappling with the relevance of our traditional values. Today there are very few external identifying markers, but

internally there are many orientations that still matter, including inner light, spiritual disciplines, and a commitment to equality.

**Shawn Flory Replogle (Brethren):** The Church of the Brethren is struggling with who we are as a people and who we are in the world. We are known for our service, but are not well-equipped to cross socioeconomic boundaries. Identity issues vary among Church of the Brethren congregations across the globe. In the United States, we struggle with finding common denominators. Our new congregations in the Dominican Republic are just learning Church of the Brethren traditions. The churches in Nigeria are struggling with their passion for evangelism since so many in their communities already have converted to Christianity.



**Anna Crumley-Effinger (Quaker):** Quakerism is changing. For example, some Quakers in Rwanda practice baptism. When you include Quakers from around the globe in the demographics, a typical Friend today is a young person in the Southern Hemisphere who grew up in a rural area, moved to the city, and is looking for community in that place. He or she is simply trying to live, reacting to the situations happening around them and looking to Jesus's testimonies as an example.

**Katy Gray Brown (Brethren):** I compare these faith traditions to the Native American culture: tribal traditions that shape your world view. When you are a minority tribe traveling with majority tribes, you are much more aware of their assumptions than they are because they're not your own. We share a world view that others don't know. We share assumptions, but because we're not creedal, we have a hard time pinning down what those assumptions are. Like the Native American culture, the Church of the Brethren has had problems of assimilation and isolation. We live in that tension.

**Tom Hamm (Quaker):** Often Quakers of different types feel more like strangers to each other than to outsiders. The most difficult chapter for me to write in my new book about Quakers was the one on foundational theology. I only identified a couple concepts that are universal to all Quakers. Most Friends are comfortable with their own particular persuasion in Quakerism and when they encounter Quakers with different views, it is often disquieting. Many Friends find more commonality with those outside the Quaker umbrella than with others who identify as friends.

**Ken Rogers (Brethren):** The Church of the Brethren lives in society but is not of society. This creates tension and frustration. We find a model of this in Jeremiah 29. Hebrews are strangers to Babylon, yet they are told to seek the well-being of the city. Babylonians and others could have seen the Hebrews as angels because of their care for the city. They also were angels because they were witnesses to God. Even today the vast majority of Jews live outside of Palestine.

**Malinda Berry (Mennonite):** We are not always prepared as institutions of higher education for what it means to welcome people of other faith traditions. Does the responsibility to be welcoming include interpreting a sense of the traditions and core testimonies of the institution, how they inform the educational process, and how the student is being educated to look at the world?





## On the Streets of Bogotá

SCOTT HOLLAND

Scott Holland, professor of theology and culture and director of peace studies and cross-cultural studies, led the group Saturday afternoon in intertextual interpretation on the theme of the stranger, engaging the crowd in stories of Anabaptists' experience of the stranger from around the globe. The discussion and question time centered on the complexities of befriending the stranger.

During the final plenary address, Dr. Marty spoke on the gifts of strangers. He presented several ways in which he saw the historic peace churches offering a unique perspective to the stranger. The principles of community and hospitality were highlighted in his address. The Forum culminated in an energetic final session of worship. Participants were invited to break bread with a neighbor unknown to them.

Lindsey Frye is an MA student at Bethany Seminary.

*"Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."*  
(Heb 13:1)

This passage on strangers and angels is quite familiar to many readers of the New Testament.

What is less familiar is how the writer of Hebrews presents Jesus as a stranger through the imaginative retelling of the story of the Melchizedek tradition.

Melchizedek enters biblical history in three short verses of Genesis 14. Abram sees from his tent a stranger approaching on the horizon. The stranger is welcomed into Abram's camp. He is Melchizedek, king of Salem, a king of peace, and a stranger priest from the far country. He offers Abram bread and wine and the two commune together. Melchizedek then blesses Abram and Abram responds by offering Melchizedek a tithe of everything he has.

We have another brief reference to Melchizedek in Psalms 110:4: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The psalmist's reference indicates that this priest is not a minor character from a forgotten narrative but he is instead part of a living theological-story-shaped tradition. What is this narrative tradition?

This intriguing tradition reminds us that Melchizedek is surprisingly a priest not from the tribe, clan, or religion of Abram. He is instead likely a Caananite priest, a stranger priest who freely communed with Abraham. The book of Hebrews makes much of this story. The writer makes at least six dramatic declarations that Jesus is in fact a new high priest, but he is not a priest in the conventional order of the Levitical priesthood. Jesus is not from the proper priestly lines of Levi or Aaron. No, Jesus is instead a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This is an astonishing claim!

Although some passages of scripture present Jesus as our friend and brother, Hebrews, by linking Jesus with the Melchizedek tradition, suggests that sometimes Jesus comes to us as a stranger priest from the far country. Jesus is not from our tribe, clan, family or church. Instead, Jesus is more like Melchizedek: a startling, a stranger priest reminding us never to neglect offering hospitality to strangers because strangers can indeed be messengers of God.

Strangers can be angels, unexpected and unpredictable messengers of God. I thought much about this biblical message while working in Bogotá, Colombia, in March of this year. I was representing the Church of the Brethren as well

as the historic peace churches traveling with an international delegation of ecumenical theologians. We were at work writing "An Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace" in celebration of the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence.

We visited a number of successful programs and projects in Bogotá that model just peacemaking. I was invited to preach for two services of the vibrant and growing Mennonite church in the city. The congregation is working with scores and scores of persons who have been displaced by the violence in Colombia. In fact, they view their church as a "sanctuary of peace" offering hospitable space not simply for their members but for strangers and seekers as well.

Miguel, who was once a stranger, stood in the sanctuary and offered a moving testimony. Like so many in the Colombian countryside, Miguel and his family found themselves caught between the violence of the revolutionary guerillas and the paramilitary forces and felt threatened by both. They fled their village in fear and landed homeless in Bogotá. For over a week Miguel, his wife, and their four young children were sleeping on the streets of the city.

He confessed that after the third or fourth day on the streets without help he became desperate and depressed. "Maybe I should throw myself under one of these big, red city buses," he thought. "Then perhaps someone might help my family."

"We were strangers," Miguel lamented. "Then," he exclaimed, "suddenly and unexpectedly I knew Jesus was with us, walking with us, sleeping with us, on the streets!" He continued, "Jesus soon led us to the Mennonites, and they helped us find a home and gave us hope."

Jesus as a stranger sleeping on the streets of

Bogotá? A European woman associated with the World Council of Churches heard Miguel's testimony and later pulled me aside. She said, "That sounded much more like a Pentecostal testimony than a Mennonite confession. How does a peace church pull together all this theological and cultural diversity?"

Later, I raised this question with the lead pastor, Peter Stucky. Peter grew up in Colombia as a missionary kid. He explained that when his church began to reach out to persons displaced by violence, some of the longtime, core members were quite uneasy with it. They feared it would change their church. Yet Peter exercised pastoral and prophetic leadership and disturbed the peace of his congregation on behalf of justice, for we know there is indeed a peace that can destroy many. The ministry to displaced persons continued.

Pastor Stucky's congregation became a true sanctuary of peace and began to grow in numbers, in spirit, and in programs of spiritual and social transformation. Peter suggested to me that if we imagine the church not as a Christian club or community but rather as a sanctuary of peace much will change. After all, the pastor explained, even those who come to the church fleeing violence are not simply seeking social services. "They are," he said, quoting Tolstoy, "trying to understand what to do with their souls."

Indeed, the church as a sanctuary of peace provides welcome space for the free exploration of the depths and elevations of the spiritual and social human journey because a peace church understands that God's *shalom* touches all of life: body, soul, and spirit. I learned much about strangers and angels from the Jesus of Bogotá, who, like Melchizedek, often comes to us not as the familiar friend but as the stranger priest from the far country, offering the bread and wine of life-changing communion.

*Scott is Professor of Theology and Culture and Director of Peace Studies and Cross Cultural Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.*





## Stranger, Enemy, Friend

RUSSELL HAITCH

We can say more about strangers who are really angels if we look first at the Stranger who is really God. In telling of Jesus, one of the first things John wants us to know is that he was a stranger to the very people he created (1:10). The other Gospels give a similar picture. Who is this person, born of Mary and the carpenter? Was it really the carpenter? I heard other things. Always a strange child, wandering off on his own.

Next, the stranger becomes the enemy. Within a religious culture of purity, he seems to violate the law, yet also intensify it. Is he a Pharisee or opposed to the Pharisees? Ultimately, it turns out, he is opposed to the world, for the forces of the world conspire to crucify him. This man is an enemy of Caesar.

Third, the stranger who becomes the enemy . . . becomes the friend. In crucifying Jesus, the world exposes itself as God's enemy. And in response, God in Christ forgives, and commences to heal and make whole a people who are harbingers of a new creation.

We are talking now about the people who are disciples of Jesus: Christians.

First, they are strangers in the world. Who are these people who seem to be saying that God has died, and they are bizarrely joyful about it, because now they're able to drink his blood? They gather for love feasts with their sisters and brothers. Are they practicing incest, or cannibalism? Clearly they are atheists: they don't worship the gods.

Next, the strangers become the enemy. Within a political culture of diversity and inclusivity, the Christians adamantly refuse to offer just a pinch of incense to the divine emperor as a token, a symbol of unity, harmony, and peace within the Roman Empire. Of course, the Jewish religion is equally intolerant on this point, but theirs is a venerable religion; it's "historic" and thus more conducive to social stability. But these Christians are a new bunch, and periodically it becomes apparent they are enemies of the established order.

Finally, the strangers who become the enemies become the friends. Starting from a different and deeper place, as friends of Jesus, they discover that, contrary to culture, the souls of women are equal to those of men, the status of slaves around the Lord's Table equal to that of free. Like a friend, they pray for the emperor and those in authority, and in time, in turn, even the emperor sees a sign, and sees himself as befriended by Jesus Christ and his followers.

What, then, for followers of Jesus today? What can we say both about meeting strangers and being strangers in the world?

Since this is the start, not the end, of our Forum, I feel no need to offer fixed conclusions but instead three questions. Perhaps we could make these questions as concrete as possible. For it is one thing to grasp these concepts of stranger, enemy, and friend. It is another actually to meet or to be a stranger.

So first, regarding strangers: When was the last time you were a stranger? Several scriptures suggest that Christians are people called, as a vocation, to be strangers: For example: "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from evil desires that war against your soul. Live such good lives that even if others accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God" (1 Pet 2:12).

This calling to be a stranger is not blanket permission to be weird or strange in every way but to be strange in precisely those ways that Jesus was in relation to the world. When was the last time we were that kind of stranger?

And for that matter, as a second question: When was the last time we truly met a stranger?

I recall what happened when our church decided we did not want just to give money to strangers but invite them to worship with us. But what if someone is worshiping with you Sunday morning, and he or she doesn't have a place to sleep Sunday night. What do you do? At one point, I had company in the parsonage: a man who found out he was HIV-positive sleeping in the living room and a recovering alcoholic in the basement. Then a third man showed up who had just become a Christian; he had been living with the first man's ex-wife, and now his conscience disapproved, so there we were.

It was not a long-term arrangement, but even in the short term, I could see this sermon of Jesus has consequences: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in" (Matt 25:35).

In Jesus, the primordial stranger, we also see the potential for strangers to become enemies. And so the third question: When was the last time we loved an enemy?

The message of reconciliation is this: not that God has no enemies, but rather that even when we were enemies of God, "we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10).

Having loved his enemies to the point of death and beyond, Jesus tells us to love our enemies.

This kind of love that is able to convert an enemy to a friend—I think it must be a gift from God. It cannot be worked up solely by an ethic of hospitality (and an ethic of hospitality without this kind of love may even become oppressive), but we can allow this love to work in and through us as we receive the One who imparts it.

*This calling to be a stranger is not blanket permission to be weird or strange in every way, but to be strange in precisely those ways that Jesus was in relation to the world. When was the last time we were that kind of stranger?*

"And to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; children born of God" (Jn 1:12-13). We can agree this is a strange way to be born. It ushers in a strange manner of living. And to that extent, it makes us strangers in the world.

*Russell Haitsh is Associate Professor of Christian Education and Director of the Institute for Ministry for Youth and Young Adults at Bethany Theological Seminary. This article is an excerpt of his sermon from the Presidential Forum Pre-Forum Gathering.*





## Entertaining Angels

MARILYN LERCH

What do you call a person who speaks three languages?

Trilingual

What do you call a person who speaks two languages?

Bilingual

What do you call a person who speaks one language?

American.

The joke is old, but its final twist serves as a constant reminder to me of hospitality or lack of it. The idea of welcoming strangers and discovering we are entertaining angels (Heb 13:2) enlivens my imagination, but my experience in life and faith has taught me how difficult the delight of entertaining angels may be to achieve. For strangers may require considerable flexibility on our part, and being a stranger places us in a world of the unknown, where many naturally feel uncomfortable.

In my more confident moments, I realize that I've had some significant experiences in my own life that have sharpened my skills at welcoming strangers: being the mother of a daughter with autism and a son adopted from India and serving at one point as a pastor to a congregation composed largely of first-generation immigrants. Strangers require us to relinquish some of our preconceived ideas and rely on God's grace to move as best we can in a spirit of love.

Students entering the TRaining In Ministry (TRIM) program that I administer through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership gather at Bethany Seminary for a few days of orientation.

Before orientation begins I "meet" the students through the narrative they write about their call to ministry. As they gather around the table on that first morning of orientation, I am very aware of the diversity of each group. Years ago I would cringe at this knowledge, wondering how such a group was going to bond in the few days we had together. But I have learned that God's circle of love is very welcoming if we don't let our own preconceptions get in the way. It took a few times of amazement at how a group of unique individuals became close companions very quickly for me to realize the power of the Holy Spirit in opening our hearts to one another. Welcoming strangers requires the hard work of stepping aside, trusting God to be in the midst of the circle.

In 2007 I became the beneficiary of one of the Brethren Academy's programs. With joy I entered the Vital Pastor program, funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., and joined a group of six Brethren clergywomen to research the question: How do we, as older, spiritually mature women, use the artistry of ministry to bring justice and beauty together? This question had nothing to do with entertaining angels, but what I learned had everything to do with hospitality in the name of Jesus. During that two-year process, the layers of learning I experienced in terms of entertaining and being entertained by angels were life-changing.

I love to travel and so was looking forward to the trip our group to New Zealand our group had planned, and the added delight of a required layover in Fiji! I imagined the learning that would occur on that adventure, not realizing that the first place I would begin this meeting of strangers

*SPE cohort meets with Shirley Murray. Front row, l to r: Debbie Eisenbise, Shirley Murray, Kay Gaier, Frances Townsend. Back row, l to r: Marilyn Lerch, Anita Smith Buckwalter, Mary Cline Detrick.*



writer Shirley Erena Murray and her husband, the Very Reverend John Murray, a retired Presbyterian pastor and past moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Our intended morning of visiting grew into a delightful conversation that only ended when the last train left the station in their town of Raumati

was right within the cohort circle of sisters. As we began to work closely together, I became aware of how many incorrect assumptions I had made about my colleagues. It was important for me to learn first how to welcome who they were before attempting to think about engaging with others whose names I did not know and who lived in countries I had not yet visited. I began to understand that an ability to be welcomed casually or to welcome someone new into my life is very different than welcoming on an ongoing basis someone whom I think I know. This discovery has impacted my work as a pastor in significant ways.

However, that deep knowledge does not deny the importance of interacting with strangers whose lives we may only encounter for a short time. What feels like a token gesture is, in the big picture, an important extension of God's love to others. While in New Zealand, our group was graciously welcomed into the home of hymn

Beach that evening. Could it be that one of the most valued aspects of welcoming the stranger is to give and receive the gift of time? Time to consider another's ideas, time to learn of another's life, time simply to sit together in the circle of God's love? Shirley's contemporary hymn texts, found in more than 100 collections worldwide including our own *Hymnal Supplement*, have filled our faith with words that allow us to verbalize and internalize God's love of stranger in a new way. It was evident by the welcome we received in her home that she and her husband live out of a spirit of hospitality for all, all, all God's children. They willingly engaged in a conversation around our topic, adding a very different perspective that widened our views and enriched our study. That day became a memory to treasure from a trip filled with incredible experiences. Such is the power of welcoming a stranger and being willing to be welcomed as a stranger.

The final Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Cohorts are forming now!  
Find out how to apply on the Bethany Web site at  
[www.bethanyseminary.edu/academics\\_programs/academy/SPE](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/academics_programs/academy/SPE).

*Marilyn Lerch is Coordinator for TRaining in Ministry for the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.*





## Welcoming the Stranger by Planting New Churches

WAYNE PENCE

Is there a secret formula for planting a church? There are a lot of resources filled with strategies to use and mistakes to avoid. At Mountain View Fellowship in McGaheysville, Virginia, we've been planting for a decade and believe we have found an effective formula but certainly not a secret formula. Prayer, while no secret, must be the foundation of any church planting effort. After all, this is God's work, and it will not be achieved by human effort alone.

Our story actually begins with the formation of the Shenandoah District New Church Development Committee in the early 1990s. After much exploration and considerable frustration, eastern Rockingham County was selected as a location, and a half dozen recently arrived Brethren were recruited. The first meetings were held in 1998 in core group members' living rooms, but as the group grew, we needed to find a larger facility.

Directing us to an old town hall building in the tiny town of McGaheysville was but one of a long series of things that God has done. The building was rustic, but the rent was within our small budget.

From the beginning the focus was on inviting unchurched persons and new residents. I quit using the term *target group* after someone suggested that targeting is best left to telemarketers and snipers. Our efforts were directed at reaching people who were just moving into our rural but growing community, but we wanted to have the welcome mat out for whomever God would send us.

For the first couple of years, worship was limited to twice a month on Sunday evenings, with music and message provided by area Church of the Brethren congregations. As the group continued to enlarge, we knew we needed to move to Sunday morning worship and employ a pastor. At that point I was still relating to the group as a member of the New Church Development Committee. I had long felt a sense of excitement about being involved in church planting but was not convinced that I had the gifts to be the planting pastor. God provided by directing me to a church planter assessment and training session, which affirmed my gifts and led me to accept the call.

We went public with our worship on the first Sunday of September 2001, and the very next week the terrorist bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon shocked the world and caused many people to ask faith questions. We continued to search for ways to welcome the strangers and respond to their questions. We did random acts of kindness, door-to-door visitation, and various outreach events as ways of extending hospitality in the neighborhoods around McGaheysville.

We were very limited in the ministry we could provide in the town hall and knew that at some point we must have our own church building. Our search for land yielded no results, so we quit searching, feeling that if God wanted us to build the way would become clear. Later that year a realtor approached us with a very desirable tract of land at a very affordable price. God had provided once again.

We began to consider more seriously constructing a building, and looked into a variety of ways to proceed. We were once again at a stalemate when we were directed to John Neff (current Bethany Board member) who was then in the early days of his church consulting work. He was invaluable in guiding us through the planning process, including conducting a door-to-door survey in which we invited our neighbors to give input into ways a new church building could address community needs.

Perhaps the most amazing way that God provided for us was through an unlikely encounter with a group of Baptists from Alabama called Carpenters for Christ. Through a series of circumstances that only God could put together, a group of eighty men and boys came to Virginia and volunteered for ten days to raise our church from a concrete

slab to a building under roof. The Brethren equivalent would be a work camp, disaster response trip, and spiritual retreat all rolled into one.

That was in June 2006, and we held our first public worship in our new building on the first Sunday of Advent. We felt very blessed to have such a spacious and attractive building. We were also blessed by much financial and prayer support from other Church of the Brethren congregations and individuals.

We fully expected our numerical growth to increase rapidly with the new building. After an initial surge we were soon only slightly ahead of our attendance the previous year. It's taken us a while to grasp this, but as the church planting folks now tell us we are rapidly moving from an "attract" culture to an "invite" culture. People are less interested in "the best dog and pony show in town." They are looking for authentic relationships both with God and with other people. This understanding makes our vision statement, chosen in the first year of our church's existence, seem even more appropriate: "Our vision is to be an authentic Christian community built on receiving and sharing the love of Jesus."

There are obviously people all around us who are under stress, hurting and lonely. But they are wary of someone trying to sell them something—even if that something is Jesus. How can we best reach out to these people? A warm, inviting church atmosphere is important but not sufficient. We must get out of the "fortress" of our church buildings and model Jesus in our communities and with those strangers whom we encounter. As we are prayerful and faithful, God will provide the way.

*Wayne Pence is a 1978 MDiv graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary.*





## Welcome to Brethren House!

ROMA JO AND JAN THOMPSON



Little did we know the opportunity to serve as hosts at Brethren House at Bethany Seminary would be so enriching. As we moved into the house and became acquainted with the comfortable

and welcoming living space, we wondered who our first guests might be. However, we learned quickly that the stranger who walks in the front door for the first time soon becomes a friend and a welcome addition to the great people we were privileged to learn to know.

It didn't take us long to feel at ease with our task and welcoming our guests seemed second nature. We made connections with the guests and enjoyed the hosting of different folks over the two months we were at Brethren House.

Having a clean bed and a bite of breakfast for the guest was secondary to the relationships we built. Students who were enrolled in intensive courses came once a month for an overnight, but the visiting in the living room was the best part of our hosting. Professors who came to the Seminary to teach the weekend Intensive were easy to learn

to know, even though they had preparation and responsibilities that could have kept them too busy to chat.

We found the creative worship services planned and participated in by the students to be uplifting and encouraging, knowing that in a few years the students will be in the pulpits of our churches. The love feast and communion service for holy week was very well planned and carried out, and was a highlight of the week.

The interaction with and acceptance by Bethany community was a gratifying experience. We attended several worship services and forums that had guest speakers sharing a wide variety of topics. Joining the Quakers at noon meals and sharing with their faculty, students, and guest speakers was valuable, too.

Maybe the icing on the cake was the fact that we were encouraged to become more involved in whatever way we wanted. Jan was eager to attend an evening class in New Testament, which was a real treat. We assisted with clean-up after the hosting of potential new students, helped with copying papers for a telethon, and worked on a mailing that needed extra hands.

If you are wondering about a different way to be in ministry, volunteer to become hosts at Brethren House for Bethany Seminary. An extra piece of information: Richmond, Indiana, has a wonderful history and great museums and displays to share with its visitors.

**BETHANY FRIENDS**

If you are interested in volunteering at Brethren House, call us at 800-287-8822 or send an e-mail to [contactus@bethanyseminary.edu](mailto:contactus@bethanyseminary.edu).



## Church Growth through Hospitality

ALLEN HANSELL



Maranatha Multicultural Fellowship in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, began as a home Bible study group, taking its name from First Corinthians 16:22b: "Our Lord, Come!" As the membership grew, they were invited to worship at the Lancaster Church of the Brethren. Their first service of worship at this new location was on Palm Sunday 2004.

Maranatha uses the facilities and office equipment rent-free. Even with very limited funds, they feel the need to reciprocate with financial donations, meals, and other acts of kindness. But Maranatha's greatest gift is helping us become much more open to and aware of multiculturalism. From the beginning both groups have felt a deep sense of togetherness and have grown spiritually as a result of being in ministry together.

Starting a new fellowship with a multicultural vision is difficult. It has been a challenging journey for Maranatha. Church growth is a struggle when financial resources are not available for maintaining even a part-time pastoral program.

Even so, their spirits are high, and they are more committed than ever to the multicultural vision. We live in a multicultural society, but Sunday worship in many churches is very segregated. For the Maranatha Fellowship, their name means that the coming of the Lord to a community will bring together all of God's people here and now—all colors, races, languages, and nationalities. Their membership brings together Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Puerto Ricans, and Caucasians.

The Lancaster congregation has encouraged Maranatha to maintain its own worship space in the building, believing it is important for them to maintain their own identity. However, the two groups work together in many vital ministries for all ages. Four of Maranatha's youth attended National Youth Conference this summer. They also recently called one of their members, Alix Sable, to the ministry. Since they do not have a pastor at the present time, the pulpit is shared by a variety of speakers, including ministers from the Lancaster congregation.

Maranatha had planned to serve an appreciation meal for Lancaster on April 25. Since that date was also suitable as Bethany Theological Seminary Sunday, Maranatha graciously agreed to share the day with Bethany. Together we welcomed several Bethany representatives. Maranatha served a wonderful meal, presented an extremely meaningful wall plaque to the Lancaster congregation as shown in the photo above, and engaged in conversation with our guests from Bethany.

Our Lord, come!





## Celebrating the Life of William Stafford

"Is it possible to be a pacifist if you think war is inevitable? I think it is likely. But I am a pacifist to postpone it, shorten it, de-escalate it. I do not think militarists make wars, or stop wars. People do." –William Stafford, from his journal, 22 June 1969

Bethany hosted a weekend of events highlighting the poetry and pacifism of William Stafford. On Friday, March 26, the Seminary community gathered for a worship service comprised of Stafford's poems utilized as liturgical prayers and woven between hymns and sermon to create a deeply meaningful experience. Travis Poling, master of arts student, planned the service and preached a sermon entitled, "Parables, Poetry, and Peace," exploring the parables of Jesus and the writings of Stafford collected in *Every War Has Two Losers*.

On Saturday evening, March 27, an audience of seventy attended the program "A Poet's Gift." The presentation included the viewing of the film *Every War Has Two Losers*, based on Stafford's writings and reflecting the relationship between his pacifism and his vocation as a poet. Jeff Gundy, professor of English at Bluffton University, described his personal interactions with Stafford. In Gundy's words from a review of the book *Every War Has Two Losers*, Stafford was for him "a model and inspiration for my own fumbling efforts toward some hybrid of ancient Anabaptist values and literary aspirations." In his book *Walker in the Fog: On Mennonite Writing*, Jeff includes a chapter appropriately entitled, "Almost One of the Boys: Marginality, Community and Nonviolence in William Stafford." In this chapter, Gundy introduces Stafford as "one whose long



Jeff Gundy

career takes on particular significance against [the] backdrop [of the wars of the twentieth century]. From his early *Down in My Heart* . . . to his collection of poems in *An Oregon Message*, Stafford's commitment to nonviolence has undergirded all of his work."

In the program introduction, Poling expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to profile Stafford's work. "I have wanted to hold some sort of public forum on Stafford ever since I came across his work as an undergraduate student at Manchester College in 2005," said Poling. "As a poet myself struggling to find my place as an artist and a person of faith, I was searching for a poet that could help me bridge that gap. After spending the past five years with his work, I have come to understand art as well as activism and faith in entirely new and rejuvenating ways."

Bethany's Baker Peace Fund, a generous endowment provided by John and Elizabeth Baker, lifelong patrons of peace concerns, provided resources for the program.

Read more about Bethany's peace studies program at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/academics\\_programs/peace\\_studies](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/academics_programs/peace_studies).



## Strategic Direction Process Continues Forward

*Board member John Neff comments on the new strategic plan.*



The Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees held their semi-annual meeting March 26-28, 2010. The board addressed several significant items of business including a strategic plan, a proposal for a distributed education track for the master of arts degree, and a feasibility study for a fundraising campaign.

**Strategic Plan.** The board approved a strategic plan that combines the twenty-two recommendations from the strategic direction paper passed by the board in March 2009—which created specific action steps to align the Seminary's educational program with its new mission and vision statement—into seven priorities with accompanying subsets of goals and tasks. The goals focus on educational ethos and environment; curriculum focus, integration and expansion of the educational program; and funding for new initiatives.

**MA Connections Track.** A proposal has been sent to the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for approval

of a distributed education track for the master of arts degree. The new MA track will offer a parallel track to the current MA program, imitating its requirements and standards while offering courses in formats that are more conducive to the needs and desires of students who would enroll in a distributed education program. *[Editor's note: this track was approved by ATS in early July.]*

**Financial Aid Program.** The Seminary's new financial aid program will go into effect in the 2010-2011 academic year. The basic components of the program include significant scholarship awards for academic excellence and goals of church service after degree completion. Federal loans, grants, and Work-Study jobs will be available.

**Student Affairs.** The board celebrated the increase of full-time students enrolled at Bethany in the 2009-2010 academic year. Ten candidates for graduation were approved pending completion of all requirements.



*President Ruthann Johansen thanks outgoing board chair Ted Flory for his ten years of service.*

Read a complete report of the board meeting on the Bethany Web site at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/news/boardmeetingspring2010](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/news/boardmeetingspring2010).





## One-Hundred-Fifth Commencement

On Saturday, May 8, Bethany celebrated its one hundred fifth commencement, awarding nine students master of divinity degrees and one student a certificate of achievement in theological studies.

Ted Flory of Bridgewater, Virginia, chair of the Seminary's Board of Trustees, gave the commencement address titled "An Incarnational Education" based on the biblical texts of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and John 1:1-4, 14. He challenged the graduates to confidently live out their Incarnational education experience in whatever ministries they plan to pursue as servant leaders and with "wholeness and harmony with the community and with God, love for neighbor and stranger, health, fullness, welfare, service to the weak and poor, all practiced and studied in the context of the mystery of the Incarnation of God in Christ."

Scott Holland, professor of theology and culture and director of peace studies and cross-cultural studies, delivered a sermon at the afternoon worship service titled "We Live Only What We Imagine," drawing from the thoughts of French



*Graduates, front row, l to r: Laura Kelsey, Fishers, Ind., Tracy Stoddart, Dayton, Ohio, Rebecca Rhodes, Roanoke, Va., Judith Hollandsworth, Parker City, Ind., Second row, l to r: Seth Hendricks, Englewood, Ohio, Denton Krietz, Thurmont, Md., Joseph Tolton, Midland, Mich., Roland Johnson, Live Oak, Calif., Travis Poling, Richmond, Ind., Barbara Leininger Dickason, Frederick, Md.*

philosopher Paul Ricoeur and David Tracy, professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School. "Paul Ricoeur would insist that there is something in you that enables you and empowers you to transcend the grasp of the superego and the collective soul that seeks to tame and tutor you: the God-given gift of imagination." He noted that David Tracy said the theological imagination "connects us to others, to God, and to the largeness of life by inviting us, graciously and freely, into the analogies of being. Life is wonderfully interconnected for those with active analogical imaginations."

Graduates' future endeavors include careers in pastoral and congregational ministry, chaplaincy, spiritual direction, and additional graduate study.

Read a complete report about commencement on the Bethany Web site at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/news/commencement2010-report](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/news/commencement2010-report).



## Faculty News

Denise D. Kettering has been named as assistant professor of Brethren Studies. She will begin in this part-time position July 1, 2010. Kettering received a masters degree in theological studies from the Candler School of Theology and a PhD from the University of Iowa in 2009. Her dissertation was entitled "Pietism and Patriarchy: Spener and Women in the Seventeenth-Century Pietist Movement." In 2002-2003 and again in 2009-2010, she worked in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. She served as an adjunct professor at Bethany during the past academic year.

Julie Mader Hostetter, director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, received a doctor of ministry degree from Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Va.

Malinda Berry, instructor in theological studies and director of the master of arts program, has written "Changing the Bulb and Turning on the Light: The Power of Personal Agency in Feminist Work," which will appear in the forthcoming *Keeping the Light: Women of Faith: Scholarship, Activism, and the Next Generation*. Her chapter entitled "The Gifts of an Extended Theological Table: MCC's World Community Cookbooks as Organic Theology" will be included in *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity*.

Russell Haitch, associate professor of Christian education and director of the Institute for Ministry With Youth and Young Adults, gave a paper entitled "A Generation of Artists? Youth and the Language of Creativity" at the Association of Youth Ministry Educators.

Tara Hornbacker, associate professor of ministry formation, presented a workshop at the Evangelical Association of Theological Field Educators Biennial Conference and was called to cochair that association for the next two years. Her article "The Artful Practice of Testimony" has been published in *Vision*, a journal for church and theology published by Canadian Mennonite University and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, associate professor of preaching and worship, gave a lecture at the International Bugenhagen Symposium on Preaching in Munich, Germany. The paper entitled "New Hermeneutics, New Homiletics, New Directions" will be published in an edited volume of presentations from the symposium.

Dan Ulrich, professor of New Testament studies, and Elaine Wainright are editing a volume of essays for the Matthew section of the Society of Biblical Literature. During his sabbatical leave next spring semester, Dan will focus his attention on his own book entitled *New Testament Visions for Ministry*.

Kendall Rogers, professor of historical studies, directed a cross-cultural study trip to Germany during the May intensive. While there, he and the group of students led a Love Feast celebration with their German hosts and colleagues and shared worship leadership on Pentecost Sunday at the Lutheran Church of Saint Mary. The congregation has worshiped in this church since the twelfth century and became Lutheran in 1525.

Scott Holland, professor of theology and culture and director of peace studies and cross-cultural studies, gave the Menno Simons Lectures at Bethel College in Kansas in fall 2009. The lectures, "Prophets, Poets, and Pragmatists: The Historic Peace Churches and Public Theology," will be published as a book.





## Stories between Strangers

LOWELL FLORY

Some years ago a Quaker essayist penned an article on the theme that an enemy is one whose story we have not yet heard. While some may think of times when they would take exception to that premise, it is a thought-provoking bit of counsel.

This issue of *Wonder & Word* focuses on strangers, how we regard strangers, and how we receive strangers. We may often think of strangers as folks from far away, coming from different cultures, or speaking different languages or dialects. They are aliens or foreigners from outside a particular group with which we identify. And while we may not necessarily think of strangers as enemies, they may seem a bit more suspect to us when we've not heard their stories and when we permit ourselves to invent our own stories about them.

The question could now arise whether we experience strangers in our own fold. Yes, they may sit on the next pew on Sunday morning or attend a church just five miles down the road, but they think differently, believe differently, or understand their faith differently. They are just a bit outside the belief system with which we identify.

When students come to Bethany, they sometimes find they are strangers to each other. Through curriculum of the classroom and sharing of stories in campus life, they discover they can find genuine Christian community that transcends their differences in thought, belief, and faith that they have brought to the conversation. Various students in recent years have testified to this discovery even though they have spoken and witnessed from quite different places on the spectrum.

Perhaps now more than ever before, the Church of the Brethren has the opportunity to live into its historic testimony of finding reconciliation amid difference. This year's Annual Conference has invited us all to participate in conversations in our congregations and our districts to explore differences and also to search for opportunities for witness together. When we share our stories with one another, perhaps we can discover the powerful testimonies we have in common. When we focus on those testimonies we can better learn to do bridge-building dialog.

Rallying a group around opposition to some perceived enemy or stranger is easier than guiding communities to peace and reconciliation, which may be one of the hardest aspects of leadership. At Bethany, students can learn to focus on precisely that kind of leadership—leadership that is attentive to individuals as well as ideologies, that fosters healing and wholeness in our own congregations and denomination, and that moves us toward being an outward-looking church, ready to dialog with the world that needs to hear the story we bring. We deeply appreciate your support that makes this kind of leadership development possible.

### A FINAL WORD

*Lowell Flory is Executive Director of Institutional Advancement for Bethany Theological Seminary.*





# Wonder & Word

*Wonder & Word* is a magazine for alumni/ae and friends of Bethany Theological Seminary, published biannually and free of charge by the Office of Institutional Advancement.

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## **Our Mission**

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 the world.

## **Our Vision**

Incarnational education at Bethany Theological education is:

- Grounded in Jesus Christ, as the Incarnation of God's reconciling love
- Founded on Scripture, read in community, guided by the Spirit, for discerning wisdom, ethics, and theology
- Rooted in distinctive Anabaptist and Pietist traditions of the Church of the Brethren
- Experienced in a curriculum that explores the comprehensive gospel of Christ's salvation using multiple communication formats
- Practiced in spiritual disciplines, intellectual inquiry, Christian discipleship, and cross-cultural engagements that bear fruit where God is working toward *shalom*
- Committed to preparation for ministry in a variety of models and settings: congregational life, pastoral leadership, theological education, each engaged locally and globally at the intersections of the church and the world
- Embodied in transformed and joyful service that integrates the values of simplicity, community, reconciliation, and care for creation.

**Our Mission and Vision** are enhanced by partnerships that make educational opportunities accessible in other locations: graduate courses through the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and nongraduate study and continuing education through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and SVMC.

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### *Stranger, Standing at My Door\**

Stranger, standing at my door,  
you disturb me in the night:  
you have needs I can't ignore,  
you have eyes that speak your plight.

Do I know you, nameless face,  
Battered woman, detainee,  
hungry youth or sickness case,  
jobless parent, refugee —

Do I know you, nameless face?

You are strange in speech and dress,  
you have children at your side,  
you are not like one of us —  
you have begged away your pride.

If you passed across my screen  
I might switch you out of sight,  
worlds away you might have been,  
yet you stand here in the night.

Do I know you, nameless face?

I am fearful of your claim,  
yet I cannot turn away.  
Stranger with a foreign name,  
are you angel come to stay?

You are messenger and guest,  
you the Christ I can't ignore,  
you my own compassion's test,  
stranger, standing at my door.

You the Christ I can't ignore.

Shirley Erena Murray

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*\*selected to accompany the article "Entertaining Angels"  
on pp. 14-15.*