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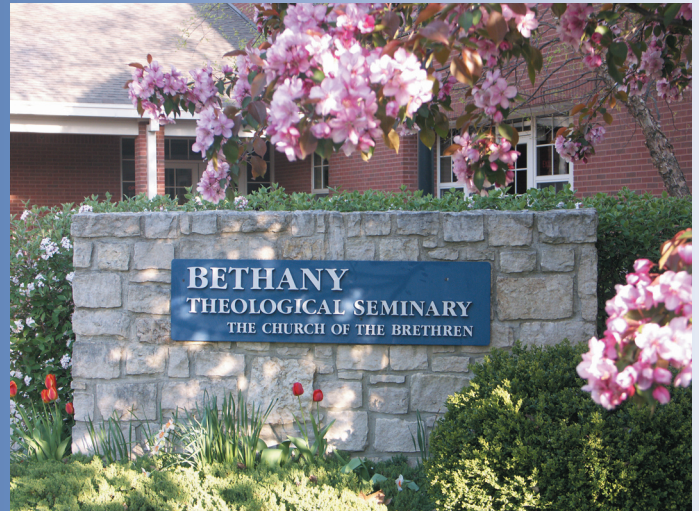
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Witness & Wonder

RUTHANN KNECHEL JOHANSEN

Surrounded as we are in the world by prejudice and bigotry, by natural disasters and deprivations that contribute to human suffering, by dreams deferred or derailed that eventually erupt into violence, secular and religious institutions alike are often drawn to analyze and evaluate the “fallen” creation and to resign themselves to the powers of fear and hate. The 300th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren, combined with the leadership transition at Bethany Seminary, has given the faculty, students, and friends of Bethany opportunity to reflect on how we can renew and interpret for this time the foundational commitments to Jesus’ Way of love practiced by our forebears.



what mission can a Christian, Church of the Brethren seminary proclaim in this time?

Such reflections inspired the Inaugural Forum on “Hearing Scriptures of Peace,” which publicly opened the witness of Bethany Seminary and the Church of the Brethren to a world hungering for justice and peace as it invited participants to consider another way of being in the world. The roots of this witness lie in several core practices of our Anabaptist-Pietist heritage. These include the study of scripture in community; the expectation that the Holy Spirit guides and continues to reveal God’s truth to us; and the belief that loving our neighbor or the stranger—even our enemies—embodies Christ’s way in the world.

During the academic year we have wondered together about how to honor the priesthood of all believers in the face of a growing acquiescence to authoritarian direction and intolerance. We have reflected on how the culture of consumption confounds our attempts to embrace simplicity. We have asked how satisfying our self-interests contradicts our commitment to justice and constrains our service to those in greatest need. When domestic, international, and religious conflicts erupt into brutal violence, how can an historic peace testimony offer life-giving alternatives to destruction? And

In this Forum we applied these central practices to the scriptures of the three Abrahamic faith traditions, believing that all faith traditions share common ground in their concerns for peace and justice. The emphasis on hearing scriptures invited us all to move away from fear and mistrust, to wonder and inquire together about God’s revelation through sacred scriptures, and to move toward holy conversation with these texts and one another, guided by God’s spirit. To embody Christ’s Way of love in this time leads us toward a theology and ethics of wonder and gratitude.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Inaugural Forum Review

Bethany Theological Seminary's Inaugural Forum "Hearing Scriptures of Peace" on March 30-31, 2008 celebrated the call of Ruthann Knechel Johansen as president, publicly marking the beginning of a new chapter at Bethany Seminary and opening the witness of the Seminary and the Church of the Brethren to a world hungering for peace and justice.

Scholars representing the three Abrahamic faiths presented plenary sessions which were followed by responses from Bethany faculty and other members of the Church of the Brethren. Bethany students presented papers from their

Gospel of Peace class. The Forum also included small group discussions and worship. The Sunday evening worship celebration featured a performance of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, based on Revelation 10 where the seventh angel descends and sounds the trumpet, signaling that the mystery of God will be consummated and announcing that "Time will be no more."

This issue of *Wonder & Word* gives significant space to a synopsis of the Forum's content. *Wonder & Word* expresses thanks to Julie Garber for her editorial assistance in preparing this review.



The Incarnation of Reconciliation: Interpreting Scripture Through the Person of Jesus

R. SCOTT APPLEBY

[In his plenary speech, Scott Appleby presented a theology based on relationship that both Catholicism and Anabaptism can embrace, and then makes the case that the civically-involved Catholic Church and more sectarian Anabaptists have something to teach each other about peacemaking, and, more importantly, reconciliation.]

The ethic of Jesus is rooted not in an act of will or intellect, but in a commitment to a certain kind of relationship to the other. The most important thing I have to say today is that in Jesus that original relationship is not merely restored; it is

transformed. "Reconciliation" is the appropriate word here. This is not an unprecedented relationship; there had been one before, but it has been ruptured. According to the Encarta World Dictionary, *conciliation* is an "action taken to reach agreement or restore trust, friendship or goodwill that has been lost." The Crucified and Abandoned One is reconciled to the Father: this is the mystery and triumph of Easter. More radically let me suggest that both the Father and the Son are transformed in this event, by their mutual love. Genuine peace is rooted in reconciliation, and genuine reconciliation is possible only if one loves one's enemies, refuses retribution, and hopes for and then, if it occurs, accepts without counting

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the cost the honest contrition and change of heart on the part of the alienated party—whoever did the alienating.

... Jesus is not the Word; He is the Incarnate Word, the Word Made Flesh, the Word cast into a world that has turned its back on the Godhead.

... Jesus did not have to die to make the Father love us again, but He did have to die, to experience the alienation of us all, in order to effect definitive reconciliation.

... Jesus is the Conflict Transformer, not a “Getting to Yes” man. He is the Builder of peace par excellence, for he goes to the heart of the conflict. And with insight that we can only call sacred, He understands that the transformation must occur in the heart of both the just and unjust parties to a dispute. Questions of who is “right” and who is “wrong,” while not irrelevant, are also left ultimately to God to decide. Yes, the unjust must repent of their injustice; but that injustice is situated in a wider world of sin and ambiguity, and in some mysterious way, “the just” are also implicated. Even the Son of Man is compromised by the sin of the world. “Why do you call me Good?” Jesus asks, stunningly, in the Gospel of Mark (10:18). “No one is good but God alone.”

Jesus employs every skill at his disposal to get this stunning point across, that true love transforms the just and unjust alike, both restoring and changing a primordial relationship. This of course is the meaning of reconciliation. ... [but] genuine reconciliation will be opposed by the world in that it upsets the established social order. This is a heavily counter-cultural message, and will be a hard sell.

... It was not just the witness of Jesus of Nazareth, an ethically and spiritually unsurpassable individual

with a special relationship to ABBA.

No, the witness was in fact

a revelation of the very nature of God.

The person of Jesus—the soul enacted and historicized in teaching and deed—disclosed nothing less than the heart of the sacred, the essence of The Real, the character of The Ultimate.

... Must not our efforts as peacebuilders to reduce violence, transform conflict, advance human rights, and so on be rooted in this understanding of reconciliation, that is, in a special kind of relationship with one another?

... Can we truly speak of a Catholic Theology of Peace? [We can talk about a] robust and influential social doctrine, yes, but [what can we say about] a “systematic” theological statement that causes Catholics to re-think parts of their theological heritage and ecclesiology? And, further, [how can Catholicism talk about] a theology that is grounded in part on the Spirit moving in the lives of grassroots and civil society peacebuilders, from Bogotá to Mindanao? What are the lessons to be learned, in short, from conflict resolution, conflict transformation, reconciliation, and so on as practiced for many years by Anabaptists and, increasingly, Catholic peacebuilders.

[In fact] Roman Catholicism offers a robust challenge to the Peace Church tradition, one that is reflected in the shift of representatives of the latter from absolute nonresistance to engagement with the world. This move, I know, remains highly



controversial, but I think Catholics can make an effective argument in favor of the shift. If discipleship, in the Anabaptist understanding, stands in tension with Catholicism's commitment to statecraft, citizenship, even membership in the institutional, visible church, so does Catholic sacramentalism stand in tension with a theology of the cross.

Peace church ecclesiology is biblically rooted, congregational, horizontal; can it be developed more systematically as a resource for peacebuilding? [and] how might Catholics help, in terms of sharing our own frustrations but also advantages as a global institution with a long history of diplomacy, statecraft, "humanitarian intervention"—while also being a supremely local and uncoordinated church, with a thousand flowers (and a few weeds) blooming everywhere?

So I ask: Can Catholics and Anabaptists together construct an ethics of engagement with a corrupt, post-Christian secular order, an ethics that would protect the church from betraying its transcendent mission while enabling it to exercise positive influence in the course of world affairs? One hopes.

Peace church ecclesiology is biblically rooted, congregational, horizontal; can it be developed more systematically as a resource for peacebuilding?

Response

DAN ULRICH

Thank you, Dr. Appleby, for your profound interpretation of Jesus as the incarnation of reconciliation. As a member of a historic peace church that sometimes struggles to be a living peace church, I agree that reconciliation stands at the center of the teaching and example of Jesus, both before and after the resurrection.

I agree with so much that you have said, yet one question still troubles me: Have we adequately addressed the theme of judgment in Jesus' teaching according to the Gospels? In Matthew, Jesus says that God sends sun and rain on the just and the unjust, but later we read that God will separate the weeds from the wheat. In Luke,

one chapter after the parable of the prodigal son, we encounter the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When I think about people of other faiths reading the Gospels, I am especially troubled by sayings attributed to Jesus that interpret Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE as a result of divine judgment against the leaders of Israel. One way to address this theme would be to say that vengeance is the prerogative of God alone. We might also observe that we who are relatively comfortable may prefer a non-judgmental God, whereas the oppressed may find their only hope in a God who will act decisively. I cannot fully answer my question, but I would like to offer it for discussion at this Forum.



Dr. R. Scott Appleby is Professor of History and John M. Regan Jr. Director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.



Islam Beyond Tolerance: The Qur'anic Concept of *Ta'aruf* (embrace)

A. RASHIED OMAR

Since the abominable attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States of America, there has been a vociferous public debate concerning the relationship between Islam and tolerance. A number of public figures have raised questions about the compatibility of the two, and Muslims have been told time and again that their task as global citizens is to increase tolerance toward people of other religions and to achieve more tolerant societies. Some Muslim scholars and activists have responded positively to this challenge and have emphasized the great strands of tolerance and coexistence in Islam and Muslim history.

Notwithstanding the many invaluable insights contained in this and other works on Islam and tolerance that are flooding the market, I contend that the project of articulating an Islamic validation of the Western concept of tolerance is not the panacea to overcoming violence committed by Muslims in the name of Islam. While I fully appreciate the fact that these efforts of promoting a more "tolerant" version of Islam takes place against the backdrop of a belligerent post-September 11 context in which Islam is constructed as inherently intolerant and predisposed to violence, I believe the project is limited. I contend that the persistence of Western scholars, policymakers, journalists, and, indeed, interreligious activists, in using tolerance as a cross-cultural

category, does not inspire us to reach the highest ideals of our respective religious traditions. In fact, it limits our visions in the critical task facing the world in the aftermath of September 11, namely that of "building bridges of understanding" between and across religious communities. I propose an alternative vision for interreligious peacebuilding, which I call "*Ta'aruf*: Islam beyond tolerance."

... The Jewish scholar of Islam, Yohanan Friedman, has correctly demonstrated in a recent book, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, that there is no precise Qur'anic equivalent to the term tolerance. In fact, its linguistic equivalent, *tasamuh*, and its verbal derivatives, *samaha*, are not found in the Qur'an.

... Because of the linguistic affinity of *samha* with *tasamuh* or *samaha*, the modern Arabic terms for tolerance, prophetic traditions are understood by modern Muslim scholars as being supportive of the idea of Islamic tolerance toward other religions. In earlier commentaries, however, the same prophetic tradition was understood to mean that Islam is a lenient religion that does most impose hardships on its followers, not in reference to Islam's attitude to other religions.

The fact that there is no linguistic equivalent for the term "tolerance" does not however imply

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that Islam does not accept the existence of other religions. On the contrary, the Qur'an stresses that the differences in beliefs, views, and ideas of humankind are not incidental and negative, but represent a God-willed, basic factor of human existence. A denial of the right of others to hold beliefs and views that are different and incompatible to one's own is tantamount to a denial of God himself.

commonality and our dazzling cultural and religious differences. In short, according to Safi, progressive Muslims (and, I would add, all other Muslims) should not wish for a tolerant Islam any more than they should long for a tolerant American or European society. Rather, they should seek to bring about a pluralistic society in which we respect, honor and engage each other through our differences and our commonalities.

We don't want to merely "tolerate" our fellow human beings, but rather to engage them at the deepest level of what makes us human, through both our phenomenal commonality and our dazzling cultural and religious differences.



... Muslim scholar ... Omid Safi rhetorically asks: "Is this the best that we can do? Is our task to figure out how many "other" (be they Muslims, Jews,

blacks, Hindus, homosexuals, non-English speakers, Asians, etc.) we can tolerate before it really kills us? Is this the most sublime height of pluralism that we can aspire to? The answers to these critical questions is, of course, an unequivocal no! We don't want to merely "tolerate" our fellow human beings, but rather to engage them at the deepest level of what makes us human, through both our phenomenal



Response

Rashied's point that anyone entering into a forum or discussion which is usually conducted in English whose first language is not English is at a distinct disadvantage. Not only can vocabulary be a problem, some of the concepts which English uses are not a part of other linguistic structures. On behalf of our North American arrogance which assumes others should operate in our cultural and linguistic structures, I want to personally apologize.

Noting that the Arabic language does not have a word for tolerance as defined by western tradition and culture, Rashied indicated it is usually translated by the word *tasamuh* which is not found in the Qu'ran. It is noteworthy to realize that tolerance is found only two times in Christian scripture, once in Esther and once in the Revelation of John. Rashied is accurate in his translation of *tasamuh* but many Arabic speakers would use the word *tasamuh* to capture the concept of reconciliation. This is not to deny the use of *tasamuh* to cover the concept of tolerance but might bring Muslim and Christian thought closer together than it might first seem.

The concept of *Ta'aruf* as Rashied presented it was very consistent with the Qu'ranic texts he used. I very much appreciated his balanced selection of

ROGER SCHROCK

texts both from the Qu'ran and from the Hadith tradition. To recognize that Allah created diversity and we should be seeking to embrace others who are different from us because God as the creator made us that way takes us far beyond tolerance. I wished that Rashied had quoted some of the familiar peace texts of the Qu'ran for the audience because most of us are unfamiliar with the Qu'ran.

I close with the challenge that each of the Abrahamic faiths have problems when pursuing peace with some of our texts. The Christians have the "Just War Theory" and Jesus' message that he came not to bring peace but struggles of relationships between father and son, etc., the Jews have the gruesome instructions from Yahweh to kill women, children, etc. when taking over the Promised Land, and the Muslims have to work around the instructions to perform the Lesser Jihad. In spite of these mutual struggles with our texts, it is worthy that we work for common discourse in our pursuit for peace.

Dr. A. Rashied Omar, an imam from Capetown, South Africa, is Research Scholar of Islamic Studies and Peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.





Vechol Netivoteha Shalom: **All the Paths of Torah are Peace**

RACHEL GARTNER

[“All that is written in the Torah was written for the sake of peace” (Tanhuma Shofetim 18). Drawing from biblical and rabbinical texts of Judaism like Tanhuma Shofetim, Rabbi Rachel Gartner, campus rabbi for Earlham College, demonstrates the centrality of *shalom* in Judaism and finds an affinity with the concern for peace in the other monotheistic faith traditions. This selection of texts is drawn from her plenary presentation.]

Biblical Texts of Shalom

"And it came to pass, that, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Avram; and, a dread, even a great darkness, fell upon him. And God said to Avram: 'Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs and they shall be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years; but that nation whom they shall serve, I will judge; and in the end they shall go free with great substance. As for you, you shall go to your father's in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.'" Genesis 15:12-15

Seek peace, and pursue it'—seek it in your own place, and pursue it even to another place as well."

Leviticus Rabah 9:9

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying: 'If God remains with me, and protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat, and clothing

to wear, so that I return safely to my father's house, then shall Adonai be my God.'" Genesis 28:20-21

"And Pharaoh said to Joseph: 'I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it. Now I have heard it say of you that when you hear a dream you can tell its meaning.' And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying: 'Not I. God will see to Pharaoh's welfare.'" Genesis 41:15-16

"And Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him: 'Let me go back to my kinsmen in Egypt, and see how they are faring.' And Jethro said to Moses: 'Go in peace.'" Exodus 4:18

"And if his offering be a sacrifice of well-being: if he offer of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD." Leviticus 3:1

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying: 'Thus shall you bless the children of Israel. Say to them: The LORD bless you and protect you; the Lord deal kindly and be gracious unto you. The LORD bestow favor upon you and grant you peace. So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.'" Numbers 6

"When you approach a town to attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace. And it shall be, if it make you an answer of peace, and open itself to you, then it shall be that all the people that are found therein shall become tributary to you, and shall

serve you. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it." Deuteronomy 20:10-12

Rabbinic Texts of Shalom

"Great is peace, for of all the commandments it is written: 'if thou see,' 'if thou meet' (Exodus 23:4, 5), 'if [there] chance' (Deuteronomy 22:6); that is, if the occasion for this commandment should arise, you must do it, and if not, you need not do it. In relation to peace, however, [it is written]: 'seek peace, and pursue it'—seek it in your own place, and pursue it even to another place as well." Leviticus Rabah 9:9

Peace, the Lifebreath of all the Mitzvot/



Commandments

"For when a commandment comes to your hand in order to be fulfilled you are obliged to do it with peace, as it is written, 'Seek peace and pursue it ...' (Psalm 34:15). Seek it where you are and pursue it in other places as well". Derech Eretz

"Hezkiya said, 'How great is peace, for every commandment in the Torah is written with it. [For example:] When you encounter your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him (Exodus 23:4). When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him.'" Derech Eretz

"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof so that you do not bring blood guilt on your house if anyone should fall from it." Derech Eretz

Peace, the Supreme Teaching, Vision, and Source of Redemption

"God announces to Jerusalem that they [Israel] will be redeemed only through peace." Deuteronomy Rabah 5:15

Peace in Relation to Other Values

"All falsehood is forbidden, but it is permissible to utter a falsehood for the purpose of making peace between a man and his fellow." Derech Eretz Zuta

"Rebbe (Yehuda Hanassi) said: 'How great is peace, for even if Israel practice idolatry but manage to maintain peace among themselves, the Holy One, blessed be He, says, so to speak, I have no dominion over them; for it is said, Ephraim is united in idol-worship; let him alone (Hosea 4:17). But when their hearts are divided, what is written? Their heart is divided; now shall they bear their guilt (10:2). So here you learn how great is peace and how despised is discord.'" Genesis Rabah 38:6

Rabbi Joshua ben Korha taught that "where there is strict justice there is no peace, and where there is peace there is no strict justice," and he consequently instructed the judge to "act as an arbiter," that is, to rule for compromise, which is justice tempered with peace." (See Jerusalem

Talmud, Sanhedrim 1:5; Babylonian Talmus Sanhedrin 6b; the opposing view is "let justice pierce the mountain," that is, justice at all costs.)

Peace, God's Work, Our Work

"And if the heavenly beings, who are free from envy, hatred and rivalry, are in need of peace, how much more are the lower beings, who are subject to hatred, rivalry, and envy" (Deuteronomy Rabah, loc. Cit.).

Peace, God's Name

"How great is peace, for a name of the Holy One, blessed be He, is peace, as it is said, 'And he (Gideon) called [Him] God of Peace.'" Judges 6:24

"*Shalom* is one of the names of God (Shabbat 10b) and more than that, God can find no

blessing more worthy of a blessing than peace." Uktzin 3:12

Shabbat Shalom, Shabbat Menucha

"The Bible tells us that on the seventh day God finished God's work. Our teachers concluded from this that there was an act of creation on the seventh day. What was created on the seventh day? Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose. Rest (*menucha*) is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony ... It is the state in which there is no strife and no fighting, no fear and no distrust. The essence of good life is *menucha* ... Six evenings a week we pray: 'Guard our going out and our coming in'; on the Sabbath eve, however, we pray: 'Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.'" Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Response

AMY GALL RITCHIE

Humanity longs for balance, and we do not want a life of imbalance that makes us bitter and defensive. But we fall prey to the latter over and over, until that imbalance is the norm. We bristle and attack when we are angered from that imbalance. But most often, we do not seek peace before we declare interpersonal war. Perhaps from the lack of the hope of a realized *shalom*.

The Rabbi leads me to ponder that *shalom* is a result from intentional cultivation of a way of being. We can live our lives out of a habit of *shalom*.

Our sense of *shalom* must be experienced in a way that involves the other. Dr. Omar in his

remarks, referred to the word *ubuntu* (I am because We are.) *Shalom* cannot be experienced by one person, while those around them are in despair, or it is a very shallow *shalom*.

The *Shema* found in Deuteronomy presents a model of intentional cultivation. The rhythmic litany of the "ands" of how to instill this ideal into our lives can be applied to *shalom* living: living *shalom* in our rising, and our lying down, and through post it notes on the computer screen and in our table conversations with our children, we can go deeper and deeper into a life with God, fuller and fuller into a life of *shalom*, until it spills out overflowing in abundance as we connect with one another.



Rabbi Rachel Gartner is a campus minister at Earlham College.



Shalom in Kenyan Culture

BENSON KHAMASI AMUGAMWA

The Luhya people [of Kenya] have adopted the word *milembe* as a form of greeting. The word literally means “peace,” similar to the ... [Hebrew] word “*shalom*.” ... Among the Luhya people, the word *milembe* (peace) is very significant and is used daily. The Luhya tribe is divided into many sub-tribes. Each sub-tribe speaks a language with an accent different from the others. It is easy to identify the sub-tribe of any Luhya person by his or her accent. ... But the word *milembe* is one of the few words that is exactly the same in all the Luhya sub-tribes. The word was in use long before the coming of white missionaries. On this account, the white missionaries cannot claim to have introduced the concept of peace to the Luhya people.

According to Joseph Kisia, a prominent Kenyan Quaker, Chief Munubi, Andrea Agufana, and Samuel Mukone paid a visit to Uganda in 1917. During their tour, they came across a cathedral by the name “Namirembe.” They carried the name to Kenya with them. In their report to other Kenyan Quakers, the three emphasized the word *milembe*. The Quakers came to a consensus, agreeing to change “their greeting word to *milembe* instead of the usual words like *gavoole* (say it), and *gadase* (any more).” Kisia proceeds to report that the committee agreed to this idea. Hence the word *milembe*, which means peace, came into use from that time onward.

This does not mean that it was the first time the word *milembe* (pronounced *milembe* among

the Maragoli) was introduced among the Isukha people as a word for greeting. The word was already in use ... but on this date, it was established as the official greeting, thereby gaining dominance over the other words that served a similar purpose. The word gained entrance into the Luhya Bible as a translation for the Hebrew *shalom* of the Old Testament and the Greek *eirene* of the New Testament.

The Luhya people, who did not know anything about the Bible, knew that it was good to keep peace.

... It is true that “Gentiles,” who do not have the law, are capable of doing by nature the things of the law because the law is written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15). The Luhya people, who did not know anything about the Bible, knew that it was good to keep peace. The missionaries’ biblical message on peace confirmed that the Luhya already had some truth revealed to them by God. In the long run, the Kenyan Quakers (who are predominantly from the Luhya community) deviated from both their tradition of peace and the missionaries’ gospel message of peace when they buried themselves in internal conflicts. Now they seem to have discovered the heights from which they had fallen (Rev. 2:5) and repented. Now, [as for all Christian peacemakers,] they are faced with the challenge of maintaining the peace testimony they claim to possess.

Benson Amugamwa is an Earlham School of Religion student who was enrolled in the Spring 2008 Gospel of Peace class. He is a native of Kenya.





Peace at the Core

ROB MILLER

Growing up in the Church of the Brethren I heard stories about those who sought peace; faithful men and women who stood up for their beliefs to the point of going to jail or even dying, ... [but] I have found that peace is much more than opposing war. Both in my life and in my ministry, peace is personal, familial, interpersonal, communal, and international. If I am to be a peacemaker, it must be at the core of my life.

... Peace is personal. One of my biggest struggles has been finding peace with myself; and this is the first step to being a peacemaker. ... This requires a constant awareness of my internal peace, or lack thereof, in my daily interactions.

Peace is also familial. Over the course of seventeen years of marriage I have found that peace within my family affects my efforts to be a peacemaker outside of the home. Familial peace includes the way I define my role as both a husband and companion, but also how we interact with our children.

One place peacemaking must be most prevalent is in the faith community. ... In Luke 4: 4-19 we find Jesus' inaugural visit to the synagogue in Nazareth. Here, many believe, he calls for the reinstitution of the Jubilee. A significant part of this is liberation of the poor, the captive, and the oppressed.

... Of course, peacemaking must also be international. ... We need to better understand the cultures in the world around us, ... speak out against the unfair labor conditions, ... be responsible investors, ... join international groups that work for justice, peace, and livable conditions among the most needy in our world, or at least we can support them through our congregations, our dollars, and our prayers.

Both in my life and in my ministry, peace is personal, familial, interpersonal, communal, and international. If I am to be a peacemaker, it must be at the core of my life.

... [Of course,] to speak of the end result of peace is easy. The question is where we begin. In all of my failures and successes, both have taught me much about myself as a peacemaker. I can't do it alone, so God has given people to join me on this journey. I won't always succeed so God has granted me grace on this journey. But I also can't stop, so I pray that God will give me strength along this journey. Where do I begin? I'm not really quite sure. But maybe a sign in my yard that says, "Seek peace and pursue it" is at least a start.



Rob Miller was a student in the Spring 2008 Gospel of Peace class. He is pastor of the Crest Manor Church of the Brethren, South Bend, Ind.

An Inaugural Gift

The Crest Manor Church of the Brethren, President Ruthann Knechel Johansen's home congregation, presented her with this gift at the Inaugural Forum. Pastor Rob Miller offered these sentiments:



As the pastor of the Crest Manor Church, I bring this statement of congregational celebration and support for the calling of one of our own to the position of President of Bethany Theological Seminary.

We affirm the gifts that Ruthann brings to the leadership of this institution and pledge our support and prayers as she embarks on this journey of ministry. We are certain the gifts she brings to the Bethany community will enhance both its ongoing academic and spiritual transformation.

Ruthann, while your presence is deeply missed during your absences, we rejoice in seeing your gifts benefit the greater denominational community.

As a token of our appreciation and love for you, we present you with this pitcher and basin;

A pitcher that you may never thirst for God's presence,

A basin that you may not only wash but be washed in love,

And a matched set that you may remember that although you are apart from us, in spirit we travel together.

May God embrace you on this path, give you wisdom for direction, and steadfastness of spirit in all your endeavors.

Growing Together



JONATHAN SHIVELY

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ... From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:11-13, 16

The body grows as each part does its work. Our life together is strengthened through exercise. We are at our best when each member, each part of the body, is maturing as a disciple of Christ.

For each of us, discipleship takes on unique and God-gifted attributes. No two disciples are alike. Sure, there are distinctive marks that we hold in common, and there are behaviors that are typical; but ultimately each of us contributes uniquely to God's reign on earth.

In order for us, Christ's disciples, to grow and witness in the world, we must mature from the place we find ourselves today. If we're a new believer, we need basic discipling. If we're a committed disciple, we pursue particularity in our ministry. If we're a ministerial leader, we cultivate life for leadership. In order to nurture the variety of gifts for God's ministry in the world, a spectrum of teaching and learning is necessary.

Some will be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Each emerging leader in the church is called to further preparation and formation. Rather than attempting to make each leader look alike, the invitation is to recognize the variety of gifts and to nurture those gifts along that trajectory.

It is this commitment to joining with emerging church leaders where they find themselves in the continuum of their growth and development, and nurturing them to maturity, that shapes the fundamental relationship between Bethany as a graduate school and the Brethren Academy as a training partnership between Bethany and the General Board.

We are at our best when each member, each part of the body, is maturing as a disciple of Christ.

In my work with the Brethren Academy these past eight years, I have noticed a tension between the desire to serve developing leaders in ways that are accessible yet accountable and a bias toward graduate-level training for pastors. I share that bias, having earned both an M. Div. and a D. Min. There is no substitute for in-depth study and intensive preparation for ministry. For some people that means seminary. But for others the next level of their learning is pursued through different avenues.

When an emerging ministerial leader is recognized in our midst, the first question is not necessarily, "When will you be going to Bethany?" Rather, the process of discernment begins with questions like, "Where are you on your educational and spiritual journey?" and "What do you need next in your training to further develop as a disciple and as a ministering person?" These are the questions that should inform our encouragement and accountability for emerging leaders.

Bethany and the Academy encourage emerging ministerial leaders to learn at their next level of achievement. As growing disciples and the maturing body of Christ, we commit ourselves to continuous learning. To learn is to hold ourselves and one another accountable to the next level of understanding and skill. Such learning requires equipping resources for people at all points along the continuum. This continuum of development defines the graduate program's relationship to the Academy. The two are not in competition, but in continuum.

In a maturing body, every part is committed to lifelong learning. The continuum is not primarily a matter of what level of learning one needs in order to qualify for ordination or "the ministry."

God's desire is that we continue to grow up into Christ who is the head.

If we are asking "what is enough education?," then we are asking the wrong question. We should persistently be asking, "what is the next education?" In a world where change is exponential, we are constantly learning new information and acquiring fresh skills to engage the world. For a faith where God is never fully known, we can never know enough. Whether we are pastors, evangelists, teachers, apostles, prophets, or simple disciples, God's desire is that we continue to grow up into Christ who is the head.

Where are you on your continuum of learning? Maybe it's time for you to grow in your faith and contribute to the maturing of the body by enrolling for a course at Bethany, by studying with the Academy, by paying better attention in Sunday school, or committing to an in-depth Bible study. Each of us is given gifts, and the responsibility to cultivate them for life with God.



Jonathan Shively concluded his work as Director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership on June 30. He now serves as Executive Director of Congregational Life Ministries for the Church of the Brethren General Board.





Who Is My Neighbor?

Manassas Church of the Brethren's Witness in a Divided Community

JEFF CARTER

Over the last five years, Prince William County in Northern Virginia has witnessed a visible increase of residents immigrating from outside the United States and making the area their home. With the promise of work and available housing, immigrants helped to fuel the building boom on both the construction and consumer side. As community demographics quickly changed, residents witnessing the greatest change began to express concern to local politicians. Concerns ranged from the enforcement of housing ordinances and homeowner association guidelines to overcrowding, with an expressed fear of diminished property values. At the same time, the school system and local hospital noted a rise in undocumented individuals needing their services, and the adult detention center noted a rise in undocumented individuals being detained or incarcerated. Community interest groups formed supporting the immigrant community, and other groups formed wanting immigration law to be enforced locally with the expectation that all illegal immigrants be deported.

For the last two years, local municipalities responded to community concerns over immigration by engaging in a public conversation

that, unfortunately, divided our community and created an unwelcoming spirit. The debate continues today, and focuses on broad fears and assumptions concerning the complex issue of immigration and is made even more complex by less tangible aspects such as racial differences, community identity, and unrealistic assumptions pertaining to the reach of current immigration laws.

In June of 2007, the Prince William County Board of County Supervisors entertained a resolution to limit all county services to illegal immigrants and enter an agreement with Immigration Custom Enforcement allowing local police officers to check immigration status during regular police activity. The introduction of the resolution further polarized the community and sparked a public conversation of labeling and assumption.

Meanwhile, church leaders struggled to find ways of building healthy dialogue when their churches were divided as to opinion and attitude related to immigration. Clearly, as people of faith we find in scripture overarching values that guide and direct the way we form our communities and live within our civil societies. Concern for the neighbor is affirmed in Islam, "seek for mankind that of which you are desirous for yourself, that you may be a believer; treat well as a neighbor the one who lives near you" (Sunnah). Jesus affirms the concern for the neighbor, the Holiness Code, and the Shema,

"to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5) by teaching, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets'" (Matthew 22:37-40). Yet when scripture was used as a place of moral grounding to begin a discussion of tangible solutions, the religious community was attacked and labeled politically partisan, illegitimate, and misguided by politicians and interest groups.

At Manassas Church of the Brethren, the discussion entered the center of worship life on July 29, 2007, when a member of the church stood during joys and concerns and expressed his concern for the immigrant community and specifically for the atmosphere of fear that might prevent them from calling upon law enforcement when threatened. I invited anyone interested in the conversation to stay after church and think together how the church might respond. From that group of twelve, it was agreed that most people need credible information and a safe place to dialogue. The deacons were asked to host a Sunday school class and invitations were sent to county officials. For three months, the church hosted information sessions which included the Prince William County Executive, Police Chief, members of the immigrant community, a member of the Congressional Research Service, an immigration lawyer, and the Supervisor who authored the resolution to deny county services to illegal immigrants. The Sunday school class also included facilitated discussions among the attendees and a time to engage scripture and the General Board Statement on Immigration. At the same time, I called together clergy from Manassas

to begin thinking of how the religious community might be a healing presence. A letter was drafted to civic leaders and sixty-one clergy signed on representing the three Abrahamic faiths. Formal discussions began with county leaders and I was invited to testify before the Virginia Panel of the United States Commission on Civil Rights.

In October of 2007, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors passed a version of the June resolution, entering into an agreement with Immigration Customs Enforcement (287g program), limiting a small group of county services to illegal immigrants, and promising to educate the community on the resolution and their legal rights. Currently, the resolution is undergoing small revisions, yet the "disincentive" for both legal and illegal immigrants to stay in the community has been communicated. The damage has been done and our overall community is still fractured. At present, Manassas Church of the Brethren and its partner churches are engaged in creating dialogue circles within the community and partnering with educational institutions such as the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution Center of George Mason University, community groups and places of worship. The church hopes to foster dialogue while working at tangible solutions to our current community struggles.

As a church, Manassas Church of the Brethren is stronger as a faith community and knows full well that when a difficult topic enters the church, we have the practice and the belief to engage the topic faithfully, encounter one another honestly, and the confidence that through our intentional work we will be empowered to move forward and serve to the glory of God and our neighbors' good. Thanks be to God.

Jeff Carter is a 1998 graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor of the Manassas Church of the Brethren.



Giving Can Be Habit-Forming!

Some habits are best kicked. Others are best encouraged. Take giving, for example.

Bethany's financial aid plan includes an opportunity called the Alumni/ae Covenant Grant. As students accept financial aid during their study, they plan a post-graduation habit of stewardship to Bethany. The covenant is intentionally unenforceable from a strict legal point of view. It is not visualized as a loan. Rather, it is a commitment to a personal practice of stewardship to assist future generations of students pursuing ministry study.



Two recent graduates have adopted a giving habit -- electronically. Nate Polzin, (M.Div. 2007) is a church planter and campus minister in Michigan. Already active in campus ministry when he came to Bethany in 2002, Nate has now left colleagues in charge of the program he had developed at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, and has moved on to Saginaw. In that auto-industry town, he has started a fellowship called "The Church in Drive," (see www.thechurchindrive.com) and also works with student ministry at Saginaw Valley State University.

Flora Williams (M.Div. 2006) came to Bethany as a second career student after retiring from a professorship at Purdue University. Already an author in the field of family economics and financial counseling, her passion was to explore connections between that field and scriptural and theological understandings of finance.

"One thing I really appreciated about Bethany was the sense of mutuality that came from the wider church and especially Bethany alumni," Nate says. "In the covenant grant, other people were giving so I could go to seminary. Now that I have graduated, I am sending money each month to help others who are preparing for their ministry."

Both Nate and Flora make regular monthly contributions to Bethany Theological Seminary through electronic transfer directly from a bank account. This is a convenient way to make giving a habit. Flora notes that "contributing to Bethany the new electronic way provides me the ease of regular giving, the peace of mind that it is not forgotten, and the security it is there each month."



Some Bethany donors make regular gifts by setting automated notices in their computerized checkbook system. Others are proficient

with just a regular old calendar, including Bethany as they prepare their month-end checks. Yet others use our online credit card opportunity (see www.bethanyseminary.edu, click on "Alumni/ae and Supporters" then on "donate now").

If you have interest or questions about how your fellow donors make these practices work, please reach us at florylo@bethanyseminary.edu, or Institutional Advancement, Bethany Theological Seminary, 615 National Road West, Richmond, IN 47374, or (800) 287-8822.

Start a new habit --
stewardship as a way of life!





Giving & Growing

Giving and growing go together—that's the concept that the Virginia District emphasizes as they birth new churches. And the district has been growing, with five new church projects established over about the past decade. Part of the district's shepherding process includes education about sharing resources with the wider church.

"Our expectation is that every new church project will emphasize a wholistic stewardship from the very beginning of their meeting together," says District Executive Minister David Shumate. "This begins with a requirement that all project proposals which come to the District Board demonstrate a long-term financial plan or budget which includes the concept of at least a 10% outreach to denominational and other ministries from local giving. As a result, we have fellowships that may give miniscule amounts in the beginning who learn to give more as they grow and prosper. This is not only good stewardship but also is a token of participation in the work of the wider church of which we are all a part. We do not relax this requirement for cultural reasons with ethnic congregations, but feel that being a part of one another is foundational to the Brethren way of being a faith community."

Thomas Hanks is pastor of the Lake Side Church in Bedford County, and interim pastor at the Siguiendo Los Pasos de Jesus in Roanoke. He shares:

"I'll never forget my first Sunday Morning as a pastor at Fraternity Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. Just as my first worship service was coming to a conclusion, the ushers finally were able to get my attention to tell me that we had not collected the morning offering. Oops!

Isn't it funny how sometimes, in new situations or in new communities, we can forget to do things that we would never forget before. As the pastor of both a new fellowship and a new project, I am so grateful for the leadership of our District Executive Minister, David Shumate. Even in the midst of our zeal to share the gospel with our neighbors, it is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking about 'our project,' or 'our building fund' that we forget the simple concept of financial outreach. From the beginning, Brother Shumate helped us build a budget which included outreach giving from our infant project. When funds were tight, he gently reminded us not to forget our outreach giving.

It's a great thing to remember as we begin to grow, that if it weren't for our denominational ministries, our district ministries, our camp, our seminary and our colleges, many of us would not even be here, today. Giving something back to these ministries, and contributing to local caregiving ministries is not only a responsibility, it is a privilege. We are so grateful to God for establishing our new faith communities in a district where we are taught to offer financial nurture to others from the beginning. As we become congregations, outreach giving is not just a duty; rather, it has become a part of who we are as God's people."



A Narrative Slice of



LIFE

A Profile of the Book *How Do Stories Save Us?* by Scott Holland

W & W: Can you share a brief synopsis of the book?

The book is really an academic exploration of narrative theology. It also examines the genres of story, poetry, drama and other artful expressions as they relate to theological formation and composition. Although the book is addressed to an ecumenical academic audience, its central theme should also be of particular interest to Brethren scholars and pastors. Brethren noncreedalism has privileged a poetics of testimony over formal creeds and stressed the story-shaped character of the Gospel over dogmatic doctrines.

W. & W: Near the end of the book, you say, ". . . every story takes place. Narratives happen somewhere and in somebody as well as sometime." However, not many direct references to story are evident in the book! How should the reader look for themes of story?

This is a fair question! The book is really a theoretical study involving some of the most recent work in hermeneutics, literary theory and Continental theology. It evolved out of my decade-long research, writing and work with the international theological consultations at Louvain University in Belgium. My next book will actually be filled with stories: *Entering Whitman's America: A Theopoetics of Public Life*.

W. & W.: You are fond of the metaphor of intersection, and the book explores many intersections of cultures, traditions and expressions. Are there particular intersections to which the reader should pay special attention?

Yes, there are the important intersections of ethics and aesthetics, death and desire, and Christ and culture, but the book was written near the intersection of modernity and postmodernity. In narrative theory, there is the claim that the age of the old masternarrative is ending. The idea that all

There is hope that narrative slices of life, both our own stories and the stories of others, will open us to meaning, the truth and the sacred.

must find their plot and place in one modern story has shifted to a more postmodern understanding that it is a multitude of stories which inform and form us intellectually and spiritually. This insight can be very significant for a cross-cultural approach to theology and ministry. For example, in my work at Bethany, I have been very attentive to the stories from our churches in Nigeria and India as I seek intercultural competence in our vision of theological education.

W. & W: *It appears that the most meaningful intersection for you is that of words, deeds and art. Why?*

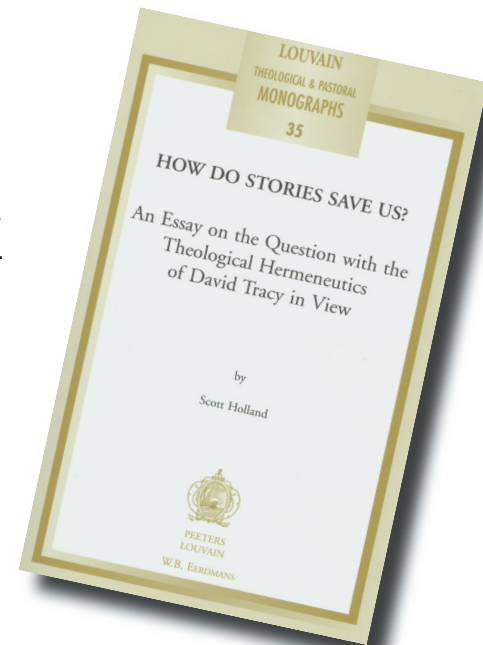
This is because the Creator God of Genesis is not primarily a moralist or a theologian but a poet and a potter. This Creator spoke the cosmos into existence and formed humanity out of the clay of the good earth. I've learned from some Jewish rabbis that Genesis is not the beginning of mere morality. Genesis is the beginning of desire, a desire for a well-integrated life, a life in which head, heart and hand find a creative integration in the shalom of God.

W. & W: *How Do Stories Save Us? is packed full of theological argument and comparison. What might a person with a more minimal understanding of theological history and theory gain from this book?*

Again, the book was really written for theologians and educated pastors. One with little theological theory and history would certainly find the book too dense. A mistake too many professors at denominational seminaries make is

feeling compelled to write only for congregational audiences. The work of the scholar, however, is to master the discipline of his or her academic guild—theology, biblical studies, history, homiletics, etc.—and then find ways to translate the knowledge of the discipline into more public languages or discourses. This is the work of the public intellectual. Here at Bethany, we have been involved in a decade-long, international program of Seeking Cultures of Peace. This work has been very story-shaped. The theory in my book has been foundational for this program, but it finds translation and expression in a more public form of practical theology. For an illustration of this see our book, *Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers*.

How Do Stories Save Us? is a Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monograph, published by Peeters.



Scott Holland is Associate Professor of Theology & Culture and Director of Peace Studies & Cross-Cultural Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.



Faculty News

Stephen Breck Reid, Academic Dean, has accepted a position as Professor of Hebrew Bible at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas, beginning August 1, 2008. Dr. Reid has served in his current position at Bethany since 2003. He led the work of the Seminary's teaching faculty and the administration of the Brethren Journal Association; gave oversight to Bethany's partnerships with the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and the Church of the Brethren General Board; and facilitated much of the process related to Bethany's ten-year accreditation review, completed in 2006.

Richard B. Gardner will serve as Interim Academic Dean during the 2008-2009 school year. Dr. Gardner is Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies and served as the Seminary's Academic Dean from 1992-2003.

H. Kendall Rogers has been named as Professor of Historical Studies, beginning in the 2008/2009 academic year. Dr. Rogers was a professor in the Religion and Philosophy department at Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind., for thirty years. He also served as Resident Director for Brethren Colleges Abroad in Germany and China, as Fulbright Program Adviser for Manchester College, and as Coordinator for the Ministry Training Institute of Manchester College and the Church of the Brethren in Indiana.

Jonathan Shively, Director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, has accepted the position of Executive Director of Congregational Ministries for the Church of the Brethren General Board, beginning July 1, 2008. Shively served as the Director of the Academy since 2000.

Julie Mader Hostetter has been named Director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership beginning July 1, 2008. She previously was Director of Academic and Student Services at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. She has held several positions for the Church of the Brethren at the congregational, district and denominational levels, including as Coordinator of Congregational Life Team Area 3 for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

Thomas N. Finger will serve as Scholar-in-Residence during the 2008/2009 academic year, teaching four courses in Theological Studies. Dr. Finger has been a professor at Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Joshua Brockway has been appointed to a one-year, half-time position as Instructor in Brethren Studies. He is a graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary and Candler School of Theology, and is a Ph.D. candidate at Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Scott Holland, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture and Director of Peace Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies, will serve as Interim Director of the Master of Arts program during the 2008/2009 academic year.

Malinda Berry will join the faculty as Instructor in Theological Studies and Director of the M.A. program in the 2009/2010 academic year. Ms. Berry is a Ph.D. candidate at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and is currently Visiting Scholar in Religion & Women's Studies at Goshen College, Goshen, Ind.



Alumni/ae News

Honored:

- **Donald E. Miller** (1958) received an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Manchester College at their 2008 commencement, in recognition of his accomplishments as an educator and church leader. Dr. Miller is listed on the Talbot School of Theology web-based database of the top Christian Educators of the 20th Century.

Published:

- Herald Press has published *Neglected Voices: Peace in the Old Testament* by **David Leiter** (1987)
- WordPlay Publishers has published *Whirlwinds and Small Voices*, co-authored by **Clarence McConkey** (1951) and his daughter, Amy McConkey Robbins.

Education:

- **Sid Gauby** (1987) received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in May 2007. His dissertation title was *The Effect of Fasting Upon the Development of Servant Leaders at Saint Joseph United Methodist Church Fort Wayne, Indiana*.

Wedding Bells:

- **Enten Eller** (1991) and Mary Schiavoni, November 24, 2007
- Will Sturgis and **Tracy Knechel** (1998, 2005), November 24, 2007
- **Brian Mackie** (2007) and Karen Miller, December 15, 2007
- **Douglas Veal** (2008) and **Tasha Hornbacker** (2007), June 21, 2008

Future Alumni/ae?:

- Theodore James Cox, son of Chris and **Beth** (2004) Cox, December 6, 2007
- Finnegan Oliver Smith, son of Trent and **Carrie** (2007) Smith, February 19, 2008
- Lydia Marie Williams, daughter of **Don** (2007) and Janell Williams, March 15, 2008
- Cayden Faith Messler, daughter of **Brian** (2004) and **Amy** (2001) Messler, March 19, 2008

Remembered:

- **Paul E. Alwine** (1958), March 30, 2007
- **E. Gifford Ammerman** (1958), January 4, 2007
- **Thomas Barth** (1993), January 1, 2007
- **Lucille Bendsen** (1946), January 17, 2007
- **Fannie Boothe** (1989), March 3, 2007
- **Fred M. Cline** (1957), August 14, 2007
- **Gale D. Crumrine** (1955), August 6, 2007
- **Willis O. Detwiler** (1961), June 28, 2007
- **Elizabeth B. Eller** (1955), September 18, 2007
- **Vernard M. Eller** (1955), June 18, 2007
- **C. Henry Esbensen** (1948), August 23, 2007
- **T. Quentin Evans** (1948), November 18, 2007
- **Paul H. Fike** (1950), January 1, 2007
- **Byron M. Flory** (1953), July 21, 2007
- **Richard W. Frazier** (1966), June 13, 2007
- **June A. Gibble** (1986), September 20, 2007
- **George W. Harvey** (1963), January 25, 2007
- **Paul B. Haworth** (1951), October 28, 2007
- **John S. Horning** (1966), December 27, 2007
- **George H. Jeffrey** (1947), May 7, 2007
- **Virginia McDannel** (1947), November 1, 2007
- **Roberta McInnis** (1952), December 24, 2007
- **John D. Mishler** (1951), October 18, 2007
- **Edward L. Murray** (1941), June 19, 2007
- **Mary Beth Petcher** (1971), September 19, 2007
- **Donald E. Roberts** (1977), August 12, 2007
- **Richard A. Smith** (1960), July 11, 2007
- **Lloyd B. Stauffer** (1959), August 25, 2007
- **James H. Waltner** (1958), December 18, 2007
- **Donald A. Westmoreland** (1964), February 17, 2007
- **Herbert D. Zeiler** (1961), April 18, 2007



A Bethany Distinctive

LOWELL FLORY

Much has been reported in this issue about Bethany's Inaugural Forum. The Forum was designed to be a unique experience, perhaps representing a different approach to content and process than our usual class format. Yet in another way, it modeled a central concept that is embedded in Bethany's understanding of ministry education.

At the heart of the Forum's process was a desire to (a) entertain a scripturally-based discussion on a subject of significance, (b) in a truly dialogical format, (c) with an understanding and commitment that we can share peace and reconciliation without having unanimity of spiritual experience or theological perspective.

That is what Bethany's curriculum tries to do. The Forum featured contrasts and convergences of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In our Bethany curriculum, we usually have quite a bit to talk about just focusing in Christianity, or even just in Church of the Brethren. And, with a central purpose of "Empowering Christian Leaders," that *should* be our primary focus.

Not well understood by many is *how* we try to craft that focus. Unique to our experience is a depth of Pietist spiritual experience and new inspiration, balanced with the test of an Anabaptist community conversation. Rick Gardner, former Academic Dean at Bethany, and now to be Interim Dean for the next year, has described us as a "Community of Conversation." But more is implied in that than just talk.

What is implied and sought in Bethany's curriculum is including *in that conversation* around the classroom table a meaningful representation of the diversity of spiritual experience and theological perspective among Brethren. Ideally it also includes the leaven of an ecumenical contingent in the student body. Without the diversity, the conversation is one sided and shallow. Without the diversity, Bethany loses the opportunity to do what it is called to do in this day.



Prominent among Church of the Brethren testimonies is a commitment to peace. Peace is far more than just opposition to international warfare, important though that is. Peace is living in a community reconciled with God and in a reconciling attitude amid human diversity. *Those who will be leaders in ministry for the church need an educational experience in which difference can be brought together in respectful, scripturally based dialog with the guidance of an informed but diverse faculty, committed to the core testimonies of the Church of the Brethren.*

A graduate recently observed that his Bethany experience brought an unanticipated transformation. The Bethany experience taught him that he could discover with people of other perspectives that we can share in a reconciled Christian community even with some differences in belief and opinion.

That, if we can do it well, is the Bethany distinctive. That is Bethany's gift to the church, and the church's to the world.



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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MISSION STATEMENT

Bethany Theological Seminary as a graduate school and academy seeks to prepare people for Christian ministry and to educate those called as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the cities and communities of the world.

Bethany's educational program bears witness to the beliefs, heritage, and practices of the Church of the Brethren in the context of the whole Christian tradition.

Among its values and goals, Bethany Theological Seminary:

Grounds its education in the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the World and in the acceptance of the New Testament as our guide to faith and practice.

Features the historic Brethren testimonies of community, peace, justice, reconciliation, service, and simplicity.

Advocates a learning process that grounds theological education in spiritual formation within the life and ministry of communities of faith.

Affirms a style of education that brings us into close relationships with congregations, the world-wide church, the peoples of the world, and God's creation.

Seeks to equip the whole church to better discern its faith and calling.

Invites into the community persons of both genders, and of all races, nations, and confessions.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

This worship center stood prominently at the front of the chapel during Bethany's Inaugural Forum. The three candles represent the three Abrahamic faiths on which the plenary sessions focused. The central flame represents God's eternal presence.

