

SPRING
2010

BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT e-edition

The Newsletter of the Bible & Religion Department at Eastern Mennonite University

Did you know . . .

- ⇒ **Peter Dula** is stepping up to become the Bible and Religion Department Chair as Nancy Heisey takes on a new role at EMU (see below).
- ⇒ **Christian Early** plans to build a small sailboat this summer.
- ⇒ **Ted Grimsrud** welcomed the birth of his second grandchild, Marja Lucy (daughter of Johan and Jill), who joined the family March 16. He looks forward to his sabbatical during the 2010-11 school year when he will be working on a book project: "A Good War? World War II and the Myth of Redemptive Violence."
- ⇒ **Nancy Heisey** will present a paper at the Mennonite Central Committee 90th anniversary conference in June. She is the newly appointed Vice President and Undergraduate Dean at EMU. She will continue to teach one course (Church History) a year. After her three-year appointment, she plans to rejoin the faculty and teach full-time.
- ⇒ **Linford Stutzman** spent spring leading his fifth semester-long cross-cultural to the Middle East.
- ⇒ **Heidi Miller Yoder** plans to complete her dissertation this summer.
- ⇒ **Kent Davis Sensenig** will return in 2010-11 to teach two courses each term for the department.

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Greetings, Haverim,

Several years ago a good friend who is also a Scrabble whiz gave me sweatshirt with the label "word person" across the front, spelled out with Scrabble tiles. I was in the midst of my doctoral program at the time, poring over photographs of fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls, translating John Chrysostom's homilies on Galatians from Greek, and developing a dissertation proposal for my committee. The sweatshirt seemed to sum up my life. Everyone who reads this newsletter, I think, is likewise in some way a "word person."

The proverb, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Prov 25:11) presents a biblical sense, however, that pushes beyond first impressions of what it means to be a word person. It invites the hearer/reader into the common ground shared by word and icon, a world which absorbs the energies of many if not all of our students. Indeed, many students have

learned to make their requests for re-framing of assignments and class input with the phrase, "I'm a visual learner." This doesn't mean that words, spoken or written, are absent from their lives. Witness how quickly the text-messaging device of choice reappears when class is formally dismissed. It does mean that image and word both need to be present in most of our teacher-student conversations, and that choosing both words and images needs to be done with great care. I thought about this recently when searching for an image of Augustine to help illuminate class reading of several sections of *City of God* in Church History. Most of images available on the internet portrayed an elderly white man, but I finally settled on an icon which portrayed a younger African—more historically accurate, at least, and allowing for a different backdrop for hearing the words written so long ago.

Finding and sharing those

words that are "apples of gold" challenge all of us, students, teachers, and ministering persons alike, caught up as we are in the daily process of lecturing, asking and answering questions, praying, and responding to a barrage of requests. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre notes how often our words offer no meaningful images, cut off conversation: "Yeah, me too." "Right."¹ Teachers wonder sometimes whether we fall into this approach to conversation in an effort to stay in touch with younger persons. As all preachers know, many temptations await those who search for words that both reach across the gulf between us and our hearers and proclaim the ancient good news to twenty-first century audiences.

In Christ,
Nancy Heisey

¹Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *Caring For Words in a Culture of Lies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 101

**May 2010 grads:**

Abigail Spurrier, Culture, Religion and Mission, will care for her nephew this summer.

Grace Schrock-Hurst, Culture, Religion and Mission, will intern with Servants to Asia's Urban Poor (www.servantsasia.org) in Vancouver from July-November, discerning with them about the next steps for doing long-term mission work in the slums of Asia.



Michael Harnish, Biblical Studies, plans a June 26 wedding to Rachel King.

Taylor Stutzman, Culture, Religion and Mission, will work for a trash company and play softball this summer while he looks for a real job.

Zach Hurst, Congregational and Youth Ministries, will begin the search for a flight instructor job.

Kelly Baker Fry, Culture, Religion and Mission.

December 2010 grads:

Angie and Rob Nash, Congregational and Youth Ministries majors, will both participate in Summer Institute for Spiritual Formation and complete a practicum before returning for their final semester.

Bryan Cunningham, Biblical Studies, just completed a semester in Washington DC and plans to finish his coursework in the fall at EMU.



L to R: Angie, Rob, Zach, Taylor, Abbey, Michael, Grace, Bryan

Announcing Recipients...***Haverim Debt-Reduction Scholarships* —**

Biblical Studies graduate **Michael Harnish**

Congregational & Youth Ministry graduate **Zach Hurst**

Culture, Religion and Mission graduates **Grace Schrock-Hurst** and **Abigail Spurrier**

***Haverim Writing Awards* —**

1st Place — **Taylor Stutzman**, 2010 Culture, Religion and Mission major, *Illumination in the Shadow of Doubt: An Essay on Agnostic Faith*

2nd Place — **Travis Riesen**, 2010 Biblical Studies major, *Premillennial Dispensationalism: Scatology for the Ages*

3rd Place — **Grace Schrock-Hurst**, 2010, Culture, Religion and Mission major, *Incarnational Missions: Following the Way of Christ as Suffering Servant*

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bible@emu.edu

Almost twenty years ago (Oct. 1990), three EMU alumni couples built on our prior mutual friendship. We were sharing our extra time, meals, and ideas together on that homecoming weekend. For example, prior to our mid-Saturday 1970 class reunion, we chose to attend the music department's annual alumni breakfast meeting. It was here that we all noticed something special. Their attendees were not merely present; they were also giving very practical and inspirational support. They were clearly part of an organization with "Encore" as its name.

Then all six of us went to visit/support our Bible & Religion Department's office. Two of its professors (Ray Gingrich & Herb Swartz, if correctly recalled) welcomed and updated us with department information. We soon noticed, however, that we may have been their only forenoon alumni support during this extended time. Suddenly a strong idea hit us.

EMU's Bible department needs and deserves more special alumni support! Yes, their music department does too, but they already have it. Besides, isn't "our dept." even more central to EMU - and more basic to this college's response to our church's needs? The remaining part of our mutual weekend together had us six persons "conversing & imagining" how our new dream could be developed.

Each of us: John L & Dorothy Freed, Paul G. & Miriam Burkholder, and Dan & Catherine Longenecker, were at that time pastoring in three different geographic areas. Before separating for home that weekend we had continued our conversation, and easily harmonized around one foundational vision. Let's think of workable steps toward forming a small alumni group around the basic goal of giving support to EMU's Bible department. That support would also be student-oriented. Could it even include some financial help?

Within quite a short time that winter John Freed suggested three important ideas. First, we must be in direct touch with EMU's alumni office and Bible department leadership. Then, provided our vision is indeed thus affirmed, we could suggest a meeting time during next homecoming weekend for sharing and testing such a goal with other Bible alumni. Finally, based again on EMC's full agreement / encouragement, our little group could help to make this happen.

John - who has now 'gone to be with the Lord' - really deserves the most credit for our practical moves at that key time. While all three couples indeed followed through on the above, John gave the most direct leadership. For example, he even eventually agreed to lead the initial 1991 Bible department alumni homecoming event where (as you will

see below) Haverim became reality.

Here are a few more of 'the vision's practical steps'. Most crucial was that direct touch with key EMU leadership. Janet Stutzman became the Alumni Office leader during that time. Not only did she give her own affirmation of our vision, Janet interacted with Bible department leadership and university president Joe Lapp. She also now worked with Bible faculty and they soon created a committee which could help in our vision's formation. This response and creativity was exactly what was needed to re-inspire our enthusiasm to follow through!

That (nameless)"committee" was now central, and it soon led things forward. What about the names of its members who helped with these thoughts and oversights. My memory and recent quick review of office files is so very incomplete that I won't even try! Yet I must refer to one of their first and most memorable tasks - give this new alumni group its name. You guessed it: "Haverim," the Hebrew-language word for "friends" Calvin Shenk, chair of the Bible & Religion Dept., was the one who suggested this wonderful word. This unique name was also an immediately perfect tie-in with our couple group's clear goal to be *supportive, but not controlling!*

That committee - again no surprise - was soon called "Haverim Steering Committee." They also authorized and then planned our key 1991 homecoming weekend event. That was the Sat. p.m. in EMU's Discipleship Center. Bible alumni names and addresses we couples had requested were now given to us (by the Alumni office). The Burkholders, Freed, and Longeneckers divided up the alumni list according to our geographic areas. In Summer 1991, we wrote and sent personal invitations to this October homecoming event. These letters thus became an important practical step for the success of this whole venture.

Finally, 'how Haverim got started' climaxed on that special Discipleship Center Oct.'91 afternoon with those alumni who responded to our letters of invitation. As I recall, there were approximately forty Bible & Religion alumni present - plus quite a few others. Freed not only became a good articulator of this Haverim vision, he was also an excellent listener. There were many good caring and insightful questions. For example, what does "supportive" really look like? And how might EMU or anyone see Haverim as "trying to control" the Bible Dept.?

The bottom line: there was such genuine alumni affirmation on that important afternoon - almost twenty years ago! This event became a climactic push forward, and Haverim was truly born!

**The newsletter has gone green ... Subscribe to the electronic version
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Department-sponsored Events Spring Semester 2010... PAGE 4

- January 28** Conversation with Earl Zimmerman
Current MCC Co-Representative for India, Afghanistan and Nepal
Formerly EMU Professor of Bible and Religion
- February 2** Jeffrey Kovac "Saying No to the Good War"
Professor, University of Tennessee
Author of *Refusing War, Affirming Peace: A History of Civilian Public Service Camp #21 at Cascade Locks*
- February 17** Cynthia Hess, "Nonviolence in an Age of Trauma"
Study Director at the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington DC and
Author of *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace: Christian Nonviolence and the Traumatized Self*
- April 22** Christian Early, "Conversion and Truth: Thoughts on a Sabbatical"
He was on sabbatical during fall semester, 2009.
- April 28** Seniors shared reflections on their time at EMU and in the Bible & Religion Department