

SPRING
2011

BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

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

Did you know . . .

- ⇒ **Peter Dula** gave the Baccalaureate address on April 29, 2011 (see the excerpt to the right).
- ⇒ **Christian Early** was instrumental in bringing the Attachment Conference to EMU (see his remarks on page 4).
- ⇒ **Ted Grimsrud** has been on sabbatical and will return to teaching next fall.
- ⇒ **Nancy Heisey** continued to teach Church History while in her first year serving as undergraduate academic dean.
- ⇒ **Linford Stutzman** spent spring term leading his sixth semester-long cross-cultural to the Middle East and is currently leading *Christian Movement* in the Mediterranean for seminary students. [Read more](http://emu.edu/now/holyland/2011/05/12/christian-movement-in-the-mediterranean/) at <http://emu.edu/now/holyland/2011/05/12/christian-movement-in-the-mediterranean/>.
- ⇒ **Heidi Miller Yoder** will transition to a full-time faculty position at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas Texas. We're sad to see her leave, yet know that God will bless her work with new students.
- ⇒ **Kent Davis Sensenig** taught two courses again this semester
- ⇒ **Mike Brislen** and **John Jantzi** each taught one course this term.

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Education on the Way to Emmaus

...This evening I want to read Luke 24 as a story about education, even about what us teachers like to call "lifelong education." It's about how you don't know if you are educated until well after you have been re-educated, about the dialectic between action and reflection and a series of failures of each or about what exactly success and failure in education might be. The first failure to notice in this story is that though the disciples have been living and working with Jesus for three years, they still have no idea who he was. But the stranger doesn't seem terribly concerned about that aspect. He doesn't rebuke them for not understanding their lives with Jesus, but for a second failure--not believing the prophets. But, a third failure, they don't even get it on the road listening to him. They ask him to stay, not because he was captivating or convincing, but because "it is almost evening." They finally realize who he is when "he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them." But even this, on close reading, seems like a fourth kind of failure because a few verses later, Jesus returns to them and we learn, "They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a

ghost." So once more, in vv. 44-47 he gives the same theological lecture. And only here does it finally say that "then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures."

...It seems to me that the pedagogical failure here is so utterly pervasive that it probably isn't a failure so much as a redefinition of education. But on what account of education might we understand this as a success?

....This story is not about the failure to make Jesus familiar; it is about the success in allowing Jesus to be strange, to not allow Jesus to become an idol. I want to resist the familiar reading of this story, which is to blame them, certain as we are that we know what Jesus came to do which was to set up an Anabaptist politics of Jesus. I wonder if we shouldn't actually honor Cleopas and his friend. For it seems to me now that the most interesting thing about them is not that they don't recognize Jesus or that they have misunderstood the prophets and the events of the last week. The most interesting thing about them is their hospitality. They are the kind of people who make the lonely traveler part of an intimate conversation. And they are the kind of people who, unlike the innkeepers Luke began

with, invite someone they do not know to stay and share a meal and a room for the night. What a profoundly hopeful thing to do! That the risen Christ, not just in Luke but in John, is a stranger means an invitation to live in habitual anticipation that any random hitchhiker, on any lonely stretch of road, any classmate, teacher or student, may be a potential agent of transformation, might breathe some fresh air into the stinky smelly little caves of each of our theories and experiences.

But there is something yet further about their achievement and it has something to do with recognizing the strangeness of *themselves*.... When the risen Christ vanishes from their sight, Cleopas and his friend say to each other "Were not our hearts burning within us." That is, they acknowledge a failure to acknowledge the growing sense of strangeness located not in the unrecognizable companion, but in their very own hearts, a failure to be a neighbor to the stranger in themselves.

Excerpted from Peter Dula's baccalaureate address, April 30, 2011. The entire sermon is available on [podcast](http://emu.edu/now/podcast/2011/04/30/2011-baccalaureate/) at <http://emu.edu/now/podcast/2011/04/30/2011-baccalaureate/>

**May 2011 grads:**

Josh Davis, Congregational and Youth Ministries, after a summer wedding, will pursue pastoral credentials in the United Methodist Church.

Janelle Freed, Philosophy and Theology, will go with Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Rachel Kolb, Congregational and Youth Ministries, plans an October wedding, and then will work in the family dairy store.

Jonathan Lamb, Culture, Religion and Mission, will attend Asbury Seminary.

Jason Sprunger, Philosophy and Theology, plans a summer wedding.

Michael Swartzendruber, Philosophy and Theology, plans to attend Eastern Mennonite Seminary.



L to R: Josh, Jonathan, Janelle, Michael, Jason, Rachel

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

Philosophy and Theology graduate **Janelle Freed**

Congregational & Youth Ministry graduate **Rachel Kolb**

Culture, Religion and Mission graduate **Jonathan Lamb**

Haverim Writing Awards —

1st Place — **Nathan Hershberger**, 2012 Philosophy and Theology major

Romans 13:1-7: A Call to Revolutionary Subordination

2nd Place — **Adella Barrett**, 2012 CRAM major, *Dwelling on Theotokos*

3rd Place — **Jossimar Diaz-Castro**, 2013 Philosophy & Theology major,

Romans 1:16-23 and 3:21-26: Contextual Understandings of the Wrath & Righteousness of God for the Protestant Hispanic Church

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Email us at :
bible@emu.edu

A few nights ago I had a dream in Bahasa Indonesian. People say that's a good sign, as far as language-learning goes. In my dream, I was standing in front of a class and I was supposed to explain my name's meaning using only Bahasa Indonesian. I settled on trying to say "a gift from someone-- a gift that I do not deserve." It seems like an unsatisfactory definition of my name. Grace.

Just as I struggled in my dream to find words to capture the meaning of grace, so I realize in life that this is a difficult concept to comprehend- let alone try to explain in a different language! Grace. From God. A gift nobody deserves but we're all offered. I don't think it's something one can learn from hours of theological study or years in seminary classrooms even. Sometimes I think we have to be slammed over the head by God to really get it.



Grace is second from the right along with others in her team.

Months ago in Vancouver, as I was discerning about the next step God was calling me to, I found myself on a bridge overlooking a train-yard. The crisp autumn air of Vancouver was tinted with the scent of the DownTown EastSide. There was nothing special about the day; I'd walked the same path hundreds of times before...but this particular fall day it hit me: *I do not have to live in a slum for God to love me!*

'What?' I thought. *God loves me even if I don't move to a slum.* And there it was, God's grace knocking me off my feet and overwhelming me with the reality of His undeserved love.

And I found myself joyfully answering: *I know! I know I don't have to move to a slum! I know you love me! You are inviting me to follow you and I want to say Yes!*

Living in a slum in Jakarta is an act of love and obedience to the call I have heard from Christ. Not out of obligation, but as a response to His grace in my life. The LORD continues to teach me about grace as I make my new home in this kampung.



Jakarta. Scenes of dizzyingly tall skyscrapers, crazy weaving motorcycles, monkeys on chains, immense wealth and (slightly hidden) poverty. This is the largest city in the country with the most Muslims in the world; it is also the most densely populated island on earth. Extremes.

My neighbors teach me about grace. Here I am, a white foreigner, dropped into their world out of another planet. They welcome me with slightly tentative but open arms. Feeding me, teaching me to cook their food, leading me along the narrow paths to market, sharing laughter at my language mistakes and silly 'Bule' ways...This too is grace. Undeserved welcome. They teach me so much about hospitality and sharing with open hands.

My prayer for many years has been: "God, grant me the grace to accept your grace." And this continues to be a needed prayer--to accept grace from God and from others. Often I am my own worst critic and in a slum setting many questions arise: *Do I only eat what my neighbors eat? What is an appropriate level of simplicity to live at? Am I studying language enough? Am I spending enough hours interacting with neighbors, etc..?*" I continually need to come back to grace. To remember that God is bigger than all these details. That God loves me and loves my neighbors and was at work long before I came. Grace.

A friend once responded to some long rant I'd been on simply by saying, "Remember that we do not have to save the world. Jesus has already done that." This is grace. *I can't save the world.* I can't save this kampung. I can't even save myself!

But I can love Jesus. And let His love work in me so that I can love others. This too is grace.

**After leaving EMU, Grace received training in Vancouver, British Columbia with Servants to Asia's Urban Poor.*



What have you been doing since leaving EMU?

Provide personal and professional updates at

<http://www.emu.edu/bible/update>

or send them to

Bible & Religion Department, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2462

Attachment Conference follow-up...

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by Christian Early, Professor of Philosophy and Theology

This Spring, EMU hosted a important conference -- “Conversations on Attachment: Integrating the Science of Love and Spirituality” and you can find the conference on the EMU website here: www.emu.edu/attachment/ -- which was funded in part by a Metanexus/Templeton foundation grant. Roman Miller, an EMU biologist, and I wrote the grant together, so right from the very beginning the whole event was characterized by a meeting between science and theology.

I am pleased to report that the conference was overwhelmingly positively received. Apparently, some participants even called in because the feedback form simply did not provide enough space for them to articulate how much they enjoyed the conference. I personally talked to many who commented on the wonderful atmosphere at EMU, and some of them wondered whether life was always like this on campus. I have heard stories of parents calling their children and telling them that they ought to add EMU to their list of possible colleges. Perhaps the most meaningful conversations have been with those who for one reason or another have left the Mennonite church and for whom coming to the conference was an instance of coming home again – home to a people and home to a faith.

The conference also got some attention in the Mennonite press. If you are interested you can read Bonnie Price Lofton’s article “[Without Love, We’re Dead](#)” which argues that the conference was a coming together in affirmation between an ancient faith and a modern science and Dick Benner’s article “[Habits of Repair](#)” in the Canadian Mennonite which argues that the new science of love reminds us of things that we already know as Anabaptists, but that we ought to practice much more in church life.

If you didn’t get a chance to go to the conference, the keynotes will be posted on the attachment conference follow-up website (www.emu.edu/attachment/followup/).