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# BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

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

## Winter 2001

### Greetings Haverim,

"All beginnings are somewhat strange; but we must have patience, and little by little, we shall find things which at first were obscure, becoming clear." These words of St. Vincent de Paul, a seventeenth-century Roman Catholic missionary, describe many of my experiences teaching and chairing the Bible and Religion Department this fall. We were delighted to see the number of majors in our department increase this year to 47, from 34 at the end of the 1999-2000 school year. With the numbers comes the exciting but challenging task of keeping up with these students, advising them wisely, and providing them a sense of support and collegiality as they pursue their studies and explore their callings at EMU. As a department we sponsored a welcome party at the beginning of the semester, and a pizza lunch just before final exam week, as times of getting to know one another better. During the semester we also sponsored 5 occasional forums (See article, page 4) to which our majors as well as the rest of the campus were invited.

As a department we have dealt with many items, including changing the core requirements to strengthen the Biblical Studies aspect of those requirements and developing a more flexible Bible and Religion Minor. We have also begun conversations with the faculty of the Washington Study-Service year, in conjunction with their proposal to restructure their program to make it accessible to more students. We hope that Bible and Religion majors who are required to do a practicum may find exciting and challenging new mission and ministry opportunities in Washington. Perhaps the part of our work as a department which calls for the most patience in moving from the obscure to the clear has been our effort to renew conversations among ourselves about the commitments and values we share.

During this semester as a teacher, I have been surprised to be excited about the general education classes I taught. At the beginning of the semester I felt overwhelmed by the size of the two gen ed classes, as well as the inhospitable teaching environment of one makeshift classroom to which I

was assigned. As we walked together through the writings of Paul and the gospels, and across the pages of church history, however, I was invited into a rich stream of student willingness to explore where they have come from and where they are going as faith pilgrims as well as students. At the close of the semester, one student who had sat quietly throughout the semester wrapped up his final exam with these words: "I wish the Mennonite Church would crawl out of its withdrawal box and start getting into the world for real and then talk about its spread of peace and the word of Christ."

Nancy R. Heisey  
Department Chair

### Faculty Updates

#### Kathleen Temple

Kathleen Temple taught "Introduction to the Bible" and "Introduction to Philosophy" again in the fall semester. As usual, the students and the biblical and philosophical issues were quite stimulating! Kathleen continues to feel awed by the honor of being able to introduce students to biblical study and to philosophical inquiry. "Introduction to the Bible" acquaints students who come to EMU with little or no knowledge of or experience with the Bible with the Bible as the basis for historical Christian and Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. "Introduction to Philosophy" uses philosophical inquiry not as a tool of doubt but as a way of exploring reality with a sense of wonder and reverence.

Kathleen is also one of the part time pastors of Shalom Mennonite Congregation, which meets in EMU's Strite Auditorium. She therefore gets to enjoy the challenges and rewards of pastoral ministry both in and beyond the Bible or philosophy class sessions. By combining pastoral ministry in the congregation with her teaching ministry, Kathleen is encouraging relationships and networks which enrich both university study and discipleship in community.

## **Earl Zimmerman**

Earl Zimmerman presented a paper at a conference sponsored by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship at Calvin College in Grand Rapids Michigan on November 9-11, 2000. The conference was organized by people from both Conrad Grebel College and Calvin College. The overall purpose of the conference with the rather audacious title, "Will Civil Society Save the World?" was for Christian development theorists and practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds and international experiences to assess and evaluate the role of civil society in the promotion of Third World development.

Participants at the conference were from a broad spectrum of Christian traditions including mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and a disproportionate number of Mennonites. Central to the conference was assessing the character and role of civil society in our world and asking how this relates to the work of Christian non-government organizations (NGOs). To this end, we discussed the relationship between civil society and sustainable long-term development. We evaluated the fit between civil society and world cultures and religions. And finally, we examined through case studies the means by which Northern NGOs can promote civil society in developing countries.

Earl Zimmerman's paper titled "An Ambiguous Project: Asian and Anabaptist Perspectives on Christian NGOs and Civil Society" addressed the issue through the lenses of his mission experience in Asia and an Anabaptist theological perspective. He argued that Christian NGOs are involved in civil society for better or for worse. It is not a question of "if" but of "how" we are involved. Such involvement is ambiguous because civil society itself is a conflicted arena involving many actors with diverse agendas. Furthermore, Christian communities (indeed all religious communities) need to constantly relate their primary faith commitments to their involvement in a given society.

From an Anabaptist perspective, the claims of Jesus present us with a social, political, and ethical stance that is normative. The Christian community itself is given priority in Christian social strategy. This ethic, however, also has compelling relevance for society. The challenge for the Christian community is to offer its life and witness to the society in which it exists. From this perspective civil society itself cannot "save the world" but Christian NGOs acting through civil society can be dynamically transformative forces in the world.

## **Linford Stutzman**

Linford and wife Janet will be leading the cross-cultural group for the Spring Semester in the Middle East (God willing!). A group of 25 students, including 4 Bible and Religion majors, will spend time in Egypt, Israel/West

Bank, Greece and Rome. The itinerary includes Palestinian home stays, 2 weeks on a Kibbutz, 1 week at the Nazareth Village, and ship travel to Athens and Rome. Linford looks forward to teaching one course in particular: "The Christian Movement in the Mediterranean." What an opportunity to trace the spread of Christianity, visiting Egypt and Israel, but especially beginning the course in the Nazareth Village with its reconstructed buildings from the time of Jesus, and ending in Rome, the capital city of Christendom.

## **James Rhodes**

James taught Faith and Praxis during Fall Semester and will teach it again during Spring Semester.

## **Ray Gingerich**

Ray taught Peace and Justice in the American Context during Fall Semester and will teach Peace and Justice in Global Context, Church History, and Faith and Praxis during Spring Semester.

## **Ted Grimsrud**

Ted taught Faith and Praxis, Biblical Theology of Peace & Justice, and Violence & Human Nature during Fall Semester. During Spring Semester he will teach Introduction to Theology and History & Philosophy of Nonviolence.

Ted's book, God's Healing Strategy: An Introduction to the Bible's Main Themes, was published by Pandora Press in October.

## **Calvin Shenk**

On September 24, Calvin preached at Deep Run East Church in Perkasio, PA. His sermon title was "Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" On October 7 & 8 he gave three presentations on "New Religious Movements" at Mattawana Mennonite Church in Mattawana, PA. On October 21 & 22 he gave three presentations on "Christian Faith and Other Religions" at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church in Lancaster, PA. An article which Calvin wrote entitled "Embrace Ishmael and Isaac" appeared in the December 5 issue of The Mennonite. Calvin and his wife Marie will be in Jerusalem at Tantur Ecumenical Institute as "Scholars in Residence" from January to July.

## **Student Conference**

**Cory Mullet**, senior Philosophy & Theology major

On October 5-7, Cory Mullet, Theology and Philosophy major, along with fellow EMU students Nate Frey and Eric Rutt, attended the 39<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the

Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP). The conference was held at Penn State. We met several other undergraduates at the conference, but the vast majority of conference participants were philosophers and graduate students in philosophy. Participants came from around the world but especially from the US, Europe, and Australia.

Cory attended eight sessions at the conference. Each session lasted two to three hours during which two or three presentors read their papers. Some of the sessions which he attended were "On the Phenomenology of Attention," "(Post)modern Theories of Race," and "Nietzsche's Animals." The conference's opening plenary speaker was the famous deconstructionist, Jacques Derrida, who related pieces of his current writing project. All of the presentations were intellectually challenging. Even when he lost the presenter's line of reasoning, Cory enjoyed his or her presentation style, and the way the presenter interacted with other conference attendees in the question and answer sessions following the paper reading.

The trip to the conference was sponsored by the EMU Pew Society.

## **Recent Alumni Updates –**

### **Tom Mast, '99**

For the past year Tom Mast has served as Assistant Pastor at Beldor Mennonite Church. At the end of December he and his wife, Candice, moved to Mechanicsburg, Ohio, and Tom will begin work as the Communications Director for Rosedale Mennonite Missions.

### **Matthew Showalter, '99**

Matthew is currently in mission service with Rosedale Mennonite Missions in Turkey.

### **Jonathan Bowman, '99**

Jonathan is teaching Bible at Eastern Mennonite High School.

### **Brian O'Conner, '97**

Brian is teaching high school in inner-city New York, NY, planning on seminary and eventual mission work.

### **Adam Yoder, '99**

Adam is youth pastor at Seattle Mennonite Church.

### **Jill Landis, '99**

Upon graduation from EMU in 1999, I returned to my home area of Goshen, Indiana. I spent last year doing voluntary service at Amigo Centre, a Mennonite camp and retreat center in Sturgis, Michigan. I was involved as an instructor for Amigo's Outdoor and Environmental Education program, a dining hall hostess, co-coordinator for

the Winter Youth Retreats, Activities Director for summer camp, and co-coordinator for Know Jesus 2000, a Jr. High convention that Amigo co-sponsored with Camp Friedenswald at Goshen College. I enjoyed the solitude and respite of the outdoors, the challenge of learning and teaching new things, and the supportive community of people there. It was also a wonderful place to transition out of college and into the "real world."

This past summer I accepted a position with Mennonite Board of Missions and in August I began a term as a Service Adventure leader in Philippi, West Virginia. I lead a unit of one man and four women, three of the whom are from Canada, so we have been enjoying learning about each other's cultures and countries. I was excited about getting back into intentional community, but sometimes find it amusing that I am doing it with five 18 and 19 year olds. Along with my responsibilities of nurturing, mentoring and leading the Service Adventurers, I work with an after-school program for middle schoolers. Our focus is violence, drug and alcohol prevention, and it's been quite a challenge. I love the age group, but the culture of fighting is one that I am not accustomed to. I continue to seek God's direction and peace as I work with these children, most of whom are very much "at-risk." The past few months I have also begun to work as a Land Surveyor with a crew from my church. I love the work, the outdoors, and am amused by the occasional threats we get from unwelcoming neighbors who aren't appreciative of our work. The community of Philippi is quite small, but very welcoming. The congregation itself has 35 members, so one can't help but be involved. I've enjoyed trying out different things, and have enjoyed watching the Service Adventurers use their gifts as well.

After my term in Philippi, I may look into attending graduate school, most likely seminary. So far the itch to be studious hasn't hit yet, so I'll wait until that urge beckons me. Until then, I'm just enjoying the mountains and experiences that Philippi and Service Adventure are offering.

## **Haverim Breakfast**

Sixty people were in attendance at this year's Homecoming Haverim Breakfast. Mark Wenger gave the welcome and the meal blessing. Michael Derstine introduced the speaker, Daniel Hertzler, and led the discussion afterwards. Daniel Hertzler spoke on "In the Wake of Johnnie S: the persistence of Mennonite community." Ruth Zimmerman then introduced the faculty and concluded by leading in prayer.

**Daniel Hertzler**

## Occasional Forums

On September 13 the Bible & Religion Department presented the first forum for the school year. Calvin Shenk spoke on “The Middle Eastern Jesus: Messianic Jewish and Palestinian Christian Understandings.”

On October 18 Ted Grimsrud moderated a panel discussion on “Understandings of Scripture: Why is the Bible so Controversial?” Panel members consisted of James Rhodes, Calvin Shenk and Ray Gingerich.

Current students Cory Mullet and Aaron Kauffman led the next forum on November 1. They described their year of study abroad, in China and Ethiopia, respectively.

Nancy Heisey led the forum on November 15 on “Sharing Global Gifts: The Vision of Mennonite World Conference.”

The last forum of the semester, on December 1, was led by students Lorendia Schmidt, Nate Horst, Nick Hurst, Daniel Patterson and Charity Shenk. They spoke about their study and travel experiences in India.

Seminary professor of Old Testament, Anil Solanki, will lead the next forum on January 18. His title is “Justice Traditions in the Bible: Concern for the poor and needy in the Bible.”

**Note: Anyone interested in having their name put on an email list to receive information about upcoming forums should contact Marci Myers at (540)432-4463 or [myersmk@emu.edu](mailto:myersmk@emu.edu).**



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