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# BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

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WINTER  
2010-11

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

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## Did you know . . .

- ⇒ **Peter Dula** has had his book, *Cavell, Companionship and Christian Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2010) published. He also published an article on Stanley Hauerwas in the July *MQR* [*Mennonite Quarterly Review*].
- ⇒ **Christian Early** and **Ted Grimsrud** edited John Howard Yoder's non-violent epistemology entitled *A pacifist way of knowing*.
- ⇒ **Nancy Heisey** and **Linford Stutzman** attended the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) meeting in Atlanta from Nov 20-22.
- ⇒ **Kent Davis Sensenig** and **Mike Brislen** each taught two courses for the department this fall.
- ⇒ **Reta Finger** taught two courses + gave a presentation 10/21 at ACRS on "The Ethics of Eating Together" — on the origins of the Agape Meal and the Lord's Supper, as well as on current issues around food and on eating justly."

## Greetings, Haverim,

I recently ran across a website called 'S--- My Students Write.' On it professors post examples from student papers, usually sentences that are grammatically or syntactically bizarre. Admittedly, it can be very funny, and, admittedly, students can write the strangest things. But the cynicism behind it is still slightly disturbing. While I could troll through student papers and find similar things, I feel far more inclined to do the opposite--show examples of some of the remarkable things our students write.

But I will begin with a detour to something I wrote. In July I published a paper in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. In concluding, I said, "I worry about my students for all the usual reasons that one worries about young adults, but I don't worry about the future of the church in their hands. When I look out across a chapel or the dining hall, I am overwhelmed with confidence about the prospects for the Mennonite church." Writing samples like the ones that follow will demonstrate just why I could write something like that. They are all from papers written by students in the Senior Capstone class for Bible and Religion majors (which has for the last two years been combined with the Peacebuilding and Development senior capstone), which I had the great privilege of teaching this fall. The following quotes are from their papers and projects.

"After a lifetime growing up going to whatever Protestant church was nearby, and being raised to see the differences between denominations as primarily divisive and insignificant, I find myself claiming the name 'Mennonite' as my own.... I want to be part of a community whose theology and principles, even if they are not always lived out, I can be held accountable to, and hold others accountable to. I want a voice in the politics of the institutional church and I want to be associated with the ideas of pacifism, John Howard Yoder, and simple living."

"I see God's call in my life to be an evangelical.... I grew up semi-fearful of the word, associating it with Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.... I had never thought of myself as an evangelical until my spiritual mentor basically labeled me as one. I have felt convicted that Christ has called me to take this on and use this spiritual gift to further the kingdom."

"We should not be concerned with the instrument God uses to speak to us, but with what God is saying to us. I am just a little pencil in His hand.' This is a quote by Mother Teresa.... I found that she puts into words what I feel God has given to or revealed to me.... I would like to consider myself just a little pencil in God's hand as he does the writing."

"When looking ahead, I can't help but see how God and the church will be present in my life. I've decided to attend AMBS next Fall and hope to get more guidance from there. When I tell people I am going to seminary, the immediate response is, 'Oh, you're going to be a pastor!' Maybe. Then I tell them I will be getting my M. Div with a concentration in Theological Studies. The response to that is, 'Oh, you're going to teach!' Maybe. I don't really know where seminary will lead me.... So from here, I wait. I wait to hear God's voice and hope that I will respond."

"Through my recent exposure to theological arguments in favor of an eschatological and holistic view of Christ's body... I have been challenged to reevaluate how I view success. I can no longer make the easy and dismissive conclusion... regarding nonviolence. Instead I must overcome my discomfort and learn to grapple with what it means for Christ to be Lord, a struggle I am sure will take my whole life. With the prospect of asking difficult questions and expecting no answers, carrying out actions I know to be futile in the eyes of the world, and learning what it means to be part of the body of Christ, I am, surprisingly, beginning to feel at peace."

Blessings,  
Peter Dula

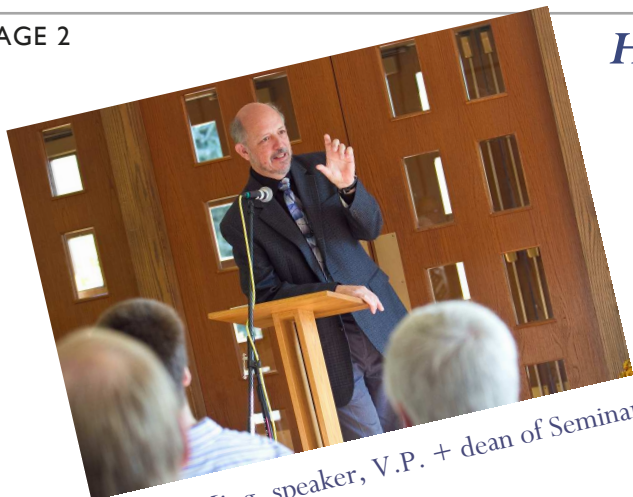
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## Haverim Breakfast 2010...



Michael King, speaker, V.P. + dean of Seminary



Sam Thomas, president of Haverim



Linford Stutzman, faculty; Michael King; and Mike Derstine, Haverim committee member



Rebecca Charles, Haverim committee member; Nancy Heisey, academic dean; Derrick Charles, 2006 Biblical Studies

## Alumni Happenings ...

**Emily Sims Wingert**, 2009 Congregational and Youth Ministries grad, writes:

“God’s timing is perfect. I can say this now because looking back it was his Spirit’s nudgings that have led me to where I am today. Only He knew five years ago when I changed my major from Culture Religion and Mission to Congregational and Youth Ministries that I would find myself married in Mechanicsburg, PA and invited to attend a small church plant in need of a program for the kids. I am so blessed to be able to serve as the volunteer Children’s Ministry Coordinator at On Eagles Wings Church. I am challenged weekly with hard questions that kids ask and I am so thankful that my faith and my education can help me lead them and point them towards the One who has all of our answers. I am excited to see how God will continue to grow our small church and to see where He leads us all in His perfect timing.”

**Traci Yoder Stoltzfus**, 2005 Congregational and Youth Ministries grad, (with husband Jared) recently became the mother of Graham. She writes:

“I’m still managing the Phoenix Mennonite Guest House and also directing the Phoenix SOOP program (Mennonite Mission Network’s Service Opportunities for Older People). We have 4 SOOPers living here in the house with us now, but during the winter months we will be sharing this big house with about 20 others. It get’s very busy around here!

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 Email us!  
[bible@emu.edu](mailto:bible@emu.edu)

A junior from Harleysville, PA, History and Social Science major, Education endorsement with Bible and Religion, Political Studies minors

I was privileged to spend a good portion of a week this past summer at the Fund for Theological Education's (FTE) annual Leaders in Ministry Conference. Held at Boston University, from June 16-20, the ecumenical conference spanned many Christian traditions including Catholicism, Episcopalians, Orthodox, Presbyterians, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Baptists, and many more. Amidst the nearly 40 undergraduate Fellows, 40 graduate Fellows, 10 voluntary service Fellows, and various FTE staff, this eclectic and sporadic group of men and women, primarily under 30 years of age, met to worship, dialogue, learn, pray, eat, and explore the theme of "The Creative Encounter: Discovering Our Common Story for the Church and the World."

Upon arriving at Logan International Airport, unsure of what lay ahead and what exactly I had gotten into, I found myself among people with similar fears and questions; a theme that would continue to emerge throughout the conference. A group of four unlikely companions decided to find a place to eat since we had time before our opening session. We discussed our journeys coming to this conference and quickly delved into who we are, what we believe, and what in the world a Mennonite is (a question that I often hesitate to answer, but enjoy the challenge of describing the small Anabaptist denomination that I appreciate so much). Still emerged in conversation three hours later, after eating our sandwiches at Panera Bread, we packed up our trash and headed back to the conference site.

Unbeknownst to us, this small group including a Presbyterian, Non-denominationalist, Mennonite, and Unitarian Universalist, prematurely discovered the theme that lay ahead of us for the week: we all had a common story.

The plenary address, given by Dr. Sarah Drummond of Andover Newton Theological School, and a day-long workshop on public narrative, led by Rev. Dr. Tiffany Steinwert of Syracuse University were two of the most memorable sessions that discussed the importance of telling our stories and telling them effectively to encounter something wild, uncontrolled, or unexpected. We looked at how stories can engage the heart, communicating values through the language of emotion and the head; fusing the cognitive and the affective together. We were challenged to look for common experiences as stories elicit what we have in common, build relationships, show humanity, share knowledge, transform and inspire us.

On public transportation, walking from place to place, during conference sessions, touring historic Boston, eating and worshipping together with the incredible view from the 26<sup>th</sup> story of Boston University's largest dormitory, in historic Marsh Chapel, in the Law School Auditorium, conversations ceased to end. I was struck by the common stories I heard from everyone I encountered. I was reminded that human beings are not all that different despite the ways in which we often polarize ourselves. I received an encouraging promise throughout this week: the church is in good hands. Young and educated leaders are rising to the call of ministry in various forms. The stories shared throughout the week helped me to see a common purpose and vision for the church and the world; a vision of hope, love, and acceptance for a hurting world.

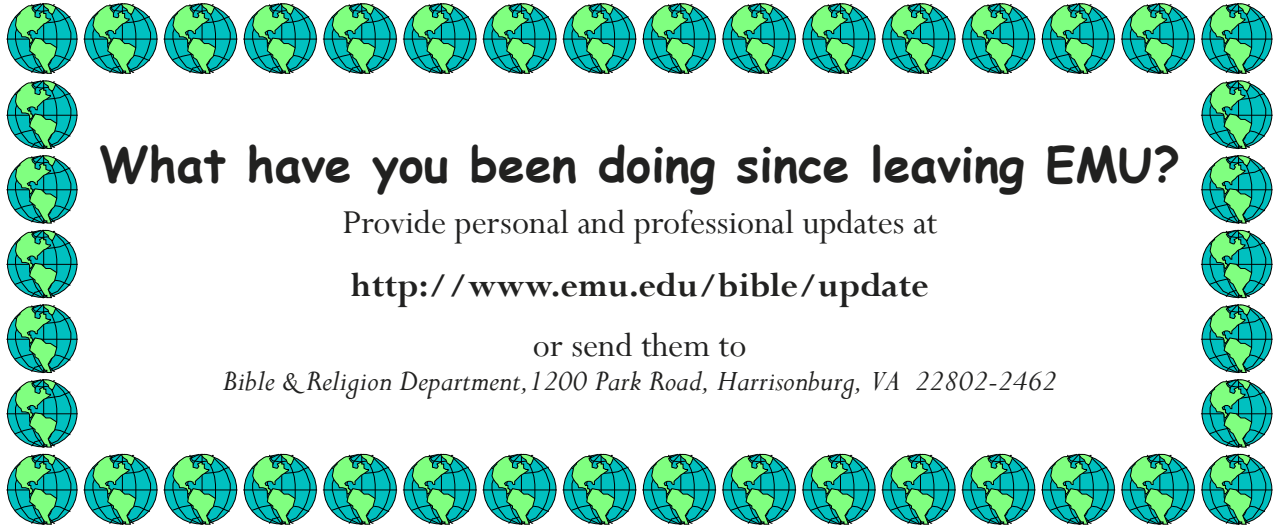
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## Alumni Happenings continued ...



After four months of training in Vancouver, Canada, **Grace Schrock Hurst**, 2010 Culture, Religion and Mission grad, left for a three-year assignment with Servants to Asia's Urban Poor to Jakarta, Indonesia in the kampong community. For the next few months she will be living with a host family while doing language study.

She writes of her training experience as part of an intentional Christian community, Downtown Eastside, which practices radical hospitality among those who are marginalized in our society, "As I reflect on my time in Vancouver, I am very grateful. Downtown Eastside was a place of learning for me as the Lord taught me about prayer, the power of worship, the intense darkness of drug addictions, and the hope of Christ even amid much darkness. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it!"



## 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

## Upcoming Event ... a first of its kind conference ...

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### *Conversations on Attachment: Integrating the Science of Love and Spirituality*

What are healthy attachments, why do we need them, and how can we form them? In answering these questions, we can discover how to be fully human. So say the organizers of an "attachment conference" to be led by experts from across North America gathering at EMU in the spring of 2011. Read more at <http://www.emu.edu/news/index.php/2371/>.

Christian Early was instrumental in bringing the conference to EMU. He says, "Attachment theory gives us a specific handle on the development of our sense of self, the dynamics of love, and the hope for repair after rupture... This conference provides an open space—stretching from neuroscience to spirituality—to talk about what it means to be human."

The conference will be held March 31—April 1, 2011 and is open to the public.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.emu.edu/attachment/>

