

BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

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

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Greetings, Haverim!

A Reading of John 20.11-12

“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.” (Jn. 20.11-12) According to more than one of the John commentaries, this seemingly straightforward description is also an allusion to Exodus 25.17-22. “Then you shall make a mercy-seat of pure gold. You shall make two cherubim of gold ... at the two ends of the mercy-seat. Make one cherub at one end, and one cherub at the other.... There I will meet you, and from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites.”



Assuming these commentaries are onto something here, what do we make of the imaginative space to which the evangelist directs us, the empty space between the cherubim? Before (or instead of) attempting to answer that question, it is worth noting that there is another Old Testament allusion at work here. That other is to end of the third chapter of Genesis—“at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.” While the careful crafting of imagery in v. 12 clearly suggests the mercy seat of Ex. 25, the context suggests Gen. 3. No other gospel says anything about a garden. Where Matthew and Mark say that Jesus went to “a place called Gethsemane” John says he went “to a place where there was a garden” (18.1). Where the synoptics don’t specify a location of the tomb John repeats it twice in one sentence. “Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified and in the garden there was a new tomb” (19.41) And when Mary first sees the risen Lord she supposes him to be the gardener (20.15). So now we have to ask not just about what it means to juxtapose the empty tomb and the mercy seat but also the Garden of Eden as both

swim before the eyes of weeping Mary. At one moment at the end of John's gospel Jesus is an empty space the inaccessibility of which is guarded by the cherubim. A moment later he is calling Mary by name, looking not like an angel in shimmering white but a gardener in muddy overalls. At one moment, the risen Lord is too otherworldly to be represented. In the next he appears so comfortably with the natural world that he can be mistaken for a gardener.

We dare not force a choice between these two allusions. Rather they teach us that theology oscillates between presence and absence, proximity and remoteness, immanence and transcendence. It has done so from the very beginning. Moses said to the burning bush

If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.'"

Verse 13 is everybody's question. Verse 14 is the bewildering philosophical answer—"Being"—that convinced the church fathers that Plato had been reading the Old Testament. And verse 15 is I am the one who has been with you all this time. But then, finally, watch those verses and the dichotomy between them, start to collapse into each other, not so much presence and absence as present absence and absent presence. The accessible present God of those stories is, well, the God of those stories. And the abstract God who is simply Being is not so as a concept but as a name, not a what but a who, one who is nameable, addressable, therefore part of a conversation, one that we are invited to humbly join.

Excerpted from remarks given as part of the Mennonite/s Writing VI conference panel on Theopoetics.

~ Peter Dula, chair

Graduation Brunch



The annual graduation brunch was held on Sat., Apr.28. The graduates gathered with family and department faculty to enjoy conversation and dishes made by the faculty. After introductions, Peter Dula offered a prayer of blessing for the food and for the students as they transition to new endeavors. Much conversation then followed, as evidenced in the images below!





Images courtesy of Joan Chamberlain.

Ministry Inquiry Program

The [Ministry Inquiry Program](#) is an exciting opportunity of the Mennonite Church USA for college-age young adults to explore pastoral ministry. The program offers the opportunity to experience first hand what ministry is and to test one's own gifts and sense of call. The rich variety of placements this summer are representative of the multi-cultural nature of the church.

Philadelphia Praise Center (pastor Aldo Siahaan), where Erika Bollman will be placed, is an inner city congregation that worships in three languages: English, Spanish and Indonesian. Erika is well suited for this placement as prior to coming to EMU Erika spent a year in Indonesia with the MCC Salt program. Thus Erika has language skills that will be helpful for worship and for pastoral care in the PPC neighborhood. Erika and another EMU student (Ardie Hermawan who will be serving with PPC through MCC's summer service program) will also be creating a summer day camp for inner-city children, with a peace component.

Jossimar Diaz-Castro will be serving with the Spanish speaking Anabaptist church plant in Harrisonburg, IDA (Iglesia Discuplar Anabautista – pastor Byron Pellecer). IDA worships on Saturday evening at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church. Jossimar has already been worshipping with IDA as an EMU student and is excited about the challenge of going deeper into the areas of teaching, preaching and working with the youth.

Rekekah Enns' placement with Fourth Street Community Church in DC will be working primarily with the homeless population providing worship, meals, and legal counseling, as well as hosting youth groups from suburban Korean congregations who come to the city for an immersion experience into inner city reality. Fourth Street (pastor Sang Jin Choi) has core members who are Korean Mennonites and their community center building is also home to Korean Christian Broadcasting (not sure of technical term for this).

Also serving in DC, Joel Nofziger's placement with Washington Community Fellowship (pastor Del Glick) will give him exposure to another kind of faithful kingdom living in the DC area. WCF is a multi-denominational evangelical congregation affiliated with VA conference of the Mennonite Church located very near the capital.

And in the mountains of VA, Rose Jantzi will serve as Staff Chaplain/Christian Nurture Coordinator for Highland Retreat (program director Dean Williams). This placement enables Rose to develop pastoral care, teaching and worship planning skills with both staff and campers alike.

Funded in part by MCUSA the MIP program provides students with an opportunity to explore their gifts for

ministry and to test their possible calling to longer term service work for the church. At the completion of their 11 week placement MIPers receive stipend money towards their continuing education at a Mennonite College. In addition to MCUSA, funds come from EMU, the host congregation and conference, and the student's sending congregation and conference. This summer MCUSA anticipates having over 20 MIPers from five Mennonite colleges participating in the program.

EMU MIP director Carmen Schrock-Hurst says, "The MIP program is a win-win for the denomination, the local congregations, the students, the participating colleges, and indeed for the broader church. The opportunity for students to test their gifts and to be mentored by seasoned pastors is truly invaluable. The insights that these students then bring back to the classrooms in the fall greatly enrich the learning environment on campus. A study done by Goshen College in ??? shows that investing funds in MIP leadership development does help to create a new generation of leaders for the church."

Read the [news release](#) about the 2012 program.

Loss of Student



The Bible & Religion Department mourns the death of EMU student Theo Yoder (class of 2012). Theo was a Congregational & Youth Ministries major from Kalona, Iowa. President Loren Swartzendruber presented him an honorary degree in March. Thirty-one students, faculty and staff traveled by bus to the funeral. (read the [Weathervane article](#))

Faculty in Action

Peter Dula presented a paper entitled "Theology is a Kind of Reading" during the Theopoetics panel on March 30 at the Mennonite/s Writing VI conference.

Christian Early will teach a course on faith and reason at Fuller Theological Seminary this summer. He is also editing the Attachment Conference Keynotes, which Wipf & Stock will publish in the fall.

Ted Grimsrud hopes to complete a book manuscript this summer: [Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story](#).

Nancy Heisey will be attending a meeting on Anabaptist education sponsored by Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Education Agency, and the International Committee of Mennonite Brethren. Basel, Switzerland, May 25-30.

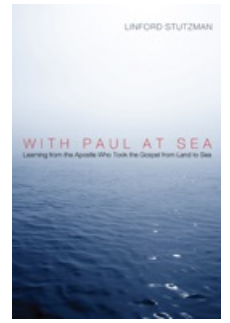
Carmen Schrock-Hurst helped to represent EMU at the Children, Youth and A New Kind of Christianity conference held in Washington DC May 7-10.

Linford Stutzman ... Just released: [With Paul at Sea: Learning from the Apostle Who Took the Gospel from Land to Sea](#) (Cascade, 2012). This book comes out of the perspective of sailing the routes of Paul in the Mediterranean for the past seven years, and attempts to look at Paul with the following three sea-based perspectives on the world in which Paul moved as well as our own:

- the world is like the sea
- the church is like a ship
- living by faith is like sailing

Available now from [Wipf and Stock](#), and shortly on Amazon.

Lin returns to the Middle East on May 6 after a semester with the EMU cross-cultural program in the spring. In Israel he will be leading a group of Canadian Mennonite young adults for the YELLA program, followed by three more seminars in Turkey and Greece. On each they will spend a week sailing the routes of Paul along the southern coast of Turkey, learning on rather obscure Acts sites such as Perge, Patara and Priene, as well as the well known ones like Ephesus, Athens and Corinth.



Haverim Awards

Haverim Debt-Reduction Scholarship Awards

- Biblical Studies major **Tim Heishman**
- Congregational & Youth Ministries major **Jamie Hiner**
- Philosophy & Theology major **Doran Stucky**

Haverim Writing Awards

- 1st Place: **Nathan Hershberger**, '12 Philosophy & Theology, "J. Denny Weaver, the Creeds, and Scripture: Thoughts on the Orientation of Anabaptism and Approaches to Theology"
- 2nd Place: **Doran Stucky**, '12 Philosophy & Theology, "Queer Theology of Christianity"
- 3rd Place: **Benjamin Bailey**, '12 Biblical Studies, "Vulnerability, Contingency, and Christian Discipleship: Theological Vision from the Seat of a Bicycle"

Alumni In Action

Heather Myers, '08 CYM (congregational and youth ministries), is the full time youth minister at Mt. Olive Brethren Church in McGaheysville VA.

Emily Sims Wingert, '09 CYM, and husband Riley now enjoy Ana Elisa, born April 24 at 8 pounds 13.8 ounces and was 20.5 inches long.

Upcoming Events of Interest

The speaker for the fall Justice Lectures will be Julia Spicher Kasdorf. **Save Nov.1, 2012** to attend the 3:30 and 7:00 p.m. lectures, followed by talk-backs.

Alumni Update

What have you been doing since leaving EMU? We'd enjoy hearing from you! Use our [online form](#).