

BIBLE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT

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

FALL 2013

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Greetings, Haverim!

As the year 2013 draws to its inevitable close and we anticipate the newness of 2014, we may be reminded (as we always need to be) of the powerful words from the book of Revelation: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (5:12).



This juxtaposition of power and self-giving love (even to the death) continues to bamboozle interpreters of Revelation, Christians in general, and, truly, virtually everyone who lives in the United States today. Our difficulty in our churches and our wider society to understand the things that make for peace underscores the vital importance of seeking ever anew better to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such a quest for understanding animates the work of the Bible and Religion Department at Eastern Mennonite University. Of course, each of us—faculty, students, staff, friends—find it all too easy to become distracted, to accept offers from the principalities and powers for comfort with the status quo. But we try to resist those offers through engaging the biblical text, the writings of the tradition, current insights from our wider world, (intense at times) conversation, service work in church and community, and reflective research and writing.

We in the department appreciate the friendship of our Haverim community. We find the material support you all offer extremely encouraging as we seek to support our students and each other. We also appreciate your prayers

for our work.

One of the challenges we face that could use continued prayer support is simply that of finding our way as witnesses to the gospel of Jesus and its implications for 21st century academic work in this particular institution of higher education. The connection among (1) a rigorous engagement with the radicality of the biblical message, (2) a need for effective vocational preparation, and (3) accountability to the secular academy at times is uneasily discerned. The role of the Bible and Religion Department at EMU has continued to evolve—and not always in ways that we in the department welcome. Thank you for your much needed encouragement as we seek the faithful way.

– Ted Grimsrud, interim chair

Students in Action

Two Youth Ministry students benefitted from experiential learning through internship placements with local Mennonite congregations fall semester. **Bethany Crouse** interned at Lindale Mennonite and **Alexa Short** at Community Mennonite. This spring semester senior **Brendan Jeschke** will be at Weavers Mennonite and senior **Jonathan Burkholder** at Park View Mennonite. In addition several youth ministry students participated in Park View and Community Mennonites' fall youth retreats. A highlight was waking up to six inches of snow at Highland Retreat and helping teenaged drivers make it safely back to Harrisonburg!

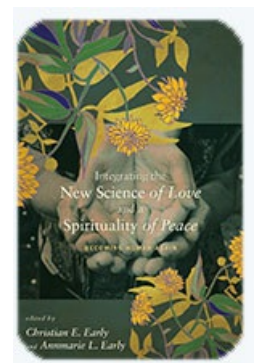
The image to the right reflects **Andrea De Avila's** engagement with the readings on atonement from a variety of Christian perspectives, as encountered in Contemporary Theology class. The art pieces were central to her Bible and Religion Senior Capstone class, where she built in research on the use of art for the purposes of psychological self-discovery. This past summer, Andrea served as co-worship leader at the Mennonite Youth Convention in Phoenix. Andrea has been a part of the planning process for the youth worship services over the past two years and did a great job on stage in front of thousands of Mennonite youth from across the country.



Faculty Comings & Goings

Peter Dula – has been on sabbatical fall semester...more details in the next issue!

Christian Early – In *Integrating the New Science of Love and a Spirituality of Peace: Becoming Human Again*, Annmarie and Christian gathered and edited the keynotes from the attachment conference as well as provided an introduction and a conclusion. They argue that while science and religion have often been at odds, there is good reason to think that with what we are learning about what it means to be human from recent neuroscience and psychology might open up a new space for constructive conversation and collaboration. To get to the point succinctly: our most basic need is to belong and to experience love. It turns out that Anabaptism, with its emphasis on lived community and service especially in times of suffering and need, has rich resources that contribute constructively to this growing conversation. It is an exciting time to be an Anabaptist. Read the [EMU news release](#) and get your copy now!



Ted Grimsrud – presented the Carol Grizzard Browning Lectures at the University of Pikeville (Kentucky) November 11 and 12, 2013. He attended the American Academy of Religion annual meetings in Baltimore, November 22-25. His latest book, *The Good War That Wasn't—And Why It Matters: The Moral Legacy of World War II*, is due out with Cascade Books this winter.

Nancy Heisey – will take up responsibilities as book editor of Brethren in Christ History and Life in 2014. Also, the MCUSA Executive Board will meet in Harrisonburg in February, and as a member she will participate and help to host.

Carmen Schrock-Hurst – along with Ken L. Nafziger from student life and Brian Martin Burkholder, University Campus pastor, represented EMU at Bethel College in October. Representatives from Goshen, Bethel, Bluffton, Hesston and EMU met to discuss how Mennonite colleges might strengthen faith mentoring on our campuses. This gathering was funded in part by Mennonite Education Association.

Meet Andrea Saner

Andrea Saner joined EMU in August 2013 as Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew Language

Q: What was your favorite part of living in England for the last 3 years?

A: It is hard to choose! The tea, scones, and mince pies were quite nice, but the best part was probably the architecture. I lived in York, which retains a city wall much as it has been since the Middle Ages; buildings in town date anywhere from the 14th to 21st century. Also, passing the two great cathedrals of northern England—the York Minster and the Durham Cathedral—on my commute was awe-inspiring.

Q: If you hadn't become a professor, what could your career have been?

A: I've been gripped by study of the Bible and theology for my entire adult life, but as a child and early teenager I was more interested in the arts: visual art, dance, and particularly music. I might have been a professional violinist or music teacher.



Q: What is that crazy contraption you use to get to work?

A: It's a folding bicycle, a souvenir from England. I can park it under my desk.

Q: Why Old Testament?

A: It's true that reading the New Testament well requires knowledge of the Old Testament. But I'm continually impressed by how the OT witnesses to God and the life of faith in its own right. Grace, mercy, justice, peace, neighborliness, sin, forgiveness, covenant, sacrifice, intercession, the presence of God, the word of God—these are all in the OT. Also, the sheer breadth of the OT is both challenging and exciting. In terms of textual mass, most of the Bible is Old Testament! It was written in a variety of contexts, but often in the shadow of one ancient empire or another; these are among the reasons that it can speak constructively and critically in a variety of contexts today.

Haverim Breakfast 2013

Carmen Schrock-Hurst, Instructor of Spiritual Formation and Ministry, highlighted the 2013 Haverim breakfast during EMU's Homecoming weekend October 13 with a fascinating presentation reflecting on how the student experience of attending EMU has changed. Drawing on her parents' time as EMU students, her own, and her children's, Carmen humorously and perceptively illustrated the evolution of student background and expectations over the past several generations. She used this family history as a way of entering into a discussion of the distinctive challenges and opportunities facing today's students and the EMU of today as it seeks to embody its mission as a Mennonite Christian university.

A robust crowd attended the breakfast, successfully inaugurating a new venue for the gathering, EMU's Discipleship Center (after years of meeting at Eastern Mennonite Seminary). The question and answer time was all too brief given Carmen's stimulating input and the energy for conversation that characterized her audience.

Ministry Inquiry Program (MIP)

Check out our [MIP webpage](#) for student reflections on their experiences last summer and for links to their chapel services. We are recruiting now for MIP students for this summer. Let [Carmen](#) know if you are aware of a current student who you believe would benefit from the MIP experience.

Andrea De Avila Balboa, 2014 Biblical Studies major ...

Reflecting back to my time at West Union, I would like to think that I left the impression of being capable and with aptitude to do what I was asked to do. But more importantly, I hope that it was tangible for the congregation and the overall community where that I love God and I want to serve him more than anything in this world. I think I would do a lot of things differently if I could, but I hope that people saw me for what I am; an imperfect human being that continuously seeks the truth in God's word, taking Christ as the ultimate guide for interpretation of the Bible. We need to learn from our experiences, whatever they may be; good or bad. We need to experiment and try different things; and although I don't think being a congregational leader is my "thing," I am still learning a lot from this experience and I hope that I was able to help others learn something as well.

There is no greater gift than the gift of service, and I thank West Union Mennonite Church (Parnell, Iowa) for letting me serve them this summer... although it feels to me that they served me more than I did them.

Jacob Landis, 2014 Congregational and Youth Ministry major ...

Ministry Inquiry Program was a satisfying and rewarding experience. Through this past summer's adventure I was strongly affirmed in my ministry abilities and encouraged in my call to ministry. I spent time reading, studying, and doing devotions, doing visits with the congregants and sharing meals with them, and preaching, planning and leading worship.

I was blessed to be working with a wonderful pastor and warmly welcomed into the community. I learned a lot about myself, about my abilities to listen and connect with people, about shepherding a congregation, leading by example and spending time with God in prayer, doing ministry with people and not to them, caring for a community in love. This summer's MIP was a great, blessed time of growth and learning.

Jordan Luther, 2015 Biblical Studies major ...

Living and learning with Pastor Nathan Ramer and everyone else at Wellman Mennonite Church was such a gem. I was greeted with a sense of warm hospitality that is such a trademark quality of small-town America, and it did not take me long to grow attached to all of these wonderfully wise people. More importantly, I value all of the countless affirmations I received over the duration of the summer. I tend to shy away from such commentary; however, it was so refreshing to have people recognize and support my gifts and talents and how they can be used for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. This experience helped me understand that pastoral ministry is exciting and a crucial realm of ministry that I can most definitely see myself doing one day.

Nathaniel McKnight, 2015 Social Work major ...

Despite a lack of strong knowledge in pertinence to ministry, I felt positive in my overall experience over the summer. One of the most notable things I felt was a tremendous sense of change, as well as a greater understanding of what it is I feel gifted in. I am honored to have been able to work with those that I had, as well as humbled by my experiences with the family that hosted me. I am also grateful for those that aided me throughout the summer. Between the first sermon I did and the new relationships I found in the James Street community, it felt like an overall rewarding experience.

Matt Naugle, 2014 Congregational and Youth Ministry major...

Note: Matt participated in a summer internship program patterned after MIP at the Methodist church plant, RISE, here in Harrisonburg, VA. Because MIP funds are only available for students interning in a Mennonite congregation

Matt did not receive as large a stipend as the other MIPers but he did receive some funds from EMU as well as from the Bible Department's Haverim fund. In any case, he found his summer to be very rewarding! He writes...

I have grown so much in my time with RISE. I have learned to recognize the necessity of hope in our lives and in the Gospel that we proclaim. I have stood on holy ground and realized the power of communion in my life and in the life of the faith community. I realized the need in my life to not only take time to minister but also to be ministered to. Lastly, I have been silent and realized the power that it gives to others, and I have told my story and been empowered by the silence of those who listened. All in all, this experience was nothing short of amazing and I feel truly blessed for having spent the time as part of the RISE community.

Fall Forums (there were three!)

September 25 – Peter Rollins, The Orthodox Heretic

Popular author (*The Idolatry of God; Insurrection*) and emergent church leader Peter Rollins, from Belfast, North Ireland, blessed EMU with a series of provocative talks and conversations on September 25. Rollins was invited to EMU by the Bible and Religion Department to give the annual department-sponsored justice lectures.

Rollins spoke in chapel, in the Common Grounds coffee house after chapel, in two undergraduate ethics courses, in the University Colloquium, and at a meeting of the Freethought Coalition. All of his talks were well-attended and elicited stimulating conversation.

Christian Early, Professor of Philosophy and Theology welcomed Rollins's input. He acknowledged that Rollins presented a challenging perspective. His "version of being counter-cultural would be different from the ones we are most use to hearing." We tend to approach reflection on God in terms of our desire for wholeness. But Rollins emphasizes more the need to "learn to live with being human, being broken, being, in a sense, unfulfilled. And in the shared humanity of that, you find true fulfillment."

EMU Provost Fred Kniss, a 1978 graduate of EMU's Bible and Religion Department, introduced Rollins with an affirmation of Rollins's approach that challenges the university toward self-reflection. "It's important that our basic assumptions are not just taken for granted, but that they are held up to the light of inquiry."

Thomas Millary, a junior philosophy and theology major who was instrumental in the planning of Rollins's visit, was pleased with the event. In his view, Rollins's encouraging his listeners to embrace, rather than trying to escape, their experience of brokenness is profound. He hopes for more conversation on campus about Rollins's ideas. "This campus could really benefit from dialogue about faith from a perspective like Peter's."

[A longer report on Rollins's visit](#)

[A podcast of Rollins's chapel talk](#)

[A podcast of Rollins's colloquium talk](#)

September 30 – Is Pacifism Always Ethical? A conversation with Moshe Shner and Ted Grimsrud

Over the years of leading the Middle East cross-cultural study semester, I (Linford Stutzman) have observed students struggling with their commitment to pacifism as they hear both stories of the Holocaust, terrorism, and brutal military reprisals in the region.

The students' confidence in their home-grown, low-risk conclusions about pacifism is challenged by the violent history and current violence that shapes the Middle East.



On September 30, these challenges came to EMU. Dr. Moshe Shner, a professor of philosophy at Oranim College in Israel, son of famous “ghetto fighters” who survived the Holocaust, and lecturer to our EMU students each year on the ethics of pacifism from a modern Israeli perspective, was in the US for several conferences. I invited him to EMU and arranged for a public conversation with Ted Grimsrud on the question “Is pacifism always ethical?”

Perhaps it was the question and the chance to hear Moshe and Ted discuss it from significantly different points of view, in any case the Common Grounds coffee house was packed with highly interested persons, both students and people from the community. Both Moshe and Ted made strong cases, Moshe arguing that violent resistance under some conditions is the most ethical response (“I would not be here today if it were not for successful military intervention by the Allies in Nazi Germany”), and Ted arguing that pacifism in the long run is more effective in defeating aggression. (“The “good war” didn’t actually prevent the death of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust.”)

While the conversation did not end with Moshe and Ted agreeing, the two convincing but conflicting points of view challenged everyone in the audience, and perhaps even Ted and Moshe, to re-exam their own positions on pacifism. And that, I believe, is a good thing.

For additional perspectives on this event, see the excellent article by Andrew Jenner on EMU’s website: <http://emu.edu/now/news/2013/10/mennonite-professor-and-israeli-philosopher-debate-pacifism-violence-and-resistance-to-evil/>

October 23 – Rolston Holmes

This Fall, the renowned philosopher of science and religion Dr. Holmes Rolston came to EMU. Shenandoah Anabaptist Science Society invited Dr. Rolston in collaboration with the provost office to speak in chapel, in classes, and at the monthly colloquium. At the colloquium, he shared from his recent book *Three Big Bangs: Matter-Energy, Life, Mind* in which he ponders the unfolding story of the universe and the possibility of understanding it as having an underlying, loving presence. The podcasts are available on the EMU website.

Thanks to Haverim

Thanks to Haverim for partially underwriting the cost of an all-day spiritual formation retreat for 24 students in the Spiritual Formation class fall semester. Haverim funds were also used to provide a small stipend for three local pastors who each met weekly with a group of six students from this class. Student evaluations from the class consistently rate the retreat and the small groups as high points of their learning experience.

Alumni Updates

Milton Loyer (Biblical Studies, 1967) – Since January 2012, Milt has been preaching each Sunday as a lay pastor at two rural United Methodist congregations in York County PA. In addition to his work as a statistician, he continues to serve as the archivist for the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church.

What have you been doing since leaving EMU? [We’d enjoy hearing from you!](#)

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