



w i n d o w

The path of God is not always straight

Alan Stucky

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When I graduated from Bethel College four years ago I thought I had a plan. I was going to wait in North Newton for a year for my future wife to graduate from college and then we were going to move to Elkhart, Ind., so I could work on my Master of Divinity at AMBS.

As so often happens when God is leading, life took a bit of a detour. So for the last four years I found myself working at Buhler Mennonite Church with a tremendous group of young people and also taking classes at the Great Plains extension of AMBS. Looking back, I can see more clearly the wisdom of God, and would not change my experience for anything.

One of the major reasons that I would not change my experience is that I had the opportunity to take classes with a wonderfully diverse group of people from a variety of stages of life and to take classes through a variety of forms. AMBS offers classes in different forms that have allowed me, and many others, to further my education through multiple settings. Most of my classes have been the somewhat traditional kind that meet on a weekly basis, usually in the evenings. As someone who was working for a church during my study, I found

this approach was often helpful because I could have regular contact with the class at a time of the day that actually fit into my schedule.

In addition to the weekly classes, each semester I would usually have a class that would meet three or four times for weekends. While these classes were intense, I found them quite rich, partly because of the people who were there. The weekend classes attracted some people who were outside of my geographical area and would otherwise not have been able to attend.

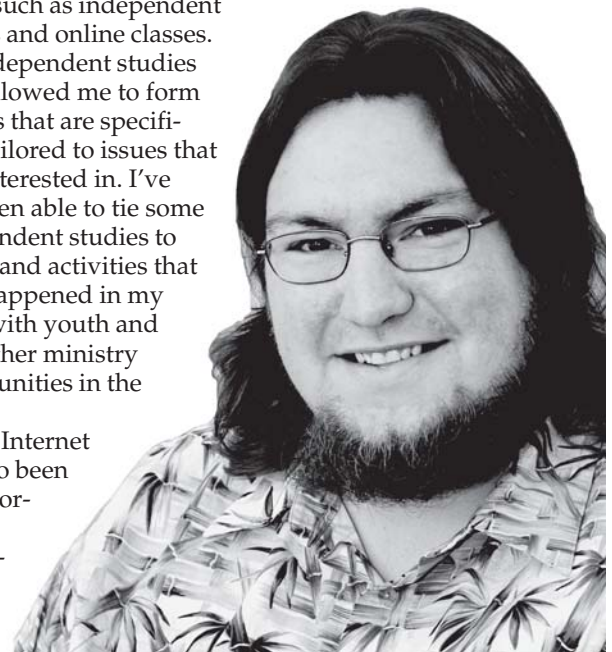
I have also had the opportunity to take classes in more nontraditional forms such as independent studies and online classes. The independent studies have allowed me to form courses that are specifically tailored to issues that I am interested in. I've also been able to tie some independent studies to events and activities that have happened in my work with youth and with other ministry opportunities in the area.

The Internet has also been an important component

in many classes. While I have had classes that were entirely online, many of the weekend classes, and some of the weekly classes, have made great use of online discussion forums to expand the discussion beyond the walls of a classroom.

This fall my path of life has finally taken me to the AMBS main campus in Elkhart. I'm looking forward to this atmosphere for new challenges and new opportunities for learning.

Alan Stucky is a student from Buhler, Kansas. He is in the youth ministry concentration of the Master of Divinity degree. ●



Mary E Klassen

Online teaching and learning

Putting good teaching ahead of technology

"Paul was engaged in distance pastoring, using the technology available to him," Jacob Elias, professor of New Testament, said at a recent meeting where AMBS faculty discussed online teaching and learning. This awareness added a helpful dimension to his recent Romans classes as they used today's technology—Internet and e-mail.

While AMBS makes accessible seminary study a strategic goal, faculty work with delivery systems that bring courses closer to people across the continent and even around the world. Online courses are one option—an option that continues raising questions about how well online learning prepares people for ministry.

Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology, took an online course on teaching online courses last summer, and she began the recent faculty discussion emphasizing that pedagogy comes before technology.

Gayle pointed out that good teaching must respect diverse talents and ways of learning, and that "technology permits building multiple pathways to learning."

On the other hand, the questions raised by online courses are significant: Is it possible to build a sense of community among online learners? Can formation for ministry happen online? How can the seminary provide time for faculty to develop online courses, when this requires 50 percent to three times more time than developing a face-to-face course? How can AMBS best provide the technical support needed

for students and professors of online courses?

Some students find that online courses give them better opportunities to participate, because they benefit from the additional time to reflect and share comments online if they are not comfortable speaking out in class. The requirement to write comments and reflections can result in deeper learning, AMBS professors have observed.

However, online courses are not better for **all** students, or for all courses and instructors. Some students are not as able to discipline themselves for the independent nature of online learning. Others may not thrive with the high

demand for written communication in online discussions. This leads to a higher drop-out rate for online courses.

Another issue important in preparation for ministry is that online courses don't bring students together physically, so the kind of community formed among class members is different. There are ways in which online faculty and students can build community, but it takes more deliberate effort and attention.

Mary Schertz, professor of New Testament, admitted, "It's hard to laugh with your students online."

Because of the tension between the challenge to make courses more acces-

sible and the value of ministry formation in face-to-face learning, AMBS is experimenting with more hybrid courses. These classes meet together two times a semester, with online work in between. (See offerings at right)

Nelson Kraybill, AMBS president, points out on page 4: As AMBS seeks to provide more opportunities for distance learning, we also continue to strengthen on-campus teaching and learning as a base for the other delivery methods. ●

To find out more about AMBS online courses, see www.ams.edu/academics/courses/online



Gayle Gerber Koontz

Sometimes seminary study involves a truck breakdown in the countryside of Guatemala. The course, *Peace and Justice: Latin American Perspectives*, took students and AMBS professors Ted and Gayle Gerber Koontz to Guatemala in January 2007. Willi Hugo taught the course at SEMILLA, the Latin American seminary in Guatemala City. This intensive, three-week course is an example of another way in which AMBS offers courses to meet different learning goals. Generally once a year, either in January or summer, AMBS offerings include a course involving encounters with a different culture and country.

Benefits and challenges of online courses:

What students say

"First, I liked the fact that students were from around the world. Second, people were reflecting on their readings while still being in the context of their present ministry."

– Ray Epp, Yubarigun, Japan, Master of Arts in Peace Studies student who has studied both on campus and online

"Online courses made it possible for me to continue gaining credits without always having to invest days on the road. This was a HUGE benefit for me and almost always outweighed any disadvantages, although I would not have wanted to do all my work online.

"What was challenging was that the computer monitor is "flat" (pun not intended, but also true!), compared to being in a classroom with a live instructor to whom one can ask immediate questions. Profs in a live classroom expound on ideas in a lecture, too, in a way that doesn't happen online."

– Jane Roeschley, associate pastor of Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill., 2007 Master of Arts in Christian Formation graduate ●



Mary E. Klassen

LeNora Klassen Duerksen (holding book) took advantage of the wide range of delivery systems for completing the Master of Divinity degree in pastoral care and counseling. She began taking courses in Kansas at the AMBS–Great Plains extension. She came to AMBS several summers for intensive two-week courses and weekend courses and then moved to Elkhart for periods of on-campus study to fulfill the requirement of completing 30 credit hours in residence in Elkhart. She returned to AMBS in summer 2007 for her last course, *From Daniel to Jesus: Early Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, a two-week course taught by Steve Schweitzer. She says she accomplished the program of study in "an unusual three years—2004–07—while still a resident of Kansas, maintaining relationships with my husband, cat, dogs, chickens and long-horn cattle!" She now is director of senior ministries at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan., and part-time chaplain at Sunshine Meadows Retirement Community in Buhler.

Other class members shown above are Reuben Glick Shank, Jim Smith and Ruth Kelly.

Extension sites

AMBS–Great Plains

To find out more about the AMBS–Great Plains extension in central Kansas, go to www.ambs.edu/greatplains.

A link there opens the course list for 2007–08.

Winnipeg Centre for Ministry Studies

WCMS is an inter-Mennonite partnership on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man. Students in WCMS courses can earn credit at AMBS.

See upcoming courses, at www.ministrystudies.ca.

AMBS–Iowa

Courses are offered in southeast Iowa. See more at www.ambs.edu/academics/extension-programs/ambs-iowa. ●

Not your traditional seminary courses

Hybrid courses

Principles of Pastoral Care

Daniel Schipani, Ph.D., Psy.D.

Three credit hours.

Meets on campus Feb. 15–16 and May 16–17, with online work in between.

Principles of Youth Ministry

Andy Brubacher Kaethler, M.A., Ph.D. student.

Three credit hours.

Meets on campus Feb. 15–16 and April 18–19 with online work in addition.

Online courses

Beginning Hebrew: Ruth

Steve Schweitzer, Ph.D.

Four credit hours

(also offered on campus).

Eastern Christianity

Walter Sawatsky, Ph.D.

Three credit hours.

Off-campus course

Celtic Pilgrimage

June 14–30, 2008

Led by Marlene Kropf, D.Min., and Willard Roth, spiritual director and retired pastor.

Three credit hours (also available for people who do not wish seminary credit).

For more information, contact Rosemary Reschly: rreschly@ambs.edu; 574-296-6244. ●

President's Window

With all the talk about new delivery systems in theological education, it is good to remember that "delivery" cannot be one-way. Education for mission and ministry is not a product that can be packaged at places such as Elkhart and shipped to the world. Leadership formation is a *process*. It demands give-and-take between teacher and student, between theory and practice. For Anabaptists, learning happens with teachers and students accountable to Spirit, Scripture and faith community.

The church is calling on Mennonite seminaries to make pastoral and theological education accessible—geographically, economically and culturally—for places and people currently underserved. AMBS takes this seriously, and we are learning that:



- A seminary changes—for the better—by having more connection with sites of ministry and mission. Theory is good, but practice hones theory.
- While graduate-level degree programs need to remain central at AMBS, we will serve the church best if we also offer non-degree opportunities and collaborate with undergraduate institutions to provide college-level education. Such non-traditional delivery systems allow the seminary to learn from diverse ethnic, cultural and economic groups that have much to teach about evangelism, worship,

- suffering and community.
- Online learning can be good, but there are challenges. It is more difficult for some online students to feel connected to professors and fellow students, and the dropout rate is higher.
- Hybrid courses (part face-to-face and part online) are more successful and rewarding than courses that are strictly online.
- Keeping a vibrant face-to-face learning community at Elkhart gives AMBS a base from which to offer a online and extension courses elsewhere.

When Jesus called his followers to be witnesses "to the ends of the earth," he probably did not have modern travel and communication in mind. But in this era of globalization, even the classroom extends to the ends of the earth, and theological education can be stronger for it.

— J. Nelson Kraybill

Panorama

Fall issue of *Vision*

Gayle Gerber Koontz, AMBS professor of theology, is the editor of the fall issue of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, focusing on suffering. This journal is copublished by the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS and the Institute for Theology and the Church at Canadian Mennonite University. You can read Gayle's editorial and several articles online at www.mennonvision.org/Volume8-2.htm.

Mission lectureship

Darrell Guder, leading authority on missional theology, will be featured in the Shenk Mission Lectureship at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, November 30 and December 1. See www.ams.edu/news-and-publications/events-and-news/guder.

Call for presentations

AMBS extends an invitation for proposals for presentations to be given at the conference, "Upgraded? The influence of technology on Christian worship," August 7–9, 2008. See more

at www.ams.edu/news-and-publications/events-and-news/upgraded.

AMBS green building featured

The new AMBS Library and Campus Center is featured in the summer 2007 issue of *In Trust*, a magazine for board members of seminaries. The article focuses on four seminaries that are demonstrating good stewardship by emphasizing sustainability. To read the article, to go www.intrust.org, and select *Read the Magazine*.

Alumni News

Greg Yantzi (Master of Divinity 1996) was ordained at Harrow (Ont.) Mennonite Church, on October 14, 2007.

Karen Weldy (Master of Divinity 2003) was ordained at Southside Mennonite Fellowship on September 30, 2007.

Garry Jost (Master of Divinity 2000) received a Doctor of Ministry from Drew University, Madison, N.J. His project was "Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength: An Authentic Encounter with the Bible in its Original Languages."

Ted Grimsrud (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 1983) is author of *Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century* (Wipf & Stock 2007). Ted is associate professor of theology and peace studies at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

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The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

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