

Engaging Pastors* Update

July 2008

* Engaging Pastors ~ a collaborative initiative involving nine projects designed to bring pastors and faculty together for sustained interaction and learning. In December 2004, AMBS received a five-year grant from Lilly Endowment to fund these projects.

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Study Group

During spring semester 2008, Daniel Schipani led a Pastor-Faculty Study Group exploring pastoral care in the congregation. Titled *The Pastor as Caregiving Sage*, the group worked with case studies brought by participants. Daniel Schipani's book, *The Way of Wisdom in Pastoral Counseling* (IMS 2003), provided background perspectives.

Jim Smith, pastor of Bethel Missionary Church in Goshen, said, "Within the demands of the pastorate, it is quite easy to slack off from disciplines of research as well as theological reflection and expansion. With the assistance of Dr. Schipani, our discussions and reflections pushed us into the realms of research and theological reflection."

This year's Pastor-Faculty Study group will be lead by Mary Schertz, Rebecca Slough, and Barb and James Nelson Gingrich. Twelve pastors will join them in a study of the theme of "release" in the gospel of Luke.

➔ For information, visit www.ambs.edu/studygroup.



Eldon Stoltzfus, Robert Martz, Jim Smith and Bob Yoder work through a case study during a session of the Engaging Pastors study group with Daniel Schipani.

Listening Project

The Listening Project continues to bring faculty, alumni pastors and their congregations together for reflection. Last November, Jacob Elias, professor of New Testament, visited Altona Mennonite Church in Manitoba, and Gordon Driedger, the pastor. In his follow-up report, Jake wrote, "As faculty members we cannot all have equal awareness of congregational realities in all regions of Mennonite Church Canada (or US), but some coordinated effort such as that afforded through Engaging Pastors is needed to make sure that we get out into the church and its communities."

➔ Find out which churches and alumni are hosting Listening Project visits this coming year at www.ambs.edu/listeningproject. You are free to inquire if your congregation is interested.

Pastor Sabbatical

Applications for funded sabbaticals at AMBS in fall 2009 are due by Sept. 5. Two grants are available each semester through Engaging Pastors to cover living expenses and provide small stipends for participants.

Seven pastors on sabbaticals at AMBS overlapped for a brief time in January (see at right).

➔ Look for information and an application form at www.ambs.edu/pastorsabbatical. We are especially encouraging pastors from racial and ethnic congregations in MC USA and MC Canada to consider this opportunity.



Pastors on sabbatical at AMBS in January were Margaret and Gary Peters, Hanley (Sask.) Mennonite Church; Henry Krause, Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Church; Hugo and Doreen Neufeld, Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alb.; and Roy and Loretta Kaufman, Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Clarifying the Call

Fourteen new pastors from diverse congregations across the United States and Canada participated in Clarifying the Call, February 15–17, 2008. Designed for pastors with two to five years experience in ministry, the weekend retreat gave participants an opportunity to meet with each other in a supportive environment to share, explore, reflect on the unique challenges they face during the initial period of serving in their first congregation, and experience a renewed commitment to their call.

"To have this level of affirmation early in the ministry was so encouraging. It inspired me to keep on doing what I've been doing," Sue Conrad said. She is associate pastor of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

David Elkins, pastor of Lima (Ohio) Mennonite Church, said, "Clarifying the Call provided a needed insight into the crucial necessity to abide in Christ for my own health, for my family's health and for the health of the ministry."

➔ See www.ambs.edu/clarifyingthecall for more reflections from participants from MC Canada and MC USA. The program is open to pastors in the second through the fifth years of their first pastorate; an application is available at the web address above. The next event is set for March 26–29, 2009.

See more

➔ Find out about all Engaging Pastors programs at www.ambs.edu/engagingpastors.