Inside this Issue

Alumni News ...................... 5-7
Campus News
- Commencement .............. 4
- Graduate Plans .............. 4
- Teacher-of-the-Year ....... 4
- Spring Sports Notes ...... 8
- Speech and Debate
  National Honors .......... 8
From the Head of School ... 2

Senior Faith Statements
pages 2-3

Alumni Features
Engaging Our Muslim Neighbors
and
Providing Hospitality to Refugees
pages 6-7
Watershed Discipleship

Watershed discipleship—understanding my faith as place-based, that I am connected to the earth and people around me—embodies the core of my faith and how I want to live.

My family places importance on living simply and within our means. Growing up I was often frustrated having to work in the garden, to bike to school and other places a lot, and to buy clothes from a thrift store. However, I’ve come to understand this simpler lifestyle shows small expressions of faith and stewardship in everyday life. So I’m trying to live with enoughness, understand my place of privilege in the world, and being a person of place who affects others around me.

Relationships with people in Christian settings at school and church have provided me support, love, and accountability in tangible ways and has been an important part of developing my faith. Yet this supportive community I live in is juxtaposed against a greater polarized nation around me.

For speech competition, I researched, wrote, and memorized an original oratory about finding national community. In the process, I learned that searching for community and finding empathy and love for your neighbor in the midst of a somewhat distant society is not just integral to healing divisions in our nation, but also for building a strong community of faith.

Hannah Yeakey plans to attend Haverford College to pursue a major in international studies with a minor in Spanish and a concentration in peace and conflict studies.

From the Head of School

In a chapel late this year, Bible teacher Dale Shenk exhorted Bethany students to “do something important.”

What does doing something important look like? It could be starting a nonprofit to serve refugees who lack food and housing (p. 7), setting up meals and conversation with Muslim neighbors (p. 6), or even serving in the world arena working to stop war crimes for the United Nations (p. 5). For these alumni, doing something important means seeking a life full of meaning.

That is the message that high school students heard in chapel and one which we intend students to encounter daily. We as mentors and teachers help students envision a future which includes heartfelt faith, healthy relationships, and meaningful work.

This issue of the BCS Bulletin describes ways of living that go beyond the values dominant in our society. Mainstream culture values financial success, prestige, and power. Jesus teaches an alternative path—one that values radical hospitality, service, and self-sacrifice. As seniors conclude their high school years at Bethany with senior faith statements, we see them consider paths of discipleship, service, and peace. Stories of our alumni in these pages describe meaningful work: practicing hospitality as a means of peacemaking between different faiths and as a way to serve the poor and dispossessed.

How do we know that we are doing something important at Bethany? We aim to foster faith development and academic excellence in the context of community. We hope this brings spiritual life and meaning to our students as it does for us. We see this manifested in students who learn the skills they need to bring change to the world, to live out their faith, and to also “do something important.”

—Tim Lehman
Peace and Love

Being Mexican living in the U.S. has never been easy and recent events have made that more clear: there are people who don’t want us here and hate us for simply being different. This has challenged my faith in God.

Yet for every person who has tried to hurt us, there have been twice as many people who have shown love and support to my family. People in the Waterford Mennonite Church community, where I have grown up, have helped my family through many difficult times and encouraged me in developing my faith.

That is why I connect strongly with John 14:27, which says “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” That sense of peace grants me strength and confidence and is especially true when I deal with social confrontation. I believe that peace, though not always possible, is the best solution out of any conflict.

Daniel Robles plans to attend Goshen College to study pre-engineering and computer science.

Serving Others

Throughout my childhood, I have learned the value of service through church, home, and school. I have participated in church and youth group service projects and learning trips. With my family I have volunteered at the Michiana Relief Sale and helped assemble school and relief kits at the Depot for Mennonite Central Committee. As a student at Bethany I have served with SWAP (Sharing with Appalachian People) and in various community organizations on service days and for senior Bible class.

Although these experiences have been fulfilling and shaped my faith, perhaps my most significant service experience was being on the receiving end.

While my family was traveling in Colorado, we became stranded along the road when our van broke down. Strangers coming home from church helped us move all our belongings to a nearby campground and another helped us dispose of our van. Within 24 hours we were on the road again as my grandparents and a family friend, Mitch Stutzman (’07), drove though the night from Indiana to Colorado to rescue us.

Making time for planned acts of service is important, but just as important, if not more important, is being aware of and responding to the needs of others around us each day. That is my aim for living out my faith.

Sophie Miller plans to attend Hesston College to study graphic design and then Bluffton College to study dietetics.

Grade 8 Reflections

Jekayla Lefever:
“I’m beginning to have an idea how God works. I’m praying and reading the Bible more and becoming more involved with church. When asked to open worship, I feel more connected not only with God, but with the church.”

Ethan Neuschwander:
“Seeing the beautiful world around me has brought me closer to God. Last winter reminded me that even when it’s cold and snowing to still have hope, because spring is around the corner—and it’s like that in our lives. Even though we go through tough times, it’s only for a season, draws us closer to God, and helps us learn something new.”

Mia Reinhardt:
Church has pointed me to Jesus and boosted my self-esteem. I think about what we talk about in Sunday school and how it affects me. Teachers are loving and it shows; Karli Graybill (’10), a youth sponsor, has taught me how to be passionate about God.
Remembering the Past, Living into the Future

“We persevered in faith and community. Through these hard times, we have grown closer as a class and learned from our experiences,” said seniors Sarah Leininger and Natan Nafziger at Bethany’s 63rd commencement on May 28, 2017.

Several times Sarah and Natan referred to the strong supportive community they have experienced during their time at Bethany—most evident following the death of classmate Anna Barnard in December. An empty seat, draped in graduation attire, marked her physical absence, yet also the presence of her memory as part of their community.

Mark Schloneger, Bethany board member and pastor at North Goshen Mennonite Church, in his message “Service Entrance Only: An Invitation to Revolution” invited graduates to the entrance that no one is watching, that God has prepared for them. “In the upside down kingdom of God, power lies in service, not domination. Prosperity is found in sacrifice, not accumulation. Success is measured in self-giving, not self-glorification,” he said.

Earning top honors were Abby Hochstetler, valedictorian, and Sarah Leininger, salutatorian. The class gift was funds for purchasing water-efficient drinking fountains designed to fill water bottles. As a parting gift from Bethany, each senior received a ceramic mug made by art teacher Eric Kaufmann.

Graduate Plans

- Mennonite College/University: 14
- Other Christian College/University: 5
- Public/Private College/University: 10
- Church Service: 1
- Work Force: 2

Teacher-of-the-Year

Adam Friesen Miller, fourth grade teacher, was named Bethany’s teacher-of-the-year for 2016-17.

Many parent and student nominations noted Adam’s patience and grace as he cares for students and teaches them how to solve arguments in real time through love and forgiveness.

Parents also noted how Adam has engaged his class, as well as the broader community and church, in connecting with faith and justice issues—most notably in promoting learning regarding the Trail of Death.

Adam is also part of a Mennonite Schools Council group writing new preK-12 Bible curriculum for member schools, working primarily with the grade 3-5 subgroup.
Deaths

See online obituaries at bethany.cs.edu/alumni/obits

Jean (Davidhizar '67) Griffin, Bristol, Ind., May 1, 2017.
Melody (Yoder '75) Slabach, Nappanee, Ind., May 9, 2017. Husband is Phil Slabach ('75).

Marriages

Caroline Bontrager (’08) and Jason Kelly, Louisville, Ky., Apr. 15, 2017.
Ellie Schertz (’11) and Josh Yoder, Goshen, June 3, 2017.
Nathan Brendle (’13) and Elizabeth DeLeeuw (’14), Bristol, Ind., June 3, 2017.

Notes

Hannah Eash-Gates (’02), Boston, Mass., is in her second year of law school at Northeastern University. Previously she served with Mennonite Voluntary Service in San Antonio at the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services and stayed for seven more years following her service term.
Kelly (’08) and Eric Frey Martin began a service assignment in Colombia with Mennonite Mission Network in February. They will work alongside the Colombian Mennonite Church to nurture the spiritual gifts of young people.
Erin (Helmuth ’09) and Jordan Smeltzer began working in June with Common Hope in Antigua, Guatemala. Erin will plan and lead groups coming to Guatemala to learn more about how Common Hope helps families and communities improve their lives.

Remembering MJ Sharp

Michael J. Sharp (’01) was killed while working for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A peacemaker with the United Nations, MJ went missing on March 12 from the Kasai Central Province of the Congo, along with several others, while investigating alleged human rights violations by the Congolese army and local militia groups. On Sunday, March 26, his body was found in a shallow grave.

MJ's father John Sharp, a history and Bible and ministry faculty member at Hesston (Kan.) College, says, “I have said on more than one occasion that we peacemakers should be willing to risk our lives as those who join the military do. Now it's no longer theory.”

MJ's legacy of peace will continue to inspire current and future peacemakers.

In a tribute at MJ’s funeral services (hesstonmc.org/mjmemorial), classmate and friend Andy Gingerich (’01) noted that the best condolence he received was, “It is so cool that you knew him.”

MJ Sharp (’01) serving with Mennonite Central Committee in the Congo in 2013. Photo credit Jana Asenbrennerova/MCC
Engaging Our Muslim Neighbors

“The biggest hindrance for Christ followers encountering Muslims are fear and misunderstanding,” says Jonathan Bornman (’85), a global consultant serving on Eastern Mennonite Mission’s Christian-Muslim Relations Team. “Every day I see inaccurate portrayals of Muslim immigrants and refugees that lead to fear and mistrust.”

With changing immigration patterns and refugee crises around the world, Jonathan notes that Christians and Muslims increasingly are neighbors like never before in history—sometimes this goes well and sometimes not so well. “Obeying Jesus’ command to love my neighbor should be the starting point for all Christian-Muslim engagements,” he says.

Jonathan works with congregations interested in learning to engage with their Muslim neighbors, leading seminars that provide a solid introduction to the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity and then teaching and equipping Christians to engage with their Muslim neighbors through dialogue, witness, peacemaking, and hospitality.

“Hospitality is a great starting point. Drinking tea or eating together, sharing tools, or playing together invariably transforms the way we see our neighbors,” says Jonathan. “It is important to be clear about my own faith—that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior—but being open to learn about the faith of our neighbors. There are many bridges to build upon when we meet our neighbors.”

Witnessing the transformation and friendships that result from such interfaith engagement brings Jonathan great joy. He tells of challenging one church member, who claimed he didn’t know any Muslims, to pray and ask God to bring Muslims into his life. Today that man is deeply involved. He helps refugees in his community, promotes refugee employment in his company, and mentors a young Somali man whose father was killed.

“Drinking tea or eating together, sharing tools, or playing together invariably transforms the way we see our neighbors.”

While Jonathan’s initial interest in missions grew out of family, church, and church school experiences at Bethany—where he participated in the Peace Club—and Goshen College (1990 grad), his sense of calling to engage in Christian-Muslim dialogue began in 1992 while on a Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Burkino Faso.

There he and a Bukari, a Muslim man, read the Gospel of Luke together out loud (one chapter per day over a month) followed by brief discussions. Since that time, he has encountered other Muslims with interest in the Bible and desire for friendship with followers of Christ. “Jesus has transformed my life and I love sharing that with others, being a witness to what God has done for me,” says Jonathan.

That profound encounter with Bukari shaped Jonathan’s future interests. A few years later he began studies and eventually earned an MA in Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary with a concentration on Islam. Subsequently, he and his wife Carol, along with their three children (now young adults), served in Senegal (1999-2009) in a partnership among several church agencies.

In addition to his current work with Eastern Mennonite Missions, Jonathan is working on a Ph.D. at the Oxford (England) Centre for Mission Studies, researching how the nonviolent commitments of a Sufi Muslim order originating in Senegal are (or are not) being lived out in a large community that has immigrated to New York City.
Providing Hospitality to Refugees

Traci (Maust '97) Vermilion, Indianapolis, long envisioned that God would use her career to help others—to make her world a better place. Three years ago, frustrated that her 12-year career in sales wasn’t fulfilling that vision, she decided to change careers and began teaching English as a second language to high school youth. Little did she realize that God would use her new career to make a difference beyond the classroom.

Many of Traci’s students are refugees, forced to flee their home countries for safety. She has heard firsthand their horrible stories of having their homes burned, seeing loved ones killed, and the uncertainties of living in a refugee camp. As she learned to know her students, she became more aware how their limited understanding of English and American culture—and often poverty—make it difficult for them to fulfill their dreams of an easier life in the U.S. “They are still suffering in America (though in different ways), a land where most Americans have way too much, and it made me lose sleep,” she says.

Traci soon realized that it is also difficult to help her students learn when they have more immediate needs at home. She tells of female students who skip school each month because their families can’t afford feminine products or clean underwear—having no access to affordable laundry facilities. Traci says, “How can I be a Christian and ignore the needs in front of me, in my own backyard?”

So Traci and her husband, Chris, began responding by distributing supplies to families with specific needs: winter clothing, tableware, and furniture. Others became involved as they heard of their work and so the Vermilions formed the Indiana Refugee Network (IHN), which received nonprofit status in March 2016.

Expanding the network of volunteers has allowed IRN to provide more services to more families. In addition to providing, donating, and organizing supplies, volunteers also mentor refugee families and help them learn how to manage bills, forms, and other tasks that are difficult for people with limited English skills.

The mentoring and building of relationships is what provides Traci her greatest joy. She has developed friendships with several Muslim women from Syria, which has led to her helping them learn to drive and obtain their licenses. Her children, Emma (13) and Carter (10), too have formed friendships with her friends’ children. “It doesn’t matter the language or culture, they get right in there and play,” she says.

While the Vermilions’ work has gone from helping a few families to now more than 30, Traci dreams of being able to serve hundreds. “The need is there. We just don’t have the resources to do it yet.”

“How can I be a Christian and ignore the needs in front of me, in my own backyard?”

Traci (Maust '97) Vermilion with her husband Chris, daughter Emma and son Carter. Learn more about the Indiana Refugee Network online at facebook.com/indianarefugeenetwork.
Notice to parents:

Please notify the BCS Bulletin of the new address of your son or daughter.

Spring Sports Milestones

Jacob Saylor (’18) qualified for regionals in boys golf for the second consecutive year with a score of 86 in sectionals.

The softball team won the Bethany sectional with wins over Hamilton, Elkhart Christian, and Lakewood Park Christian. The Bruins lost to South Central in the Bethany regional.

Brent Reinhardt (F97-) concluded his 20th and final season as baseball coach. He will continue teaching.

Speech and Debate National Honors

Hannah Yeakey (’17) was selected to compete on the Northwest Indiana NSDA District World Schools Debate team at the June national finals. She was a first alternate to the national tournament in the senate congressional debate, having placed third in state competition.

Hannah and Joel Yoder (’18) were among fewer than 500 speech and debate students nationwide to receive the prestigious Academic All-American award.