

Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

"TMTC helps form theological leadership for the church by providing and supporting graduate theological education, particularly at the doctoral level, from a Mennonite perspective in an ecumenical context."

IN TORONTO:

- graduate courses and student advising
- ecumenical conversations (e.g., Mennonite-Catholic dialogue)
- special lectures and panels
- Student Fellows Group (a forum for students to present research and receive critical feedback)
- A. James Reimer Award (an annual doctoral scholarship)

AND ACROSS NORTH AMERICA:

- graduate student conferences
- Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network
- AAR/SBL academic forums
- Muslim-Christian dialogue
- Conferences and consultations
- Sabbatical residence for visiting faculty

Founded in 1990, TMTC is now administered by Conrad Grebel University College on behalf of a bi-national Mennonite constituency represented by an Advisory Board. TMTC does not admit students, nor grant degrees. Students who affiliate with TMTC are normally registered at one of the colleges of the Toronto School of Theology, an ecumenical consortium at the University of Toronto.

To make a donation to TMTC, please make cheques payable to Conrad Grebel University College, specifying TMTC in the memo line. Interested donors from the USA are asked to contact the College's Development Director, Fred W. Martin, at fwmartin@uwaterloo.ca or 519-885-0220 x24381 140 Westmount Rd., Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6.



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A graduate teaching and research centre of Conrad Grebel University College
affiliated with the Toronto School of Theology

TMTC NOW

Student Profile: Joni Sancken

I was pleased to be asked to write something about myself for *TMTC Now*. My academic and pastoral journey has been varied, but TMTC has been a helpful part of my time at the Toronto School of Theology. I grew up in the Mennonite Church and graduated from Goshen College. It was during my time at Goshen that I accepted a call to ministry that had been nurtured in my home congregation. I began studies toward my M.Div. at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and worked as a youth pastor. While at AMBS, I began to question some of what I saw as traditional Mennonite stances and views in theology and decided that I needed to broaden my perspective. I moved my study to Princeton Theological Seminary, where I graduated with an M.Div. in 2004. After a year working as an interim pastor in Philadelphia, I moved to Hamilton, Ontario, so that I could pursue a doctorate in pastoral theology in the area of homiletics and my husband could serve as pastor of Hamilton Mennonite Church.

The Reformed perspective I gained at Princeton, coupled with my experience in Mennonite congregations fed directly into my doctoral dissertation, which I very recently successfully defended, "Preaching in the Key of the Cross." I am concerned that some Mennonite theology and preaching focuses too much on human potential and discipleship and not enough on God's work accomplished in Christ

through the cross and resurrection. Preaching that focuses more on people than God runs the risk of not communicating the gospel—the good news of what God has done, is doing and will do for the world. I contend that one way of addressing this imbalance is to refocus preaching through the cross. This does not necessarily mean that the cross has to be mentioned in the sermon, but that the cross provides a deep structure for preaching. The cross represents saving action done by God alone in Christ and it arrests and bears witness to harmful human actions, while completely reframing human destiny. The cross continues to be relevant for theology and preaching today as it upholds an understanding of power that is marked by servanthood and love rather than violence and authoritarian power.

TMTC has helped me make important connections with Mennonite conversation partners and the Fellows Group provided a



sounding board for papers and conference material. As I consider future directions, I am open to where God will lead me, but I am most interested in teaching preaching, Christian education or practical theology in a seminary context.

Andy Martin: Recipient of the 2008-09 A. James Reimer Award

Andy Martin, a doctoral student registered at TST's Regis College, is the 2008-09 recipient of the A. James Reimer Award. Andy's major area of academic interest and research concerns Christian spirituality. As he prepares for his comprehensive exams, he is anticipating writing a dissertation that will compare the "humility theology" of 19th-century Mennonites in North America with the views of humility espoused by St. Benedict, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and others.

A. James Reimer: A Tribute

James Pankratz, Acting Director

The picture below of Dr. A James Reimer and his TST colleagues commemorates one of several occasions when Jim was honoured during the past two years. It began with the release of *Creed and Conscience*, a *Festschrift* in his honour in May 2007 (reported in the Fall 2007 issue of *TMTC Now*). After the TST celebrations in April 2008 Jim was honoured by his Religious Studies faculty colleagues at the University of Waterloo at a symposium on his work on May 15. A banquet celebrating his career was held at Conrad Grebel University College on May 23, 2008. He was named Professor Emeritus by Grebel and named Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the University of Waterloo at its Convocation on October 25, 2008.

These were well deserved tributes to a distinguished scholar and a fine friend.

Those who know TMTC are aware that this Centre was largely the vision and work of Jim Reimer. Many others have helped to shape the administrative structures and systems, have contributed significant financial resources, have organized and hosted symposia and conferences, and have energized the student scholarly community that is the core of TMTC. But through all of this, Jim's initiative, direction, and passion for this project made it a reality and sustained it. His remarkable personal commitment to teaching and student advising at TST has left a legacy that will live on.

Thank you, Jim.



On April 17, 2008, a special retirement reception was held at the Toronto School of Theology in honor of A. James Reimer. Many TST students and faculty attended. Pictured with Reimer (L-R) are TST faculty Stuart Macdonald (Knox College), Thomas McIntire (Centre for the Study of Religion), Abraham Khan (Trinity College), Reimer, Alan Hayes (TST Director), Donald Wiebe (Trinity College), Peter Wyatt and Phyllis Airhart (both of Emmanuel College). Though now retired, Reimer remains active with TMTC in advising students and directing dissertations.

RECENT SUCCESSFUL DISSERTATION DEFENSES

Jeremy Bergen, *The Emerging Practice of Ecclesial Repentance and the Nature and Mission of the Church*

Yousef Daneshvar, *Revelation and Religion: A Comparative Study of Karl Barth and Muhammad Hussein Tabataba'i*

Néstor Medina, *"Race," Culture and Faith: (Re)Mapping the Development of Mestizaje as a Locus Theologicus*

Joni Sancken, *Preaching in the Key of the Cross*

Jonathan Seiling, *From Antinomy to Sophiology: Modern Religious Consciousness and Sergei N. Bulgakov's Critical Appropriation of German Idealism*

Congratulations to these students for their perseverance and hard work!

A Holy Land Research Experience

Rene Baergen (Doctoral Student in New Testament)

In 2008 my family and I had the privilege of spending three months in Israel. We were based at Tantur Ecumenical Institute, a study centre on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Tantur offers scholars from around the world the opportunity to pursue independent research in a residential community of learning. The real place which drew me to the Holy Land, however, was Galilee, especially the very local geography of the lake region. For this we moved from Tantur in Jerusalem to an apartment near a reconstructed working first-century farm called Nazareth Village. I was invited to participate as a scholar-in-residence, experiencing a flock of sheep, a first century wine press and a reconstructed synagogue

in lieu of a research library.

I was struck by the interaction of the people of the valley with the conditions and constraints of their particular microecology. I suspect it was always so. When Jesus moves from Nazareth to Capernaum he too becomes part of a particular microecology with all that this entails. For me, this makes all the more significant the social memory of Jesus in precisely that place, as often as not healer, as often as not indifferent to the political and/or religious boundaries of the day.

I came away keenly aware of my own "implacement." I experienced the very mundane and everyday needs of a family trying to make its way in the (suddenly unfamiliar) world. Yet I find here a point of some historical continuity: whatever else the lake region of Jesus may have been in the

first century, it was surely also a place of mundane and everyday existence, as it continues to be today in the twenty-first, in which families faced the challenge of survival as best they were able. At the least, this revives my interest in a subject too often disembodied and reified; it also signals to me the continued importance of placing Jesus in precisely so definite a place.



Report Fourth TMTC Graduate Student Conference

Allan Rudy-Froese (Doctoral Student in Pastoral Theology)

The conference was held August 7-9, 2008, at Eastern Mennonite University. The theme was "The Church." Nine papers were presented from literary, sociological, psychological, and theological perspectives. We went from the varieties of the "emerging church," to Native Canadian trauma/spirituality, to baptism and preaching, to many other topics that Mennonite doctoral students are researching.

In addition, there were formal and informal meetings with the Marpek deans and faculty from Mennonite institutions who had gathered concurrently for the Mennonite University Faculty Conference.

Plans are underway with Cascadia Publishing House to publish many of the conference papers. The conference was supported by TMTC, Mennonite Education Agency, EMU, and the Jim and Lorna Blair Foundation. We gratefully acknowledge all of their contributions.

Alumnus Update

Phil Enns

I graduated from TST in 2006 with a Ph.D. in Philosophical Theology (also Conrad Grebel MTS, 1993). I am currently teaching at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga (State Islamic University) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. At TMTC I participated in a Mennonite Central Committee exchange program that linked Muslims from Iran to TST. After graduating, this connection to MCC led to teaching at an Indonesian Islamic university.

At the undergraduate level, I teach courses in Western philosophy in the faculty of Islamic theology. I team-teach with a colleague who helps with language but more importantly with cultural translation. Most of the students come from Islamic boarding schools or public Islamic high schools, so their education tends not to include Western thought.

In the graduate school, most of the students are already teachers at Islamic high schools or Islamic colleges, teaching either Islamic philosophy or law. The courses I teach focus on democracy and religion. This has been a wonderful experience as we explore the implications of developing democratic institutions in an Islamic country.

Living and teaching in an Islamic culture has had the effect of bringing into relief my Mennonite beliefs. How do I articulate my beliefs in servanthood and peace in an environment dominated by the view that the West is atheistic, exploitive and working to destroy Islam? What I try to do is show a different picture of the West that highlights the philosophical search for justice, development of human rights, and pursuit of peaceful social relationships in a world of differences.