

Reports of the Annual Conference Agencies

1. Report of Bethany Theological Seminary

Growth and renewal continue to be the watch words at Bethany Theological Seminary. We are fortunate to have healthy enrollment, strong support from alumni and friends, and a pathway to a student-centered and financially sustainable future, even as many seminaries are struggling and even closing. This a testament not only to the diligent efforts of our faculty and staff to pursue our distinctive mission, but also to the steadfast support of the Church of the Brethren.

We have placed a priority on keeping the education we provide accessible and affordable for all qualified students. This includes offering a variety of opportunities to study, including both in-person and distance classes, along with semester-long and shorter, intensive courses. Our commitment also includes scholarships, housing, and living expenses for exceptional students.

We continue to prepare and nurture those who are answering God's call to ministry and service in the Church of the Brethren while also welcoming students from a wide range of Christian backgrounds who are drawn to our creative and innovative approach to theological education — particularly our Master of Arts: Theopoetics and Writing and the Master of Arts in Social and Spiritual Transformation. Our vibrant educational mission, which is rooted in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist Witness, empowers students to lead through spiritual engagement, faith-filled thought, and transformative practice. As our alumni demonstrate, the education we provide prepares students to minister and lead in a wide variety of contexts, so the world flourishes.

LEADERSHIP

Board of Trustees

Dr. Eric Bishop (Pomona, CA) continues as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Mark Clapper (Elizabethtown, PA) serves as Vice Chair, and Dr. Jonathan Frye (McPherson, KS) is Board Secretary. Bethany has welcomed several new trustees this year: Lexi Aligarbes (Harrisburg, PA), Susan Boyer (Claremont, CA), Mark Gingrich (Minneapolis, MN), Dr. Jennifer Hosler (Washington, DC), Patrick Starkey (Cloverdale, Va.), and Julia Wheeler (Pomona, CA).

Campus Leadership

Rev. Dr. Jeff Carter is in his 11th year as president of Bethany. He is assisted by an experienced leadership team that helps guide long-term planning and day-to-day decision making at the Seminary. This year Jeff has represented Bethany at meetings of the World Council of Churches, the Association of Theological Schools, and on visits to Nigeria. Locally, he remains engaged in the community,

1 recently completing terms-of-service in leadership roles on the boards of Rich-
2 mond Symphony Orchestra and Wayne County Chamber of Commerce. Jeff
3 continues to speak in congregations and at district and denominational events.
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5 MAJOR INITIATIVES

6 **Bethany BOLD**

7 With the support of a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, Bethany The-
8 ological Seminary launched Bethany BOLD, a new initiative that prepares students
9 to lead congregations through issues of diversity and division. BOLD (which
10 stands for Build, Organize, Love, and Dare) is a rigorous and demanding program
11 that challenges Bethany's best and brightest students to apply their faith and ed-
12 ucation to address real-world problems, including poverty and racial injustice.
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14 Students selected for Bethany BOLD are required to engage in service in the
15 Wayne County community, participate in educational activities (like lectures
16 and training sessions) outside the seminary, and participate in purposeful re-
17 flection about their experiences in the program. In exchange, participants will
18 receive full tuition scholarships, free housing, and a monthly living stipend.
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20 The Seminary marked the official launch of the program with a workday at
21 Townsend Community Center, the oldest community center in Richmond, and
22 one that serves the African-American community.
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24 **Nigerian Connection**

25 President Carter, Academic Dean Steve Schweitzer, and Coordinator of Seminary
26 Computing Services Paul Shaver paid a visit to Jos, Nigeria in January. They met
27 with Bethany employees Sharon Flaten, assistant of recruitment and student de-
28 velopment, and Joshua Sati, academic and operations manager, to learn more
29 about the needs of the program in Nigeria. They also spent time with students
30 and local religious and educational leaders.
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32 Regular visits to Nigeria help us to maintain and strengthen our relationships
33 in that country, including building partnerships with other academic institutions
34 and fostering relationships with those who are interested in our educational
35 programs. Spending time in Jos allows us to better understand the needs and
36 interests of our students there, by speaking with individuals and visiting the
37 classroom. There is no substitute for seeing in person how our mission is playing
38 out in another part of the world!
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40 The Postgraduate Diploma in Biblical Peacemaking continues to draw passion-
41 ate and inquisitive students, many of whom travel significant distances to attend
42 classes at our facility in Jos. These students are connected on Zoom to professors
43 and students in North America, and class discussions are enriched by the wide
44 range of perspectives and backgrounds that students bring.
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Welcome and Hospitality	1
The past year has provided us with many opportunities to welcome denomina-	2
tional gatherings, guest speakers, events hosted by partner organizations and	3
public events open to members of the local community.	4
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For the first time since before the Covid pandemic, Bethany hosted a meeting	6
of the Council of District Executives in April. The Seminary also hosted a meet-	7
ing for administrative assistants as well as multiple in-person gatherings for the	8
Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. The Seminary has also played host	9
to meetings sponsored by the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce, Richmond	10
Civic Theatre, and other community groups.	11
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In Nicarry Chapel, we have opened our pulpit to such guest speakers as Dr. Drew	13
Hart of Messiah College, Dr. Richard Rose of the University of La Verne, and Dr.	14
Catherine Williams of Lancaster Theological Seminary. We also partnered with	15
St. Paul's Episcopal Church to host a screening of a documentary film about the	16
first women ordained as priests in the Episcopal Church.	17
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At the end of the fall semester, Bethany collaborated with Earlham College, Earl-	19
ham School of Religion (ESR), and Richmond Symphony Orchestra (RSO) to	20
host a concert focused on peace. The event featured musicians from RSO and	21
readings by Bethany and ESR faculty members. After the concert, attendees were	22
able to participate in fellowship and quiet activities to encourage reflection. The	23
concert was well attended and positively received.	24
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ACADEMIC COMMUNITY	26
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Certificate Programs: New and Revised	28
In previous years, Bethany faculty have updated each of our four master's degree	29
programs. In fall 2023, faculty reviewed our graduate certificate programs, mak-	30
ing changes and creating new ones, so that eight certificates will be offered be-	31
ginning fall 2024. All certificates require either five or six courses. In addition	32
to revisions to current programs, four new certificates were designed for specific	33
student needs.	34
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The Certificate of Achievement in Ministry Studies (CAMS) was created in conver-	36
sation with the Council of District Executives to provide education for min-	37
isters new to the Church of the Brethren. The Certificate for Expanded MA	38
Studies (CEMAS) is designed for MA students to continue breadth and depth of	39
study in preparation for future doctoral work. The Certificate in Peacebuilding	40
and Neighborhood Engagement (CPNE) is open to students in Bethany BOLD	41
who want to focus intentionally on issues of peacebuilding and contextual work	42
in the community of Richmond and Wayne County, Indiana, including a re-	43
quired practicum. The Certificate in Peacemaking, Violence, and Power (CPVP)	44
analyzes uses of power and how to maintain practices of peace in the midst of	45
violence in society.	46

1 **Scholar-in-Residence**

2 During the spring semester, Bethany welcomed Dr. Philip Asura Nggada as our
3 international scholar in residence. Nggada earned a PhD from the University of
4 Jos in Nigeria where he has also been a lecturer. He has published books and
5 articles on a variety of scholarly topics including the Biblical foundation for
6 human rights and social justice, the shepherd motif in the Old Testament, and
7 the role of religion in addressing social and political concerns in Nigeria. In the
8 fall, he served as the Snowden Fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and
9 Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

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11 While at Bethany, Dr. Nggada will pursue two writing projects: "Educational In-
12 stitutions as a forum for Peacebuilding and Peacemaking in Nigeria" and "Tex-
13 tual Criticism: A Practical Approach to 16th Century Torah Scroll." He will
14 preach at a Bethany chapel service and offer a public lecture on his scholarship.
15 He will share public remarks on the current situation in Nigeria in various ven-
16 ues connected to the Church of the Brethren. By engaging with Bethany students,
17 faculty, and staff, he will learn more about Bethany's educational programs, in-
18 cluding the Postgraduate Diploma in Biblical Peacemaking, which is offered in
19 Nigeria.

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21 We were delighted to welcome Dr. Nggada to the Bethany community. All of us
22 benefitted from his wisdom and insights, and we are pleased to develop a rela-
23 tionship with another leading Nigerian scholar.

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25 **Louisville Institute Fellow**

26 **Dr. Tamisha Tyler**, a Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow, spent her second
27 year as a visiting assistant professor of theology and culture and theo-poetics at
28 Bethany 2023-24 academic year. Tyler taught several courses for Bethany, focus-
29 ing on such topics as theo-poetics, Aftofuturism, and the religious themes in the
30 works of Octavia Butler. She also offered an intensive course entitled, "Art, Faith,
31 and Justice", January 7-21, 2024. Held in Tyler's hometown, Pasadena, Califor-
32 nia, the course explored the various ways that artists are answering this call to
33 social change. Students learned about various aspects of art and art making, ask-
34 ing questions of how artists are responding to issues of justice, and how faith
35 impacts their decisions. The class considered how the Los Angeles area specifi-
36 cally impacts art, faith, and justice, and it challenged students to study these
37 concepts in one context, and then apply them wherever they live.

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39 **Selected Faculty Activities**

40 **Dr. Maggie Elwell**, assistant professor of peace studies, and **Dr. Dan Poole**, as-
41 sistant professor of ministry formation, co-authored "A Profile in Resiliency:
42 One Student's Growth in a New Neighborhood Engagement Program," focusing
43 on the Bethany BOLD program, which is forthcoming in the journal *Reflective*
44 *Practice*. Poole has an article detailing Bethany's Lilly Pathways grant program-
45 ming that will also appear in the journal. Elwell presented two equipping ses-
46 sions and spoke at the Clergywomen's Breakfast at Church of the Brethren

Annual Conference. She gave an invited talk entitled, “The Timing of Peace and Violence” as part of the Values, Ideas, and the Arts program series at Manchester University. 1
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Dr. Joelle Hathaway has been chosen as a participant in the 2024 Wabash Early Career Faculty Teaching and Learning Workshop. She also presented “Teach This Image: A *New* Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy” at the American Academy of Religion conference in November. Hathaway preached at her home congregation, Cross of Grace Lutheran Church, and taught an insight session at COB Annual Conference titled, “Holy Spirit and Imagination.” 5
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Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Brightbill professor of preaching and worship, published a chapter on “The Spiritual Dimension of Homiletical Coaching” in the book, *Learning Together to Preach* (Cascade Books, 2023) edited by John S. McClure and Allie Utley. She has recently been an invited speaker at such places as Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren, Northview Church of the Brethren, Western Plains District Conference, the University of Copenhagen, and Nazarene Theological Seminary’s annual denominational pastor’s conference. 12
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Dr. Dan Poole, assistant professor of ministry formation, published “The Power of Imagination — From Stagecoach to Bullet Trains” in the March 3, 2023 edition of *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* (no. 43, pages 146–56.) 20
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Dr. Steve Schweitzer, academic dean, published an essay titled “The Utopian City” published in the volume, *Biblical Themes in Science Fiction*, edited by Nicole Tilford and Kelly Murphy, SBL Press, 2023. He presented “Proximity to an Elusive Utopia in Deuteronomy: How the Book Presents Its Vision as Accessible but Not Realized” at the Utopian Studies Consultation, national annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in San Antonio, Texas, 2023. He also led a Continuing Education Unit event for Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center “Choose Life: Deuteronomy’s Message for Today.” 25
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Dr. Tamisha Tyler, visiting assistant professor of theology and culture and theopoetics, has been elected co-editor of the Feminist Studies in Religion Blog. Tyler recently completed a fellowship with Sacred Rites (through Northeastern University). She has also been awarded a grant by the Wabash Institute to explore ways of sustaining life as a “hybrid professor” (teaching both in-person and online). 34
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Dr. Dan Ulrich, Wieand professor of New Testament, published an article in the Gospel of Matthew in the *Anabaptist Dictionary of the Bible*. 41
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ENROLLMENT

Certificates/Postgraduate Diploma: 46

MDiv: 23

MA: 9

MASST: 13

MATW: 24

Total Headcount: 115

New Students: 13

Fiscal Stewardship

	FY 22	FY21
Assets	60,960,422	64,058,663
Endowment	47,080,826	49,402,148
Surplus/Deficit	3,222	292,336
Operating Budget	3,319,975	3,056,066

Fundraising

The table below shows a significant increase in giving to the Bethany Fund during fiscal year 2023. We attribute this to more frequent print and digital communications with our donor base as well as more proactive engagement and outreach to alumni friends through regional events. By maintaining these activities, we are hopeful we can maintain this success in future years. The significant drop in total gifts is due to some substantial one-time gifts received during FY 22 (a seven-figure estate gift and large grant from the Lilly Endowment.)

Bethany Fund	FY 23	FY 22	Change
Donations	760,343.23	610,167.03	+150,176.20
Number of Gifts	1624	1651	-27
Total Giving			
Donations	1,407,640.06	4,217,207.78	-2,809,567.72
Number of Gifts	1728	1786	-58

We are very thankful to all of those in the Church of the Brethren who support the mission of the Seminary.

Blessings,

Rev. Dr. Jeff Carter, President

Dr. Eric Bishop, Board Chair