The Open Door

Spring 2012

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In the previous issue of the Open Door, my first "message from the president" informed you about some exciting ways I believed BTS would be evolving. Although at the time I was anticipating a very different period of transition and growth, I believe these words are still relevant for our present experience:

> *Nearly 200 years ago, Bangor Theological Seminary came into being on the edge of a beckoning northern frontier. Today, we who form the seminary community also find ourselves approaching new frontiers. Like many who have gone before us, we are venturing into a future that at times can seem frighteningly unfamiliar. Yet we journey with God and with a profound sense of trust in God's guiding presence.*

In May 2011, the board approved the development and implementation of several strategic initiatives to increase enrollment. The plan included re-focusing our curriculum, continuing to adapt course schedules to meet the needs of commuter students, and creating a distance-learning program. Concurrently, a search was initiated to call a new president, seeking someone with particular gifts for student recruitment and fund-raising, especially major donors.

The academic year began with a bold commitment to economic and missional vitality and sustainability. How then did we get to the February 10 announcement that the board of trustees had voted unanimously to stop offering MDiv and MA degrees? How did we find ourselves on a different frontier than we had thought we were facing?

A Strategy for Growth

In July 2011, our new, entrepreneurial academic dean and I began working with an already functioning strategic planning committee to develop a plan for growth, affirming a continued commitment to both a Bangor and a Portland campus. The board was mindful that this growth strategy would require major funding above current operational commitments, which would mean a higher (and increasingly imprudent) draw on the endowment. There was significant risk. Success was not a guarantee. But there was a clear sense of urgency.

Declining enrollment was at the heart of our urgency. The seminary had been unable to discover a program, or a set of programs, sufficiently effective to replace the loss in total headcount and full-time equivalent students resulting from two external factors. First, changes in accreditation standards allowed other seminaries to admit students we had attracted with our formerly unique Bangor Plan. Second, there was the loss of United Methodist students. A change in policy of the United Methodist Senate removed from their approved list many seminaries competing with United Methodist seminaries. From these two sources, BTS lost 35-40% of its FTEs (full-time equivalent students). Combined with the national trends toward commuter student patterns of enrollment, and the declining pool of MDiv candidates, the dramatic decline in our FTEs is not a surprise. That we survived these "hits" to our enrollment for as long as we did is quite surprising.

Dan Aleshire, Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools has observed that Bangor Seminary has a legacy of out-performing its resources. The danger, he noted, is that we may think we can always do this. The hard reality is that the challenges today are mostly external threats, over which we have no control. And, they are greater than ever.

Challenges

We have made difficult choices in the past, responding to the external challenges. Though we have been able to "buy some time," the trends have been clear, even if there were periods of apparent stability. Both total headcount and full-time equivalent numbers have declined, with the headcount falling from 147 to 78 from 2006 through September 2011, and FTEs falling from 70 to 33 from 2005 through September 2011.

Nationally, the simple reality is that there are too many seminaries, and not enough candidates for the degrees being offered.

Our enrollment has declined approximately 20% per year for the last 3-4 years. This decline has necessitated a 9% draw on endowment in our current fiscal year (below 5% is considered prudent). The difference between a 5% draw and a 9% draw is over $400,000 for us this year. A flattened donor base has not been able to ease the financial burden of lower enrollment and the resulting excessive draw on endowment. In the past decade, we have had only one year with a draw below 5%.

It is an inhospitable landscape in which most seminaries are struggling to survive. It is one of declining church membership, and growing numbers of small churches that cannot afford to hire graduates of a very expensive form of professional theological education. Mainline denominations have responded to these shifts by considering non-seminary paths to ordination, and by the development of lay academies. Nationally, the simple reality is that there are too many seminaries, and not enough candidates for the degrees being offered. Our unique demographic and geographic issues have only exacerbated the challenges for us.

Nevertheless, the strategic planning committee moved forward with guarded optimism and energy to plan, fund, and implement a strategy for growth in enrollment and overall financial stability to support the continuing mission of providing graduate theological education for persons called to ministry in the church and in the world.

A critical part of our efforts involved enlisting assistance from experts in the field who had depth of experience and a broad vision of the theological education landscape. Barbara Wheeler and Tony Ruger, of Auburn Seminary's Center for the Study of Theological Education, provided us with important research data about national trends, validated the challenges we face, and offered a meaningful "reality check" for our plans and projections.

After months of hard work, research, consultation, discussion, reflection, and prayer, the board met in late January to consider the conclusions of the strategic planning group, the academic dean, and the president.

What We Learned

We concluded that the possibility for robust enrollment growth was unlikely. Most mainline seminaries are experiencing declining enrollments. To reach equilibrium (i.e., use less than 5% draw on endowment to support the operating budget) we would have to nearly triple our enrollment, while also increasing our Bangor Fund contributions by a similar proportion.

The projected costs of our strategy for growth would more than double the over-draw on our endowment. The projected costs of additional staffing (and associated expenses for travel, marketing, etc.) would likely increase our $400,000 over-draw to more than $800,000. This would require even greater (and more unrealistic) results in student recruitment and fund-raising.

The board concluded that to persist in our present structure and strategies for carrying out our mission was not in keeping with their fiduciary responsibility to the institution and its stakeholders, especially those past and present benefactors whose gifts make up our endowment.

A Difficult Decision

The decision was a matter of stewardship and mission. We can no longer afford to spend almost $60,000 annually to educate one full-time student. We can no longer afford to offer programs that no longer meet the needs of many of the churches we seek to serve, smaller rural churches which have been so much a part of our legacy.

At the winter meeting of the board, held in Portland on February 3-4, 2012, the decision to change our business model, discontinuing graduate degrees, was a unanimous, but painful decision. By acting now, as difficult as it was, the board believes we will be able to create and sustain a much smaller, but robust and relevant successor to the graduate school we have been for almost 200 years.

We have a most challenging year ahead of us, as the BTS community. The needs of our students will remain our highest priority. By acting now, we have tried to provide as much time as possible for students, faculty, and staff to consider their options. Our academic dean, faculty, and staff are working tirelessly, giving individual attention to every student, to help them progress toward the realization of their personal educational goals, and the fulfillment of their calls. We have a generous agreement with Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) to allow students who won't be able to graduate in 2013 to complete their degrees through ANTS. We are also working on ways to support our staff and faculty through this time of transition.

There should be no doubt about how hard this decision was for this board. Tears were shed that morning when the vote was taken. There were graduates present, and others with deep and historic family ties to our seminary. All the trustees were deeply burdened with the knowledge of the human cost of this decision to students (particularly those who would not be able to complete their degrees by June 2013), and the significant career decisions faculty and staff would face.

This historic decision was painful, but prudent; difficult, but faithfully decisive.

This is clearly a time of loss, sadness, and grief for many, including the board. This historic decision was painful, but prudent; difficult, but faithfully decisive. For now, we will live with compassion for each other in loss and grief. And soon, with trust in God's guiding Spirit, we will move forward – boldly – into a new future.

What's Next?

What's next is not the preservation of structures or forms. *What's next* will involve preserving and sustaining core values and visions.

What's next is identifying and interpreting the radical changes going on in the church and the world. *What's next* is seeing and seizing the opportunities for adopting new ways of delivering theological education, offering ministerial preparation, and providing life-long educational and formational resources for those in ministry in the church and in the world.

What are the needs of the church today and in the future? What are the needs of those who would answer a call to leadership roles today, and in the future church? These are the kinds of questions the Third Century Committee will consider (see the article on page 5 in this issue of the Open Door). In the coming weeks and months you will hear more about this process of discernment for Bangor Theological Seminary's future, and ways that you can be involved.

For me, these past weeks have been an intense time of organizational introspection and preparation. It has been a time of mapping, staging, and readying ourselves for the journey.

In the midst of maintaining current operations, while preparing for both a wind down and a radical transformation into some

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Message from the President cont.

new mission-consistent entity, it could be easy to get caught up in process and procedure, timelines and tasks, uncertainty and speculation, and lose perspective.

To keep perspective, it will be essential for us to remember that there is a human face at every point along the way in this complex process of transition. It will be essential that we honor and respect each other through it all, embracing the core values of BTS, our faith communities, and our traditions as we journey together. Compassion, mercy, forgiveness, justice, peace, and the love of God have sustained us this far.

Most importantly, we must not forget that this is not entirely a human venture that we are about. ***We must ask at every point: Where is God in this? How is the Spirit probing, prodding? Where is the Spirit informing, leading?***

We have a legacy – but it has never been contained in our buildings, or even in our degrees. Our legacy will be preserved in the lives of the generations of graduates, faculty, staff, trustees, and benefactors of BTS, who have committed themselves to a community of learning, responding to a call to serve God and humankind. Our legacy is the nurturing of theological education and ministerial preparation for the sake of the church in the world. It would be a tragic failure of imagination if we assumed or accepted that this is the end of BTS. Closure is not our intention. We may not deliver theological education in the manner we did 30, or 50, or 100 years ago. However, I deeply believe we will be a vital institution that will continue to make meaningful contributions to the life of the church, in northern New England, and far beyond.

As we have emerged from the shadowed Lenten road, and as we find ourselves on the road again, may we be eagerly attentive to signs of resurrection. May we encounter messengers, angelic and otherwise, and meet witnesses and guides who can describe and show us where new life waits. May we find in our own hearts and minds an openness to the God who will do a new thing – with or without us – but who desires us to dwell together in a just and beautiful creation. And may BTS continue to play a faithful role in service to God through the church and many other contexts of ministry, far into our third century of existence.

Peace be with you,

The Reverend Dr. Robert Grove-Markwood
President

Closing Prayer
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
February 4, 2012

O creating God, from whom all peoples come and in whom all abide: Chinese and Scots, Welsh and Norwegian, Canadian and Brazilian, Italian and Vietnamese, Russian and Mexican, Lithuanian and Iranian, Kenyan and El Salvadorian – every people in all lands: we have gathered in this place striving to discern your will for Bangor Theological Seminary, and in our discerning, to do your will. The challenge has been great – yes, at times, we confess, intimidating and anxiety producing. You have moved among us, though, by your Spirit, refreshing us, wooing us, exciting us. Tempted as we are to cling to old ways, you are guiding us to new paths. Fearful though we've sometimes been, you are making us bold. Though we would rather choose the easy way, you are arousing our imaginations and giving us courage, the great-heartedness of Jesus himself. We are thankful, O God, for your Spirit's stirring within each of us, within this board, within the community that is Bangor Theological Seminary. Make of our decisions now made a new chapter in the story and mission of this body of your believing people.

In all the days that follow, O God, keep us mindful of your presence and your purpose. Keep before us the radical truth that death is followed by resurrection, that endings do beget fresh beginnings. Remind us, when we forget, that you are Lord of the past, Lord of the present, Lord of the future, that all seasons belong to you, and that " for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Eccl. 8.1 NRSV). Where the actions we are taking cause confusion, let there soon be clarity. Where our choices prompt pain, let there soon be healing. Where what we are doing causes rupture, let there soon be reconciliation. Where our decisions bring grief, let there soon be a new sense of life and the holy possibilities you are placing before us. Abide, we pray, with each one affected by our decisions. We commit to your enduring care our students, our faculty, our administrators, our friends, each member of this board, and all who are touched by the ministry and outreach of our school. We are profoundly grateful for their dedication and the many faithful ways they live out their calls to discipleship. Though the work before us is daunting, continue to lure us to the strange ways of goodness and mercy, the out-of-the-way paths of justice and deep peace.

We make this prayer, O generous One, mindful of the generations who have gone before us, that cloud of holy witnesses through whom you have touched by your unyielding grace this world of your making, this cosmos that is our dwelling place. For the sake of the Christ, we pray. Amen.

The Reverend Michael Laidlaw

Board of Trustees Appoints Third Century Committee

Following the Board of Trustees' February 4, 2012 decision that Bangor Theological Seminary will no longer be a graduate degree-granting institution, H. Lowell Brown, Chair of the seminary's Board of Trustees, announced the formation of a "Third Century Committee." The purpose of the recently appointed committee will be: "To determine the needs to be met, the products and services to be delivered, the organizational structure, and the implementation timeline of the new Bangor Theological Seminary." The committee was charged to work in close tandem with the newly formed Transition Committee.

It was further announced that the Board's Executive Committee appointed the following persons as members of the new committee: Gary DeLong, Chair; Mark Alley, Carla Bailey, Kenneth Brookes, Philip Gleason, Allison Keef, and Bob Grove-Markwood (ex officio).

The committee held its first day-and-a-half meeting in late March. The group reflected on the importance of both honoring the rich tradition and culture of BTS even as new forms and ways of being and acting will be sought. The group addressed such topics as the opportunities that have been created, significant questions the committee and others have about our mission, and identifying today's challenges to our inherited assumptions related to ministry, education, and theology. Further reflection was given to our sources of greatest hope for the next generation of clergy and lay leaders. A substantial, facilitated session was held on stakeholders, identifying them and analyzing the best methods of engagement to ensure that we hear and understand their concerns and ideas. The committee also identified "Thought Partners" and other resources to ensure a rich mix of ideas and points of view.

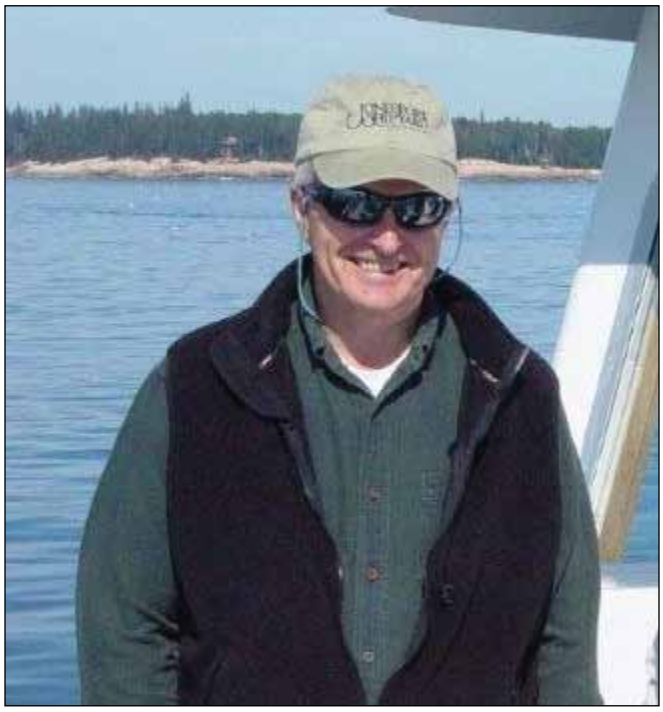
The committee's first meeting concluded with starting work on a timeline with an ambitious goal of making recommendations to the Board of Directors in late fall of this year. Meanwhile, the group committed itself to a schedule of monthly meetings and interim tasks.

Gary DeLong, Chair, attended the March 18 "Gathering for the BTS Pilgrimage" in Bangor, which he reports was a moving and rich time of worship and reflection, symbolized by lines from a litany used in the service which Mr. DeLong hopes will set the tone for the Third Century Committee:

"We move on to fresh ways of worship and learning. We move on to serve our seminary as it evolves into a new community. We move on to work with new partners to build up the life of the Bangor Theological Seminary and the church universal."

The Seminary Welcomes New Trustee – Gary A. DeLong

Gary DeLong is a retired United Church of Christ minister. From 1999 to 2010 he was the Executive Director of the Maine Sea Coast Mission, a non-profit serving the islands and coastal communities of Downeast Maine. During his tenure at the Mission, the budget quadrupled as new programs were developed, such as Telehealth services to the islands and the EdGE, an afterschool program serving 500 students in 17 communities in Washington County, one of the most economically challenged areas in the country. Prior to his work at the Mission, he was the Senior Pastor of First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, Massachusetts where he had served for 26 years.



Raised on an island in Maine, DeLong was educated at Eastern Nazarene College, Andover Newton Theological Seminary, and Princeton Seminary. He was voted Citizen of the Year in Longmeadow in 1999. He was a founder of the A Better Chance Program and the Child Abuse Prevention Partnership in Longmeadow and served on many boards and committees in the Springfield, Massachusetts area, including as a founding member of the Medical Ethics Committee of the Baystate Medical Center, Interfaith Homes of Longmeadow, Pioneer Valley Visiting Nurses Association, and Stage West Regional Theater. In 2001, he was awarded the Doctor of Humanities degree from Cumberland University. He resides on Mount Desert Island and is married to Judith DeLong, a recently-retired elementary teacher in Bar Harbor. They have two adult children and five grandchildren.

Gathered Here in the Midst of New Dimensions

by Pamela Shellberg, Instructor in the New Testament

On an unexpectedly spring-like night for the month of March in Maine, nearly 50 people gathered in the Hammond Street UCC Church in Bangor to worship and to step off together on "the BTS Pilgrimage." To tell you the truth, it seemed a rather ambitious designation as the term "pilgrimage" suggests to me a journey with the presumption of a clearly-defined starting point and destination. It has been my own sense of things that neither starting points nor destinations are clearly in view for most people connected to the seminary in this moment. Since the announcement of the suspension of the M.A. and M.Div. programs, many have been stumbling, trying to get some kind of foothold; many can see only dimly, and some not at all, the shape of plans and dreams over which something of a cloud has fallen. Yes, a "pilgrimage" seemed a little bit ambitious.

But the titles of the first two hymns, "Gathered Here" and "In the Midst of New Dimensions," came together to describe the shift that was occasioned by marking the moment liturgically—a shift in perception, a shift in the experience, and a shift in understanding the word "pilgrimage." *Gathered here in the midst of new dimensions*. The starting point of the pilgrimage would not be located on a map or calendar, but rather in the thrumming of gathered grieving, groping, and grateful hearts. Pilgrimage would not (yet) signal a new beginning, but rather the first exploration of its many dimensions. It was a moment suspended. In prayer and poetry, through scripture and song, and by music and meditation we were able, in that suspended moment, to reach backward in time and to reach forward in hope, to plunge into the deeps and to point to what beckoned, to "be" in our need to cling tightly as well as in our need to release.

We gathered under the image of a people chosen and set apart—but now to be tested and purified in the wilderness of new dimensions. We gathered in the presence of our God who reassured us, "I give waters in the desert to give drink to my chosen people who I formed for myself." Those waters flowed over us in streams of beautiful and powerful words: from the poet Jane Cresswell, "I know the emptiness of being vacant, waiting for the page to turn // I know the fear of being lost"; from the evangelist Matthew, "blessed are the poor in spirit and blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted"; from BTS founder Enoch Pond, "Come up in the spirit and hope of the Gospel; God will be your support in life and death"; from our own hearts in prayer, "we let go our anger, inaction, apathy, familiar patterns"; from the depths of our pleadings, "God we await; do a new thing among us"; and from the deepest thrumming in the heart of God, promises spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "Behold, I am doing a new thing: now it springs forth—do you not perceive it?"

Students, board members, and faculty lit candles on twin candelabra from the single flame of the Christ candle during the reading of each one of Matthew's Beatitudes. It was a powerful image.

While we are a single flame as the BTS community, we are also many—and every individual steps out with undiminished radiance. Hearts may have caught fire at BTS—but the light of Christ extends and expands beyond—and we become acts of resistance against the darkness that cannot overcome it.

The many dimensions of pilgrimage were explored in the exquisitely tender sounds of the harp, played by Mary Chamberlain, and the meditative as well as exultant sounds of the organ, played by Douglas Beck. The opening introit, "God's goodness will follow us always," led us into worship on the strength of the reminder of the spirit always at our back, and the recessional antiphon, "Send forth your light," sent us out as the very light the antiphon cried for.

The worship service was designed by BTS student, Linette George, whose pastoral sensitivity and liturgical sensibilities gathered us in a deep dimension of grace. We appreciated the presence of Mr. Benjamin Blodget, a descendant of BTS founder, the Rev. Enoch Pond. Mr. Blodget's words drew us deep into the taproot of our history. We rested in the branches of the wide embrace of those partners and friends, grown together from that taproot, who led us in worship: the Rev. Dr. Mark Doty, the Rev. Joan DeSanctis, the Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, the Rev. Stephanie Salinas, Pastor Sarah Pringle-Lewis, and Pastor John Gregory Music.

Pamela Shellberg, Instructor in the New Testament at BTS successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at Marquette University in April. Congratulations, Dr. Shellberg! Her teaching and research interests include examining the role of scripture in moral deliberations and considering the methods for doing so; hermeneutics and issues of interpretation; and New Testament understandings of the human person. She is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature and the Catholic Biblical Association and also serves as a Trustee of Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

Reimagining Worship for the 21st Century

by Allison C. Gammons, M.A. student

With the rise in people who consider themselves "spiritual, not religious," mainline churches are seeing a clear decline in membership. Social interactions are no longer limited to face-to-face meetings and entire communities are built online without its members ever needing to gather in person. How, in this ever-changing environment, can we worship meaningfully? How can we sustain vibrant churches?

January's Convocation, *Evolving World, Emerging Church*, invited the BTS community to explore how we viewed church and worship in the 21st century. During Opening Worship, led by Reverend Kate Winters, the table on the stage in Gracie Theatre held five simple items: a loaf of bread, a pitcher of water, a chalice of wine, a baptismal bowl, and a Bible. These objects would remain there throughout the festivities. While listening to the lineup of speakers and while watching video clips about religion and ministry, we examined different ways to think about "doing church" and these symbols served as reminders that no matter how we worship or how we re-imagine church there is something at the core of our faith that we need to trust.

One of the beautiful things about these particular symbols is how they are able to reach beyond the Christian faith. For instance, though I am a Unitarian Universalist and don't see most of those items as part of my personal faith, the loaf of bread evoked for me the very basic understanding of breaking bread together—community and sharing being part of the roots of my belief.

During his presentation Rev. Eric Elnes, leader of Darkwood Brew, the interactive web TV program and spiritual gathering site that explores progressive Christian faith and values, shared a story that helped him to begin his work of reimagining church. While working with a group of teenagers, Rev. Elnes found himself searching for ways to engage the teens in discussions about the bible and about their faith. He sought to engage them and to help them see the relevance between their "church lives" and their everyday lives.

Rev. Elnes noted how people tend to hold something like a firewall around worship and worship space. In trying to set a time and space as sacred, we disconnect it from our everyday lives. The music, for instance, that we listen to in our daily lives, in which many of us find great meaning and power, seems to have no place within our Sunday morning worship space. When we step into church we hear different music than what we've been playing in our homes and cars all week. But if we were to allow some of our everyday lives to merge with our worship lives, then we can develop the ability to "bring everyday life into worship, so that maybe some worship will go back into everyday life." This is a way to allow our church, and our worship, to transcend out of that narrow timeslot we have allotted it, and that single space we have appointed holy. Bringing our everyday lives and our church lives closer together allows us to carry the holy within us throughout each day.

Rev. Kate Winters led the opening worship.

In a similar vein during her presentation at Convocation, Rev. Karen Ward explored the ways that our churches can be much more than Sunday morning spaces. Her congregation, The Church of the Apostles, invested in an old church in the Fremont neighborhood in Seattle, Washington. This space had formerly housed a congregation that could no longer afford to carry on, and Rev. Ward's group were ready to use the building differently. They set out to create a space that would be safe and comfortable for the whole neighborhood. Rev. Ward's congregation felt called upon to provide a different, yet deeper and more holistic kind of hospitality. The result is Fremont Abbey, an arts center, gathering place, and worship space—all in one.

Rev. Ward also observed how we often get so caught up in the drudgery of life that we lose the imagination required to envision what could be. She encouraged us to use and reclaim that imagination, to forget the "box" and listen to the spirit, to do what we are moved to do. This philosophy has brought Fremont Abbey tremendous success. The Abbey serves as space not only for worship services, but also for yoga lessons, dance classes, concerts, and book readings. The congregation serve their community and the community sustains the congregation. Part of the Abbey's mission is to find ways in which to live their faith within the community as well as to engage with the everyday life in their neighborhood. Breaking through the traditional approach to worship spaces, and living their faith by welcoming their neighbors, allows for new life to come into the congregation.

Opening the doors, discarding the box, and re-imagining worship can deepen our understanding of our faith and bring a new energy and vibrancy into our congregations. As Convocation speakers reminded us again and again to "trust the symbols," the message was clear. Church can take many forms, worship can look *very* different than traditional models. If we truly trust in the power of the symbols we can find new (and sometimes ancient) ways to worship that will speak powerfully in this ever-changing world.

Allison Gammons is halfway through her convoluted journey to an M.A. degree at the Portland campus of BTS. She lives in Portland and has worked in the field of Religious Education.

A Marriage Present

Thoughts on October's Evening of Illumination

by Susie Maxwell, M.Div. student

The night of October 27th may have been cold and wet, but that did not deter a large, curious crowd from filling the University of Southern Maine's Hannaford Hall in anticipation of BTS's first "Evening of Illumination" for a discussion about the future of marriage.

The evening opened warmly with an invitation to receive each other's differences of opinions. As President Robert Grove-Markwood reminded us, "We're not telling you what to think, but we are unapologetically a school of theology. Thus, we seek to model a way of engaging, with respect, diverse ways of seeing the many (sometimes divisive) issues before us. At BTS our discernments/perspectives are shaped by, and expressed through language that dares to prod us toward an incarnational, active faith: words like justice, compassion, mercy, peace, inclusive, love, and - yes - Jesus and God.

Many of my friends wondered if the conversation might turn into a gay marriage debate. Personally, I believe if we are thinking and caring people we cannot talk about marriage in a positive light without including people who are gay. Relief washed over me when Marvin Ellison kicked off the discussion by addressing the gay marriage buzz in the air and brought it into a broader context. As he aptly stated, "Marriage is a human rights issue, not a gay or straight issue. We need to be concerned with marriage as a cultural practice."

Marvin reminded us of the patriarchal view that Christian marriage has historically assumed. Marriages were between a social superior and a social inferior with the purpose to restrain sin, regulate sex, and procreate. I would guess that marriage inequality has been burning on people's minds for thousands of years. Thank God we are capable of adapting to change and seeing new possibilities. As Marvin said, Christianity and other faith traditions are evolving and transforming and being more "sex positive, affirming of women, and welcoming of sexual diversity."

Speakers Dr. Marvin Ellison and Rev. Kate Braestrup with moderator Rev. Charles Whiston.

Although cultural shifts are being welcomed by many, they are also resisted by many and the result is conflict. Flash points are centered on non-marital sex and same-sex love. Heads were nodding as Marvin asked, "How do we make it right and just? On what basis do we, as people of faith, view marriage and family as a justice and an on-going call to right relationships?"

Reminding us that ours is a "marriage society," Marvin said that although 90% of us marry at least once, we still hold startlingly differing views on marriage. There are disagreements as to who can marry, there is a high divorce rate (50% for first marriages and higher for each subsequent marriage), and there are pressures due to economic and wage inequities between men and women and between different ethnic groups.

That got me thinking, no wonder people check "It's Complicated" in their relationship status on Facebook! With all the challenges of a long term relationship and all the grim statistics, what does this mean for marriage? Does marriage have a future, and if so, what does that future look like? And, how do we—as a community of faith—uphold and support marriage?

Kate and Marvin both saw opportunities for faith communities and clergy to support marriage and families by attending to the sexually illiterate and fixated. They discussed the need to offer adults and young people the quality information necessary to navigate sexual intimacy and develop enduring bonds. Ideally, we should each have the freedom to choose and enjoy our adult sexual relationships and choose whether or not to reproduce. Most people enjoy sex. We haven't populated the planet with 7 billion people just by smiling and saying hello to each other!

During her presentation, Kate Braestrup said, "Marriage is the original cement and glue of society." She stressed that in order to commit yourself to love, to honor, and to cherish someone until death is, for most people, "asking to do the impossible."

I imagine most of us who are married, have been married, are in a committed relationship, or have been in a committed relationship know what the impossible feels like sometimes. When the impossible is standing in our doorway, how do we support marriage? By being there, by showing up for each other, even when it is hard to do so. And how do we support marriage in all its possibilities? By being

open to all discussions. Even the ones that challenge our assumptions and beliefs. We support marriage by honoring family in all its wonderful forms.

Besides marriage inequality, is there a marriage crisis in our society? As moderator Reverend Whiston asked Marvin and Kate, "If you do marriage right and well, it is 'til death…what is part of our marriage crisis?"

I think there are many answers to this question, depending on the experiences and beliefs held by the person giving the answer. I think we all recognize that sometimes drastic measures like divorce are necessary. In violent or unhealthy relationships, but also when people simply grow apart. But what if we were there at the beginning? For those of us who are pastoral care providers or in any position to bear witness to marriages in crisis, with the help of the Holy, what if we helped shed light on the shadows and offered support?

Marvin discussed the marriage crisis in terms of internal and external issues. Internally, there are patterns of family violence, among other things. Externally, there are the social and economic conditions of our bonds which push millions to breaking points. It is in hard times when we turn to our marriages and families for nurture, care, and support.

Kate addressed the marriage crisis from the perspective of kin and relatives. "When you marry," she said, "your spouse becomes your closest living relative. The right to marriage creates kin. So who is kin, who is family?"

This question matters, especially when you are being handed a flag "on behalf of a grateful nation" or when you need to make a healthcare decision for your loved one.

"These questions are easy in heterosexual marriages," Kate added, "but anything outside of that and it gets complicated. Yet, marriage should not be political…we have the opportunity and responsibility to talk about evolving to a place where there are no automatic responses."

Kate and Marvin also discussed the immeasurable joy and comfort that can be available in a committed relationship. It encourages fairness, sharing of lives and resources, and offers nurturing for children and other family members.

Channel surfing recently I stumbled upon one of those "dream wedding" shows. I wondered if the producers still cared about their subjects after the cameras stopped rolling. Yeah, right. Like the rest of the wedding industry, the producers of *My Fair Wedding* probably only care about the bottom line. In this case, ratings. But the Real Producer (aka, God) does in fact care *after* the cameras stop rolling. After the champagne glasses have been washed and dried, and after the bride's dress has been cleaned and stored away, too. That caring from God comes in the form of genuine support for seminaries that educate progressive faith leaders. God comes in coalitions that support faith and justice. God comes as we offer our presence to and support in love, safety, and justice for all.

How else can we support marriage? We can support marriage by being present. Present for our own spouses/partners and families, present for other couples and families in our lives, and present for the system that must be present in return. In wrapping up this Marriage Present, I leave us with some of the rich food for thought that arose when it was time for the audience at the Evening of Illumination to share their ideas with the panel.

- When are people married? Only when duly licensed by the state or in the eyes of God?
- There's a public marriage once, but privately you keep doing it over and over as a couple.
- The marriage crisis in our society is that people will support marriage, but not all marriage.
- Religion is not the end, it is the resource.
- We must question our traditions if they are no longer fair.
- We need to share and model what it means to be faithful.
- Sometimes divorce is the public announcement that marriage never took place.
- Although religion can (and should) be implicated in its powers of injustice, it can also be a remarkable source (and should be) for new visions of possibilities.
- Clergy can improve at making appropriate recommendations, and be more mindful of their impact, especially on children.
- We all have an opportunity to be resources to each other.

If we can be honest, just, and fair, I think the future of marriage looks hopeful. But it will require both persistence and presence. There can be no sacred cows. Everything has to be on the table if we are to move forward in supporting marriage, period. To quote Marvin, "Marriage is a calling, a vocation, and not a duty."

Susie Maxwell is finishing up her first year in the M.Div. program at the Portland Campus. When she isn't studying, she and her husband Max like to hang out, sail, or spend time with family.

Why is it that people get married?

Because we need a witness to our lives.
There's billions of people on the planet.
What does any one life really mean?
But in a marriage, you're promising to care about everything…
The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things,
All of it… all the time, every day.
You're saying "Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it.
Your life will not go unwitnessed - because I will be your witness."

(from the 2004 film "Shall We Dance?")

Speaking Truth No Matter What the Cost

by Patti Stratton, M.Div. student

The Haney Award for Social Justice was presented to me by Dr. Kent Ulery at the 2011 graduation ceremony on behalf of the faculty of BTS. Established in honor of Eleanor Haney, a Christian activist dedicated to a variety of peace and justice issues, the Haney Award underwrites scholarships for students who have demonstrated the capacity for a socially active ministry.

Patti Stratton with her husband, the Rev. John Stratton, Pastor of the Bowdoinham Second Baptist Church.

I guess I didn't realize the importance or the potential impact of the work I had been doing. I saw myself as simply responding to the call of God as best I could, step-by-tentative-step. Receiving the Haney Award helped me to glimpse the larger picture, to begin to see the work I'm doing through the eyes of another, and to touch the depth and breadth of possibility present in the journey to which God has called me.

I think it's safe to say that when Eleanor Haney decided to create the Haney Fund prior to her death in 1999, she must have had students like me in mind. As I have gotten to know this amazing woman through the website dedicated to the Haney Fund, and through conversations with her dear friends and colleagues, Drs. Susan Davies, Marvin Ellison, and Glenn Miller, I know that "Elly" intended for us to pick up where she so eloquently left off – spreading shalom, speaking truth to power, and giving voice to those whose voices have been muted by society.

The Bangor Daily News once described Elly as a "theology pioneer" who had "a major impact on Maine." She was a scholar and activist who passionately committed her life to justice, with wisdom, grass-roots organizing, and a strong commitment to both feminist theory and process. Her friends describe her as an organic intellectual whose knowledge was at the service of the community, who stood *with* rather than *over*, who challenged from the midst of those who struggled.

The purpose of the Eleanor Humes Haney Fund is to carry on Elly's vision for the future. Elly Haney's life was a splendid example of commitment to shalom, the biblical concept of envisioning the essential well-being of all things making up God's creation—all people as well as all of nature. In the tradition of the prophets of Hebrew Scriptures, shalom involves diligently seeking peace and justice in the world.

While Elly's understanding of shalom included both social welfare and social action, her deeper commitment was to the latter. Social welfare seeks to aid the victims of poverty, racism, oppression, and natural disasters, but it's social action which seeks to change the political, social, cultural, economic, and religious conditions which create victims in the first place. My impression of Elly is that she was all about action, with faith informing those actions.

Elly spent her life seeking shalom and calling others to join in the search. Her commitment and actions grew out of a deep faith in the God revealed through the prophets and Jesus Christ. While her own faith was a radical expression of Christianity, she honored all forms of faith and sought to work across the religious, ethnic, and social lines that divide human beings from one another and from the earth.

"One of the goals of Bangor Seminary is to raise up a prophetic ministry devoted to peace and justice," Dr. Ulery said as he presented the award. "This scholarship is intended to encourage a prophet-in-waiting to take up the task of speaking truth no matter what the cost."

A prophet-in-waiting. Speaking truth no matter what the cost.

You may imagine how I felt hearing my name announced after such a lofty description. Especially being the award's first recipient. I certainly had never considered myself a "prophet-in-waiting." I thought, *Who am I to be called out in such a profound way by my professors, mentors, and friends?*

Who am I? I am a pastor's wife, a mom, and a registered nurse, who has spent her life in service to the American Baptist Churches in the USA. I have been married to my husband Jon for 28 years and we have four great kids. Jon pastors the small American Baptist Congregation of the Second Baptist Church of Bowdoinham and I preach there every six weeks or so, in addition to presenting a message to the children every other Sunday. I also work part-time as a school nurse and health aide at Bowdoinham Community School. I have held the honor of representing Maine to the General Board, serving on and then later chairing the Statement of Concerns Committee, and serving on the National Board of American Baptist Women's Ministry.

This past December I completed a two-year term as Vice President of ABCUSA. American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with 5,500 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God's mission around the world. It is on this platform that I have been able to help shape the future of the denomination as we seek God for the ministry to which we are called.

One of the highlights of my term as Vice President has been to encourage a growing Baptist/Muslim dialogue, between ABCUSA and other Baptist groups and with the Islamic Society of North America. As part of this growing dialogue, my husband and I traveled to the Middle East in the fall of 2010 as part of an American Baptist Delegation for conversation and friendship.

With Dr. Susan Davies as my mentor/advisor, I was able to turn this trip in to an Independent Study project. She worked with me to prepare for the experience and spent much time helping me debrief and decompress after I returned. She encouraged me to consider "the process of processing" as ongoing; she assured me that there would be a night when I'd finally stop "reliving the trip in my dreams"; she reminded me to never forget the people that had so touched my heart. Considering that Susan and Elly were colleagues and close friends, I imagine Elly's guidance would have been similar to Susan's.

During our time in the Middle East we met with many of our Baptist friends, colleagues, and congregations in Lebanon and at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut. We also met with Naime Ateek at the Sabeel Institute in Jerusalem (Susan had introduced me to Naime's writings prior to the trip), leaders of Bethlehem Bible College in Bethlehem, and then with local Palestinian Christian pastors. A highlight of the trip was a luncheon, meeting, and tour of the Jordanian Baptismal Site hosted and led by Prince Ghazi of Jordan. It has been an absolute joy and an honor to serve the ABCUSA. Recently, I have been called upon by American Baptist Women's Ministries to represent them on a seven person "Journey Team," leading and guiding the denomination in a two-year discernment process we've named "Transformed by the Spirit." So the adventure continues!

Those of us who have had the privilege of being part of the BTS community have experienced the passion for God that people like Elly Haney so elegantly demonstrated. That passion has become part of our culture. Each class I take, every classmate I meet, and each instructor I encounter helps to shape my worldview and prepare me for the next new thing God has in store for me. I hope Elly Haney would be proud of me and my commitment to do all that I can to bring justice and peace to the world, and I am honored to be the first recipient of the Haney Award for Social Justice—hopefully the first of many to come.

Please pray for me as I will pray for you so that together we can live up to the legacy of Eleanor Haney—creating shalom, justice, and peace as we become the change we want to see in this world.

For more information about the Haney Fund or to help guarantee its future with a donation, please visit haneyfund.org *today.*

Patti Stratton is a wife, mother, registered nurse, and senior at BTS. She has served American Baptist Churches USA in several capacities since 2000. Recently, Patti was nominated to be the national President of America Baptist Women's Ministries. She lives in Bowdoinham with her husband Jon, an ABC pastor, their younger sons, Tim and Andy, as well their cat, a Yorkie, a corn snake, a painted turtle, a dozen hens, and a bearded dragon named Frodo.

Patti with Dr. Glenn Miller, Professor Emeritus – BTS.

Please Give to the 2012-2013 Bangor Fund

While there are changes ahead for the Seminary, BTS will continue to be a fully functioning and graduate degree-granting theological school for the 2012-2013 academic year. Your gifts to BTS Bangor Fund will help our students, our seminary, and the churches and communities in which our graduates serve and will serve. Your support makes a tremendous difference!

www.bts.edu/support

A Call to Grow My Spiritual Discipline

by Tricia Carver, M.A. student

> ***"With one concerted voice the giants of the devotional life apply the same principle to the whole of life with the dictum: Discipline is the price of freedom."***
>
> Elton Trueblood

Share this quote with my 28 year-old, pre-seminary self and, though she mostly agrees, she will fight you on it. First, what about the saying "moved by the Spirit?" Surely, our discipline cannot dictate how the Spirit moves and the Divine is the giver of spiritual freedom. Second, discipline and freedom are at completely opposite ends of a spectrum. And third, she might tell you with as much humility as she could muster, I *am* living a spiritual life. I do what I feel called to do when I feel called to do it.

Now, at the ripe old age of 29, I look at myself at 28 and think, "Ah, the spit and vinegar of youth!" In but three semesters at seminary, I fear I have become older than my years. I know too much now to uphold my earlier visions of God and the church. I now know that the Bible is not what I had originally thought, and that Christianity has done at least as much harm as good throughout history. My pre-seminary God was one of love, healing, care, and compassion, alive in so many ways. There have been times in the past year and a half when my God has felt like one of absence. But I am at *seminary*, how can that be?

I felt a little like Cindy Lou Who in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* singing, "Where are you Christmas [read: God]? Why can't I find you? Why have you gone away? Where is the laughter you used to bring me? Why can't I hear the music play?"

There is a chance that I have revealed too much about myself too quickly—I have a habit of doing that. Let me step back for a moment and introduce myself. My name is Tricia Ann Carver, named after my mother (Patricia Ann). I grew up on Beals Island in Washington County where championships are expected and the community takes care of its own. Day-to-day, it was a fairly typical small, Maine town with the additional benefit of the beauty of the ocean there to greet us every morning. Oddly, or perhaps poetically, I fell in love with the Spanish language in high school. This inspired me to spend time in Spain and Peru, and, ultimately, led me to my first profession as a Spanish teacher—a job I loved.

The summer of my third year teaching I had a feeling it would be my last. My gut has very frequently done right by me, especially in matters relating to God, and although I didn't understand why I knew something was in the works in the God-zone. About five months later, I awoke one morning knowing that it was time to resign. I had no real prospects for income after the school year ended, but I knew God was calling. I knew because I had felt that calling before—the feeling that my call to ministry was imminent. I just needed to create the space and opportunity to allow it to come.

A couple of days later, I handed in my letter of resignation. What I am about to tell you may not surprise you believers who have witnessed the amazing things that the Spirit accomplishes: I landed a full-time job as a youth minister before my teaching year was done. Well done, God. Right? I share this to further demonstrate why my pre-seminary, 28 year-old self would have been puzzled by Elton Trueblood's remark about "the giants of the devotional life." I hadn't been particularly disciplined in my spiritual journey—a bit fearless, very trusting, and incredibly curious, but not overly disciplined.

Oh, how it pains me to write the following statement, but the truth must be spoken—three semesters ago, I thought that if God had lined up this youth ministry job for me four years ago and then two years later had created the opportunity for me to attend seminary, surely I was a giant of the spiritual life. Everyone told me I was an inspiration. No one would just up and leave her job like that. I was feeling *pretty good* about my relationship with God. God was taking care of me.

Enter Seminary. Cue piano music: Dun, dun, dun! Maybe I should have run for the hills when our former President Kent Ulery spoke the original words to the song *Spirit of the Living God*, "Make me, break me, fill me, use me!" Maybe then I would still be living with lots of comfortable answers instead of oh so many questions.

I hear Cindy Lou Who singing again, "My world is changing. I'm rearranging. Does that mean Christmas [read: God] changes, too?"

My world is rearranging here at BTS, along with my concept of God and my sense of vocation. My seminary experience has been challenging—even more so since we are dealing with the necessity to be finished with what we can by June 2013. On the other hand, BTS has provided and, God-willing, will continue to provide.

The classmates and friends I've met here at BTS are precious and valuable. They are real and true, steadfast and supportive. I am inspired by each of them in unique ways. I miss them when we are not in session. The worst day at seminary is still a good day.

As friends, we uphold each other in thoughts, words, tears, and prayers in a sacred bond of understanding, and we laugh and joke through it all. Beyond doubt, laughter is holy. Also, our beloved professors are just that—beloved. Inspirational. Thoughtful. Experienced. Caring. The quality of the teaching at BTS makes the challenges—academic, yet of-the-Spirit—attainable and worthwhile. Like many others, I entered seminary without a clear understanding of where it would lead. I wasn't really sure why I was at seminary. Just that, in the words of Parker Palmer, I "couldn't not" be there. If you ask me what I want to do with this degree now, I still don't have a definite answer—but I do know that I, along with my classmates, am taking shape. Additionally, I have a deep and abiding, sometimes unnerving, sense of call. More often than not, I feel that *call* to the dreaded D-word—discipline.

That "discipline is the price of freedom" line should have come as no surprise. After all, a large part of my life is grounded in athletics. Again, I come from a town that expected championships. Discipline was the price of victory—and with discipline comes the freedom to put oneself in a position to succeed. I know from my athletic background that if I want my body and mind to feel good, I need to be disciplined about maintaining a healthy balance of yoga, meditation, volleyball, swimming, dancing, muscle-toning, pilates, and sleep, along with healthful eating. At seminary, I am sensing a call to grow my *spiritual discipline* repertoire both for myself and to share with others.

My inner 28-year old is humbled and a bit sheepish, yet thankful. Through all of the challenges and gifts that seminary has offered, Cindy Lou Who echoes the refrain, **"**Christmas is here, everywhere, oh. Christmas is here, if you care, oh!"

God is here, everywhere. God is here, if you care.

Tricia Carver is a Master of Arts student on the Bangor Campus of BTS. She grew up on Beals Island, ME and currently serves at the Children & Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Community of Christ New England. She lives in Hampden, Maine, loves playing volleyball, and is very excited about marrying her fiancé Brock this coming September!

UCC Council of Theological Students' Trip to Cuba

Several seminaries affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ participate in the Global Ministries Council of Theological Students. Linette George, an M.Div. student in Bangor, is our representative to the Council for the 2011-2012 academic year.

"The purpose of the Global Ministries Council of Theological Students (CTS) is to equip diverse groups of ministerial students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective ministers in a global community. Members of CTS network with other UCC and Disciples students, and have the opportunity to learn of, engage in, and interpret the work of Global Ministries."

The nine Council of Theological Students will embark on a mission engagement from May 20-26, 2012 in Cuba, where students will have the opportunity to meet with various mission partners, including the Reverend Dr. Ofelia Ortega Suarez, President of the Consejo Mundial de Iglesias. Rev. Ortega was a featured speaker at BTS's 2011 Convocation.

Linette is a member of Hammond Street Congregational Church, UCC in Bangor and is in her second year at BTS, with an intended graduation date of June 2013. She is following the precedent of other BTS students who have engaged in mission work by inviting local churches to make a donation of $25 toward her expenses in exchange for her commitment to make a presentation at each church upon her return from Cuba. For more information, contact Linette George at lcgeorge@roadrunner.com.

First Impressions

by Elizabeth Coffey, M.Div. student

"You can't see anything properly while your eyes are blurred with tears."
C. S. Lewis

Since the BTS Board of Trustees decided to suspend its M.Div. and M.A. programs as of June 2013, I have determined that I will not be far enough along in my studies to graduate before the seminary closes. While I do not know, at this point, where I will continue my studies after next June, I place my trust in God to show me the way.

I began the Master of Divinity program in 2009 by taking one class. Just one. With three young children and a husband with a busy job, my plate was chockfull. Cautiously, I checked the course schedule against my family's schedule to ensure I wouldn't miss any basketball practices, swim meets, or chorus rehearsals. I even made sure I would be home the nights before my first grader's weekly spelling tests. Meticulously, I chose a class that would meet on an evening when my husband could be home to prepare dinner and put the kids to bed.

On the morning of the big day, I took a test-drive to the seminary. To check out the parking, to browse through the bookshop, and, in general, to get my bearings. I wanted to ensure there would be no confusion later that evening.

With my husband due home only fifteen minutes before the start of class, my timetable was tight. I rushed myself to class, and as I was walking up to Peabody Hall I ran into a friend. I smiled and told her how excited I was to attend my very first class as a Master of Divinity student.

"Beth," she said, "that class started last night!"

There I was, already behind and I hadn't even set foot in the class! Despite all my attention to detail and all my careful scheduling preparations. Somehow, I later realized, I had forgotten to change the month on my calendar from August to September.

Elizabeth Coffey with her family.

But that's okay. After Beth informed me I'd missed class, she said, "I'm in it, too. Do you want my notes?"

Ever since, my classmates and teachers have been tremendously supportive of the two hats I wear. Even when I'm wearing them simultaneously. More than once I've brought my children and their Legos to class. I've also received "urgent" phone calls from my youngest only to step out of the classroom for him to tell me he was bored. Then he would ask, "When will you get out of the cemetery and come home?"

I don't know where God is leading me on this path through BTS, but I'm grateful for the doors that have opened up for me since I began my theological studies. Already, I've had the opportunity to intern as a chaplain at Eastern Maine Medical Center, I've learned about the multiple ways you can structure Christian worship services, I've done some pulpit supply in the summer, and I've honed my exegetical and research skills, too. These opportunities to put my faith and education into action have helped me grow spiritually, intellectually, and personally. I am stretching myself in directions I never could have predicted on that first night.

Later, when I called my professor to explain my absence, he said I should take it in stride. The transition from a stay-at-home mom, he said, to a stay-at-home mom/student is a big one. He, too, had recently made a big change and so he understood how such mix-ups could happen. While still transitioning back to teaching after a sabbatical, he had forgotten to attend Opening Convocation!

When I hung up the phone I finally relaxed and let my first day anxieties go. Constant as ever, God was with me in that moment. And he has continued to have my back (as my tween would say) at BTS. He is the very glue which holds me together, and he makes it possible for me to be both a mother and an M.Div. student.

Lastly, writing the story of my time here at BTS has helped me to grieve for the end of this chapter of my life. The simple act of putting pen to paper forced me to wipe the tears from my eyes so I could literally see what I was trying to do. Once a good bit of the blurriness was gone I was able to begin taking stock of my time at BTS and look into the future for the next wonderful thing God has planned for me. For that, thanks be to God.

Elizabeth Coffey will be halfway through her journey to the M.Div. degree next spring at the Bangor campus. She, her husband, Brad, and their three children live in Bangor.

A Powerful Act of Faithfulness

by Reverend Frank Graichen '78

Rev. Graichen '78 reflects on receiving a scholarship from a Church when he was in Seminary and how the parish he serves now, Trinity Church in Rome, NY, continues to pay it forward.

If, as a student of BTS, I knew that individual churches sent money to the Seminary to support students, I would not have known that until my senior year. I do not think I knew, and I was a student representative to the Board of Trustees. Perhaps during orientation my first year something was said about how our tuition was a combination of what I paid and what churches contributed to the Seminary. A special event happened my senior year that changed the way I understood the work of the local church. Feeding Hills Congregational Church, UCC invited the Seminary to send a senior student to them for a weekend. I was selected. The people of the church wanted to know what it was like to be a student in training in the late 1970s and what my hopes and aspirations were for ministry. Pastor Bill Sadlier welcomed us, and two different families opened their homes for us to stay overnight. Our family had just grown from two to three; Frank III was born in February and was just six weeks old.

2011 Scholarship recipient, Phyllis Merritt '11 with Rev. Frank Graichen '78.

I was surprised to discover that the people of the parish had hung a paper cutout on the wall with no head! A paper hung where the head belonged and the text on it read: "What will our seminarian look like?" We had a nice gathering for supper Saturday night which gave me an occasion to speak about seminary life and address questions. On Sunday morning I gave an address during the sermon time about the hopes and aspirations I had for ministry in a parish setting. Topping off all their gracious hosting, they gave me money for expenses, including much gas and many tolls, and best of all they gave me a scholarship for $1,000! It was the first time I'd thought about a local church providing direct aid to a student, and these thoughts have stayed with me all these years.

Now that I am in a parish that can afford to, we have been doing something similar. While we do not have the students come to Rome, NY we try to learn about them from the introduction I usually have with them during convocation. If recipients care to, they can stay in touch with us by communicating something of their current work in ministry. This is something that we are really interested in.

Perhaps students today are quicker than I was thirty-five years ago and understand the direct relationship between their tuition and church gifts to the Seminary. I hope they do. However, for us, it is knowing we made personal contact with a student and let them know that churches they may never even heard of are praying for their success in ministry and are willing to back up those prayers with a scholarship. While Trinity United Church of Christ supports other institutions, in this case, there is something special about giving a scholarship to a Seminary student and learning about that student's hopes and aspirations for ministry in this day and age.

Response

by Kana Sundblad, Scholarship Recipient and M.Div. student

Throughout my seminary experience, conversations concerning the changes in ministry frequently surfaced. In fact, I took an intensive course on this very topic called The Once and Future Church. And it's true. Ministry and the Church are changing. This can be seen in our local congregations, national denominations, and our beloved Seminary. But the act of faithfulness, benevolence, grace, and generosity from Trinity UCC in Rome, NY and Rev. Graichen is a reminder that the Spirit still calls and God's people still answer.

I truly cannot express how grateful I am to have received this gift. Seminary has been a place for me to delve into the beauty and wonder of the Scriptures, be gripped by the thrill of theology, and marvel at the body of Christ at work in the world. I am changed for having been a part of this community. Trinity UCC's gift of walking alongside me on this journey is a powerful expression of the unexpected and extraordinary ways in which God continues to move and act. Knowing that a group of people whom I do not know have invested in me and are now connected to me is precious and deeply meaningful. I will carry this gift with me as I move along my path towards ministry.

Standing Tall: My All-School Retreat Sermon

by Allison C. Gammons, M.A. student

Allison Gammons, 2nd year M.A. student, gave this sermon as part of the student-led worship service on April 14, 2012 at the All-Seminary Retreat. The Retreat was held at Hill Mansion in Augusta, ME and attended by approximately forty students, faculty, staff, and trustees.

For those who don't know me, I grew up in Oregon, so a lot of imagery I regularly reference is rooted in the landscape of the Pacific Northwest. Lately, I've been thinking about Mount St. Helens. Through all of the changes that are happening at BTS, and in my life in general, I've found some comfort in using this mountain as both a metaphor and a source for inspiration.

Mount St. Helens, before and after (U.S. Forest Service.)

My family often took trips to Mount St. Helens. It was cheap, educational, involved rocks, and allowed for running around and climbing—key features for a family with five active kids, not a lot of money, and a dad who was an amateur geologist. But the Mount St. Helens I know from these trips is not the same one that my neighbors had known. For many, the Mount St. Helens I knew was the Mount St. Helens "After."

All of my visits to the mountain took place after the eruption of May 18th, 1980. Mount St. Helens "Before" had been much like other mountains in the Pacific Northwest. It rose above the hills that surrounded it, majestic and snow-capped. Above its timberline were rocky peaks and around its base were evergreen forests and pristine lakes. Spirit Lake, home to an overnight camp, was popular for fishing and swimming. The area provided space for hiking, skiing, camping—all of the normal outdoor activities that Northwesterners are so fond of. That was the mountain "Before."

But Mount St. Helens is a volcano. Not a dead volcano, but a sleeping one. She'd rumbled a little before 1980—small quakes, little warnings—but no one could have predicted what the coming eruption would look like. No one could have guessed how much it would transform her landscape.

Everything changed that day in May when Mount St. Helens literally "blew her lid." It looked like someone had taken a scoop out of her: the mountain lost her beautiful domed top. And with that eruption came the largest landslide in recorded history. The blast flattened trees over 20 miles away and formed a crater more than a mile wide. 150 square miles of old-growth forest was destroyed in the process, ash was blown as far away as Virginia, and the cloud of the eruption could even be seen from space. Due to its boiling waters, all life in Spirit Lake died. Now, it was jammed with fallen trees. 57 people were killed, some of whom were well inside the designated "safe zones." And at least one casualty famously refused to leave the mountainside he so loved. All life it seemed had been devastated, destroyed.

A few years later is when I got to know the Mount St. Helens "After." By the time my family was making our regular visits, a lot of regrowth had already happened. You see, life came back to the mountain much faster than scientists expected. But, to the untrained eye, to the five-year-old eye, this rebirth was not much to speak of. The Windy Ridge Loop, the route we took on our trips, started us out in the woods that stood just outside of the blast zone. These were woods typical to the area, old-growth forests towering far into the air, wildlife, streams. Beautiful and inspiring, but no different from where we went camping every year. And then we came upon the blast zone.

The change was dramatic. Still miles away from the volcano, the devastation was clear. All I could see was gray. Bleak, dead, ash-covered, desolate, gray land. But, the rangers and my dad were quick to point out that it wasn't as bleak as it seemed. Signs of regrowth would become much more apparent over the coming years, certainly, but they were there from the beginning. Just a few months after Mount St. Helens erupted, scientists had found a gopher pushing through ash. Within a year, prairie lupines had reappeared, supported by their deep, deep root structures. Insects, too.

Life had been decimated when Mount St. Helens erupted, but not destroyed. The lupines and trees had been ripped up, but some of their root structures went far too deep to be destroyed by a mere volcano eruption. And now, 30 years later, there is so much life returning to the area. Fish are swimming again in Spirit Lake, something that was once thought impossible. Elk have begun returning to the area, too, and the trees, though still nowhere near as tall as they once were, are thriving.

Bangor Theological Seminary, as we know it, will never be the same again. Many if not most of us have found ourselves and our paths forever changed. For me, it's been a difficult time and the trajectory

I'm on now is not one I would ever have imagined three months ago. The metaphor of Mount St. Helens is pretty applicable here. We are in the midst of a change that can be seen as devastating. It is the end of something. However, that does not mean that it is the end. New life will grow from this just as new life grew out of the ashes of Mount St. Helens. We have been given an opportunity to re-examine the paths we are on. None of us can ever claim to really know where we're going. The roads that we're taking are winding, and every obstacle that is put in our way is a chance for us to strengthen our understanding of ourselves, our call, our purpose, our path.

The only thing that anyone knew for certain after Mount St. Helens erupted was that it would never be the same again. Something was lost, yes, and everyone knew something new would come and take its place. That something new came rapidly and it presented an amazing opportunity. Nowhere else had scientists been able to study regrowth like they had the chance to at Mount St. Helens. To see firsthand the strength and endurance of this world as it healed itself. It seems a little silly to be saying this to a group of seminarians, and people associated with a seminary. But, we have to have faith. As a UU who is still struggling with my own beliefs, that statement always strikes me as a little odd. When I say it to a group of UU's I may well be talking to atheists, agnostics, and wiccans. So when I say, "We have to have faith," I don't qualify just what we have to have faith in. The scientists at the mountain, they had faith in the natural world that *something* would happen.

I've had the most unusual calm, or even hopefulness, through much of the current turmoil. It's gotten to the point where my family worries I'm in denial because I'm not usually such an optimist. But I think it is, in large part, because I do have faith. I honestly trust that it is all going to work out, that everything that is happening is meant to assist me in strengthening my understanding of my ministry. And I trust that BTS, while it may never look like the BTS I know and love now, will continue to serve in some way.

When I saw the readings for today's retreat, I was amazed. They reinforced for me the importance of having faith that everything will work out okay. I could not have found better readings myself. They speak to the heart of what I have been trying to articulate to myself, as I have been reflecting on the metaphor and inspiration of Mount St. Helens.

"The world I knew was gone. What I know is that I do not know. Where I am going or Who I am becoming."
(from "What I know" by Jane Cresswell)

The devastation, the emptiness, the uncertainty. But really, when do any of us really know where we are going or who we are becoming. How many of us have been utterly surprised to find ourselves at some point looking back over the years and saying, "If you'd told me when I was younger that I would be where I am now, doing what I am doing, I would never have believed you." Sometimes it takes something powerful, definitive, life-altering, to make you realize in the moment instead of in retrospect just how much our own journeys are not really in our hands.

Something was lost, yes, and everyone knew something new would come and take its place. That something new came rapidly and it presented an amazing opportunity.

"This beginning has been quietly forming, waiting until you were ready to emerge."
(from "For a New Beginning" by John O'Donohue)

Perhaps that is what will come, for some of us, out of these changes. The chance to finally be ready to see the world that awaits us. To truly see the gifts that we can bring to our ministries, to the world.

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" *(from Isaiah 43:19)*

Those first signs of life after Mount St. Helens erupted were hard to see. The tiny indications of what was to come. A new thing is coming for all of us. It is springing forth whether we like it or not and it's our job to figure it out, to pay enough attention to see it. To have the faith: in our future, in ourselves, in God's plan, that something great will come from all of this.

One of the inspirations that I draw from Mount St. Helens is that rapid regrowth. That unexpected, rapid regrowth. The land around the mountain wasn't going to let a little, catastrophic volcanic eruption stop it from growing. And Mount St. Helens itself continues to change and grow today. Recently there have been rumblings and small eruptions. A lava dome is growing in the crater. I take inspiration from the Mount St. Helens that I grew up with. Though it doesn't stand quite as tall in the skyline as the Mount St. Helens "Before," even in its broken state it still stands tall enough to be seen. It has a beauty, a different beauty than before perhaps, but one that sets it apart. Yes, I'm personifying the mountain and the land around it, but I find it hard not to. I see Mount St. Helens standing tall, her wounds a part of her character, a part of her future.

May we all stand tall through these changes. Our wounds are there, and they need to be honored and held. We need the chance to mourn what is lost. But we must also move forward. We need to be open to the new growth that can come from devastation. As one of the readings at the retreat said, "Though your destination is not yet clear, you can trust the promise of this opening."

Allison Gammons is pursuing an M.A. degree at the Portland campus of BTS. Read Allison's take on Convocation 2012 in this very issue of the Open Door.

Life's Purpose: Living a Life of Worship

by Douglas A. Beck, AOJN, BTS Adjunct Faculty Member

There was a cold, gusty wind blowing across the Wisconsin prairie. The frost line was difficult to break loose as I worked to free the remnants of last summer's invasive weeds from the garden pathways. I was helping Sister to prepare the paths for the sowing of new seed that was to sprout, creating low-maintenance grassy walkways around the garden plots in the spring. We worked steadily and methodically, digging beneath the early frost line to grip as much weed and root as possible. It was the week before Thanksgiving, the week leading up to Christ the King Sunday and the conclusion of another church year. The close of another liturgical cycle, as we prepared to begin anew with Advent, was the perfect time for a pilgrimage.

My "mostly silent," annual retreat to the Episcopal Order of Julian monastery was punctuated with Sister's exclamation in the quiet of our mid-morning work period, "Douglas, look!"

At this point I had been stooped over for nearly an hour, intent on my work, deep in my own contemplative space. As Sister's beckoning broke my concentration, I heard the clackety-clack bugle call of sandhill cranes migrating to their winter habitation. Looking skyward, I was awestruck by the choreography of these birds implanted with all that was needed to guide them homeward.

The large flock took advantage of the high winds, maximizing their velocity by flying high in a triple V-shaped formation.

"A symbol of the Trinity?" I recall wondering to myself.

One bird in each V rotated with another on the opposite side of the formation, likely to reduce the probability of stress caused by the high winds. All the while there were frequent calls back and forth from one to the other.

What I witnessed on that cold November morning was no less than worship of God found in creation. My thoughts often return to the awe and connectedness I felt that morning, and I am so thankful for the memory of that beautiful image of those sandhill cranes flying home.

For me, those few moments were a solitary worshipful moment that reminded me of corporate acts of worship. And our church gatherings are only part of what I mean by corporate acts of worship. Hear the fourteenth century anchoress, Julian of Norwich, echoing her ancient time. "God out of goodness created the planets and the elements to work for all people so that union with Christ's bliss might be known." Julian's "all people" refers to those living in every place in time. It is an opportunity for God's creation to be *oned* (Julian's word) with its source. Christ's bliss is the eternal source Julian names as *love*. *Love* (here, read: God) is the life source of all being.

If this is so, then the concept of our single hour practicing weekly worship expands to include every nook and cranny of universal existence. Experiencing this Love in our congregations becomes an experience of relating this Love to one another out of an ever-developing sense of relationship with God. After all, this Trinitarian God is the God of creation, recreation, and regeneration. Life itself becomes our worship in an experience of relating to God and to one another that knows no bounds. Through this experience we come to understand that worship becomes the only reality. In *Original Blessing*, American theologian Matthew Fox reminds us that creation did not begin with the absence of God, but in God's presence, and with God's blessing. While human choice may have blurred this view, God remains at the crux of creation.

This is why the cross of Christ imagery remains so integral to faith. The cross reminds us that the center is *still* at the heart of the matter. It is where Love is found. Love pours forth inviting all to join in the journey homeward in relationship with God, the source and purpose of life and the recipient of our spiritual worship.

Our Hebrew ancestor, the Psalmist, reminds us that "all the earth worships" God. Paul picks up on the theme of God's nature in creation: "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made."

With the steadying rise of individualism in our postmodern lives, it is difficult sometimes for us to see that we are part of something more connected. That our relationship with God began not with us as individuals but as a created order on a journey returning to its source. The shining light of today's emergent church contrasts with the world's darkness, even shining into its darkest corners. It reminds us that worship has been and will continue to be a convergence of ancient and eternal relationships with God.

God, the creator, gave those sandhill cranes everything they needed for their journey in this life. What I witnessed was a community sojourning in relationship with one another. In that community was a sense of trust, communication, companionship, and mutuality.

The flock's survival was dependent on each bird working as one unit. Some were clearly leaders, some clearly followers. Some shared leadership, easing the burden. All were essential with their own individual uniqueness. Birthed into creation with our own uniqueness, we too have a longing to journey. God's gift to us is the opportunity for relationship and *oned-ness*. We spend our lifetimes making our way home. Like the ancients before us, and certainly those that will follow, we are given choices. Do we deny or engage in the journey with the sojourners around us? Do we honor the wisdom and learn from the mistakes of those before us? What wisdom will those who follow us receive from us for the sake of their own lives?

Regardless of any conscious choice we make, it is inevitable that life's journey returns us home. At times, our own migratory patterns may seem unchartered, while at other times our paths may feel strangely familiar. Like the sandhill cranes of Wisconsin, we each have our own homing devices, we bear the crosses we've been given, and we live in perpetual relationship with Love.

Douglas A. Beck, AOJN is affiliated with the Order of Julian of Norwich in Waukesha, Wisconsin, a member of the Episcopal Church, and a member of the Adjunct Faculty at BTS. He has been a church musician since 1983 and is especially interested in the reawakening of ancient church worship practice in today's congregations. He welcomes reader feedback at douglasbeck@mac.com.

Faculty Member Michelle Ellis to Step Down after June 2012

In March President Robert Grove-Markwood announced with deep regret that he had received the resignation of Michelle Ellis as Instructor of Hebrew Scriptures effective June 30, 2012. In her own words:

"The last three years at BTS have been wonderful and I know in my heart this is where I was meant to be for this time. But this season has passed and with the changes occurring at the Seminary, I must prepare for the next chapter of my life. I need to write full-time to complete my dissertation; unfortunately my duties at BTS would preclude me from doing that.

Though I had hoped to spend the rest of my career at BTS, God's plans are not always our plans. It pains me to leave the place and people I love so dearly, and I pray that God will guide the trustees as they make the very difficult decisions to help the Seminary continue in some form into the future."

Thank you,

Michelle D. Ellis
Instructor of Hebrew Scriptures

Michelle will continue to teach through June 30, 2012. After that, her plans are to remain in Maine as she completes her dissertation. It will be a blessing to have her close by, though BTS students, staff, and faculty will miss her everyday presence as teacher and colleague. The BTS community will be diminished by this loss.

The whole BTS community—students, staff, faculty, and trustees—promises that our prayers and affections will embrace Michelle and her children during this time of transition. May God illumine her path, and guide her on her continuing journey of discovery; may grace and peace be her constant companions.

Receptions for the BTS community to celebrate and share our appreciation for Michelle are planned for April 30 at 4:30 p.m. in Bangor and on May 8 at 4:30 p.m. in Portland.

Thank you Michelle!
Best wishes to you and your family!

Distinguished Alumnus Award 2012

by Rev. Larry A. Zimmerman

On Tuesday, January 10, 2012, Rev. Larry A. Zimmerman presented the Distinguished Alumnus Award for 2012 at the Annual Meeting of the Alumni/ae Association of BTS.

When I first entered Bangor Seminary over forty years ago, I had the distinct honor to meet many outstanding colleagues with whom I would share my seminary journey as well as my life in ministry. Some, following graduation, I would never meet again. After all, not all BTS graduates stay in Maine. Or even in New England, for that matter. Still, there are those of us who, because of such events as Convocation, have managed to see each other at least once a year. There are also a few whose paths in ministry connected with mine over the years in unexpected ways. One such classmate was John Mingus.

John and I share the same birth year. We first met on "the hill" in 1968, shortly after my arrival to begin my seminary journey. John, already two years ahead of me, would have been a commuting student then, since he and his wife Judy had begun serving a small church in Cherryfield that same year.

John was ordained in that church in 1970. During his time there, he would be instrumental in establishing Weld Bethel, a north campus for the Maine Seacoast Mission. Today, that facility has grown to include a food pantry, programs for the elderly, after-school programs for children and youth, daycare and summer camps, and a host of other community outreach programs. John also saw the need for elderly housing and laid the groundwork for a Senior Housing program that has grown substantially over the years.

According to his own reflection on his life and ministry, which he shared with me, John continued to work with the Maine Seacoast Mission. In 1975, he and Judy with their two children moved to Vinalhaven for 18 months before returning to Cherryfield. Then, in 1976, John accepted a call to the First Congregational Church in Townsend, Massachusetts. Since I had been called to a church in Dracut just two towns away, the two of us would soon connect for the first time since our Seminary days.

Rev. Dr. John Mingus with his wife, Kim.

Later, in 1982, John became the organizing pastor of the United Church of Christ in Senecca Valley in Germantown, Maryland. After successfully seeing that church through the construction of a new building, John accepted a call to become the Secretary of Church Development for the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. Here again, we connected—somewhat. John tried several times to entice me to begin a new church as he had done. But I was not a door-knocking sort of guy, so I declined, although I appreciated John's thoughtful opinion of me.

In January of 1993, John and I connected again. I was still in Dracut when he returned to parish ministry at First Church, Methuen—the next town over from me. What a thrill to be there for John's installation and have him and Judy just down the road. It was the perfect setting for John, who was set to follow a 34-year tenure of another Seminary grad, David Ladre.

However, less than two years into his ministry, Judy, John's best friend and life partner in ministry, would lose her life in a battle with cancer. John's world fell apart. He could not continue at First Church without her. In 1994, John started to rebuild his life. A year later, he fell in love with Kimberly and together they moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee where John became pastor of the Pilgrim Congregational Church. Together they set about "rebuilding a church devastated by conflict and rebuilding a life" for themselves. Again, John was more than successful in his efforts there.

John retired from ministry in 2006 and moved with Kimberly to Venice, Florida where Kimberly is a teacher and John, a stay-at-home dad. A year into retirement, John would be diagnosed with ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

In 2008, I retired and moved to Maine. After a year or so I found myself missing the pulpit. Of all places, I was offered a

part-time ministry in Cherryfield, where John had first begun his ministry—in a time that seems not too distant. Shortly afterwards, I received an e-mail from John congratulating me on serving back in his old stomping grounds. I had forgotten he had been ordained there. My memory was only jogged when I found a copy of his ordination service in one of those many drawers that are filled with the "stuff" that accumulates in all of our churches. So to speak, we had crossed paths once again.

John is certainly not forgotten in Cherryfield. This holiday season, when I was out caroling with our choir, one of the Cherryfield members commented as we drove through an elderly housing complex, "You know, John Mingus started all this." I felt proud of my colleague, and honored to serve in the church where he'd gotten his start and left such a lasting legacy.

Reflecting on his life and ministry, John wrote, "I now know that something more wants to permeate our lives. The realm of God is right now. I've known it in my call. I've known it in visions and scholarly study. I've known it in light-filled moments that have directed my life. I'm experiencing it even now as my body, piece by piece, knows what ALS can do. The realm of God is here. Invoke it in bread and wine! Celebrate that Jesus was right: we are all invited to the banquet with God."

There are so many stories of those whose paths in ministry crossed and crisscrossed since our time at BTS. There have been lifelong friends made and partnerships forged since ministry is, after all, about relationships.

There are many alumni/ae out there who have distinguished themselves in ministry. Many stories have been shared, and many stories will never be told except in the hearts of those who lived them. But we are all the richer for the efforts of our classmates who have served the Lord with commitment, enthusiasm, and love. Our Seminary can be so proud of its collective service to the church. But today, I am proud to present this Distinguished Alumnus Award to my friend, colleague, and classmate, John W. Mingus, Sr.

Let me close with these words John wrote after learning he was the recipient of the Distinguished Alumnus Award:

> *I am surprised and honored by the letter telling me that I have been chosen for this year's Distinguished Alumni Award.*
>
> *My years at Bangor and with the Maine Seacoast Missionary Society are among the happiest and most productive of my life. Those years laid a firm foundation for my 40-year ministry. From the finest teachers I learned to study and I was prepared for a lifetime of faithful learning. From my mentor, the Rev. Dr. Neal Bousefield (Superintendent of the Mission when I went to Cherryfield as a 25-year-old student pastor in 1968) and the members of the church I learned the art of ministry. On this foundation I built a career of church renewal and a committed living of the faith of Jesus.*
>
> *It is with pride that I tell folk that I am a graduate of BTS.*
>
> *I wish that I could travel to be with you. Unfortunately, I developed ALS and now rely on a lot of bulky life-supporting technology that makes overnight travel very difficult. Any financial gift should be given to a BTS fund or to the Maine Seacoast Missionary Society.*
>
> *Grace and peace,*
>
> *Rev. Dr. John W. Mingus, Sr.*

Mark Your Calendars: Commencement 2012

The One Hundred and Ninety-third Commencement will be held at State Street Church, UCC at 159 State Street in Portland. Commencement will begin at 1:00 pm on Friday, May 18; all are welcome so please join us in celebrating the class of 2012. Special alumni classes to be recognized at the ceremony will be the classes of 1962 and 1987.

The senior class's commencement speaker will be the Reverend Mark Monson Alley. A BTS Alumnus and a member of the Board of Trustees, Rev. Alley is a Full Member of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church, as well as an Ordained Elder in the UMC. Rev. Alley currently serves as Senior Pastor of the UMC in Dover, NH and has previously served as Pastor of John Street UMC—the product of a merger between two congregations in Camden and Rockport, Maine—as well as the Tuttle Road UMC in Cumberland, Maine. He has provided tremendous service beyond the local church, as a supervising Pastor/Mentor for new clergy colleagues since 1989, chair of numerous District Committees on the Ordained Ministry, and a member of eight Mission Teams to Louisiana and Haiti. Born in South Portland, Rev. Alley is known for his tremendous pastoral experience and presence, as well as his love of Maine and BTS.

Parking: Options include street parking and a limited number of reserved spaces at the Holiday Inn on Spring Street. The spaces in front of the church will be reserved for handicapped parking. If you would like a reserved parking space at the Holiday Inn, please contact Bonnie Wright at bwright@bts.edu.

Alumni News

The Rev. Dr. Edward DeLong '94 has been chosen by the Executive Council to serve as Moderator of the Cumberland Association upon the resignation of Rev. Gina Finocchaiaro.Rev. Delong is pastor of the Westbrook-Warren Congregational Church.

Rev. AbbyLynn Haskell '99 was called to be the Pastor at Acton Congregational Church, UCC in April 2012.

Judy Braun '05 will be in Ecclesiastical Council of the Cumberland Association on June 17, 2012.

Annette Mott '08 was ordained at First Parish Church, Brunswick in November 2011.

Sarah Pringle-Lewis '08 was approved for ordination in March 2012 by Ecclesiastical Council, pending a call.

Jim Parr '09 was approved by Ecclesiastical Council in March 2012 and will be ordained at North Windham Union Church, UCC on June 3, 2012.

Genise D. (Knowlton) Stern '09 was ordained at the East Otisfield Free Baptist Church in March 2012.

Elizabeth Lowe '10 received her Board Certification as a Chaplain from the Association of Professional Chaplains in February 2012.

Bill Walsh '10 was approved in Ecclesiastical Council last November and was ordained in December 2011 at First Congregation Church, UCC in Waterville. He now serves as Pastor of Hampden Congregational Church, UCC in Hampden, ME.

Barbara Chodkowski '11 was approved for ordination in March 2012 by Ecclesiastical Council, pending a call.

Petra Smith '11 was approved in December 2011 for ordination by Ecclesiastical Council pending a call.

Angela Tarbox '11 completed her exam with the Board of Ordained Ministry earlier this year and was recommended to the Bishop's Cabinet for commissioning as a provisional elder.

Dear Alumni & Friends of BTS,

Are you receiving email from BTS such as monthly newsletters or special announcements? If not, would you like to? ***Sign up today to receive electronic communications from BTS!***

Send a message with your email address to pannis@bts.edu asking to receive electronic communications such as the monthly electronic Newsletter and other special announcements.

Thank you!

In Memoriam

Reverend Canon Clyde Hoyte Cox, Jr.

Reverend Canon Clyde Cox of Sandy Point, Maine passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Wednesday, November 23, 2011 at EMMC. He was 80 years old.

Clyde was Director of Anglican Studies Program at BTS from 1995 to 2002, Interim Rector at St. John's Church, Bangor from 1995 to 1998, and, two separate times, Interim at Trinity Church, Castine where he celebrated his 50th Ordination. He was also a Search Consultant at St. Saviour's in Bar Harbor until 2007. At the time of his death, Clyde attended St.Thomas Church in Ellsworth. He enjoyed his new community of friends, students, and colleagues and loved working in their library, devoting many hours and texts for future readers. Reverend Cox is survived by his beloved children and grandchildren.

The Reverend Charlotte A. Lesak '78

Reverend Charlotte Anna (Rockel) Lesak, 88, passed away on January 13, 2011 at Quaboag on the Common. She was the wife of the late Joseph Lesak and is survived by her daughter, Alice Lesak of Barre; her son, David Lesak and his wife Lorie of Allentown, PA; her grandchildren, Scott Lesak of Allentown and Jana Houser of Norman, OK. She was born in Altoona, PA and retired as minister of Flicksville UCC in 1985. She also later served as Interim Minister at the Barre Congregational Church.

The Reverend Dr. Harold Jerome Mortimer Jr. '68

The Rev. Dr. Harold J. Mortimer died peacefully at Maine Medical Center in Portland on Wednesday, January 11, 2012. A graduate of the Wooster School in Danbury, CT, he attended Brown University in Providence, RI, later receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree from Goddard College in Vermont, his Master of Divinity from BTS and his Doctor of Divinity from

Boston University, in Boston, MA. Harold proudly served in the US Navy on board the destroyer USS Bausell during the Korean War. He also spent 20 years developing and managing low-income housing for off-reservation Native Americans and the elderly in the Black Hills area and Rapid City, SD. His "co-op" model for housing is still considered an industry standard. Following his ordination in 1989, Harold provided interim parish ministries for the United Church of Christ in Longmont, CO, Ascutney, VT, Newport, NH, and Wilmot, NH. Greatly loved by his many friends and family members, he will be dearly missed. He is survived by his wife The Reverend Dr. Mary E. Seals, and several children and grandchildren.

Charles E. "Stick" Stickney Jr. (Former Trustee)

Charles E. "Stick" Stickney Jr., 89, died Dec. 3, 2011 after a fall while hanging holiday garlands over the front door of Cutter House, the home he loved. Stick died as he lived, active to the end. He was a man of intense energy and many passions, including his work and giving back to the community.

For several years Stick was on the board of Maine Department of Environmental Protection. He was a staunch supporter of University of Maine, particularly the College of Engineering, and was active with UMaine's Development Council. His love of being on the water led him to become a volunteer docent at Maine Maritime Museum. He was devoted to Portland, and expressed that through philanthropic support of many Portland institutions, including Portland Museum of Art, Portland Symphony, Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, and the recent reconstruction of the fountain at Deering Oaks Park.

Stick also never stopped learning. In the 1990s, a deepening interest in theology inspired him to take courses at BTS's Portland campus, leading to him eventually joining the Seminary's board of directors. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Anita, and their four children and seven grandchildren.

The Reverend R. Ward Wilson '62

The Reverend R. Ward Wilson, 81, died on November 26, 2011 at home with his wife and family by his side. Born in Springfield, MA on March 7, 1930, Ward graduated from the University of Hartford and BTS. He served UCC churches in Hampden, Meddybumps, Orono, and Eastport, Maine as well as many other churches throughout New England.

Ward will be fondly remembered for his sense of humor, storytelling, his love of old cars, and his passion for live theatre. Reverend Wilson is survived by his wife of 38 years, The Reverend Jane Wilson, Pastor of the United Congregational Church of Orford, NH and Bethany Church, Pike, NH, and seven children and seven grandchildren.

The Reverend James Albert Potter '54

Rev. James Albert Potter was born on March 16, 1927, in Hopkinton, MA, the youngest of four children. He graduated from Tufts University and BTS. Thereafter, he served a succession of churches in the East and Midwest as a Congregational UCC minister: in Lewiston, ME; Sangerville, ME; Danville, VT; Villa Park, IL; Bunker Hill, IL; Hardwick, VT; and Feeding Hills, MA. In retirement, he returned to part-time work, serving as a chaplain for Heritage Nursing Home and Noble Hospital. Throughout his professional life and beyond, Reverend Jim had been active in social justice work and service to the community. In 2003, he was awarded BTS's Distinguished Alumnus Award, of which he was particularly proud. He accomplished all this and more despite a devastating spinal cord injury in 1964 that left him mostly paralyzed below the waist. Instead of retiring from the world of work and life in general, he fought back—learning to drive with hand controls, for example, and serving as a model for people who are, in fact, "differently-abled!" He is survived by his wife Margaret whom he married in 1994, and three children, two stepchildren, and six grandchildren.

The Reverend Arthur Wellington Perkins '74

Reverend Arthur W. Perkins, age 85, of Petersham, died peacefully on February 22, 2012 at his home with family by his side. Arthur was born in Boston in 1926, son of the late Reverend Palfrey Perkins and Linda (Wellington) Perkins. He grew up in Boston and attended Shady Hill School '41, Phillips Exeter Academy '44, and Harvard University '48.

In 1971, Arthur was called to ministry. He received his M.Div. from BTS in 1974 and was ordained by the United Church of Christ. Arthur served churches in Jackman and Hampden, ME and Millbury, MA. During his time as pastor in Hampden, Arthur exchanged pulpits with his counterpart in Dumfermline, Scotland. He retired in 1988, and he and Anne settled in Petersham, where he served as interim pastor at the Petersham Congregational Church and the North Orange Congregational Church. He leaves behind his wife of 63 years, his daughter, two sons, his sister, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. A Memorial Service celebrating the life of Arthur Wellington Perkins will be held on June 9, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Church in Petersham, Massachusetts. Burial will follow in the East Street Cemetery. All are invited to a reception at Winterwood on North Main Street in Petersham.

Bangor Theological Seminary
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PO BOX 411, Bangor, ME 04402-0411

June 2012 Intensives

CC 1710: Religious Themes in American Culture
Dates: June 4-8 (9-4)
Bangor campus with VC to Portland
Instructor: Steven Lewis

This seminar explores major religious and theological themes: God, Sin, Redemption, Salvific figures, the Human condition, and enlightenment or truth as expressed in various media in American Culture. Television, movies, music, art, literature, internet, and advertisements all explore and express universal religious themes in both subtle and overt ways. This class analyzes religious assumptions that underlie American culture and the expressions of those assumptions in our culture. The course will compare classic theological understandings with contemporary characterizations in media.

ET 1722: Crime, Punishment, and Restorative Justice
Dates: June 8, 15, 16, 22 and 23
Portland campus
Instructor: Richard Snyder

The course will examine the punitive culture of the U.S. criminal justice system, with particular attention to the ways in which Christian beliefs have contributed to that culture. Drawing upon the philosophy and practice of the restorative justice movement, alternatives to the current system will be explored and specific practices examined.

Summer Intensives are open to current special and degree students and auditors with the permission of the instructor as space allows.

Contact Danielle LaVine to register or for more information at dlavine@bts.edu or 1-800-287-6781 x- 136.

July 2012 Intensives

ET/PTP 1721: Theology, Theory, and Practice of Organizing Change
Dates: July 12, 13, 14; 20-21
Portland campus
Instructor: Desi Larson

This course is intended to provide participants with both theoretical understanding and practical guidance to organize members of congregations and local communities to work for social change. We will examine the work and thought of four major figures (M. L. King, Jr., Paulo Freire, Saul Alinsky, and Nelson Mandela) and investigate several local, community-based organizations working for social change.

SFD 1701: Spirituality and the Arts
Dates: July 9, 11, 13; 16,18,20
Waterville UCC church
Instructor: Alice Andermann

This course will show you how the arts can be used to express and explore faith and spirituality, connect with God, and do theology. You will learn how to integrate arts in worship, preaching, faith formation, and retreats by studying artists who are theologians and theologians who are artists, doing visual exegesis, learning how art can engage and inform your theology and spirituality, and practicing application in worship, pastoral care, retreats, Bible Study, Christian Education, and church history.

WR 1606: Introduction to Judaism
Dates: July 31-8/23; Tues., Wed. & Thur. 6-9 PM
Portland campus
Instructor: Hillel Katzir

An overview of Judaism, both as a religious tradition and in the role it has played in the life of the Jewish People over 4,000 years, including history, commandments, life cycle events and holidays. We will also focus on the relations between the Jewish People and other faith communities – particularly Christianity - historically, in the present, and prospects for the future.