

The Shalom MINISTRIES CHAMPION



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Your source for all the latest in Shalom Ministries News **Cham-pi-on n.** an ardent defender or supporter of a cause.

Spiritual Leaders are formed by the Spirit

It seems obvious, doesn't it? Spiritual leaders are formed by the Spirit. Simple. Easy. Take one new Christian, add a dollop of the Holy Spirit, and you've got a Christian leader set to do battle for God's Kingdom. Right?

Yes...and no.

Of course, the Holy Spirit can do anything the Holy Spirit chooses to do. So someone can come, fresh off the shelf, and be the messenger of God's word with no preparation...in theory.

The problem is the sticky fact of the Bible. Leaders took time for preparation. Years. Decades... Moses spent forty years in the wilderness, just so he could take the People of God back through the very same wilderness for another forty years! According to the letter of Galatians, Paul spent time in Arabia and three years in Damascus before seeking out the apostles. Jesus spent time in the wilderness, and trained His disciples for three years.

There is a common thread here: Spiritual leaders are formed by the Spirit through a process. In the investment of time and study and reflection, the Spirit helps emerging leaders gain wisdom and insight. Spiritual leaders are formed by the Spirit, but that process of formation is not the same as an MP3 download. That process involves hard work. It requires wrestling with temptations. It involves learning to pray.

I was asked once how I would restructure my seminary education. I replied that I thought my first year should be entirely devoted humbly to learning to pray. The second year should be entirely devoted deeply to the study of scripture, in Hebrew and Greek. The third year would have only two requirements – to complete baseball umpires school, so that I could learn to make a decision...even if I knew it would be unpopular, and finally, I could graduate when I led one person to faith in Christ, walked them into a life of discipleship, and participated in their baptism. A person of prayer. A student of scripture. A decision-maker. A disciple-maker. These are the qualities of authentic, long-haul, life-time ministry. And the Holy Spirit just doesn't dump a load on us and pronounce us fit for gospel ministry. We live into this kind of ministry. We make mistakes. We let pride get in the way of prayer. We replace the study of scripture for some radio preacher's cliff notes. We learn to please people instead of make decisions. We steal someone else's sheep instead of making disciples for Jesus. We cut corners, and the Church of Jesus Christ suffers.

One of the great spiritual movements of the last century was the explosion of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. Powerful streams of social justice, personal transformation, and authentic praise were unleashed in the Welsh revival in 1904 and the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906. The echoes of those revivals are still ringing in Nigeria, and Indonesia, and Guatemala, and literally everywhere the church of Jesus is alive and well in this world. The twinning of historic Anabaptist understandings of discipleship as walking in the way of Jesus, church as radical community, and God's mission of peacemaking, coupled with a Pentecostal understanding of transformational conversion, breaking down the barriers of race, class, and gender, and celebrative worship and prayer is a powerful combination of Christianity's most radical revival movements.

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Our challenge today is to work to create this form of Christian expression. But we are confronted with the temptation to the easy way. But there is no easy way. No cheap grace. There is only our willingness to humble ourselves for the long haul of learning, in and out of classrooms. That's why Shalom Ministries has created various forms of leadership development, such as the School for Urban Mission, in association with Hesston College and the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference. That's why we embrace a conversation between Anabaptist and Pentecostal expressions of the Jesus Way. It's hard, and cutting corners is for wimps. Spiritual leaders are formed by the Spirit. The hard way. In the school of Jesus' costly, free grace.

*Jeff Wright,
President/COO*

Bluffton University Students to Discover the City

From May 6 to May 23, 2008, Shalom Ministries will be hosting 18 students and two adult leaders from Bluffton (Ohio) University. This is a continuation of the partnership between Bluffton University and Shalom Ministries which began last May.

The 18-day urban plunge experience satisfies the students' cross cultural requirements for graduation, and is designed to be an introduction to the joys, challenges, and complexities of ministering in a global, urban setting.

Highlights for the 2008 experience will include

A Los Angeles Power Tour which analyzes how economic, cultural, and religious power has shifted throughout LA's history.

An urban scavenger hunt

Service and learning opportunities with Union Rescue Mission and My Friend's Place

A weekend trip to San Diego and Tijuana to explore the effects of global trade.

Seminars with Shalom Ministries staff and board members

Excursions to the Getty Museum and the Museum of Tolerance

A Dodger Game, time at the beach, Hollywood, and other unique activities the city has to offer.

We have also partnered with two constituency congregations; Family Mennonite Church and JKI Maranatha. Both of these congregations have graciously agreed to host the students during their worship services for a time of fellowship, relationship building, and a chance for the students to learn from the unique stories and ministries of these two congregations.

We thank God for the opportunity to host this group from Bluffton University, and pray that it will be a transformative experience in the development of young leaders.

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Meet School for Urban Mission's First Graduate's

On February 1, 2008 during opening session of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference the following students were recognized as the first graduates of the School for Urban Mission. They received their diplomas from Rev. Dave Grieser, Director of the Pastoral Ministries Program at Hesston College.



Grace Eluwa, member of Los Angeles Faith Chapel in Inglewood California member. She is a member of the Leadership Team at Los Angeles Faith Chapel and ministers to Widows and Orphans in Nigeria.

Jason Evans, member of Ecclesia Collective in San Diego. He is passionate about planting small urban faith communities, restorative justice and promoting sustainability.



Bro. George Makinto, member at large of Los Angeles Faith Chapel. He is also the Executive Director of Amahoro International.

Following is the keynote speech delivered by Rev. Dave Grieser on February 1, 2008 during the opening session of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Assembly in Los Angeles CA. He addressed and celebrated the first graduates of School for Urban Mission.

Pressing On to Equip Leaders

I'm excited to be with you this evening. I really mean that! I feel like Paul telling the Romans "your faith has been proclaimed throughout the world." Brothers and sisters of the Pacific Southwest Conference, you are the fastest growing part of the Body of Christ known as Mennonite Church USA. I've been looking forward to this time in order to feel the presence of God's Spirit.

On behalf of Hesston College I congratulate you who are receiving certificates from Hesston College. You have overcome obstacles of time, distance, finance, perhaps language, not to mention the extra obstacles that colleges and deans and registrars and accrediting associations put in the way of programs like the School of Urban Mission! You have persevered and finished the race and completed your requirements. Congratulations!

I want to invite everyone to a little exercise called "Overhearing the Gospel." Here's how it works. I'm going to speak to the three receiving certificates. But I want all pastors and congregational leaders to overhear what I am saying to them. And I want all who are members of churches also to overhear what I say. You're eavesdropping on a conversation. My assigned title is "Pressing On to Equip Leaders." I want to talk to you about the essential qualities of an equipped Christian.

Turn with me to John 21. While you turn there, let me set this in context. Many years before Paul wrote to the churches about the gifts of the Spirit for equipping the church for ministry, Jesus met by a lake with his disciples. He was about to return to heaven. Since these were Jesus' last words, we expect they would be important, and they are. Let's start reading at verse 15. [John. 21:15-19]

Jesus asks Peter a question, and then gives him a directive, an order. The question is "Do you love me?" The order is, "Feed my sheep."

We assume Jesus is asking Peter if he loves him because of Gethsemane—the denial. Peter seems to take it that way. But I think Jesus is giving Peter a final exam. He's testing Peter's readiness for ministry. And the final exam is just a single essay question that Jesus asks Peter and, I believe, all of us here tonight: "Do you love me?"

Love Me

Let's think about the question—don't write your answer yet. "Do you love me?" That's an odd final exam question. It's not the question professors usually ask. When I consider my students and their readiness for ministry I ask, "Can you preach? Do you know how to present the gospel? Can you teach, or counsel? Do you have the skills?" That's not where Jesus starts. Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"

Academic training for ministry is important. Spiritual gifts are important. Anabaptist theology matters. Skill in preaching and in interpreting the urban context, matter. But a warm, personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is ESSENTIAL.

And why is that? Jesus tells Peter. Up to now, Peter, you have gone where you wanted and done what you pleased. You've lived your life in your own way. You've saved your own skin! But if you serve me, you will no longer be your own. Someone will eventually take you where you don't want to go.

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Let me try to translate that for our world. Graduates, pastors, Christians...ministry is not a career! By that I don't just mean ministry is not a place to make money—I hope by now you know that! Its not a place to call attention to ourselves or our gifts or to get our ego needs met. It's not a place to showcase ourselves, our speaking ability or musical talent. Ministry is a calling. When we're called, we go WHERE Jesus calls us, WHEN Jesus calls us, UNDER THE CONDITIONS Jesus calls us to bear-whether the place is glamorous or hidden.

A long time ago, a pastor talked about the servant heart: "Genius, learning, eloquence, zeal, public exertion, and great sacrifices, even if it should be of all of our goods, and of our lives themselves, will be accounted of no value in the eyes of the Lord, if love to Christ be wanting."

That's the very opposite of careerism—it's calling...service. Tonight, Jesus, who knows your heart, calls you...pastor, graduate, Christian...to answer the simple question, "Do I love him?" That's the question. You may write your answer now.

Love My Sheep

Then, Jesus gives a command. I know we're city people, but we can make the connection. Shepherds feed sheep—applied to the church, they grow people. The basic characteristic is still love. Here it is love for the sheep-for people. See the movement? Love me, love my sheep. Earlier in John's gospel Jesus says, "My sheep know my voice, but they won't follow a hired person. The hireling does it for the money." Again, he's talking about our motive for ministry. Is it love or money? Love or attention? Love or approval?

I travel and speak to a lot of ministers these days and a major focus seems to be on keeping boundaries between their work and their personal time. They'll give 40 hours but no more. Now we need family time. We are not the Messiah! But in some parts of the church, the career mentality, the me-first mentality has gone too far. If we do not truly, deeply love the people God has given us we are not equipped for ministry. Ministry is tiring. People's lives are at stake. Neighborhoods are at stake. People's eternities are at stake. When we give ourselves to people they will take us to painful places and keep us up nights. Real ministry requires love for real human beings.

It requires love for two kinds of sheep, according to Jesus. There are the sheep in the fold, in the church. And there are sheep that, according to John. 10:36, are not of this fold. When we're equipped with love for Christ we'll always have a yearning for people outside the Body of Christ. Churches equipped with love for Christ ask, "What are the best ways we can love and reach the outside sheep? In many cases the best way to reach sheep outside the fold is to start new churches. LA is still ripe with opportunities for church planting. With new people emigrating and moving here every day church planting is always in season. I hope that every congregation here this evening has a plan, a prayer project, or at least a dream for planting a congregation. Our denomination across the country is in dire need of new churches. One of my teachers at Fuller used to say, "It's easier to have a baby than to raise the dead!"

So my challenge...to you who are graduating tonight...to every member of a church...is to really hear Jesus' question: "Do you love me? Do you love me more than everything else? More than your reputation? More than success? Your convenience? Your future? Your life? Do you love the people in your church? Do you love the people outside your church? Jesus asked Peter three times. You know your attention span is short. Keep the flame of love alive. Pray constantly. And leave all the rest to God.

Dr. David Greiser is the Director of the Hesston College Pastoral Ministries Program.

A Newbie's perspective on Assembly

Rebekka and I arrived Friday night at Family Mennonite Church in South Los Angeles curious and eager to participate in our first PSMC Assembly. We were "newbies" to the people and the life of the conference. We had been invited by our pastor to be delegates representing JKI Maranatha and to attend the weekend proceedings and festivities. We didn't know what to expect, but we were keen to be take part in what proved to be an incredible weekend.

The Assembly kicked off Friday night with worship and a Teaching at Family Mennonite Church. We heard a powerful message about Jesus' question in John 21, "Do you love me?" The speaker spoke plainly about the uniqueness of PSMC. "It is the place to be. The Anabaptist world is watching." He was talking of course about the exciting dynamic of multi-culturalism that is embodied in the congregational life of the conference. The Saturday morning teaching picked up on the same theme. We were invited to celebrate who we are as the body of Christ and to build multi-cultural relationships. In the afternoon session, we were challenged to be the people of God as a missional strategy.

Of course there was the conference business to attend too, which was a bit overwhelming to us "newbies" at times. For the most part, we understood what was going on, but any semblances of confusion, on our part, was addressed in small group or big group discussions. We were impressed by the active participation of the delegates and the collective attentiveness at hearing concerns and issues of the gathered body.

Besides the seriousness of the input and the conference business, we need to point out our wonderful and gracious hosts, Family Mennonite Church and Assembly at Royal Dominion Family Chapel, of this year's assembly. With large measures of warm hospitality and delicious meals, the participants were well taken care of. Furthermore, the highlight for us was the "Concert of the Nations," which was a powerful experience to see how art, music and worship can bring us together as a body in Christ. We were impressed how God is gathering us together in Los Angeles to be sent and to participate in God's mission. After the Winter Assembly we didn't feel like "newbies" anymore and are excited to be part of such a dynamic conference. Since moving here in 2006, both of us have become more intentionally and deeply involved in the life of the church and mission in LA. We look forward to the next Assembly.

Rebekka and David Stutzman



Evangelicals Oppose War

Over 150 people participated in the 6th annual Palm Sunday Peace Parade in Pasadena, California Sunday afternoon, March 16. The participants, mostly evangelical Christians, marched from a church in a low income neighborhood to an upscale mall in the city's business district, calling for peace at the beginning of a week that would mark the 5th anniversary of the Iraq War. The rout of the parade was chosen to symbolize the journey that Jesus culminated on the first Palm Sunday, from Galilee to Jerusalem, from the margins of his society to the center.

Participants carried palm branches as well as signs calling for peace. A few people also played drums. At the mall the group sang and prayed for peace.

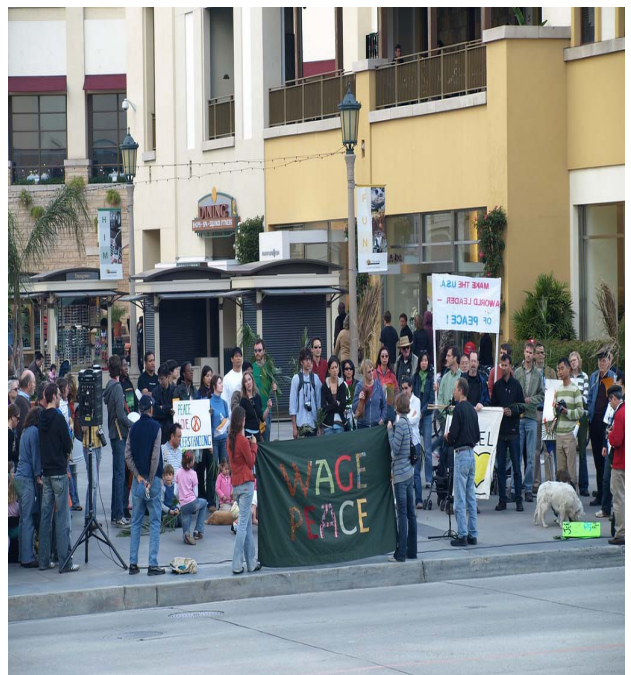
As the participants gathered at the church, they were addressed by Dr. Glen Stassen, Professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Stassen shared about a meeting that he had with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran, last September. The meeting was part of a series that emerged out of the work of Mennonite Central Committee in Iran and came to include leaders of other Christian denominations. In his remarks to the parade participants, Stassen made a strong case for dialog rather than threats or acts of war.

The parade was cosponsored by the Peace Center @ CAL, Pasadena Mennonite Church, and the Urban Village. At least thirteen other churches and community groups were also represented among the participants.

Bert Newton



Photo's) courtesy Bert Newton



School for Urban Mission course offering

The Anabaptist Witness course is an investigation and assessment of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition from historical, theological, pastoral and missiological points of view in light of an urban, post-modern context. Students who successfully complete this course should be able to meet the following objectives:

- Develop an appreciation for the history of the Christian movement from a non-Constantinian point of view.
- Describe the Anabaptist-Mennonite story from the 16th century to the present as a story of a church in mission.
- Explain the confessional tradition of the Anabaptist theological movement.
- Offer a constructive critique of the Mennonite movement in light of the urban, postmodern setting of Southern California, paying special attention to the intersections of Anabaptist and Charismatic approaches to the Christian Way.
- Define and explore pastoral leadership as informed by Anabaptist-Mennonite theological and missiological perspectives.

Instructor: Bishop Jeff Wright

Class will meet on

Apr 26 May 3 May 17 Jun 7 Jun 14

Students should come to the first class having **already read** the book, "**Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History**," by Harry Loewen, et al, (Herald Press: 1996), ISBN 0-8361-9015-7. The book can be ordered at www.amazon.com, for as little as \$10.87 + shipping and handling (new), or used for as little as \$4.20, or it can be ordered from the publisher at <http://mpn.os.mennoniteusa.org/> for \$15.99. Students who register by March 28, 2007, will receive the complete course outline and reading list before the first session.

Course Sessions will take place from **9 am to 1 pm**
on
the campus of William Carey International University
located at
1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena CA 91104.

To **register** for this course please contact our office at (626)727-8100
or send an email to urban.anabaptist@gmail.com

Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to the editor. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to urban.anabaptist@gmail.com.

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