

# Around<sup>THE</sup> Green

BETHEL COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2026



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EMILY TIMPERLEY

Courtesy photos unless otherwise indicated

**AROUND THE GREEN  
SUMMER 2026**  
bethelks.edu

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#### AROUND THE GREEN

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On the cover: Brayden Schilling walks across the  
Memorial Hall stage to receive his diploma  
AVA BROXTERMAN

Above: The Class of 2026 processes toward Memorial  
Hall. Left side, Emma Killingsworth, Caleb Koontz, Louisa  
Lehmann; right side, Petr Kollar, Lisa Legros, Yuretzi Licea.

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a message from

# President Jon C. Gering

## *Hellos and Goodbyes*

A wise person once told me that life is a series of hellos and goodbyes. Most days, we arrive and leave our homes and places of work, always greeting and bidding adieu. There is seasonality to our hellos and goodbyes, when family and friends come to visit for holidays or summers. Many groups of Bethel graduates meet on a regular schedule. So, yes – life is a series of hellos and goodbyes spanning time and space and ranging from the routine to the significant. We should value these moments and strive to be good at them.

I want to thank the Board of Directors and members of the Bethel College community for their excellent and thoughtful goodbye to me and my family. My last day is June 30, so this will be my last President's Column for *Around the Green*. I'm not just leaving a job. Bethel College is my academic home, where faculty and staff taught me how to think, teach, and do research. I met my friends and future wife at Bethel. I have deep and wide family connections at this institution. It's hard to say goodbye, though I know it is the right decision.

I'm proud of everything we've accomplished together. The endowment is approaching \$50M, many of its funds used to support students. We constructed three buildings over eight years: the softball clubhouse, Thresher Stadium locker room, and the Wellness Center. We increased the efficiency of our operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and accreditation challenges. Bethel has no long-term debt, which is rare for small colleges. We've added historically large incoming classes because prospective students and parents are attracted to our unique value proposition that integrates the liberal arts, work, and faith. We've added new majors in Software Development and Health and Human Performance, with more to be announced later this year.

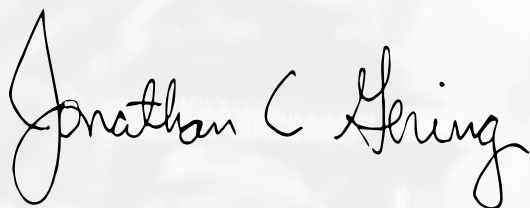
One of my favorite parts of the job has been visiting Thresher alumni. Thank you for taking time to talk with me and inviting me into your homes. I will miss visiting you! Check out the impressive accomplishments of our alumni spotlighted in this issue.

On July 1, 2026, the college will welcome Wynn Goering '77 as interim president. I've worked with Wynn as a board member and chairperson throughout my presidency. He is well prepared to lead the college, and we are fortunate to have a person of his experience and commitment (see p. 29) in this transitional role. I encourage you to welcome him – and the president who follows him – with kindness, generosity, and respect. Bethel is well known on the national scene, and I'm confident that our mission, strong financial position, and numerous assets will attract a strong pool of presidential candidates.

We've entered a new season at the college – a season for hellos and goodbyes. I know from personal experience that the college community does these transitions well.

It's been an honor to serve as the 15th president of Bethel College. Thank you for your support.

Yours on the journey,



# TAKE NOTE

»Bethany Schrag, graduating senior from Valley Center, Kan., became **the first-ever Thresher athlete to represent Bethel in the NAIA Marathon Championships**, which took place Dec. 14, 2025, as part of the BMW Dallas Marathon.

»Seth Balzer, tuba, made it **four in a row for Bethel students** winning the Newton Mid-Kansas Symphony Orchestra's Dwight Beckham Young Soloists competition, college division. He played *Concerto No. 1 for Tuba and Orchestra* by Alexej Lebedev at the Feb. 15 NMKSO Winter Classics concert.

»Thresher women's basketball **made history with their first-ever NAIA Tournament win**, March 13 in Madison, S.D., when Bethel advanced to the 2nd round after defeating #6 seed Concordia (Neb.) 78-76. Bethel's 21-10 regular season record was one of the best in program history.

»Bethel's **social work program received affirmation of accreditation** in March from the Council on Social Work Education until 2034, the successful completion of a process that began in 2024.

»Bethel **won the 2026 KCAC Competitive Dance Championship**, March 14 in York, Neb. The regular season also saw the Threshers setting a new record for their highest team score at a competitive meet. Kiley McCord was named Coach of the Year.

»The staff of *The Bethel Collegian* **brought home 10 awards** from the 2026 Northern Plains Collegiate Media Association's Golden Leaf Awards March 28, including 2nd place for Best Overall Newspaper, and two 1st-place awards for sports photos (Ava Broxterman and Ethan Wilcox).

»Bethel forensics **qualified four team members to nationals** (April 3-6 at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Ore.): Isaiah Smith, graduating senior from Great Bend, Kan., and sophomore Preston Vicenzi, six events each, and juniors Sophia England and Micheala Wenger in one each.

»The Department of Teacher Education received notice in April that **the program was fully accredited** by the Kansas State Department of Education through December 2032. This followed notice in late 2025 of full accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) through December 2032.

»Bethel men's tennis finished the season undefeated in conference play, and **won the regular-season championship and the KCAC Tournament**. The women were runners-up in both, and both teams received bids to the NAIA Tournament in Mobile, Ala., May 12-14, while Gabe Johnson '19, head coach, was named KCAC Coach of the Year in tennis.



Senior Taryn Paulino was named Thresher of the Year by *The Bethel Collegian*.  
LUIS AVILES

»The annual Seth Dunn Memorial Award, which **honors an incoming senior who has made a significant contribution to the Bethel community**, went this year to Mason Bolen. Dunn's family established the award after his death in an accident in 2011. For a complete listing of end-of-the-year academic, athletic and service awards, see [bethelks.edu/awards](http://bethelks.edu/awards).

»Dr. Siobhán Scarry, professor of English, was **awarded the Sprunger Research Grant**, endowed in honor of the late professor emeritus of history Keith Sprunger.

»Taryn Paulino **received the 2026 Maud Wyatt Recognition Scholarship** from the Kansas Independent Colleges Association (KICA), given to students with a record of achievement in the classroom and contribution to the community.

»The nursing class of 2026 posted a **100% pass rate** on the NCLEX-RN.



# SELF-DRIVING VEHICLE SPECIALIST

ABE REGIER '07  
CHEMISTRY

Bethel College was Abe Regier's family legacy – he was the fourth generation to attend. But even more than that, "I grew up on campus," he says. His father, Chuck Regier '81, worked at Kauffman Museum from 1984 until 2026. "I didn't want a large university. Ultimately, it was the combination of family history, the faculty and staff tuition break, and the opportunity to run track" (he competed in hurdles and the 400m relay).

Smaller class sizes meant "you had a chance to get to know everyone, to have friends in a wide variety of circles. Professors took an interest in me, which helped because I lacked focus when I started college." Abe was drawn to his science classes and has fond memories of a math and science history tour to Europe and a chance to attend the PittCon analytical chemistry convention, a trip made possible by an alumni gift.

Abe also appreciated the liberal arts aspect. "I was one of those students who had no idea what I wanted to do, and still didn't when I graduated. I'm a chemistry major because I enjoyed the classes and professors so much. It was good that I didn't have to commit to something I wasn't interested in."

After graduation, Abe spent a year in Mennonite Voluntary Service in Tucson, Ariz., doing residential repair for low-income clients, then the next three years back in Newton building museum exhibits for the alumni-owned business Flint Hills Design (now Upland Exhibits), sometimes working with his dad, before moving to Pittsburgh in 2011. There, he was a research and development chemist for PPG Industries, a coatings company.

"After five years, I was growing tired of a corporate job. I had a neighbor who worked at Aurora," a recent self-driving vehicle start-up. "There were some open roles, so I applied."

He started out in 2017 as a vehicle operators specialist, doing early-stage testing. When his manager left to start a new company a year later, Abe moved into the role. In 2021, Aurora acquired Uber ATG, another company developing self-driving vehicles. Abe worked as a program manager for integrating the operations team. Since 2022, he has been a program manager on operational safety.

"My job now focuses on incident response, where managing software bugs or collisions requires immediate action. Because these incidents occur under intense public scrutiny, how we handle the aftermath is the ultimate deciding factor in maintaining public trust."




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"What I value most about my liberal arts education at Bethel is how well-rounded it made me. It gave me a strong analytical foundation in science, while teaching me how to communicate clearly, think broadly, and effectively connect with people."

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**MELANIE ZUERCHER**

# BLOOD CANCER RESEARCHER

ANASTASIA TIKHONOVA '05

NATURAL SCIENCES

Anastasia Tikhonova came to the United States from Russia to attend Hesston College, and completed her undergraduate degree at Bethel after hearing about its “strong science program and reputation for being a place where students were genuinely supported by faculty.”

“As an international student, that combination was really important to me. Moving to another country and navigating college is a big transition, and Bethel felt like a place where I could grow academically while also making friends. I learned a lot of independence and resilience. Being far from home, as an international student, forces you to grow quickly.

“I also appreciated how accessible the faculty were. The small class sizes created an environment where you could ask questions, engage deeply in discussions, and build real relationships with professors and classmates.”

In 2007, Anastasia began working on a Ph.D. in immunology at the University of Pennsylvania. While there, she became interested in how microenvironments dictate cell fate choices. A cell’s immediate surroundings (called niche factors) act as a set of instructions to the cell on whether to divide, migrate, stay dormant or specialize into a completely different tissue type – vital to understanding cancer and cancer treatment.

She continued her training at New York University Medical School, where she identified niche factors that govern hematopoietic stem cell (HSCs are those that form blood) differentiation and leukemia progression. In 2020, she joined the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto, where she leads her own research lab while also serving as faculty at the University of Toronto in medical biophysics and immunology.

“Bethel gave me a strong academic foundation and helped solidify my decision to pursue biomedical research,” she says. “More importantly, Bethel shaped how I think about mentorship and scientific community. The investment faculty made in students left a strong impression on me, and it continues to influence how I mentor trainees and build my own lab today.”

Anastasia’s research has garnered a number of grants and awards. The most recent, in 2024, is a three-year Terry Fox New Investigator award, enabling Anastasia and her researchers to pursue better treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), which develops in bone marrow and invades the blood. It’s rapidly progressing and, untreated, can be fatal within months. Even with recent improvements in treatment, it often returns after a period of remission. Current therapies frequently produce toxic side effects. By analyzing the behavior of immune cells in the bone marrow of patients with ALL, researchers hope to ultimately develop more personalized treatments that both save and improve the lives of people with ALL.

**MELANIE ZUERCHER**



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At Bethel, I had professors who really encouraged me to pursue science seriously and pushed me to think bigger about what I could do professionally. That support came at a formative time in my life and had a lasting impact.

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# TRIBAL GUARDIAN

NATHAN HART '83

INDUSTRIAL ARTS, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMICS

Nathan Hart's time at Bethel in some ways foreshadowed his professional life.

His parents, Lawrence Hart '61, Cheyenne, from Hammon, Okla., and Betty Bartel '57, Mennonite, from Hillsboro, Kan., met at Bethel. Nathan was born in Kansas and grew up in rural Oklahoma. In his senior year at Bethel, he added business and economics to his industrial arts major – largely born from his growing understanding of Oklahoma's unique position as home to 39 recognized tribal groups and his desire to contribute to economic improvement among Oklahoma Native Americans.

For the next nearly-20 years, Nathan did just that – working to provide technical resources to Indian-owned businesses; running the state's Indian Affairs agency; developing new investment markets for dozens of tribes across the country.

In 2000, Nathan decided to move from wood turning as a hobby to being a professional artist. Nathan's specialty is pots – ranging in size from 2 to 20 inches – and vases, made of native Oklahoma woods like pecan, hackberry, walnut and oak.

His efforts were well-received: In 2003, only his third time at Santa Fe's Indian Market, all 30 of his pieces sold. The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., procured his work for their grand opening in 2004. He was soon represented by galleries in Chicago, Santa Fe, Phoenix and Tucson, and today is at Shiprock Trading in Santa Fe and the Heard Museum in Phoenix.

In 2002, Nathan began nine years of working with development of the American Indian Cultural Museum in Oklahoma City, in all aspects, from public presentations to branding to construction oversight to exhibit design. (The museum opened in 2021, rebranded as the First Americans Museum.)

Nathan has now spent almost 40 years in tribal relations, economic development and leadership, creative art and cultural preservation. He has worked in state and tribal governments. He is active with community organizations that reflect his personal passions – housing services, chambers of commerce, finance and the arts.

Nathan grew up within the traditional Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) forms of governance and had been a member of the Elk Warrior Society all his adult life, until June 2025, when his role shifted. He was selected to leave the Elk Warrior Society to join the Council of Forty-Four Peace Chiefs, a position similar to that held by his father for 64 years and, before that, by Lawrence's grandfather, John Peak Heart.

Nathan and Melanie (Stucky) '85 Hart have two daughters, Lily Hart, a 2026 graduate of the University of Oklahoma, and Sydney Hart '28.



The Bethel values of service and community intersect well with my work among tribal nations in Oklahoma and across the country.



MELANIE ZUERCHER

# NEW YORK PIANIST

MORY ORTMAN '93

MUSIC, GERMAN

Growing up in the Freeman, S.D., community, it was “fairly obvious” to Mory Ortman that, after graduating from Freeman Academy, he would choose one of the Mennonite colleges.

“I ultimately decided on Bethel for many reasons. My uncle, [Professor Emeritus of Music] Marles Preheim '55, was on the music faculty at the time, and almost half of my Academy graduating class decided to go to Bethel.”

Mory jumped right into the choral department, as a singer and as a pianist for the Concert Choir and Second Century Singers. “I was soon involved as a collaborative pianist in almost all areas of the music department, including vocal and instrumental recitals, playing for musical and opera rehearsals and performances, and studying chamber music with Shirley King. Both she and [Professor Emeritus of Music] Karen Schlabaugh were important mentors, and helped steer me towards graduate school in piano accompanying and chamber music, nowadays referred to as collaborative piano.” He has both masters and doctoral degrees, from Eastman School of Music and Arizona State University.

Bethel once had a January interterm between fall and spring semesters, when Mory “managed to do two international choir tours, the first a Europe tour in 1990 and the second a combination Europe and Russia tour in 1994. I have great memories of Vienna and Prague in particular. I also remember visiting Tolstoy’s estate and playing the Becker grand piano there that Rachmaninoff had played once upon a time.

“On another interterm trip, I did a course called Broadway at Bethel and got to travel to New York City with Arlo '61 and Kathryn (Dick) Kasper '62 to see Broadway shows and operas. This was the beginning of my love affair with New York and Broadway. Now I have lived in New York City for almost a quarter century and my love for the art forms of musical theater, cabaret and opera have only grown during that time.”

Since moving to New York in 2002, Mory has held staff or faculty positions at the Mannes School of Music, NYU Steinhardt, Adelphi University and, currently, Montclair (N.J.) State University, where he works mostly with opera and classical voice majors; been the principal accompanist for Manhattan Concert Productions for more than two decades; and maintained a vigorous freelance accompanying schedule. Since 1997, he has been a director, performer and accompanist at the Quisisana Resort in Lovell, Maine.

“The versatility I discovered at Bethel as a musician has served me well in the real world,” Mory says. “I learned early on how to work with various types of instrumentalists and singers and how to lead an effective rehearsal.”



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I’ve always appreciated the broader liberal arts focus of Bethel and never regretted the various course requirements that were part of that degree. I believe I became an independent thinker because of that coursework, as well as through the relationships I formed during those years.

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MELANIE ZUERCHER



# THINK TANK FOUNDER

NISHA ONTA '03

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMICS

Although Nisha Onta was already enrolled in college in her native Nepal, she went to a career fair – and there was a Bethel College rep. “I submitted my documents,” she says, “and I was immediately accepted and offered some scholarships. I asked my brother, who was living in Portland at the time, if this was a good offer. He asked around and he liked the liberal arts aspect of Bethel and advised me to give it a shot.”

Bethel was “a completely new world.” To a young woman from the land of some of the world’s highest mountains, the flat landscape was a shock.

“But from Day 1, when I was picked up from the airport, I felt I would be guided well. I was placed at Haury Hall amongst a bunch of hippie-ish girls, so my ‘Nepali sensibility’ found a home immediately. I was vegetarian and most girls on my floor were, so we connected in that way too.”

The International Club was vital to her feeling of belonging. “Having friends from Korea, India, Malaysia, Germany, Spain [and more] felt really good. We were all going through similar experiences. I am still in touch with most of them till this day. [While at Bethel,] we danced during cultural shows, we cooked during Fall Fest and we also did late night trips to Newell’s for cheesy fries.”

And Bethel is where Nisha found her vocation. She carried through with her plan to study business and economics, but discovered there are many ways to use a business degree.

One important piece was an internship at the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR). “That really shaped my interest in social issues. Because of my experience at KIPCOR, I got [another] internship at the *Journal of Peace and Development* in Washington, D.C. [which pushed] my trajectory to international development.”

A third internship, with Ten Thousand Villages, a fair-trade marketing nonprofit, made her realize “my business degree can include social good, and not just profit-making. My course work and my internships really pushed me to go beyond business.”

“I initially thought I would do a masters in development economics but I also realized the importance of going back to my community. When I found out there was a Gender and Development Studies program in Thailand, I applied, and when I got full scholarship it was a perfect move back.” She has both a master’s degree and Ph.D. in the field from the Asian Institute of Technology in Pathum Thani.

Nisha lives in Kathmandu, where she is the regional coordinator for Asia of Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) and manages a think tank focused on governance and women’s empowerment.



Liberal arts education is still uncommon in Nepal. I really learned how to be critical of facts and go in depth on issues and scholarship. It definitely made me into a more curious and critical thinker.



MELANIE ZUERCHER

# CLASS NOTES

Information received as of May 18, 2026

## FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF:

ALUMNI EVENTS: [bethelks.edu/alumni/events](https://bethelks.edu/alumni/events) | ATHLETICS: [bethelthreshers.com](https://bethelthreshers.com) | FINE ARTS: [bethelks.edu/calendar](https://bethelks.edu/calendar)

### 1960-69

**Lauren Friesen** '65, North Newton, wrote a two-act play, *Erasmus Among the Luminaries*, that has now been published by Wipf and Stock.

**David Janzen** '69, Goshen, Ind., became a grandfather at age 78, when his son and daughter-in-law adopted a child and he gained five more from his new spouse's family.

### 1980-89

**Shella (Ortman) Franz** '81, Mountain Lake, Minn., completed the Journey Mission Leadership Development Program of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., in 2025.

**Susan Schultz Huxman** '82, Kansas City, Mo., retired after 15 years as president at two institutions in Virginia and Ontario, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, and Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Susan began her academic career at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., and spent many years at Wichita State University as a professor and director of the Elliott School of Communication before moving to presidential leadership in 2011. **Jesse Huxman** '81 continues to work as communications manager for Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) U.S. Susan's parents, former president Harold Schultz (1971-91) and Carolyn Mast Schultz, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary Aug. 27, 2025.

**Mary Sprunger** '84, Harrisonburg, Va., and **Kimberly Schmidt** '84, Greenbelt, Md., co-led "Anabaptism @500: Gender and Class" in summer 2025. The 17-day tour from Vienna to Amsterdam focused on the social history of early Anabaptism. They plan to reprise this tour in 2027.

### 1990-99

**Jon Ewert** '98, Granby, Colo., is entering his 20th year as the Area 9 aquatic biologist for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. At the recent 60th annual meeting of the Colorado-Wyoming chapter of the American Fisheries Society, he presented a talk entitled "Green Mountain Reservoir: A large-scale attempt to control gill lice infestation in the wild," and co-authored a poster, "Evaluation of the impact of stocking YY males on river ecosystems."

**Todd Janzen** '95, Indianapolis, celebrated the 10th anniversary of the law firm he founded, Janzen Schroeder Ag Law, on Dec. 1, 2025. The firm is based in Indianapolis and is focused on serving those involved with agriculture.

**Anthony Jasso** '89, Moundridge, Kan., has been selected as the new music director for the Wichita-based Great Plains Jazz Orchestra. GPJO is a big band group that plays music from the '30s to today.

**Brandon Russell** '98, Maize, Kan., was accepted to the doctoral program in non-profit administration at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice. This is a new program and Brandon will be a member of the first cohort, beginning in fall 2026.

**Tammy Sawatzky** '98, Winnipeg, Man., began as executive director of the Westland Foundation in February. The foundation focuses on post-secondary scholarships supporting underserved youth in inner-city Winnipeg.

**Valerie Schrag** '95, Lawrence, Kan., was awarded an honorary doctorate in social studies from Grinnell College, Iowa.

### 2000-09

**Spencer Goertz-Giffen** '02, Lawrence, Kan., released her first LP album, *How to Hold a Bug*, on March 27 with her band Hello Biplane, which she formed in 2010 with her partner Braden Young.

**Elizabeth (Howard) Hafoka** '03, Lawrence, Kan., has been named the municipal court judge for the City of Lawrence.

**Katy Schmidt** '08, Great Bend, Kan., writing under the pen name Irene Hunter, published the short story "Sugar Windows" in the 17th issue of the *Prairie Ink Journal*, released by Barton County Community College on April 23.

### 2010-19

**Jennifer (Scott) Kindell** '14, Shawnee, Kan., was nominated for the Kansas School Social Worker of the Year.

## Marriages

**Heath Goertzen** '19 and Iris Holzer, Davis, Calif., Sept. 6, 2025

## Births and adoptions

**Clint Ackerman** '03 and Carla, Taylorsville, Utah, Millie Edyth and Madge Utahna, adopted Feb. 9

**Cayla (Lawless)** '18 and **Reece Hiebert** '18, Walton, Kan., Ridge Allen, Aug. 15, 2025

**Michelle (Schrag)** '19 and Lucas Hiebert, Moundridge, Kan., Levi Dean, Dec. 11, 2025

## Remembrances

**Homer Andres** '62, Ferndale, Wash., March 19

**Elaine (Graber) Brown** '54, Kingman, Kan., Dec. 8, 2025

**Arlo Jack Brubacher** '57, Edmond, Okla., April 29

**Joan (Goering) Brubacher** '70, North Newton, Jan. 11

**Craig Butler** '72, Lawrence, Kan., Jan. 1

**Milton Claassen** '54, North Newton, April 16

**Nyla Friesen** '75, Newton, Jan. 29

**Mary Beth (Funk) Goering** '61, McPherson, Kan., Nov. 27, 2025

**Kay (Ewert) Graber** '58, Mount Vernon, Iowa, Feb. 7

**Lucille (Franz) Harms** '53, Redmond, Wash., March 19

**Donald Harrold** '63, North Newton, April 25

**Bonnie (Zerger) Heidebrecht** '54, Hesston, Kan., Jan. 27

**Krystine (Schrage) Hiebert** '71, Newton, Dec. 7, 2025

**RuthAnn Hiebert** '73, North Newton, Aug. 1, 2025

**Perry Krehbiel** '71, Moundridge, Kan., May 17

**George Kroeker** '61, Turpin, Okla., Dec. 25, 2025

**Chester "Chet" Nachtigal** '63, Seattle, March 5, 2025

**Jon Neufeld** '90, Newton, March 7

**David Northrup** '74, Bedford, Texas, April 9

**Alvin "Al" Penner** '61, North Newton, Feb. 18

**Lawrence "Larry" Penner** '58, Newton, Dec. 7, 2025

**Lois (Thiessen) Penner** '64, North Newton, April 27

**Marles Preheim** '55, North Newton, May 5

**Ella (Kroeker) Regier** '49, North Newton, April 8

**Hilda Regier** '58, North Newton, Feb. 15

**Josephine (Goering) Schmidt** '54, North Newton, Jan. 28

**Myron Schrag** '59, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 6, 2025

**Stella (Waltner) Schrag** '46, Forest Grove, Ore., May 17, 2025

**Winona (Waltner) Senner** '58, Saskatoon, Sask., Jan. 28

**Lynn Simpson** '64, Raymore, Mo., March 9

**Jane (Nyce) Voth** '58, North Newton, Jan. 25

**Phyllis (Klassen) Voth** '51, Goessel, Kan., Dec. 15, 2025

**Jack Warkentine Jr.** '75, Newton, Nov. 6, 2025

**Linda (Dyck) White** '67, Hesston, Kan., Feb. 22

**Stanley Wiens** '58, Hesston, Kan., Jan. 15

**Norma (Graber) Yoder** '63, Escanaba, Mich., March 9

**Russel Yoder** '63, Kansas City, Kan., March 22

## Dillons/Kroger Card

Do you shop at Dillons/Kroger grocery or convenience stores? If so, here's a great opportunity to give back to Bethel College and student scholarships while you are doing your everyday shopping!

Simply sign up for the Dillons Plus Card/Kroger Community Rewards Program by visiting:

<https://www.kroger.com/o/store-services/community-rewards>

## WHAT IS NEW?

Alumni are invited to submit recent news of interest to others — marriage, job change, addition of a child, award, promotion, graduate school retirement, and so on — to the **Office of Alumni Relations**.

Mail to 300 East 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67117, e-mail to [alumni@bethelks.edu](mailto:alumni@bethelks.edu) or submit via the Bethel website at [www.bethelks.edu/alumni-update](http://www.bethelks.edu/alumni-update).

### PHOTOS WELCOME!

Please model your information after the current listings below, beginning with name, class year, city and state.

Anyone who earns 24 or more credit hours is a Bethel alumnus, whether a graduate or not. When reaching alumni status, they are assigned a "class year" (later replaced by "grad year" if they graduate).

The year behind each name below is the person's class year, often the same as the grad year unless the individual has told the alumni office that they wish to associate with another reunion year (as in the case of a five-year program, study overseas, etc., that delays graduation).

For additional activities of Bethel faculty and staff who are alumni of the college, go to [www.bethelks.edu/news-events/newsroom/fac-staff-achievements](http://www.bethelks.edu/news-events/newsroom/fac-staff-achievements)



## PSYCHOLOGY ENDOWMENT TO LAUNCH WITH DOUG PENNER MEMORIAL FUNDS



Psychology professors Navanté Peacock, left, and Aimee Voth Siebert, right, with 2026 psychology graduate Lilli Reiser

At Doug's graduation from Bethel in 1969, I stood alongside as he accepted congratulations. I was a year younger, and planning to finish my undergraduate degree at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, where we would move after our wedding in a week. I overheard the academic dean saying to Doug, "Isn't it your plan to get a degree in psychology? Come back and help us strengthen that department when you finish."

Neither of us took the suggestion very seriously that day, but three years later and with his dissertation still unfinished, Doug returned to teach in the psychology department at Bethel in the fall of 1972. I remember how he scrambled that first year of teaching. He had been a researcher in his graduate program, not a teaching assistant. Perhaps my memory exaggerates, but he had huge General Psychology lecture classes in Krehbiel Auditorium; I think I remember 80-90 students in one class.

These memories come back to me today as I learn that the gifts offered by nearly 150 distinct donors to Bethel College in Doug's name after his memorial service at Bethel College Mennonite Church on Sept. 13, 2025, now amount to nearly \$40,000. He would be so honored. I knew immediately that Doug would be pleased if the money could be used to strengthen the psychology department.

Dr. Navanté Peacock and Aimee Voth Siebert '10, the two young members of the current department, accepted my invitation recently to come for coffee and discuss an endowment. Navanté, who has a Ph.D. in psychology from KU, has only been at Bethel for three years in his role as department chair, while Aimee just

finished her first year. They are bright, energetic, enthusiastic about their plans for the department, and excited for the numbers of students interested in psychology.

I wondered if they would appreciate my interest in growing the seed money received so far in Doug's name into an endowment that students and faculty could use to supplement and broaden the small-college experience of a Bethel psychology major by providing funds to attend conferences and seminars, grants for research, and more. Navanté and Aimee quickly supplement and refine my suggestions. I am thrilled with their energy. My grief over losing Doug is tempered in this moment by thinking about the significance of his life and this small legacy.

Endowed departmental funds begin at a threshold of \$50,000. Continuing to grow Doug's legacy in Bethel's psychology department pays it forward to Dr. Navanté Peacock, Aimee Voth Siebert and the students. Bethel alumni who experienced Doug in the classroom or appreciated a psychology major or even a few courses in psychology – we invite you to be a part of supporting the Doug Penner Psychology Endowed Program 57 years later.

**RAYLENE HINZ-PENNER '70**

## REIMERS' SEVEN-FIGURE GIFT WILL SUPPORT BETHEL COLLEGE NURSING



The nursing class of 2026, from left (front): Dulce Erazo-Tejada, Aleah Shaw, Janet Sanner, Heydi Ortez-Mezquita, Lexi Moore, Jenny Mayen-Aragon; (back) Kennedy Chodak, Maria Cortes-Hernandez, Lisa Legros, Julie Wilhite, Olivia Keen

The Bethel College Department of Nursing has received a \$1 million gift from Richard '57 and Lois (Unruh) Reimer '60, North Newton. The gift is divided into a \$600,000 endowment to provide nursing scholarships, with \$400,000 going to an endowed program fund for the nursing department.

Lois was born into a farming family near Hillsboro, Kan., and announced at age 5 that she wanted to be a nurse. She began her education at Bethel in 1954 (following her father Edwin Unruh '25 and brother James Unruh '48). She sang in the A Cappella Choir and participated in the 1955 Europe tour. Nurses' training began in the second year with six months on campus before a move to the student nurse dorm at Bethel Deaconess Hospital in Newton.

Lois graduated from the Bethel Deaconess nursing program Sept. 6, 1958. She and Richard were married four days later, on Sept. 10, and moved to Illinois, where Richard started graduate studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Lois began her nursing career as an R.N. with preemies and newborns at Mercy Hospital.

The next year, Richard continued his graduate work at Michigan State University. Lois completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing through MSU and worked in the MSU hospital's medical/surgical unit until 1962, when their first child, David, was born. When Richard took a job at The College of Wooster (Ohio), Lois began working at Wooster Community Hospital, first in med/surg and later in obstetrics.

Lois's nursing career spanned 35 years and included The College of Wooster Health Service as well as hospital nursing. "Nursing has given me much joy," she says.

So have children and grandchildren. David, a recently retired ambassador, and his wife, Simonetta, live in Milan, Italy. Paul '86, a physicist at Argonne Labs, lives in Chicago with his wife, Melissa. Susan, married to Craig Prauls, is a professor of molecular biology at St. Francis University, Loretto, Pa. Lois and Richard have three grandchildren, all currently in graduate school.

In 2020, the Reimers gave a substantial gift, as part of the academic program enhancement piece of the college's Engage the Future capital campaign, to boost the establishment of an endowed chair in economics.

That gift reflected Richard's lifelong vocation in economics and higher education — he served The College of Wooster from 1962-96, when he retired as Hoge Professor Emeritus of Economics.

Their Bethel education and lifelong careers in nursing and teaching have motivated their gifts to Bethel College, the Reimers say, and their desire to encourage others to give.





## LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR TOMORROW—WITH US!

Help us bring the fiscal year to a successful close.  
Your support now puts us on firm ground for the next effort.

Add to a strong foundation for the year ahead—every gift counts, and  
makes a difference from first to last.



**MAKE A GIFT TODAY! BETHELKS.EDU/GIFT**

## FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN **UPDATE**

  
**FOUNDATIONS**  
STRONG AND TRUE



Bethel launched the Foundations Strong and True campaign in January 2026, and we are providing updates with each issue of *Around the Green* for the duration of the campaign.

In the first half of 2026, campaign fundraising presentations were held in Sarasota, Fla., Reedley, Calif., and Seattle and Spokane, Wash.

The current campaign focus is on applying to have Haury Hall accepted to the Kansas State Historic Registry. If accepted, up to 40% of Haury renovation expenses may qualify for tax credits. The process involves two applications for the historic registry and a separate application for Kansas tax credits. Tax credits were very helpful in funding our most recent building project, the campus wellness center. The entire application process can take a year; we have submitted the first application and will learn more in October. In the meantime we are beginning work on the second application, which includes architectural finishes and designs.

As we close out fiscal year 2026 and look ahead, the advancement office is focused on the Bethel College Fund, which supports annual operating expenses; we are on track to meet this year's goal of \$1.35 million. The Bethel College Fund is an element of the Foundations campaign, and the fund goal will increase by 5% annually over the next four years with the addition of support for athletics.

**Haury Hall:** renovation and remodel \$11M; endowment \$1M

**College Avenue homes:** renovations \$1.25M; maintenance and acquisition fund \$750,000

**Softball field turf:** \$650,000 actual; endowment \$21M

**Employment Experiences:** \$4M; endowment \$21M

**Workforce Development Certificates:** \$1.5M

**Online degree programs:** \$550,000

**Learning Management System:** \$100,000

**Bethel College Fund 2027 goal:** \$1.8M



## Every dollar counts to make an **IMPACT!**



### HAURY HALL

A renewed Haury Hall will elevate the residential experience for first-year students and establish a stronger foundation for recruitment, retention, engagement and academic achievement. Donor support transforms a historic residence hall into a modern, welcoming and sustainable space—ensuring that generations of future students begin their Bethel journey in a place that reflects the care, excellence and community that define the college.

### SOFTBALL FIELD TURF

Turf will strengthen recruitment and retention and allow for more consistent practice and game scheduling. The Bethel turf softball field would be the only one in the area, allowing for revenue-generating rental opportunities.

A challenge of \$350,000 has been provided by a donor. Our goal is \$750,000 to install softball field turf.



### COLLEGE AVENUE HOME RENOVATIONS

Diversifying revenue streams is essential in today's higher education environment. Strategic investment in the rehabilitation and long-term care of the College Avenue homes will create a dependable new source of income that directly supports student initiatives, the development of new classes, and other critical capital needs across campus. At the same time, these revitalized properties will enhance the physical appearance, hospitality and appeal of Bethel's campus community.

### EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

Your investment simultaneously reduces student debt and prepares Bethel graduates for meaningful lives of work and service. The campaign seeks \$4 million to support student EE grants and will continue to grow the Employment Experiences endowment toward a long-term goal of \$21 million—ensuring this transformative program remains accessible and sustainable for future generations.





# Prairie Vocation

To find a flagship for prairie conservation and sustainability, you need look no further than about 10 miles from the Bethel campus, where two graduates working at a sister college have been helping to develop the organization and implement its mission.

At Dyck Arboretum of the Plains at Hesston College, Brad Guhr '92 coordinates education and prairie restoration (as well as the Prairie Window Concert Series), while Katie Schmidt '15 is the horticulturist and grounds manager. Brad graduated from Bethel with an environmental studies concentration of the Global Studies major, while Katie did natural sciences. Brad also has a master's degree in landscape architecture with a focus on ecological restoration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Katie is deep into her master's program in ecology at Wichita State University, studying the encroachment of cedars into grasslands and the effects on forbs and flower-visiting insects. Brad began working full time at Dyck Arboretum in 2004 and Katie in 2015.

Brad grew up in Moundridge, Kan., and Katie in North Newton. During high school and college, Katie worked at Benton's, a North Newton greenhouse (which her parents bought in 2021 and renamed Hidden Stems), for local farmer Larry Goering '67, and on the grounds crew at Bethel. What that taught her, Katie says — in addition to "skills that I use all the time now" — is that, for the most part, commercial greenhouses, common farming practices and institutional groundskeeping aren't geared toward sustainability, given the enormous amounts of water, plastic and chemicals used in all of them.

When she discovered Dyck Arboretum and the job that opened up soon after she graduated from Bethel, "[I found that] I can make good, sustainable changes in the management of the land, and in what we sell in our bi-annual FloraKansas fundraiser. I can make sustainable choices, and experiment to see what's possible and what can and should be changed. The work and the ethos aligned with what I was growing into a core ethic, that had been formed into a kernel at Bethel.

I would like to be the person who makes changes."

Katie has never made her home anywhere but south-central Kansas. She still lives in North Newton, with her spouse, Chris Riesen '13. Brad, however, with his spouse, Sara Friesen Guhr '92, spent a number of years away, first getting master's degrees at the University of Wisconsin and then working in Kansas City, where Brad was in the environmental studies and permitting division of the construction, architecture and engineering firm Burns & McDonnell. By the early 2000s, "I was getting into more project management and marketing," he says. "I was far enough down the career path in environmental consulting that I was getting away from the fieldwork and ecological restoration I was most interested in."

Brad and Sara decided to move back to Newton (where Sara grew up) to be closer to parents and to raise their children in a place more conducive to a simpler lifestyle. Brad continued to work remotely for Burns & McDonnell and also began volunteering at Dyck Arboretum. He did some grant writing and was able to write himself in for a position in prairie restoration and conservation that eventually turned permanent.

"I was lucky that the horticulturist position opened up three months after graduation," Katie says. "I went through Bethel thinking I would get into lab science, but it turns out I'm not particularly good at it and I don't enjoy it.

"Immediately after I graduated, I spent some time as an intern with the U.S. Geological Survey, catching gophers [with Professor Emeritus of Biology Francisca Méndez-Harclerode], and realized, this is what it's like to be a field scientist, and that I wanted an outside job."

When Brad came on board at the arboretum in 2004, it was still very much the "prairie botanical garden" of its original vision, but with big dreams for the future. At the time, the "developed" part was the 13 acres north of the hedgerow, but there were 18 more acres of agricultural land to the south that the arboretum owned with an eye toward prairie



KATIE SCHMIDT



BRAD GUHR

reconstruction.

"That's what I had studied, and was really jazzed about," Brad says, and so one of the new programs he initiated was the Prairie Window Project to reconstruct that piece of prairie.

Another was starting a prairie landowner network. "We're trying to emulate the prairie ecosystem in urban landscapes, to create biological diversity in urban areas," Brad says. "We follow and visit all the prairie remnants within 60 miles of Hesston, and consult with landowners who ask for that.



"We wanted to reconstruct prairie from seed, using local ecotypes that are collected within a 60-mile radius. This hadn't been done anywhere else in the state."

Yet another new program was Earth Partnership for Schools, which trains teachers to restore prairie gardens on school grounds, an idea that came from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's arboretum.

"I started this in 2007 after a training institute in 2006, so it's now in its 19th year," Brad says. "We have trained 397 teachers from 108 schools, mostly from Kansas. If you multiply by an average of 25 students per year, that approaches 100,000 kids impacted."

And adult education hasn't been ignored — Brad also started the Winter Lecture Series and an annual Spring Symposium on topics of importance in the Great Plains. Recent lectures have included Santa Fe Trail remnants and the return of mountain lions to Kansas, while the 2026 Spring Symposium (a day-long event) focused on "the future of water in Kansas."

Among Katie's initiatives has been building up the volunteer corps. "Since my time here, I have really focused on volunteer recruitment. I rely heavily on a community of volunteers, and it has been a lot of fun."

In the past 22 years, the arboretum has built three major new facilities — the Prairie Pavilion, an events space; the HUB (Horticulture and Utility Building); and a new propagation greenhouse completed in 2026. "Volunteers make up the gap," Katie says. "Engagement from volunteers drives a lot of what we do. It's impossible to do this job without them."

Revenue from the spring and fall FloraKansas fundraisers has grown significantly in the past 10 years, thanks to marketing, especially on social media, and an increase in the number of plants offered. "That comes from my greenhouse background, knowing how to maximize space and the right growing conditions," Katie says. "I think we've doubled what we used to sell."

"We were encouraging gardeners to use native plants before it was cool. When FloraKansas started, in the mid-'90s, that was not mainstream at all. It's cool to be part of something that has such a long history. I think we [still have the largest selection] in the state for natives and adaptable plants."

Considering all these initiatives, "It's

obvious how valuable a liberal arts education has been for both of us," Brad says. "We are relying on our majors but also things [we learned] related to history, theater, speech, economics, working with people. These are valuable parts of my education that buttress what I'm interested in."

Katie adds, "The rigorous science education I got helps me understand on a large conceptual level what needs to happen. The liberal arts insanity of doing everything, that thing that happens to you at Bethel that pulls you in different directions, really helps in a job like this. You get the practice. It's never just one thing, at a liberal arts college or a small nonprofit."

"I grew up seven miles down the road [from Dyck Arboretum], seeing wheatfields all around," Brad says. "I didn't have much of a connection to the land or to the prairie ecosystem until I went to Bethel."

"That translated into an educational focus and then a career and then coming back into [this] geographical location."

"[The prairie ecosystem] is partially restorable. It's not lost forever. We can recreate them around our homes, in our lives. That's a beautiful thing and is an important part of my job, but I also learned at Bethel it's my vocation — a way of living and using your passions."

How well Brad has followed his passions was affirmed by his peers earlier this spring, when the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) gave him one of their 2026 Excellence in Conservation and Environmental Education awards.

Katie feels similar, she says. "I'm proud of our message and mission: 'Cultivating transformative relationships with people and the land.' I enjoy engaging with people about our mission — not everybody gets to say that about their work."

"[A Bethel liberal arts education] makes you take all these introspective classes like religion and philosophy, to think deeply about what your life should be. It encouraged me to be a deep-thinking, purpose-driven person [who now works in a purpose-driven organization]. The community values I learned at Bethel have made me want to be a person who's contributing to the community."

**MELANIE ZUERCHER**



## *A long-term vision for Bethel land*

Jason Schmidt '04 (pictured above, left, with Bethel student Connor Harrison and goats) has farming roots going back five generations, and pretty deep agricultural roots at Bethel, too (his grandfather, Don Penner '50, was working at the college dairy when Schmidt's mother, Jeanne '75, was born).

Though that dairy and the college farm are long gone, Bethel still owns agricultural land both on campus and off, but most is currently leased to others.

There's also the part of Sand Creek Trail on campus property, the Kingsbury Prairie restoration in the southeast corner of campus, and Sand Prairie, a tract of virgin prairie in western Harvey County, among others.

And Schmidt has dreams that include all of it.

"I proposed this job [as grounds and land development manager], seeing that the land Bethel owns has all kinds of potential for conservation, student involvement and regenerative farming practices."

"On paper, at least, it looks like an obvious melding with our Employment Experiences program." He can envision student involvement — through both working on campus and developing skills that could lead to employment after college — in sustainable food enterprises, ecological land management, and marketing opportunities.

"Giving students the opportunity to learn to grow food and manage land in an environmentally sustainable way ties into the mission, core values and history of the college," Schmidt wrote in his job proposal.

This past spring, Schmidt led the first prairie burn in several years on the Kingsbury Prairie restoration site, and hopes to work with the Sand Creek Trail Committee to develop a southern "prairie spur" of the trail that will allow walkers to actually get into the prairie and look around.

Longer term, he dreams of creating and using "regenerative farming/landscape management/small-scale farming models" and recruiting students interested in conservation, land management and sustainability.

"What is the best use [of all the land Bethel owns], that honors the land and makes sense for Bethel to own and manage?" Schmidt wonders. "What are enterprises in Kansas that can honor the whole history and mission of the college while pointing toward a sustainable future for the campus and the students who pass through here?"

(PHOTO BY MELANIE ZUERCHER)





AVA BROXTERMAN

Erna (Thieszen) '62 and Richard Rempel '63 talk with President Jon Gering at the MLK Day event Jan. 19. The Rempels and Duane Friesen '62, who can be seen just behind Richard, attended Dr. King's speech as students at Bethel on Jan. 21, 1960.

## CAMPUS

# NEWS

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## MLK DAY INCLUDES HISTORY, MYSTERY, MUSIC AND CROSS-COLLEGE COLLABORATION

The high point of Bethel's 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration on Jan. 19 was listening – in Memorial Hall – to the speech King gave, at the podium that remains in place to this day, on Jan. 21, 1960, in Mem Hall. But it was just one of a range of good things.

Bethel's Office of Culture and Belonging collaborated with Hesston College, Newton Community for Racial Justice (NCRJ) and the Newton Public Library for several special events on Jan. 18 and 19.

Michele Hershberger from Hesston College approached Sheryl Wilson, Bethel vice president for culture and belonging, last fall about the two schools working together to plan for the 2026 King holiday. The result was an invitation to Roz (Royster) McCommon '93 to come from her home in Bellevue, Wash., as an artist in residence at Bethel, working with both Bethel and Hesston choirs and the Central Kansas Master Chorale, a group of community singers, for a concert at Hesston on Sunday afternoon and a spoken word and music event at Bethel on Monday evening.

Financial support came from the Milford E. Greer Fine Arts Endowment (Greer Lecture Series) and the Reimer/Boese Worship and the Arts Endowment, both established at Bethel, the latter by the late Dr. Rosella Reimer Duerksen '48.

The Sunday concert, titled "Melodies from Heaven," started with a short program of Negro spirituals by the CKMC, directed by Dr. Joel Garber '07, and continued with a selection of music that McCommon had curated to reflect King's life and legacy. Many were her original compositions or arrangements. In addition to the established choirs, the singers included members of the gospel choir that flourished in McCommon's student days at Bethel in the early to mid-'90s – Jen Chappell Deckert '96, Sara Dick '93, Chywonna Gonzalez '96, Jessica Goering McGee '96 and Karin Kaufman Wall '95 – who were featured along with Jude Krehbiel, vocals, Doug Krehbiel '79, banjo, and Caleb Klingenberg, fiddle, on McCommon's song "Home."

On Monday during the day, NCRJ, for which Wilson is a board member, and the

Newton Public Library created and hosted two themed escape rooms, in which participants go inside in small groups and solve clues in order to be released (although unlike commercial escape rooms, these were not actually locked from the outside). One set of clues had to do with King's life and the other with the "I have a dream" speech. Since Monday was a school and work holiday for many, a number of parents with children chose to take on the escape room challenge.

The Monday evening performance was titled "A Better World: The Journey of MLK," a program of McCommon's compositions and arrangements for choir and orchestra. The two college choirs and a few of the CKMC singers provided the "gospel choir" vocals along with student soloists Luz Mayora and Alauna Thomas. The student narrator was Jaric Woodley and the orchestra comprised mostly Bethel students, with a few extras, including Don Kehrberg, Bethel professor emeritus of music.

And in between – the replay of King's 1960 speech. A short excerpt had been

part of an MLK Day celebration several years ago, but aside from that, this was the first time since King delivered the speech that it sounded out inside Memorial Hall.

In 2009, then Vice President for Advancement Sondra Bandy Koontz '70 began preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the speech, titled "The Future of Integration," in January 2010. She went to the Mennonite Library and Archives "to get the recording" — only to discover that to the best of the archivist's knowledge, no such thing existed.

Koontz sent out a plea to alumni — and Randy Harmison '61 answered. The good news: as a student interested in the latest technology at the time, he had recorded the speech with his new reel-to-reel tape recorder. The bad news: the tapes had been sitting in a box in a barn

for decades.

Koontz managed to find a company that could restore the recording, which was played in a packed Krehbiel Auditorium on Jan. 18, 2010.

Wilson has listened to the recording on her own a few times. "Every time, I find it hard not to cry," she says. "It is not lost on me that I have written about, listened to the teachings of, and engaged around the activism of, this man my whole life."

"It means so much to know that this is a rarely heard speech and that at Bethel College, we get the opportunity to hear it and engage with the content in a way people in other places don't. And it means everything to be able to invite people to hear his words."

Wilson says when she listened to "The Future of Integration" for the first time, she could hear "the precursor language"

to King's 1963 speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (known as "I have a dream").

"What I noticed in his voice was a level of certainty: This is the future. This is happening. We are a nation going on this journey, [and] we will come out of this time a different nation."

"In 1960, Dr. King's speech was the call to go on the journey, and he was telling us it won't be easy."

"He was still on the come-up, and that's Bethel's sweet spot — we get a lot of people on their ascent, and this was the biggest person we ever had. The fact that Bethel can have that as a feather in our cap is amazing, and we should talk about it all the time."

MELANIE ZUERCHER

## BCAPA MARKS THREE DECADES OF ARTS EDUCATION

Thirty years ago, a Bethel music professor was facing a problem — and how he decided to solve it has now grown into an important community arts center.

Don Kehrberg, professor emeritus of music, founded Bethel's arts academy in 1996 and was on hand Jan. 31, 2026, when Bethel College Academy of Performing Arts (BCAPA) marked its anniversary with an evening of instrumental and vocal music and dance.

Kehrberg had started the Sinfonia, a chamber orchestra, at Bethel in 1988. But he soon foresaw a lack of string players. "There were three or four seniors at Newton High School who [played strings and] were coming to Bethel, which was great," he says, "but in four years, then what?"

Back when Kehrberg was still an undergraduate himself, at the University of Iowa, the director of music at First Presbyterian Church of Iowa City, Rosella Reimer Duerksen '48, "hired me for the first job in which I ever got paid for playing oboe." He of course knew nothing about Bethel College at that point, but in the way the universe sometimes bends, in 1994, he found himself visiting with that same Rosella Duerksen, on campus to receive the Outstanding Alumnus Award.

"I was lamenting that we had no string players," Kehrberg says, "and she said, 'You're going to have to grow your own.' And the seed was planted."

That seed grew into the Bethel College Academy of Music and it has flourished for

30 years, now as BCAPA.

Kehrberg taught at Bethel from 1972-2003. In 2010, after his wife, Corinne, retired, they moved to Chicago, and they now live in Asheville, N.C.

Back in 1996, Kehrberg hired Brian Wiebe '85 as the academy's first director. Wiebe had recently become certified in the Suzuki method of strings instruction.

Kehrberg began learning about Suzuki programs, visiting several — at the time, Ottawa University had a well-regarded one.

"I got the Bethel administration on board and cobbled together a plan. Brian was going to do the Suzuki program. I directed the chamber orchestra and the summer music camp, and I played in the Wichita Symphony."

"Brian was important in getting Nancy Johnson here [Johnson is still a BCAPA violin instructor]. We did everything out of the Fine Arts Center."

In 1999, Wiebe left for a job at Goshen (Ind.) College. "Rebecca Schloneger had just graduated from her master's program at the University of Cincinnati," Kehrberg says. "[Her spouse] had a job at Hesston College and she didn't have a job yet."

Schloneger became the academy's next director and continued to manage the Suzuki program up until just a couple of years ago, when she became a middle school orchestra director. She is still a BCAPA instructor.



"The academy is fortunate that people came after me who were better at organization and keeping things going," Kehrberg says. "Haylie [Berning, current BCAPA executive director] is so good at that." Berning began at BCAPA as the dance director and added the executive position.

Around 2004, Kehrberg, who was still actively involved with the academy, saw the need to add a dance component. Bethel rented a building on E. Broadway in Newton and did extensive renovations to create two dance studios. Peggy Finizio was the first director of the dance program, teaching tap, modern and ballroom, and the erstwhile "Academy of Music" expanded to an "Academy of Performing



Arts” and renamed itself accordingly.

A challenge for the academy has been finding the right space. The Suzuki program eventually moved to the second floor of the building where the dance studios were, but that became too expensive. For a while, the old Washington Elementary School in Newton was home. Finally, in 2017, the entire BCAPA came to Bethel, into the basement of Memorial Hall after the Department of Nursing had moved to the Will Academic Center.

Along the way, BCAPA added instruction in other instruments and expanded the dance program. Kristin Kliever began the Kindermusik program for very young children. BCAPA now offers private

lessons in 12 different instruments, from cello to ukulele, along with some group lessons, Kindermusik and voice. Dance classes (ages 2-18) range from pre-school to pre-professional, offering ballet, hip-hop, jazz, tap and more. BCAPA serves about 200 students in Harvey County and beyond, and it employs several current Bethel students and recent graduates as instructors in both music and dance.

“When Don Kehrberg opened BCAPA 30 years ago, he had a mission ‘to provide quality instruction in music and dance in a caring and professional environment to people of all ages and ability – regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability to pay,’” Berning notes. “While our mission has

evolved over the years, our goals still very much align with that original mission to provide arts education in an inclusive environment.

“I’m honored to have been a part of BCAPA for the last 15 years and I hope to continue building a place where our students learn, thrive and [find] a second home. Our students and team mean the world to me, and I’m very thankful to be a part of BCAPA’s story.”

MELANIE ZUERCHER

## JUNIORS HOLD ANNUAL NURSES’ LAMPLIGHTING



The Bethel College nursing class of 2027, from left (front): Karleigh Buethner, Madalyn Dobrinski, Camryn Entz, Abigail Griffin, Alaycea Kremerier, Ashlyn Rushing; (back) Jocelyn Burnett, Corey Catron, Adrianna Floro, Trinity Williamson, Abigail Hablitzel, Hope Jacobs, Daniela Navarro

The Department of Nursing honored its junior students in the annual lamplighting, held Feb. 21 in Krehbiel Auditorium with the 13 members of the Class of 2027 participating.

Krista Miller, B.S.N., assistant professor of nursing, told about the meaning of lamplighting, a Bethel tradition that honors upper-class nursing students for their commitment to the profession.

The students recited the “I Believe” pledge, followed by the ceremony in which lamps are lit and presented to each student to keep.

The lamplighting has its origin in the Crimean War between England and Russia, 1853-56, when British nurse Florence Nightingale, considered the founder of

modern nursing, volunteered to go to Scutari, Turkey, with a group of about 30 women to care for the wounded soldiers.

Nightingale spent up to 20 hours a day dressing wounds, comforting soldiers, assisting in surgery, directing staff and maintaining records. The men called her “the Lady with a Lamp” after the Turkish candle lantern she carried as she provided care, going from soldier to soldier.

Conrad Snider ’84 designed and now produces the lamps.

In addition to honoring junior nursing students, the lamplighting has become a time when the students express their gratitude and appreciation to the families and communities who support them in their studies.

Bethel nursing faculty, in addition to Miller, are Becky Bartell ’02, M.S.N., assistant professor of nursing and director of the Department of Nursing; Heather Hosford, M.S.N., assistant professor of nursing; Sarah Masem, D.N.P., professor of nursing and assistant director of the Department of Nursing; and Jeri Melin, M.S.N., adjunct instructor.

# THEOLOGIAN EXAMINES 'FOLLOWING JESUS OR FOLLOWING BONHOEFFER?'



Jamie Pitts, left, talks with Heidi Regier Kreider '82 after one of Pitts' lectures.

A Lutheran theologian who actively opposed the Nazis in 1930s Germany has plenty to say to Christians today, said Jamie Pitts, associate professor of Anabaptist studies and chair of the Department of History, Theology and Ethics at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Pitts was on campus Feb. 22-23 to give the Staley Lectures, based around one of the best known works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (more commonly known in the United States as *The Cost of Discipleship*). *Discipleship* and the biblical book of Matthew were the two common texts for Bethel's senior capstone course, Basic Issues of Faith and Life (BIFL), this school year.

Pitts titled the first of his two lectures "Becoming a 'Front Light' for Justice?: Mennonite Positions of Social Transformation." Pitts is the director of the Institute for Mennonite Studies, the research and publishing arm of AMBS, and the editor of *Anabaptist Witness*. In that capacity, he has been working over the past year with a group of writers who represent two 21st-century, Mennonite-connected activist organizations, the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery and Mennonite Action.

Both groups are influenced by the late Vincent Harding, who became a pacifist as an adult, a Mennonite pastor and denominational leader for a time, and worked clo-

sely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement. Harding challenged Mennonites to move from their traditional position as "the quiet in the land." Mennonites needed to go from "a rear light to a front light [headlight] for justice," he said — to not only talk about peace but also act for peace.

Mennonite Action named itself in response to Harding's call, Pitts said. The group first organized in 2023 to oppose the U.S.-backed Israeli war on Gaza, challenging Mennonite churches to take meaningful, visible public action on behalf of the oppressed. More recent direct action has addressed government violence against undocumented Americans and their supporters, and the extension of war in the Middle East to Iran.

A key text for Mennonites has always been the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. "Mennonites are proud of how we put [it] into practice, but we are not the only Christians who take it so seriously," Pitts said.

Bonhoeffer was reading Matthew while directing the Confessing Church, a Protestant resistance movement and "semi-legal seminary for students rejecting Nazism and developing a different concept of power that depends on embracing the poor, weak and marginalized," he said. "Harding echoes Bonhoeffer. Struggle is part of life in the Spirit. ... [Bonhoeffer wrote that] 'discipleship is as visible as

light in the night, as a mountain in the flatland.'"

Pitts looked at "who has the agency" when groups like Mennonite Action say "we need to show up for the struggle, to be visible, to be the front light" and how Bonhoeffer might speak to that. "We" might be "the community (which can mean a church congregation), individuals or institutions," he said.

There's no one answer. Bonhoeffer had thoughts on how communities (churches) and individuals should respond. Harding breaks "a common dualism between [community equals good and institution equals bad]," Pitts said.

"If we are going to create, develop, use institutions for the purposes of the struggle, as part of the front light, they have to spread ... liberating love, grace and fellowship in order to be viewed as institutions of freedom and hope."

Pitts' second lecture had the provocative title "Would Jesus Kill Hitler?," based on the fact that Bonhoeffer was arrested as part of a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

Pitts answered his own question early in the lecture. Bonhoeffer was responding to the evidence of Hitler's "Final Solution" to wipe out Jews. Jesus was himself almost a victim of genocide when the Jewish ruler Herod ordered all boy babies under two in the town where Jesus lived to be killed in response to Jesus' birth as a possible



future “king of the Jews” (Jesus’ parents fled with him to Egypt). As an adult, Jesus could have commanded an uprising against the Roman government and their collaborators but chose not to, nor to let his disciples violently oppose his arrest and crucifixion. So no, Pitts said, Jesus would not kill Hitler.

“Loving peace, drawing near to and serving the poor and marginalized – this is Jesus’ way,” Pitts said, “but the question of doing away with a dangerous leader is serious and live.”

Bonhoeffer, Pitts said, was a realist. “He didn’t change his mind on what Jesus would do. Jesus would not kill Hitler, and we are called to follow Jesus. But we are steeped in a sinful world, and we are going to sin. You must act in some way that carries out your responsibility to the weaker and more vulnerable members of society. You don’t deny that it’s sinful but you have to act anyway. We have to appreciate his realism even if we don’t

agree with his decision.”

He went on to say, “Was the [assassination] plot realistic? On one hand, it could have worked. But on the other, concentrating all the evil being done by the Nazis into one person is perhaps not so realistic. If Hitler had been dead, someone else would almost certainly have stepped in.

“There might have been some failure of imagination, with the only options being a small group of Protestant monastics [the Confessing Church] who stop evil by living out the way of Jesus, or killing Hitler. What could have come in between? There is a lot of space there. Look at the Black freedom struggle, or the civil rights movement, or Mennonite Action, or other nonviolent ways of trying to change the social order [that keep] Jesus’ love in view and [try] to live as Jesus taught while also [being realistic].”

Bonhoeffer’s life and his writings exhibit paradox, Pitts said. But Bonhoeffer “recognized the severity of the problem

and got involved in trying to implement a solution. He is recognized as a martyr, executed by the Nazis in 1945. He shows us something of what it means to resist evil, in the model of Jesus, even if he [ultimately decided] to try and kill an enemy instead of loving him.

“How does that challenge us to let our light shine and be Jesus’ disciples, to put into practice a way of organizing society where there is good news for the poor, liberation for prisoners, where the sick, weak and oppressed are met with healing and community, where immigrants are welcomed? Will we follow Jesus or Bonhoeffer?”

MELANIE ZUERCHER

## LECTURE, SYMPOSIUM CHALLENGE CHRISTIANS ON ISSUES OF IMMIGRATION

When many people think of the biblical book of Ruth, they think of weddings. For Karen González, Ruth is a primer for Christians on how to treat immigrants.

González, Washington, D.C., was this year’s KIPCOR Peace Lecturer. Her Feb. 25 presentation, titled “Grace and Compassion in the Immigration Conversation,” was also the start of the biennial Justice Symposium, for which the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution is a main planner. KIPCOR Peace Lectures have been taking place since 1972, supported by the Marguerite (Geiger) ‘36 and J. Winfield Fretz Peace Fund. The symposium, of which this was the second, is underwritten by a gift from Harry ‘60 and Donna (Kaufman) Neufeld ‘55.

González is the author of two books, *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong* and *Beyond Welcome: Centering Immigrants in Our Christian Response to Immigration*, which focus on what the Bible has to teach Christians about “strangers and foreigners” and how they should be treated.

“I want [Ruth] to be remembered for more than just the words we hear at weddings,” González said. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth says to her mother-in-law, Naomi, “Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will

stay. Your people shall be my people and your God my God.”

“They are beautiful words,” González said, “but remember, they are not spoken at a wedding, or even a happy time” – among them, three women have experienced famine, displacement, infertility and widowhood.

In Scripture, González said, there are many times when people don’t obey God’s laws, but the book of Ruth is not one of them.

In Ruth, the people of Bethlehem follow “the laws that say to leave some barley in the fields and some olives on the trees for widows and orphans and strangers – the most vulnerable,” González said. “The community welcomes Naomi and also [the stranger,] her Moabite daughter-in-law. [The landowner] Boaz is a devout follower of God. He was wealthy and also very generous, [showing that] compassion for the poor is more important than efficiency or profit.”

The outcome of the book is a marriage; a son, Obed, who would be the grandfather of King David; and joy for Naomi. Ruth is in the direct genealogy of Jesus.

González continued, “Sunday school tellings of [the story of] Ruth are almost



Karen González gives the 2026 Peace Lecture in Kidron Hall at Kidron Bethel Village.

Disney-princess-like – a fairy godmother, Naomi, a prince, Boaz, and a princess, Ruth. But I see it as more of an alliance.

“Ruth is a hard worker, who ‘gleans and threshes until evening.’ She takes care of Naomi. Naomi is poor, and too old to work, but she is a cultural insider who knows how to navigate the laws of the land, even though as a woman she can’t enforce them. She shows Ruth how to

make her way. Boaz is the most powerful of the three, but knows how to use power for the common good.

"What would happen if Ruth showed up at the southern border, Juarez or Tijuana, today?" González wondered. Ruth probably wouldn't have qualified as a refugee, because "being poor and vulnerable doesn't qualify [as 'persecution']". She had no one to sponsor her.

"Her only hope might be a temporary work visa, but there aren't many of them and what there are go mostly to people with advanced education. What would Bethlehem have missed if their laws were like our laws [in the United States]? What Ruths have we denied entry?

"When you lose hope in the national immigration conversation, remember Ruth. Summon her back."

For the last part of her lecture, González talked about some common perceptions (and misperceptions) of who recent immigrants to the United States are and what they do. For example, research says they are far more likely to be victims of crime than to commit it. The majority – 55% – are Christian. Despite not having Social Security numbers, undocumented immigrants pay taxes, but that same lack also means they don't get public benefits. Recent immigrants make up 13% of the population but 16-18% of the workforce – those who come here self-select as those who want to work, González said.

"Immigration is good for countries and

their economies. But even if it weren't, God commands us to welcome immigrants."

Other components of the Justice Symposium, Feb. 25-27, included a Circle of Belonging, led by Bethel's Office of Culture and Belonging, in which participants reflected on a short film about immigration; a legal panel with three Wichita lawyers; a service project at the MCC Central States office near campus; and a know-your-rights training aimed specifically at allies.

The legal panel and the training were organized by the Kansas Immigration Coalition (KIC), one of the Symposium sponsors.

A number of recent immigrants who live in the Newton community attended the panel on Feb. 26, hosted by symposium sponsor Bethel College Mennonite Church, and consisting of immigration lawyers Sara Balderas and Beatriz Valdez, employment lawyer Don Berner and immigration activist Esmeralda Tovar-Moros.

The panel strongly encouraged recent arrivals, especially if undocumented, to make sure they had a power-of-attorney designated and a plan to protect and care for minor citizen children and assets. There are local organizations that provide POA clinics, with lawyers offering free services and help to get documents in place.

The panel also responded to questions that Bethel international students had submitted ahead of time about how best

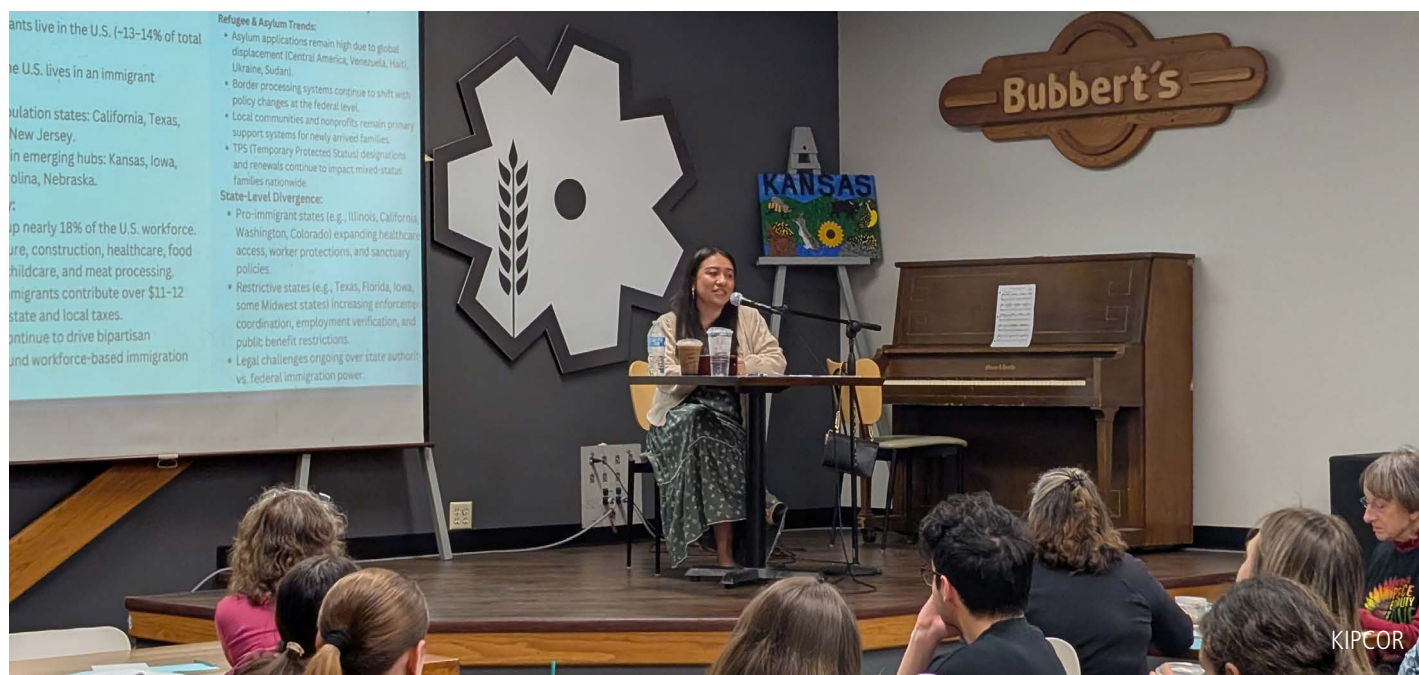
to keep themselves safe.

When the attorneys were asked for "something hopeful," Balderas said, "We are still winning. People are still getting citizenship and green cards and getting bonded out of detention."

Tovar-Moros led the know-your-rights training Feb. 27. She lives in Hutchinson, Kan., and is a co-founder of KIC and director of Hutch in Harmony, a nonprofit centered on bridge-building and community organizing. She offered her own extensive knowledge and a number of resources in English and Spanish, including links to other immigrant aid and advocacy organizations in Wichita and other parts of Kansas and northwestern Missouri and what allies can and can't legally do when trying to intervene in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions.

In the midst of giving so much information, Tovar-Moros also said it was important to include self-care. "It doesn't always have to be heavy. We have to find micro-joys in order to keep going. Unclench your jaw. Let your fingers breathe. Read kids' books. Remember, no one can do this by themselves."

MELANIE ZUERCHER



Esmeralda Tovar-Moros leads a know-your-rights training at the 1887 Cafe.



## NEW COUNSELOR IS FOCUSED ON STUDENT WELLBEING

Liz Rempel graduated from Bethel in 2005 with a major in psychology and a deep appreciation for her alma mater. Right after graduation, she worked as a cook and baker, and then in elder care, first locally and then in Austin, Texas, where she eventually earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Texas in 2012 with the plan to work with older adults.

As the years passed, Rempel moved into social work positions with a variety of populations, including elders, the unhoused, and people with substance use disorders. She moved back to Newton, where she had grown up. Working first with Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) and then with integrated behavioral health at Hunter Health in Wichita, "I [kept] my eye on the student wellness counselor position at Bethel. I feel very positively about my student experience and the Bethel community. In terms of being a therapist, the college setting appealed to me when I'd think about options."

Now, after one semester on the job, she says one of the things she appreciates most is the strong support she has felt from the Bethel community. The position was open for about a year "and there was strong advocacy from within the campus for a counselor before I arrived. I have felt a great level of welcome and support, and I'm impressed by the extent to which faculty and staff recognize the need for students to have mental and emotional support."

Rempel cites some statistics on the need for that support from the 2024-25 "Healthy Minds survey" of 84,000 college students at 135 colleges and universities: 37% reported depression, 32% anxiety,

11% suicidal thoughts and more than 50% loneliness, while only 38% reported "flourishing."

"While this is an improvement from [immediately after] the pandemic, it still shows a significant need," Rempel said. "To name some but certainly not all" of the areas Rempel has addressed in her first semester, she lists depression; substance abuse; grief; anxiety; trauma; academic problems; ADHD; relationship issues; athletic performance; and life path decisions.

"I've seen strong and growing student engagement with the counseling center," she says. "About 16% of the student body used the services this semester. April was the busiest month. New clients continued to come in, even into the middle of finals week."

She continues, "Administrators, faculty, staff and coaches have all been receptive and welcoming around mental health and wellness. They have been responsive when I've reached out – they show a deep level of care for their students, and want students to succeed."

"Bethel has a wonderful community of students. I love the opportunity to work with such a diverse group of people, from many different backgrounds, life experiences and cultures."

"They bring wonderful gifts, unique perspectives, and strengths to this community. They also carry many challenging things with them into college – family problems, traumatic experiences, anxiety, financial fears, undiagnosed neurodivergence and learning disabilities – and many have carried these things quietly on their own."

"We all need support and connection, and I have seen that having someone to



Liz Rempel

carry these things with them means a lot to them and has immediate benefits for them, academically, socially, athletically and in their general wellbeing."

As Rempel begins planning for the next school year and the future of the counseling office, she hopes "to bring on a graduate student to also provide counseling, to expand the capacity of the office to serve the student body." She has already begun the interview process.

**MELANIE ZUERCHER**

## CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR RECEIVES TEACHING AWARD



Robert Milliman, left, presents Will Wiebe-Friesen with his teaching award.

Dr. Will Wiebe-Friesen, associate professor of chemistry, received the Ralph P. Schrag '37 Distinguished Teaching Award at commencement on May 10.

"In presenting this award at commencement," said Dr. Robert Milliman, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, "we affirm the importance that Bethel College places on excellent teaching by our faculty and meaningful learning by our students."

In his citation, Milliman noted that Wiebe-Friesen "cultivates an environment where students feel supported and motivated to succeed."

"With a notable ability to take a challenging subject and make it relevant to students' lives, he allows for academic growth without intimidation."

One student said, "Because of Will's help, I was able to genuinely understand and learn. Will is the best professor I have ever had. He believed in me and made me believe in myself," while another summed up many other positive observations with: "Will is da GOAT."

Peers describe Wiebe-Friesen as "easygoing" and "one who shows genuine concern for others." One called him "an amazing professor, ... knowledgeable and passionate, kind and open, [and] an asset to Bethel College."

Milliman added that Wiebe-Friesen "distinguishes his teaching through his leadership, service and dedication to student success." He received the Thresher Leadership Award for advising

in 2024 and for student support in 2025, "proving that he always keeps student success first," Milliman said.

"This is true especially in his role as a Liberal Education Adviser [to first-year students] and as an adviser for our pre-health students."

"His support of teaching also extends to his work on the Assessment Committee [and] his role as the faculty liaison for our transition to the Canvas learning management system. Will has provided valuable support, communication and guidance while faculty adapt to this new technology."

Wiebe-Friesen has a B.A. in chemistry from Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kan., and a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry with a focus in mass spectrometry from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

He taught chemistry at Garden City (Kan.) Community College for two years and Hesston College for five before coming to Bethel in the fall of 2023.



# RETIRING STAFF HAVE DECADES OF MUSEUM MEMORY BETWEEN THEM



Dave Kreider, left, and Chuck Regier with “friends” from Kauffman Museum’s permanent exhibit “Of Land and People,” which the two helped to create and fabricate more than 40 years ago.

During the 2025-26 school year, Kauffman Museum underwent a deceptively quiet transition, when David Kreider ’82 retired as museum technician at the end of December and Chuck Regier ’81 as curator of exhibits at the end of March.

Both started working at the museum in 1984. Together, they built the permanent exhibit “Of Land and People,” which opened in 1987. The fact that the exhibit is still here – as it was built – tells you a few things: the exhibit design by Bob Regier ’52 is timeless; Dave and Chuck’s workmanship was excellent, both in construction design and in fabrication – anyone can start with a good design but for it to look good in the end, you need skilled crafters; the exhibit is due for a few upgrades, which is on the schedule for the its 40th anniversary in 2027.

After some years away from North Newton – during which Dave worked as a preparator at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, an assistant preparator at the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida, and as a naturalist instructor at Morningside Nature Center, Gainesville, Fla. – Dave (and his spouse, Heidi Regier Kreider ’82) returned in 2000, and Dave assumed the position of museum technician.

In that role, he has played a crucial part in exhibit maintenance, artifact care and exhibition installation. Additionally, Dave has put in many miles moving traveling exhibits across North America. For 20 years, Dave also coordinated exhibit moves within Kansas for Humanities Kansas, often hosting Smithsonian exhibits, amounting to more than 65 exhibit moves.

With all these, Dave was the face of Kauffman Museum on the road. There have been many expressions of praise for Dave’s kindness, patience with volunteers, and interest in engaging visitors at each exhibit site.

At home, Dave has played key roles in specific projects such as restoration of the museum’s unique Teschemacher cabinet organ; curating and installing the recent “Unlocking the Past: Immigrant Artifacts and the Stories They Tell” exhibit; and serving as collections coordinator for the last six years. Dave brought integrity, attention to detail and thoughtfulness to all projects,

large or small.

Kauffman Museum directors and curators have come and gone, and Chuck Regier has been here through it all. Beginning in 1984, Chuck and Dave built the permanent exhibit literally from the ground up. As curator of exhibits, Chuck has been involved in every exhibit project – temporary, traveling or permanent – serving as fabricator, designer, co-curator or all three. Given his many talents, gregarious personality and curious nature, Chuck’s responsibilities and influence touched most areas of work at the museum, from facilities to IT to special events.

Chuck’s influence and collaborations extended beyond Kauffman Museum through his participation in state and regional museum associations, a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution, and especially through consulting jobs and traveling exhibits. With other museum staff, Chuck designed and built permanent exhibits at the Pikes Peak Hill Climb Museum in Colorado Springs, Colo., the Grassroots Art Center in Lucas, Kan., and the Stauth Memorial Museum in Montezuma, Kan. Through these jobs, other small consulting gigs, and work with firms such as Exhibits USA and Upland Exhibits, Chuck has built lifelong relationships and is well known in the museum world. In 2006, Chuck earned the Kansas Museums Association Distinguished Service Award.

Traveling exhibits also created avenues of collaboration and connection for Chuck with institutions across North America. The “Mirror of the Martyrs” traveling exhibit was the first of at least 15 high-impact Kauffman Museum special exhibitions that Chuck engineered to travel, often providing storage and transport in their own display cases, a revolutionary idea in traveling exhibits. Chuck’s passion for simple yet innovative and efficient designed Kauffman Museum’s national reputation as an award-winning museum and will leave a lasting legacy here and in the regional museum world.

**ANDI SCHMIDT ANDRES ’85,  
KAUFFMAN MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

## OUTSTANDING SENIORS



Four graduating seniors received Thresher Awards at the end-of-the-year convocation on April 27, given for outstanding work overall, as well as in a senior thesis or senior project. Peter Goerzen and Dr. Christina Liu presented a Thresher to Josué Coy Dick in Bible and religion and music; Dr. Siobhán Scarry to Louisa Lehmann in English; Dr. Cristy Dougherty to Isaiah Smith in forensics; and Dr. Katy Layman and Dr. Will Wiebe-Friesen to Karissa Wilson in chemistry. For a complete list of academic, athletic and service awards, see [bethelks.edu/awards](http://bethelks.edu/awards).

(from left: Dougherty, Scarry, Wiebe-Friesen, Lehmann, Dr. Trent Voth [Bible and religion], Smith, Wilson, Coy Dick, Goerzen, Layman and Liu)

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## BETHEL BOOKSHELF: EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE, ANTICIPATE PUBLICATION

Several Bethel faculty and staff have celebrated publication or scheduled publication of new books during the 2025-26 school year.

Last fall, Dr. Drametrice Smith, assistant football coach, published *A Grit Mentality: The Whole Being Starting with Your Mindset*, a combination memoir and self-help guide, with strategies to help readers get through trauma and adversity and build resilience, using faith and education as core principles.

The book draws from Smith's own story of overcoming poverty, addiction and near-fatal accidents, to earning a doctorate in education and human sciences from Walden University and running his own business as a mentor and coach in both life and football.

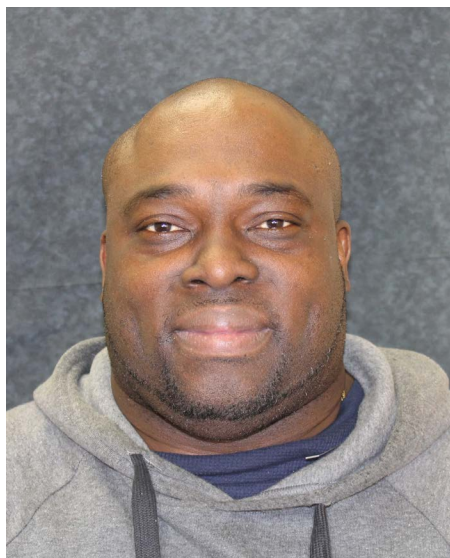
Last October, Smith appeared on the regional public television station, KPTS, on the talk show *One on One with Victor Hogstrom*, to talk about his life and work. *A Grit Mentality* is available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Sheryl Wilson, vice president for culture and belonging, and Caitlin Morneau are the co-authors of *The Little Book of Restorative Justice and Community: Reclaiming Connection and Responsibility for Our Neighbors*, released April 10 by Good Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing.

Morneau, Alexandria, Va., is director of restorative justice at the Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN). Wilson came to Bethel in November 2017 as executive director of the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR). At that point, she already had years of experience as a restorative justice (RJ) practitioner.

"Long before coming here, I had been thinking about the way we talk about stakeholders – victims, offenders, the community – in restorative justice," she says. "There is lots of literature for and about how we attend to the needs of victims and offenders, but what about the community?"

Good Books launched the "Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding" in 2002 with Howard Zehr's now classic *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, which was formative to Wilson's RJ journey. Wilson and Morneau's book is #25 in the series.



Clockwise from top left: Drametrice Smith, Cheryl Wilson, Rachel Epp Buller, Siobhán Scarry

In 2021, Wilson joined the board of CMN, which is how she met Morneau and discovered they had similar ideas about the need for RJ resources to help people "become good neighbors."

They began working on the book together in 2023, mostly via Zoom, with one weekend writing retreat together.

"I took a lot of delight in thinking about the fact that the goal of a restorative community aligns with Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'Beloved Community,'" Wilson says. "You don't have to shoot for perfec-

tion, but you have to keep choosing each other and staying connected even when it feels hard."

For more about *The Little Book of Restorative Justice and Community*, see [rjandcommunity.my.canva.site/](http://rjandcommunity.my.canva.site/)

Parlor Press will publish Dr. Siobhán Scarry's new book *Figure in a Field: Poems & Investigations* later this year through its imprint Illuminations: A Series on American Poetics, edited by Jon Thompson.

Scarry is professor of English and chair of the English department. She has taught

at Bethel since 2014. In addition to her teaching and scholarship, she is the faculty adviser for Bethel's literary magazine *YAWP!* and runs the English department's Visiting Writer Series.

"This is a hybrid book," Scarry says, "making use of different genres – for example, lyric poetry, erasure poems, pieces that look like prose poems but function more like miniature pieces of literary criticism, a letter that functions like an essay."

Scarry's last book, *Pilgrimly*, a collection of poems, came out in 2014, also from Parlor Press.

There will be a public book launch sometime next fall when *Figure in a Field* is published.

Dr. Rachel Epp Buller '96, professor of visual arts and design, is the co-editor, with Dr. Sheena Wilson, professor of media, communications and cultural studies at the University of Alberta, of *Walking the Talk: Climate Moves and*

*Relational Attunement*, currently in the publication process with the University of Alberta Press.

This interdisciplinary volume emerged from Buller and Wilson's successful application for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant, funded by the Canadian government. Among the activities the grant supported was the faculty speaker series and symposium, "Walking the Talk," that Buller organized in 2024.

The book *Walking the Talk* includes an essay by Joel Boettger '14, one of the symposium presenters, as well as a piece co-written by Dr. Christine Crouse-Dick, professor of communication arts, Sheryl Wilson and Peter Goerzen '07, assistant professor of Bible and religion.

"This interdisciplinary volume of multi-genre writing gathers contributors from partner sites in Canada and the U.S. to explore how relational, affective modes of engagement lead to transformative

learning," Buller and Wilson wrote in the SSHRC grant application. "Research activities, including guided walks about local ecologies and histories, walking interviews, arts-based walks, speaker series, and participatory workshops, offered opportunities for participants to explore social-cultural aspects of climate change and response, in locally situated contexts, and join in interconnected outreach activities across locations.

"Contributions are grouped by theme, interspersed with three edited conversations that underscore the interdisciplinary and transformative possibilities of walking as pedagogical and research methodology... Topics explored in the collection through walking include prairie ecology, Indigenous poetry, medicinal plant healing, turtles, memorial sites, deep listening and soundscapes, climate justice, and wellbeing."

MELANIE ZUERCHER

## BOARD CHAIR WILL TRANSITION TO INTERIM PRESIDENT



Wynn Goering

Wynn Goering '77, the current chair of the Bethel Board of Directors, will assume the duties of interim president on July 1, 2026. Goering will step down from the board on June 30, at the conclusion of Dr. Jon Gering's tenure as president.

"We're pleased that Wynn was willing to take this on so that we can maintain Bethel's momentum while we take the time to do a comprehensive search for our next president," said Lori Schmidt-Harrison '87, board vice chair.

"We have a lot going on right now – a capital campaign, strategic planning, further development of Employment Experiences – and we believe Wynn is the right leader to ensure progress continues on all these fronts as the college thoughtfully moves through the search and presidential transition process."

Goering holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English language and literature from the University of Chicago, and an M.B.A. from the University of New Mexico.

He served as Bethel's chief academic officer from 1991-97, before beginning a two-decade career at the University of New Mexico in a variety of executive roles. These included tenures as special assistant to the president, vice provost for academic affairs, and interim appointments as vice president for advancement and chief executive at UNM's campuses in Taos, Gallup, Los Alamos and Rio Rancho.

Since 2018, he has served as a consultant for the executive search firm EFL Associates in Kansas City, where he has helped to recruit and place presidents and other executives for colleges and universities.

Goering has been a member of the Bethel College board since 2016.

Eric Rhoades '86 will become board chair on July 1.

Gering '94 announced his resignation in March, after more than eight years of service. He began his tenure in January 2018.

Meeting March 27-28, the board, in addition to finalizing the leadership transition, also approved the promotion of Dr. Kip Wedel to professor of history and politics and Dr. Navanté Peacock to associate professor of psychology.





AVA BROXTERMAN **1**



AVA BROXTERMAN



CHASE DEMPSEY **5**

1. Jaric Woodley, right, and Dr. Matt Dorton; 2. Caryn Yoder receives her diploma; 3. Daniel Gonzales, left, and Azucena '18; 4. Madison Gonzales crosses the Mem Hall stage; 5. the Class of 2018 graduates; 6. Daniel Gonzales, left, and Azucena '18; 7. Becky (Esau) Bartell '02, left, and Carley Bartell '02, right.





TERMAN **2**



MELANIE ZUERCHER **3**



AVA BROXTERMAN **4**



EMILY TIMPERLEY **6**



EMILY TIMPERLEY **7**



EMILY TIMPERLEY **8**

lez-Arevalo, Class of 2026, is the third Bethel psychology graduate in his family, along with sisters  
2026; 6. Carmelo Yakubu with two of Bethel's biggest basketball fans, Juan Acosta, left, and Soledad  
artell '26 (now Bollinger); 8. Claudia Hurtado congratulates her son, Rodrigo Sanchez.



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**75th**  
**ANNIVERSARY**

This year marks an incredible milestone, as we celebrate 75 years of the exchange between Bethel and the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, including special events at Fall Fest, Oct. 17-18. For three-quarters of a century, this cherished partnership has connected students across continents, fostering lifelong friendships, cultural understanding and meaningful exchange between our Bethel community and the city of Wuppertal, Germany. Here's to 75 years of connection, growth, and the bonds that transcend borders – and to many more years to come!