

COSSO Newsletter

Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)

2009

Winter

From the Director's Desk

Rev. Diane Turner-Sharazz



Greetings Course of Study Family!

Blessings to you as you journey through this season of Lent toward the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. This is a journey of preparation and change. The weather is beginning to give us a glimpse into spring, and soon the buds will be on the trees -- it is a time of re-awakening. Praise God for this wonderful cycle of life.

There is something that I would like to re-awaken in us as we move forward -- that is, a certain expectation for Course of Study. Our policy, in conjunction with policies of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, states that ***there are no excused absences from class. It is the expectation that students will be in attendance for ALL class sessions.*** The dates for our courses are published well in advance, so that students have the opportunity to plan church activities around those dates and/or provide pastoral back-up at the church for that period. However, we know that there may be times when there are ***extenuating circumstances***, when emergencies come up and are unavoidable. ***Extenuating circumstances include*** such things as emergency situations, illness, dire circumstances, etc. ***Extenuating circumstances do not include*** such things as going on vacation, baseball games, church ice cream socials or activities that could be planned at other times or could go on without the pastor's presence, etc. **In case of extenuating circumstances, the Director should be notified as soon as possible.** The General Board of Higher Education and Ministries policy states that ***a student cannot miss more than 20% of a course and get credit for that course.*** This would have to be taken into consideration when excusing the person with the extenuating circumstance. Questions regarding tuition already paid, etc. will also be dealt with in accordance with the COS handbook. *(Further details will be forthcoming in our newly updated COS handbook which will be available shortly.)*

Now, while I am sure that COSSO students do not do this, I would just say that the 20% policy is not license for persons to decide that "Since I can take up to (4) hours off, I will arrange my schedule to do something else for those (4) hours, and will just come to class for the other (16) hours." Surely this is not the way that COSSO students do things. But just in case you are tempted

It is our desire to provide our students with the best education and training that we can. We look forward to each student receiving all that he/she can of all that we offer. Let's pray that those dire emergencies and extenuating circumstances are few and far between for each who enters these halls. Blessings and Peace,

Diane

MORE NEWS about Spiritual Formation

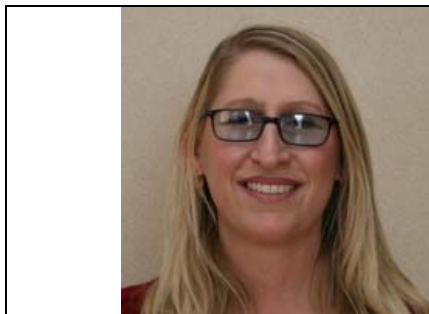
From Rev. Rebeka Maples, Ph.D., Director of Spiritual Formation



Slowly, we are making our way to the cross as we journey through our wilderness places, in anticipation of the joy and promise that await us on Easter morning. I know we have made this journey before, but we are different each year, so our Lenten journey is different too. The baggage we bring with us this year is also different from what we carried last year. What is in your carry on bag? Mine is full of things I could throw away but they are so familiar I still cling to them, like the negative comments people have said, New Year's resolutions I made but never started, and the list goes on. It seems as though I believe it all relies on me.

In my Lenten devotion, I am reminded that this is a season for change, a time for turning around and letting go. I do not have to carry this baggage. God wants only me, just the way I am right now. As I allow this message to move from my head to my heart, I will slowly become all that God has called me to be.

Lent is also a time for "spring cleaning" - time to clean out and throw away the things that clutter our lives. What will you let go on this Lenten journey?



*WELCOME OUR NEW
COS ASSISTANT:*

ROBIN WELLS

It is amazing how each and every one of us is called by God to this place, the Course of Study School of Ohio. I became a full-time student at MTSO in the fall semester of 2008. I followed God's call from California where I was born and raised. Without ever having visited Ohio, much less MTSO, I packed my things into a trailer and made the cross-country trip to where the Lord would lead me next.

In California, I was a high school English teacher and I was also a journalist. I grew up in the United Methodist Church and always felt that being a teacher and a journalist were a Christian calling. A couple of years ago, I had gotten a new job teaching and had moved to a new area, which meant attending a new church. The Church of the Wayfarer in Carmel-by-the-Sea is where I became a member and it was there that I was encouraged to use my gifts and graces in church ministry.

All my life I had been a United Methodist and I had this strange sense that there would be a time in my life when I would become a nun. I now realize that the intuitive feeling was right, but the framework was wrong. I had never really known that it was possible for a woman to be ordained within the United Methodist Church! The parishioners at Church of the Wayfarer continue to affirm my call to ordained ministry and while I am earning my masters in divinity with a specialization in church leadership at MTSO, I am also in the process for ordination as an elder in the California-Nevada Annual Conference.

Becoming the new student assistant for COSSO has been truly a blessing. The work I do here is a ministry and when I see your names as I am filing, stuffing envelopes, or doing any other number of tasks related to this job, I try to be mindful enough to lift you up in prayer. Having met many of you in my first COSSO session gives me a deep appreciation for all that you do within your local congregations and how you sustain one another and your calling by continuing your education through COSSO. You are all truly called by God. It is my honor and privilege to serve the students and faculty at COSSO.

FACULTY FOR 2009 SPRING SESSION



Susan Bowman

Susan Bowman -
Teaching 214

Received her M.Div. from MTSO, did some D.Min. work at Boston University School of Theology, former DS and retired elder from Iowa Conference



Brooks Heck

Brooks Heck -
Teaching 111

Received his D.Min. from United Theological Seminary, elder in West Ohio Conference



Tyrone Inbody

Tyrone Inbody -
Teaching 512

Received his Ph.D. from University of Chicago, retired Professor of Theology at United Theological Seminary



Diane Lobody

Diane Lobody -
Teaching 412

Received her Ph.D. from Drew University, Professor of Church History at MTSO, elder in West Ohio Conference



Ervin Smith

Ervin Smith -
Teaching 414

Received his Ph.D. from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary-Northwestern, retired Professor of Christian Ethics at MTSO, elder in West Ohio Conference



Chuck Zimmerman

Chuck Zimmerman -
Teaching 312

Received his Ph.D. from Emory University, Professor of Religion at Otterbein College, retired elder

**IN MEMORIAM
WE REMEMBER JESSICA SPILLMAN**



Jessica Spillman died suddenly December 10, 2008. She was 32 years old at the time of her death.

She was Coordinator for COSSO from 2004 to 2007. She will be missed by many COSSO students and staff members and by the community at MTSO where she also served as Academic Services Manager.

Jessica's funeral service was held on December 15th at Prospect Street UMC in Delaware. Rev. Joseph Miller and Rev. Ned DeWire officiated at the service. The burial was at Grand Prairie Cemetery in Brush Ridge, Ohio.

Jessica is survived by her mother, Charlene Spillman of Marion; her husband, Mark Fausnaugh of Marion, and three children, Jesse, Faith, and Mark. Special cousins include Brandy Spillman and Ric Kear, and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Jessica L. Spillman Fund in care of The Ohio State Bank, Marion, Ohio.

MEMORIAL WREATH

We will display a Memorial Wreath during COSSO weekends throughout 2009.

You may tie a ribbon on it at any time.

If you are here during one of the weekend courses, you are invited to tie a ribbon to the wreath then.

Since many COSSO students never had the opportunity to meet Jessica, you may choose to tie a ribbon in memory of a loved one who has touched your life. You may also want to bring a ribbon with you to add different colors and textures to our wreath.



REFLECTION ON A MEMORIAL WREATH

The colorful ribbons that make up this wreath are tied in honor of loved ones who have died.

Together we can build a powerful and colorful tribute to those we love as a visual testimony.

Each ribbon reminds us of someone special in our lives.

When you look at the wreath, stop and remember the people in your life who are gone.

Remember a smile or the sound of laughter, favorite things they enjoyed, and meaningful times you shared together.

May we cherish our memories.

Words Words Words

From Margaret VanSickle, Writing Coach



WRITE WITH ENTHUSIASM!

By now, all of you are aware that every COSSO course you take at MTSO will require writing a paper or papers. Many of the same expectations of good grammar and mechanics, precise vocabulary, logical organization, etc., are important as they were in high school compositions and college research papers.

One of the other important factors that every student should remember in preparing written assignments is the need to share your passion and enthusiasm for your calling that will become contagious to your reader(s).

I think that most of you, as pastors, find it much easier to speak enthusiastically than to write enthusiastically; but I am convinced that the same level of energy you use in speaking is a valuable tool for writing.

One of the best pieces of advice that I have received in training as a liturgist is that the goal should be to read scripture lessons to the congregation with the energy you would use if you were sharing the information in the passage for the first time. For example, imagine that you have just heard or read the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8 (NRSV): "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Would you be content with telling others about these words with a somber face and speaking in a quiet monotone? Or would your appearance be animated and your voice filled with excitement and energy as you spoke these words to others?

OK, coach, that's easy for you to say! No one said it would be easy! For most of us, conversation is easier than writing because we can share eye contact, use gestures, use vocal inflections and dynamics to convey our words and our meaning. Many of us remember those grade school/high school composition assignments about "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" or "My Favorite Animal" or whatever other topic you were burdened to write about as a youth.

As instructors seek to motivate your creative skills, writing assignments may seem a little vague: "Write a 3-page paper about your call to ministry"; "write a description of your ministry setting"; etc. Let's look at the ministry setting assignment as an example. Be clear about the direction you want to take in writing this assigned composition.

(1) Think before you write: What makes the church I serve unique? What improvements are being accomplished among the congregation members? How is it with the souls of your church members? How is your worship becoming more effective? What new programs are emerging for children, youth, and even "senior" members of the congregation?

(2) Be realistic in your descriptions. None of us—and none of our churches—are at Wesley's goal of perfection. Be positive about what is going on in your church(es), but don't present a rose-colored glasses view of what is happening.

(3) Write with the enthusiasm of your faith! What would encourage the reader of this paper to want to become a member of this church?

HAPPY WRITING!

REQUEST, PLEASE!!!

Please be sure that papers you send to the writing coach are not submitted in Word Perfect or Corell. I cannot open these files, which causes a delay as I must contact you to ask that you send the paper in some other program or include the paper in the body of an e-mail. If you send the paper(s) in the body of an e-mail, I must reformat the paper in order to do the track changes and suggestions for you. I think that you probably have to reformat the paper when you get it back from me. If including the paper(s) in the body of an e-mail is your only option, we'll work with that; however, I would appreciate your help by sending materials in Microsoft Word if at all possible. Thanks! Margaret

Views from the Coordinator

By Terri Litchfield



To all COS students:

Registration forms must be complete (including all required signatures and full registration fee) for registrations to be processed. Incomplete forms will be returned; no student will be added to future rosters if paperwork is incomplete.

I will send an email confirmation when registration is received and processed. If you don't hear from me by the time you think the form should have arrived here, please contact me.

CHECK WEBSITE SCHEDULE PAGE FOR CLOSED CLASSES AND REGISTER EARLY FOR BEST COURSE SELECTION!

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR 2009 SUMMER TERM IS April 15, 2009

Summer Weekend	Instructor	Crs #
June 26-27 & August 7-8	Jeff Jaynes	212
	Randy Stearns	313
	Paul Kim	411
	Robin Knowles Wallace	413
	John Lepp	511
	John Wallace	514

Many students find it convenient to register for all courses for a given year on one form. Remember that the registration fee is non-refundable and non-transferable if you must withdraw from a term. Also remember to complete 100-level courses first (or email Rev. Diane Turner-Sharazz for approval to take a non-100 level course), take prerequisites before registering for COS 411 and COS 511, and complete all lower level courses before registering for 500-level courses. (Again, if there are no other options in a given term, you can request approval from Diane.)

There are now Word and Excel versions of the registration form on the REGISTRATION page of the website so you can download the form, open in Word/Excel to complete, and print it off, ready to send for signatures. Always keep a copy of your registration form for your records.

UPCOMING CLASSES

The 2010 schedule has been posted. Go to the SCHEDULE page and click on the link in the right-hand panel: 2009/10 Classes. The Course Planning Grid (available on the CURRICULUM page) now includes 2010 courses.

Have You Considered.... 2009 Summer Intensive: August 10-21

Have you noticed the Summer Intensive classes on the COS schedule but been uncertain of what two weeks of classes might entail? Prior to last August, I had some concerns myself. What would it be like to prepare for students coming to take not one, but two courses? What rhythms would evolve over the two weeks? How would those weeks feel? Undoubtedly it would be quite different from the more traditional weekend model. Well, ready or not the Summer Intensive term arrived. Students note many differences right off the bat. Registration takes place in the dorm lounge (where's that??). Dinner on the evening of registration is served in the coffee shop – it was a full-house but the buffet style pizza dinner worked well. Classes meet for two hours on Monday-Friday, either in the morning or the afternoon with evenings and the weekend open. We invited students from the 2008 Summer Intensive session to share their perspectives and want to share those with you.

2008 was my first experience with COS at MTSO, I enjoyed the weekend classes, however, it was the summer intensive that had the greatest impact on me.... I made new relationships that last to this day. The fellowship and generosity of the school was incredible; the classes were better than I could imagine... I enjoyed the experience so much that I'm signed up for 2009 and 2010 intensive sessions. It is the best 2 weeks spent away...
Sue Hoover, Western Pennsylvania (Franklin District)

I went to Summer intensive in 2008 for the first time. I did not know what to expect. I thought that there would be a tremendous amount of schoolwork, but there wasn't... I took food along for suppers... and to my surprise, there were three opportunities for supper at the campus and at surrounding churches. This was a blessing... My laptop was a trusted companion... The library computers were available... I also had time to travel to nearby communities and enjoy nature. Summer intensive classes made it convenient.... I would recommend them...
Jerry Schmidt, Central Pennsylvania (Wellsboro District)

Never did I think I would want to give up two weeks of my precious time to go to Columbus, Ohio to attend class full time... But, what a blessing it was... Of all of the class time and experiences I had during my Course of Study, my two weeks on campus at MTSO were the very best. I found myself taking walks... I was able to play a round of golf on the course next to the seminary... I was able to find quiet time for reflection, prayer and study... bonding with fellow students... The meals and the fellowship were marvelous. I was able to spend quality time with my studies... and spiritual formation experiences each morning. It was a meaningful time... Sign up today, you will not regret it!!
Larry Dunn, 2008 Fall COS Graduate, Western Pennsylvania (Greensburg District)

COS is really quite an experience.... If you have opted for the summer intensive classes you have a really wonderful experience ahead of you. First of all you will have what can only be termed as "a considerable amount of time" in which to read, reflect, study, and just take in all the instruction and ideas.... Secondly you will find a sense of peace as you relax... concentrate on your own Bible readings, prayers and inner-thinking... Truly a wonderful way to spend two weeks!... you will return... with a real sense of peace... through the two weeks you spend here in the intensive classes.
Bonnie Frey, Detroit (Ann Arbor District)

The food and the fellowship were great, both at the school and at the churches that provided for us through the two weeks. Blessings,
Clare Huyck, West Michigan (Central District)

Summer Intensive lives up to its title! After two summers (and enrolled for 2009, summer AND summer intensive), this is my sage advice:

1. Take the entire two weeks OFF—don't try to be super pastor and return home for worship, even if you're close by.
2. The church functioned before you and it will continue without you. It may even learn to depend more on Jesus and less on you!
3. Bring a cable for your computer—there is no wireless in the dorm rooms.
4. Don't wait until you get to MTSO to do all of your reading. THERE WON'T BE TIME.
5. Get exercise—it's easy to park after sitting all day.
6. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and protection...

Georgette Gaston, East Ohio (Firelands District)

I can honestly admit I wasn't looking forward to attending the Summer Intensive Course last summer... However, that was the only time I could get the course I needed to graduate. So, I registered... I found the two weeks absolutely a refreshing experience. The whole atmosphere was one of peace and tranquility... It allowed time to get to know those in class. We also had several occasions to share meals and fellowship with the group. It was a wonderful experience that I would recommend to anyone...

Paula Bryson, 2008 Fall COS Graduate, West Ohio (Miami Valley District)

Last year was my second opportunity to attend the Summer Intensive. I love the concentrated time of study and to just get away... The fellowship and mutual support is wonderful and relationships are built and enriched... I love the spiritual formation and worship, and appreciate time spent centering on God. I consider it a spiritual retreat...
Linda Dulin, West Ohio (Miami Valley District)

Thanks to all students who took time to share from their experience!!

Registration deadline for 2009 Summer Intensive term is May 15. We'd love for you to join us.

2009 Summer Intensive Classes

AM Classes	James Parnell	112	PM Classes	Judith Craig	114
	Diane Turner-Sharazz	214		John Lepp	311
	Kendall McCabe	413		Ervin Smith	414
	Paul Schrodtt	512		Randy Haase	513

COS GRADUATES – MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND THE FIRST COS REUNION!

Have you every wondered once Course of Study is finished, "Now What?" We find ourselves making new friends in classes as we study together, coming from various Annual Conferences and across the miles that separate us. We share stories from our ministries and support one another in our prayers. We network with one another as we work toward the completion of the requirements given to us by our District Superintendents and Annual Conferences. We do all of this over years of work as we manage the ministries we are appointed to and even some work full-time. Then the day comes for us to graduate from COS. In an emotion filled weekend, we find ourselves saying good-bye to friends and families that have helped us get through the ordeal.

I propose we not lose touch with those friends. I propose we continue to stoke the flames of our connections by gathering once a year back in Columbus at Methodist Theological Seminary for a reunion. I was wondering how many others of you would be interested in doing the same thing? I am looking for help to organize an annual reunion that would bring graduates of the MTSO Course of Study back together with current students during the Summer weekend gathering. We could meet together under the picnic pavilion behind the dining hall and catch up with each other. It would also give those of us who have graduated an opportunity to help others who are still struggling to get through the process and just need to hear from someone who has finished.

Are you interested in helping to organize this kind of gathering? Are you interested in participating in this kind of event? I am willing to help organize such an event. Drop me an email and let me know of your interest. I would like to have our first gathering this summer on Saturday, August 8th at noon after graduation. Please give this prayerful consideration and drop me an email at un1xman@verizon.net if you are interested.

God bless you all as we serve God's plan in our ministries! *Pastor Larry Dunn, Herminie UM Church,*

Greensburg District, Western PA Annual Conference, Graduate of MTSO COS October 2008

A Reflection on COS from a Graduate

In August, 2008 I stood looking into the faces of other students as I was recognized as having completed all requirements of the Course of Study. I can't explain the feelings I had that day. I was excited, pleased, and sad at the same time. I was certainly pleased that, after almost 6 years, I was graduating. I was thinking about other graduates I have known and watched as they were recognized. But, there is no way to explain the difference between watching someone else and being the one recognized.

I began my journey at MTSO and completed all of my courses there. This journey included meeting many fellow students and instructors who shared my journey.

We all began this faith journey in response to God's call on our lives. Although I have completed my Course of Study requirements, and glad I have, I hope your journey will be as fulfilling and satisfying as was mine. Enjoy the journey. One day, before you realize it, you too will be standing at the front looking at the sea of faces of your friends.

Dick Carlson is Senior Pastor of the Trinity Charge in Western Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Linda, live in Hermitage, Pennsylvania. The Trinity Charge includes three churches; one in Mercer, one in Sharon, and the other one in Wheatland. He has one associate pastor working with him.