



A YEAR IN REFLECTION

In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic sent Seminary students, faculty, and staff home. While staff began returning to their offices—at least one day a week to check-in, collaborate, and plan—since the summer of 2020, the majority of faculty and students have done their teaching and learning from home. Below are reflections on experiences in the past year from students, faculty, and staff:

Grace Newswanger,
Final Semester MACH Student



Reflection has been a big part of attempting to process the transition from pre-COVID to the current landscape. Initially, I didn't fully feel the impact of this transition. There was a sense of fear of the unknown, which seemed to extend to the whole Seminary and to the whole world. As it became clear that this would not just be a phase

and instead a more permanent change, there was a sense of grief. Specifically, I missed my professors and classmates. Before we all went home, the power of Moravian Theological Seminary involved being able to move with, learn with, eat with, and simply be with one another. I still believe that there is power in presence, especially within the context of MTS. And also, I am learning that there is a beauty in some of the shifts that COVID has brought. Time that I used to spend in transit, I now spend connecting with myself and the world in different ways, from reading for pleasure (a luxury I rarely gave myself time for before) to strength training. There is a huge element of nostalgia for my pre-COVID Seminary life, and I am also excited to have had this time of transition to a new normal paralleling my time at MTS where I am constantly seeing innovation in how the Seminary, the Church, and the greater World interact in different ways! Δ

Jonathan Weaver,
1st Semester MACC Student



With the exception of meeting Randy D'Angelo for a campus visit just before the pandemic started, my entire experience at Moravian Seminary has been remote. My interview with Dr. Rivera and Dr. Toler was my first experience with Zoom. Registration went smoothly. Orientation and the first week of classes started without a

hitch. Overall, the remote experience has seemed creative and friendly. In my World Religions class with Dr. Appler, we visited a synagogue virtually through livestream, eliminating the need to arrange childcare logistics for a Saturday trek from Philadelphia to Bethlehem. We've made some impressive progress in our various adaptations, but it can't go on like this forever.

When I think about the future, I am torn. I am anxious to return: both wary of it and wanting it. I wonder: Do we need to do this now? Is it too early? Let's just do one more semester remote and then things will be more certain. Learning in the classroom can seem a bit risky or more of a chore with the remote option available. But I applied to come to Moravian Seminary for a fully in-person experience. I am looking for more deeper connections and engagement than I think remote learning can provide.

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Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom and during study on our own. It happens in the halls and on the grounds too. It's in reaching out to others and sharing in the community. I enjoy the Midweek Pause our chaplain Jennika Borger leads each Wednesday on Zoom. It's a special place beyond the classroom where I like to connect with the Seminary community and share sacred space together.

Ultimately, I am hoping to return to in-person learning with some hybrid options. But as much as I want to connect in person, I also sense that I am waiting for something else to happen. I feel like I'm breathing on eggshells. As the anniversary of George Floyd looms ahead, I sense that measuring COVID response is more straightforward than tracking our progress in making sure everyone's voice can be heard. We still have a lot of work to do to come together as a larger community. It won't be easy at the beginning, but we can practice together at Moravian Seminary. Δ

Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera, J. T. Hamilton Assoc. Prof. of Doctrinal Theology



For months now, I have particularly enjoyed the view from the study's window, right in front of the old desk. It looks to the back of the house, to our small but pleasantly-gardened backyard and to the train tracks. The Chestnut Hill West rail line runs through West Mt. Airy (Philadelphia) and right behind our house. The

beginning of the pandemic pushed this line into a hiatus. Although I missed the regular cadence of passing trains, this suspension afforded me a different view of nature. I have seen a parade of diverse creatures: deer, fox, possum, gopher, prairie dog, cats, and myriad species of birds. A world that is somehow familiar, yet as surprising as it can be.

There is another window on the other side of the house, looking to the street, to the more familiar human world of people walking up and down the street, cars passing by, of couples hand in hand, children, pets, conversations and music, laughter and noise, and the ubiquitous political signs on lawns. It is a world of faces, of smiles and warm greetings, of people strolling. There is also tragedy, like the neighbor who recently took his own life, of those experiencing illness or despair overlapping with manifestations of grace and moments of hope, a testimony to the gratuitousness of those who care for others, the less fortunate ones.

It is not that the world is necessarily different now, but maybe that my attention is, since I have come to better see what has been out there in the first place, but with an intensified awareness of daily life. Δ

Rachel Starmer '16 MACC, Assistant Director of Seminary Administration



I grew up in a household of people coming and going: exchange students, colleagues of my father's from around the world, foster siblings, family friends, kids from the neighborhood. Everyone knew our door was open, and it was exciting to see who might be at the kitchen table.

Before the pandemic sent everyone home, the Seminary felt very similar to me—lots of people coming and going, always a lively lunch or supper in the kitchen, murmurs of conversation down the hall. It was rare to find yourself alone in Bahnson. But then pandemic restrictions sent folks to their separate homes. Faculty taught from home and students learned from home. Bahnson went silent. I continued to work on projects from home—assessment, Common Thread, continuing ed—but felt somewhat unsatisfied without the ability to connect my work with the people I worked for and with: other staff, students, and faculty.

The staff quickly started working to connect with each other and combat the isolation: first meeting via Zoom twice a week, then coming back to Bahnson at least once a week for in-person (as much as possible) staff meetings. Sometimes, we had lunches together, all spread out in the Saal, in the kitchen, or outside. Even more exciting were days when a faculty member, student, or visitor happened by and would stop for a chat. As we have moved through the winter and into spring, those days have felt a bit like crocuses peeking out of the snow: is it safe to come out, is winter gone, is our hibernation over? As I hear about more and more fully vaccinated members of the Seminary community, I am beginning to feel a growing excitement, the same that I felt as a kid approaching the back door of my house, wondering who will be at the kitchen table today. Δ

PLEASE WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Heather Vacek,
Dean and Vice President



We are delighted to announce that the Rev. Dr. Heather Vacek will join Moravian Seminary as its next Dean and Vice President of the Seminary. She takes the helm on July 1 after the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch who led the Seminary ably for many years and the Interim leadership of the Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood over this last academic year.

The Rev. Dr. Vacek currently serves at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as an Associate Professor of Church History. For the past six years she has also served as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty.

“Moravian College and the Seminary are excited to welcome Rev. Dr. Vacek, she is an accomplished teacher, scholar, and administrator and will be a great addition to our community,” commented Cynthia Kosso, Provost of Moravian College. “We’re confident her experience will allow her to make an immediate and positive impact on the students, faculty, staff and alumni of the Seminary.”

The Rev. Dr. Vacek worked for more than a decade in corporate engineering and marketing when she experienced her call to ministry and earned a Master of Divinity (2006) and Doctorate in Theology (2012) from Duke Divinity School. She was ordained by the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in July 2012.

An accomplished administrator, teacher, and scholar, her research interests include American religious history, history of Christianity, theologies of disability and suffering, and practical theology. Her recent book, 2015 Madness: American Protestant Reactions to Mental Illness, was published by Baylor University Press in 2015.

Rev. Dr. Vacek is an avid runner and hiker and the mother of a recent college graduate. She is looking forward to bringing her experiences in theological education to her denomination’s seminary, and to getting to know more deeply, and serving alongside, the faculty and staff of Moravian Theological Seminary and Moravian College. Δ

Brigidda Zapata Bell,
Assistant Professor Of New Testament



We are excited to welcome Brigidda Zapata Bell as Assistant Professor of New Testament, beginning in fall term 2021.

Brigidda will be awarded the Ph.D. from the University of Toronto this summer. An award-winning teacher, Brigidda has taught at the Universities of Toronto, Calgary, and Alberta in

Canada. Across her former institutions, Brigidda has grown programs to mentor and develop the next generation of thinkers and teachers, and her students are invited to reflect on their learning needs and build community and knowledge together.

Brigidda says that she “is continuously inspired by the weird and wonderful parts of the Bible that make her stop and think about how we think the world works. Growing up travelling between Canada and Ecuador, the homelands of her parents, and between Latin American Catholicism and the Anglican Church of Canada, she experienced cultural and theological differences in biblical interpretation which ultimately invited her into biblical studies. These formative experiences of in-betweenness inform her teaching and her scholarship, which take seriously human embodiment and the centrality of our individual lived experience in our learning and thinking.” Δ

"AUDITING IS AWESOME"

By Nancy Lynch Gibson, MAPC '08

There have been many challenges associated with the restrictions placed on the world due to COVID-19, but one blessing that I have experienced has been the opportunity to audit classes at Moravian Theological Seminary via Zoom. As a graduate of the Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling program in 2008, I have wonderful memories of my learning experiences at MTS. I was so excited when I realized that I could audit classes distantly, since all classes during the pandemic have been taught via Zoom. In the Fall of 2020, I audited Dr. Appler's class on Religion and Politics and in the Spring of 2021, I am now auditing Dr. Appler's World Religions class. What a joy it has been to be back in the groove of learning, reading, and engaged in deep theological discussions with fellow classmates. I have been welcomed into the class and encouraged to participate freely. In this time of social distancing, auditing the classes at MTS has given me the gift of connections in meaningful ways.

Listed below are the upcoming classes available for audit this Summer and Fall. See what Nancy is excited about and audit a course yourself. Register today at moravianseminary.edu/audit or reach out to Randy D'Angelo, Director of Enrollment at dangelor@moravian.edu or 610-861-1512. Δ

Summer 2021



On the Way to the Promised Land: A Journey through Exodus and the Underground Railroad

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Deborah Appler • Tuesdays & Thursdays May 26–June 22 • 5–8pm

Online via Zoom Video Conference

Exodus is one of the most drawn upon books of the Hebrew Bible, especially for those seeking justice and liberation from oppressive systems. The Hebrew people experienced the dehumanizing cruelty of an Egyptian Pharaoh who used them as human chattel to build his impressive cities. Likewise, the burgeoning United States built its empire on the backs of African slaves and other marginalized peoples. This course will examine the Book of Exodus and the power dynamics that lead to

the oppression experienced by the Hebrew and African slaves in the context of their quests for freedom. In addition, it will explore contemporary contexts and ways to dismantle systemic oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, and other intersections)—a new Exodus narrative. Possible field trips 6/11 and 6/19 (in person or virtual) to the Underground Railroad historical sites.

Fall 2021



Intro to Theology

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera • Thursdays, September 2–December 16 • 6–8:50pm

In Person or Online via Zoom Video Conference

Get acquainted with the basic tenets of the Christian faith and tradition. Primary attention is given to the triune reality of God, understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the activity of the Holy Spirit, the identity and purpose of the church, and the vitality of Christian spirituality.



Moravian History

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood • Mondays, August 30–December 13 • 2–3:30pm

In Person or Online via Zoom Video Conference

This course is a survey of the history of the Moravian Church from its founding in 15th century Bohemia to the present. The course examines three eras of Moravian history: the Czech Unity of the Brethren, the Zinzendorfian church, and the modern Unity. Special attention is given to the Moravian Church in North America. Key topics include Moravian pacifism, communalism, the choir system, and global missions.



Intro to Hebrew Bible

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Deborah Appler • Thursdays, September 2–December 16 • 2–4:50pm

In Person or Online via Zoom Video Conference

The goal of this course is to provide the historical, cultural, and religious contexts behind the Hebrew Bible—a text whose creation, interpretation and transmission takes place over many generations and represents a multiplicity of voices. It explores how these living and Sacred texts continue to shape communities of faith today within many social locations.

ALL DEGREE & CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE ONLINE

After more than 12 months of teaching all of our courses online, our faculty have recently made a commitment to continue providing online learning even after the pandemic. **Beginning in Fall 2021, students may choose to meet in-person or online. All courses will have a video conference or other online component, allowing access from around the world.**

We will look forward to in-person interactions between students, faculty, and staff and welcome even more students to our community by way of online learning. Δ



Thank you to everyone who supported current and future Moravian Seminary and College students during Lighting the Way: Moravian's 6th Annual Day of Giving.

We are excited to share that 1,202 donors made 1,218 gifts, raising over \$260,000 to support scholarships and programs for our Seminary and College students.

Throughout our 280-year history, the Moravian community has always joined together to help students succeed. This year was no different! You continue Lighting the Way to provide students an exceptional Moravian education. Δ

NEW BAHNSON HVAC SYSTEM

While we regularly mourn the silence in Bahnson Center that is the result of students and faculty learning and teaching from home, the staff and faculty that come into Bahnson Center are so pleased with the **silence of the new HVAC registers in the kitchen and lounge**. Not only are they quiet, but they also do a great job of heating and cooling the building!

All MTS alum who have studied in Bahnson Center will understand why we celebrate an idiosyncrasy of the HVAC of this building is fixed. Δ



SAVING BLACK LIVES

Did you see? Debra Fraser-Howze, current MATS student, was featured in the 2021 Spring issue of the Moravian College Magazine.

In January of this year, having amassed the support of the public health officials, nonprofit and private organizations, and most importantly a powerful cadre of Black clergy from five cities, she launched Choose Healthy Life, an initiative aimed at tackling the COVID crisis in Black communities.

You can read the entire article about Debra in your copy of the Moravian Magazine or online at moravian.edu/news/moravian-college-magazine. Δ

FACULTY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Rev. Dr. Craig Atwood

- “The American Plan of Zinzendorf and Spangenberg,” *Becoming American: Moravians and their Neighbors, 1772-1822: A Virtual Town and Gown Conference* September 23-26, 2020 - Wake Forest University.
- “We have nothing to do, but to be happy.” The Role of Happiness in 18th century Moravianism. *Gefühl und Norm. Religion und Gefühlskulturen im 18. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zum V. Internationalen Kongress für Pietismusforschung 2018*« (Hallesche Forschungen, 61) ed. by Daniel Cyranka, Thomas Ruhland, Christian Soboth and Friedemann Stengel (Wiesbaden, 2021).
- “Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700-1760),” in Wolfgang Breul and Thomas Hahn-Bruckart, ed. *Pietismus Handbuch* (Tübingen, 2021), 184-197.
- Series Editor for *Pietist, Moravian, and Anabaptist Studies* (Penn State University Press). Recent titles published: Peter James Yoder, *Pietism and the Sacraments: The Life and Theology of August Hermann Francke* (2021); Alexander Lawrence Ames, *The Word in the Wilderness: Popular Piety and the Manuscript Arts in Early Pennsylvania* (2020).

Rev. Dr. Deborah Appler

- With Norma Franklin, Jennie Ebeling, Phillippe Guillame, “An Ancient Winery at Jezreel, Israel.” *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 8, no.1 (2020), 58-78. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/750987>.
- With Julie Bidmead and Marilyn Love, “Women, Water, and Walkways: Preliminary Findings from the Jezreel Expedition in Light of Biblical and Archaeoethnographic Evidence,” *The Woman in the Pith Helmet: A Tribute to Archaeologist Norma Franklin*, edited by Jennie Ebeling and Philippe Guillaume. Atlanta, Lockwood Press, 2020, 3-17.
- Review of Stephens, Darryl with Michael Alleman, Andrea Brown, Ruth Daugherty, Mary Merriman, *Out of Exodus. A Journey of Open and Affirming Ministry. Reading Religion, American Academy of Religion*
- Lenten Day Apart Eastern PA Conference for the UMC “Climbing Sacred Mountains. Elijah’s Transformation,” Feb 19, 2021

Rev. Dr. Riddick Weber

- “Brother Bowles & the Builders in the Basement” 2020 Bethlehem Conference on Moravian History & Music, Oct. 2020
- “From Innovation to Imposition: Changing Understandings of the Single Sisters Choir in Salem from 1772 to 1822” Reynolda Conference 2020 “Becoming American: Moravians and their Neighbors, 1772-1822,” Winston-Salem, NC, September 2020 (forthcoming pub.)
- Lectures on Church History and Moravian Liturgical Tradition at the March 2021 ADSOM Conference for Florida Moravian Churches.
- Panelist in Session 5 of A New Way of Being: From Confession to Hope, a Lenten series featuring Moravian stories and racial justice, Lent 2021
- “The Church’s Hidden Secret: Our (Tacit) Approval of White Supremacy” part 2 of the Central Travelers’ program Our Racial Awakening and Healing Journey: Join Us at the Table, Central Moravian January 2021
- “Christian Discipleship: Mission, Stewardship, Evangelism, Discipleship” Bible Study Series, Raleigh Moravian, November 2020
- “Moravians and Civic Duty” Board of Cooperative Ministries Office Hours, October 2020
- Dr. Weber was the chair for the 2021 Bethlehem Conference on Moravian History and Music

Rev. Dr. Beth Toler

- In February, 2021 led a "Train the Trainer" workshop for Spiritually-Integrated Psychotherapy Certificate programs for the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)
- At the May 2021 ACPE National Conference, led the workshop "In Thought, Word, and Deed: Anti-Racism as Spiritual Practice" and served as a facilitator for the Crossroads Anti-Racism Project
- At the June 2021 National Conference of the Society of Pastoral Theology, present the workshop "By the Renewal of Your Mind: Theological and Psychological Perspectives of Anti-Racism"

Rev. Dr. Nelson Rivera

- Dr. Rivera has been named the **John Taylor Hamilton Associate Professor of Doctrinal Theology** in recognition of his excellent teaching and contributions. The Hamilton Chair was established to honor the former president of Moravian College, Bishop John Taylor Hamilton (1856-1951).
- Theological Reviewer for *All Creation Sings*, the newest worship supplement of the Evang. Lutheran Church in America, published by Augsburg Fortress (November 2020). He also revised the Spanish translation of its communion setting.
- Two presentations on "The Interplay of Science, Faith, & the Church" at the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, PA.

Rev. Dr. Audrey West

- "Liturgy of the Palms: Mark 11:1-11; John 12:12-16," in *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship*, Year B, Vol 2, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2020), 109-116
- "Living by the Word: Reflections on the Lectionary" (Exodus 23:12-33, Matt 22:34-46), *The Christian Century* 127:21 (October 7, 2020), 20-21
- Dr. West also had four exegetical essays covering texts from Matthew published by WorkingPreacher.org

Dr. Michelle Santiago

- Vice Chair- PA State Board of SW, MFT and PC
- Vice Chair of DOC Northampton County Jail advisory Board
- Committee Advisor/Consultant & Mentor, Re-Entry Committee of International Association of Addictions and Offender Counselors
- Currently studying for an additional certificate in Cognitive behavior therapy
- Dr. Santiago was determined to be a Subject Matter Expert (SME) by the Nbcc.org Credentialing and Quality assurance Assessment Division. She wrote content for the CCE TeleMental Health Examination. She is also in the pool to write content for the Certified Clinical Mental Health Examination for the NBCC.org.
- In January 2021, she taught a multicultural workshops with a president's council and a provost's council at an LVAIC college.
- Program reviewer for the 2021 APA National Convention and APA Div-35 Psychotherapy with Women Award
- Peer Reviewer for the book: *Suicide Assessment and Treatment Planning: A Strength-Based Approach*. John Sommers Flanagan and Rita Sommers Flanagan



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