

Around THE Green

BETHEL COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

WINTER 2025



A message from

President Jon C. Gering

FOUNDATIONS STRONG AND TRUE: A CAMPAIGN FOR BETHEL COLLEGE

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF BETHEL COLLEGE,

The Bethel College community is most effective in motion, like a threshing stone. That's why I am excited to announce the *Foundations Strong and True* campaign just 18 months after the completion of the *Engage the Future* campaign (2018-24, \$36M). We are in motion — and we want to stay in motion (with apologies to Isaac Newton). With your help, we'll continue to Roll On!

While many of the details of this exciting campaign are presented on pp. 6-7, I'll use this column to address broader questions about the campaign.

WHY NOW?

There are several reasons. First, higher education is competitive, so we have to continue to update all aspects of our college experience. The renovation of Haury Hall is urgent — our students have regularly requested updates to our almost-68-year-old residence hall. Haury is a co-educational residence that houses all first-year students. Its renovation is important in our efforts to increase retention and graduation rates. Second, this campaign supports mission-centric projects such the Employment Experiences program (see p. 7 and pp. 16-17) and Workforce Development Certificates (WDCs) that position the college to be a national leader in career readiness. These programs are out of the pilot stage and into the growth stage. Finally, a campaign feasibility study revealed support for the projects and the broader position of the college. Thank you for your feedback!

WHAT WILL THIS CAMPAIGN DO FOR THE COLLEGE?

When the campaign is completed, we will have experienced four years of growth in the Bethel College (BC) Fund. This fund is used for annual operations, and increases from campaign contributions will allow us to respond effectively to inflationary costs of running a college. We will have placed Haury Hall on the state historic register and renovated it to meet the expectations of our future students. We will have started new revenue streams for the college by renovating and renting the historic homes on College Avenue. We will offer Bethel-centric and -adjacent WDCs and launch our college's first online degree programs. We will increase the sustainability of our Employment Experiences program through operational and endowed funds. In total, the completed campaign will fortify the financial position of the college, increase its net assets, and strengthen its educational offerings.

WHAT INSPIRED THE NAME OF THE CAMPAIGN?

I'm glad you asked. It's a nod to the official Scripture of the college, 1 Corinthians 3:11. It also celebrates the contributions of past donors who generously contributed to Haury Hall, the houses on College Avenue and the Allen Wedel field. We will literally be renovating atop the foundations that they provided for the college! The name also anticipates a solid financial future for the college.

WHAT ELSE IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN?

This is a blended campaign, the first of its kind for the college. The campaign is blended in three ways. First, funding sources will be private foundations, individual donors, and state and federal sources. Second, the campaign goals are spread across different time frames. We aim to raise \$19 million over four years, with the remaining funds over a much longer time and primarily emerging from estate gifts and bequests. Third, the campaign serves a variety of goals; this is not simply a bricks-and-mortar campaign. The students will benefit from the renovation of Haury Hall and the online degree programs. Our softball team will benefit from new turf and a reduction in annual operating costs. Employees and community members will swell with pride when the houses are renovated on College Avenue. Finally, some projects will have a silent phase, whereas others will be immediately open to giving.

I am excited about how you can help us move forward over the next four years (Jan. 1, 2026-Dec. 31, 2029). In the meantime, take joy in all the good things happening at Bethel College. This issue of *Around the Green* celebrates the success of our alumni, students, and employees.

In closing, I wish you and your loved ones all the joy and peace of the Christmas season.

Yours on the journey,

Jonathan C. Gering





CHASE DEMPSEY

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WINTER 2025
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On the cover: Mason Bolen, left, and Joan
(Siebert) Entz '88 in Thresher Shop, by Ava
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TAKE NOTE



Bethel has its first-ever Wellness Center, which opened for use by students, faculty and staff this fall in a new building east of Goering Hall. The facility houses cardio equipment, a large weight room, shown here, and a gym that includes pickleball courts.

ERIC REID

- » Bethel landed in **the top 25** in the annual "Best Colleges" issue published by *U.S. News & World Report*, at #25 out of 89 colleges or universities in the Best Regional College Midwest category. Bethel appears at #23 for both "Best Value Schools" and "Top Performers on Social Mobility."
- » Felicia Teeter, head flag football coach, has been **named Senior Woman Leader** for the athletic department, in which her role is "to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of intercollegiate sports on NAIA campuses."
- » Junior Cameron Offerle (volleyball) was named a KCAC/Game One **Game Changer of the Month** for September, an honor given to student-athletes and staff members who have made a positive impact in their sport and on campus.
- » Bethel has made the **top five nursing programs** list from RegisteredNursing.org for the state of Kansas, out of 33 bachelor's degree and traditional RN programs.
- » For the **eighth straight year**, Bethel athletics was named NAIA Champions of Character® Five-Star Gold (for 2024-25). Champions of Character® aims to motivate schools to produce character-driven athletic programs.
- » **For the first time in 17 years**, Thresher volleyball went to the NAIA Tournament, after finishing as the runner-up in the KCAC Tournament.
- » Two cross country runners **qualified for the NAIA National Championships**, Nov. 21 in Tallahassee, Fla. – Bethany Schrag, senior from Valley Center, Kan., and first-year Asa Johnson.
- » Ten voice students attended the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) West-Central Student Auditions at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Nov. 7-8. Juniors Seth Balzer and Jasper Krehbiel **made the finals**, finishing 4th in Nontraditional Adult Classical and 2nd in Avocational Adult Musical Theatre, respectively.
- » Kauffman Museum received an Award of Excellence for the traveling exhibit "A Day With the Birds: Community Science & the Audubon Christmas Bird Count" from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The AASLH Leadership in History Awards is **the most prestigious recognition for achievement** in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

FOUNDATIONS

STRONG AND TRUE

FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN

Bethel College's new capital campaign

Duration: 4 years, starting with FY2026

Short Term Goal: \$19.5M over 4 years

Long Term Endowed Goal: \$23 Million

SCAN HERE
FOR MORE
INFORMATION



bethelks.edu/foundations-campaign

Founded in 1887, Bethel College is looking toward celebrating 150 years in 2037. It is not too soon to take major steps toward preserving Bethel's legacy while also preparing it to be a college for the future.

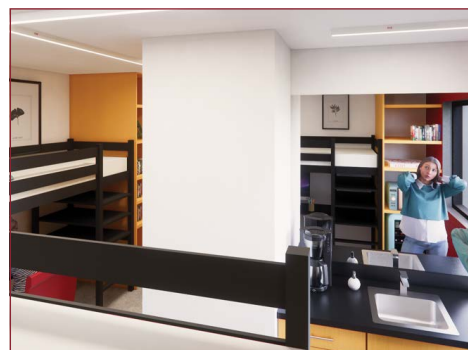
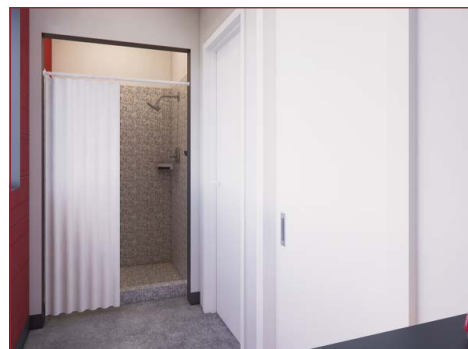
With that in mind, a substantial piece of *Foundations Strong and True* is significant renovation of the oldest residence hall, now an example of classic Mid-Century architecture, and five college-owned homes that are at or near the century mark. Another is to face Bethel firmly forward through the Employment Experiences initiative for campus-based students, along with Workforce Development Certificates and online degree programs, both aimed at those who need alternatives to typical on-site degree completion. Another part of the campaign would improve the softball field to benefit current student-athletes and aid in recruitment.

HAURY HALL RENOVATIONS

At almost 68 years old, Haury Hall is not only the oldest residence hall on campus, but a certified icon, and eligible for designation to the state Registry of Historic Places. It also needs work – a lot of work.

Although there would be significant work done on the south and east/west wings, the bulk of proposed upgrades and renovations apply to Haury's north wing. A few items on the long list include: turning the north wing into 30 pods for 90 students (3 residents and 1 restroom per pod); ADA accessibility compliance, possibly adding an elevator; updates to the residence director apartment; construction of new kitchen and laundry spaces on the first floor/ basement level and removing the current kitchen and laundry spaces from second and third floors.

The budget for this piece of the campaign is \$11 million for construction and \$1 million for the endowment to support ongoing expenses. If the application for historic status is successful, it will contribute to fundraising efforts by adding historic tax credits.



SOFTBALL TURF



Installing artificial turf on Allen Wedel Softball Field offers a number of benefits.

It reduces the inability to practice, and the number of games that have to be rescheduled, due to weather effects on the field.

It adds a recruitment benefit, since not all schools in the KCAC have turf fields. There is currently no turf field in Newton, so it could be a source of revenue through summer rentals. It can benefit other athletic programs – soccer and flag football are two sports that could use a turf field when available.

Turf fields have a guarantee of eight years, with the expectation to use the field up to ten years or more before replacing. The cost savings over ten years would be significant.

COLLEGE AVENUE HOMES



AVA BROXTERMAN

Bethel needs to identify other streams of revenue beyond the historical (tuition, annual fundraising, endowment distributions) and to think creatively about how to use its existing assets. Over the years, faculty have bequeathed homes adjacent to campus, mostly on College Ave., that have served a variety of uses (e.g., office space, guest housing). We believe these houses can be key assets for generating income.

Identifying philanthropic investments to both rehabilitate these residences and build a fund to maintain them is a top priority – to provide the college with critical revenue that funds student initiatives, develops new classes, meets other capital needs on campus and more, while also making the campus more welcoming and appealing.

The College Ave. homes the campaign aims to improve are the Wedel Guest House, Welty House, Kaufman House (KIPCOR), Kliever House and Richert House (pictured).

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

In fall 2024, Bethel launched a bold enhancement of its undergraduate experience, building on its history of service, community and practical learning to transform education into lived experience through a work-learning-service model. Every student will graduate with a Bethel liberal arts education, along with robust work experience, a comprehensive resume, professional references and a verified work transcript. In addition, students receive \$2,500 per year toward reduction of their tuition costs.

Bethel graduates will not only hold a degree, they will enter the workforce with confidence, equipped with leadership and communication skills, and with responsibility honed through experience. Graduates will be prepared to make an immediate impact in their communities and professions. To fully embrace this initiative, Bethel invested in new infrastructure, working toward four successful years of operation, after which Bethel can access federal dollars to partially support this effort. Your investment will fund essential staff to guide, grow and deepen this new initiative by providing strong support for student success and by growing placement opportunities.

Additional infrastructure needed includes marketing, systems to track student progress and work hours, performance evaluation tools and supervisor training. Most importantly, your investment will provide \$2,500 per year in EE grants for each student, directly reducing their debt burden.

We need \$4M to support student grants over the next four years, and we plan to grow the endowment by \$21M over a longer period of time.

BETHEL COLLEGE FUND

The BC Fund is Bethel's annual fund for unrestricted giving. This fund has the widest impact on campus life, providing critical resources when tuition alone does not cover costs.

Areas supported include academic programs, faculty development, instructional resources, student life services and much more.

Contributions to the BC Fund can be made directly via check or credit card or in a number of other ways. View "Ways To Give" on the next page for additional information on giving to the BC Fund.

The goal for FY2026 is \$1.35 million, and to increase by 5% annually over the four years of the campaign.

ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Bethel is expanding its educational opportunities by launching online degrees for the first time in its history. During the 2025-26 academic year, two undergraduate degrees will be available fully online.

Bethel has a long history as an excellent liberal arts college, currently offering 40 areas of study. The online initiative builds on our goal of increasing educational impact.

Most directly, this allows students facing challenges with full-time, on-site degree completion to receive a Bethel degree. An investment of \$550,000 is urgently needed to fully embrace this initiative.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

With a 138-year history of excellent liberal arts education, Bethel is expanding its educational impact on Kansas by launching and continuing to build out online Workforce Development Certificate (WFD) programs.

The WFD initiative enhances our ability to deliver needed education beyond the traditional 4-year, on-site undergraduate degree. It aligns with Bethel's goal of preparing students to pursue meaningful lives of work and service.

Our goal is to raise another \$1.5M for continued implementation and growth between now and the end of FY2027.

WYNN M. GOERING '77, BOARD CHAIR

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS UNANIMOUSLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PRIORITIES OF FOUNDATIONS STRONG AND TRUE. HAURY HALL IS A PROJECT DEAR TO ALL OF US, AND THE OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN ARE KEY TO POSITIONING BETHEL FOR A STRONG FUTURE.





WAYS TO GIVE

DONOR ADVISED FUND (DAF)

A DAF allows you to make a charitable contribution to a fund sponsor such as Everence Foundation, receive an immediate tax benefit, and then recommend grants from the fund over time. Currently, 7% of our donors take advantage of this method, and their numbers are growing!

"Bethel College will always hold a special place in my heart. The education, leadership opportunities, and friendships I found there shaped who I am today. Supporting Bethel's annual fund is our way of saying thank you—for the blessings, memories, and sense of community that have meant so much to us. We hope to help future students experience the same gifts that Bethel has given us."

— Ran and Tish (Palacioz, Class of 1983) Nielsen



RAN AND TISH NELSON
COURTESY PHOTO

IRA REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION

If you are 70-1/2 or older, you can instruct your IRA plan administrator to transfer funds directly from your IRA to Bethel College as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), excluding the donated amount from your taxable income while satisfying your RMD for the year. About one in ten Bethel donors make their gifts in this way, and their generosity helps form a solid base for funding college operations.

STOCK GIFT

You can avoid capital gains tax when selling shares of stock, while taking a tax deduction for the FMV of the stock, by donating the shares to Bethel College. Check with your stock broker or investment advisor for details, and ask them to contact Greta Hiebert at 316-284-5250 to initiate a stock transfer.



BETHEL
COLLEGE

ADVANCEMENT

SCHOLARSHIPS

Are you looking for a way to honor a loved one, your academic field or a favorite professor? You can establish a new endowed scholarship at Bethel with \$50,000 in initial funds received within a 5-year period. This enduring gift to the college will support students in your chosen area far into the future. You can also contribute at any level to an existing scholarship to help maintain robust student awards. Contact George Leary at 316-284-5226 to discuss your options.

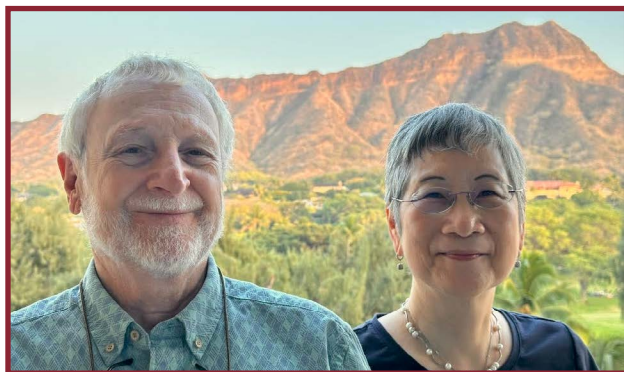
PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

When you give \$5,000 or more to the Bethel College Fund in a fiscal year, you become a member of our President's Circle. We invite these donors to about four exclusive on-campus or virtual events each year to hear updates from President Gering and interact with selected students and faculty. Boost your giving and join the circle!

MATCHING GIFTS

Double your impact! Many companies offer a matching gift program to encourage philanthropy among their employees. Some will make this available through payroll donations, which you may also be able to set up as automatically recurring gifts. Check with your employer's HR department, or use our matching gift search engine at bethelks.edu/giving-bethel-college/match/ to see if your employer will match your generosity. There you will also find program details and links to company guidelines and application forms. Call Greta in the Development Office at 316-284-5250 with your questions!

AMPLIFY YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF BETHEL COLLEGE STUDENTS!



JOHN AND VANESSA LUM BUHR
COURTESY PHOTO

"For the past 30 years, we have doubled or tripled our donations to Bethel College due to a matching gift program offered by Vanessa's employer, Johnson & Johnson. J&J matches employee donations at a 2:1 ratio and retiree donations at a 1:1 ratio. This program has enabled us to amplify our donations to the Bethel College Fund, as well as make a significant donation to a campus building project. As retired scientists, we are also especially pleased to have supported the Summer Science Institute for over a decade."

— John (Class of 1971) and Vanessa Lum Buhr

BETHEL COLLEGE FUND

Donations from Bethel alumni and friends help cover operating costs and are an essential element of our annual budget. Your gift to the Bethel College Fund has an immediate and vital impact on our students, underpinning everything from academic programs to facility maintenance, library and lab resources to student life services, technology needs to faculty and staff support. You can give online now at bethelks.edu/gift, or send a check to:

**ADVANCEMENT OFFICE
BETHEL COLLEGE
300 E. 27TH STREET
NORTH NEWTON, KS 67117**

YOUNG ALUMNUS

KRISTIN E. WEDEL '08

A PASSION TO CARE FOR NEW PARENTS



Kristin E. Wedel
COURTESY PHOTO

Kristin Wedel knows from years of experience, hers and that of others, that becoming a parent can be as difficult as it is joyful – so she's made it her life's work to help people navigate this important transition.

Wedel, Providence, R.I., is the 2025 Young Alumnus Award winner. The award recognizes character and citizenship, achievement or service rendered, and honors and recognition received. The recipient must be 39 years of age or younger.

The award citation lifts up Wedel's work "pioneering and leading the nation's only specialized intensive outpatient program for perinatal Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and for the profound impact her work has had on the lives of perinatal women, their infants and families. Kristin's dedication to advancing maternal mental health care exemplifies innovation, compassion and excellence."

Wedel completed a bachelor's degree in social work at Bethel in 2008, and went immediately into a term of Mennonite Voluntary Service in San Francisco, where she was a case manager at Larkin Street Youth Services for homeless youth living with HIV/AIDS.

By 2012, she had earned her master's degree in social work at Boston University, and had solidified her interests in perinatal and reproductive mental health, OCD and anxiety disorders, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure and response prevention (ERP).

From 2012-15, Wedel worked in some capacity as a therapist at Butler Hospital, a private, nonprofit, psychiatric and substance abuse hospital in Providence. Since 2015, she has been associated with Women & Infants Hospital, the primary teaching hospital in obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics at Brown University's medical school.

She started out as a clinical care coordinator, serving as a therapist

apist in the perinatal Day Hospital, the nation's first partial hospital treating pregnant people and new parents with depression, anxiety or other emotional distress. (In 2025, Wedel presented at the annual conference of Postpartum Support International [PSI] on the lessons learned from 25 years of this innovative and groundbreaking care.)

In 2023, Wedel took a position as a clinical manager for the OCD Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). In this capacity, she co-designed and launched the Perinatal OCD IOP. As the only one of its kind in the country, the program draws patients from throughout New England.

"Pregnant women and new mothers find themselves in a whirlwind of transitions," Wedel told a researcher in 2019. "Changes in their bodies, emotions and hormones can all contribute to acute episodes of depression and anxiety during this period in a woman's life."

In 2025, Wedel began a new venture, her own counseling service, KEW Counseling, continuing to focus on the particular emotional needs of pregnancy and new parenthood.

"Becoming a parent can be both joyful and overwhelming," she says, "and it's common to feel anxious or unsure during this major life transition. I specialize in supporting new and expecting parents who are experiencing perinatal OCD and anxiety disorders. I am passionate about helping individuals find relief from intrusive thoughts, worry and self-doubt, so they can feel more grounded and confident in their role as parent."

Wedel also has interest and experience in teaching, which has been another part of her work at Women & Infants Hospital. She has been a didactic lecturer in perinatal OCD; a clinical supervisor and educator in CBT and ERP; a mentor and/or field instructor for MSW students, and Ph.D. clinical psychology residents and fellows; and a supervisor for graduate students from major universities in the region.

"Under her academic and clinical leadership, students and trainees from multiple disciplines have learned specific evidence-based psychotherapeutic techniques designed specifically for this patient population," said her nominator, Margaret Howard, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and human behavior and medicine at Brown. "Kristin approaches both her clinical and supervisory work with robust expertise, clear and compassionate guidance, intelligence, passion and humor."

"She has made and will continue to make a profound impact on the lives of perinatal women, their infants and families, as well as the next generation of mental health clinicians whom she has trained."

The 2025 alumni award winners will be honored and will speak in convocation on April 6, 2026.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

OUTSTANDING ALUMNUS

VIRGIL PENNER '60

AN INFLUENCER FOR COLLEGE, CHURCH AND COMMUNITY



Virgil Penner
COURTESY PHOTO

How both Bethel College and the city of Newton look and operate today are in large part thanks to the efforts of Virgil Penner.

Penner, North Newton, is the 2025 Outstanding Alumnus, receiving an honor "given on the basis of character and citizenship, service to church/community or college, or other outstanding achievements, honors and recognition."

Penner's citation states "his visionary leadership in developing and expanding Fall Fest and Taste of Newton, his innovative contributions to the Newton Chamber of Commerce, and his steadfast support of Bethel College's students, staff and faculty. Virgil's enduring commitment to community engagement and institutional excellence has left a lasting legacy."

Penner graduated from Newton High School, where he concentrated on physical education, football and track, industrial drawing, and four years of art study with Marie Orr. After graduating from Bethel in 1960 with a degree in industrial arts, he worked for three years as an industrial therapist at the Laure D. Carter Mental Center in Indianapolis, which left him with an abiding interest in the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

He began his high school teaching and coaching career at Walton High School, 1963-64, and then his first period of employment at Bethel. From 1964-71, he chaired the physical education department, coached football and served as athletic director (1965-71). During those years, he earned a master's degree in education at Wichita State University.

From 1971-81, Penner worked in the Wichita school district, heading up physical education departments and coaching football, track and field, or both, at Wichita North, Wichita West and

Wichita Heights high schools.

Penner began his second stint at Bethel in 1981. He served as Annual Fund director and director of alumni relations. One of his first and most important tasks was to coordinate the Centennial capital campaign, leading up to Bethel's 100th anniversary in 1987. In addition to expanding Fall Fest, he developed a cooperative event with the city, Taste of Newton.

In his nearly two decades in the Bethel alumni and advancement offices, Penner also strengthened, expanded and promoted the Student Alumni Association, the African-American Alumni Association, the Parents Association and the Host Family Program, among many other events and groups that have left their own legacy.

In 2000, Penner took on a new challenge, that of CEO of the Newton Chamber of Commerce. His accomplishments include, among many more: installation of the 4-way stop at 12th and Meridian; moving the Christmas parade from a Saturday daytime event to the current "Parade of Lights" on a weekday evening; pushing for the removal of tin facades and the addition of awnings on Main Street buildings, as recommended by the National Main Street Program.

While racking up accomplishments at Bethel and in the wider Newton community, Penner also remained active in his church, Grace Hill Mennonite east of Newton, and the broader Western District Conference and Mennonite denomination.

For WDC, he served on fundraising and church planting committees. He was a convention planner for Mennonite World Conference's Wichita gathering in 1978 and for several General Conference Mennonite Church and joint GC/MC conventions around the country.

Over the years at Grace Hill, Penner's service has included chairing the church board. His contributions to infrastructure range from volunteering as a teenager on construction of the 1952 church building to designing and erecting the brick cemetery entrance in 2011.

Penner has served on the boards (often as chair) of Northview (now ResCare), Harvey-Marion Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO), the Newton/North Newton Planning Commission, Newton Tourism (now Convention) & Visitors Bureau and Warkentin House.

Through his working years, Penner occasionally did ink drawings of buildings and homes (his drawing of the Wichita North High School tower still appears on diplomas every spring), but put aside his hobby of painting until he retired in 2009. He has now done more than 900 acrylic landscape paintings, and continues to create more.

Penner and his wife, the late Kaye (Friesen) Penner '62, have two children – Sondra (Tony '89) Otto '88 and Tom (Paige) Penner '91, current treasurer of the Bethel board – and four grandchildren.

The 2025 alumni award winners will be honored and will speak in convocation on April 6, 2026.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT

TIM WIENS '74

A LIFE'S WORK CREATING 'HOME'



Tim Wiens
COURTESY PHOTO

In 1978, Tim Wiens '74 was a young social worker, just four years past earning his bachelor's degree at Bethel, when his congregation, Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, called him to join a ministry they were starting.

That was the genesis of Jubilee Association of Maryland Inc., which began as one group home for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), tapping into a growing movement in the United States to get people with IDD out of institutions and into home-like settings.

At the time, Wiens was working as a clinical counselor in a Montgomery County agency. He was drawn to the challenge of doing organizational social work, being involved in a new organization from the ground up.

Forty years later, when Wiens retired as executive director, Jubilee had gone from one home with seven adults, three staff and an annual budget of \$40,000 to 140 clients in 70 locations with 260 staff and a \$12 million budget.

Wiens is the recipient of Bethel's 2025 Distinguished Achievement Award, which acknowledges character and citizenship, achievement in a chosen profession or vocation, and work of benefit to humanity.

The citation lists Wiens' "award-winning career, advocating for and serving individuals with intellectual disabilities through his leadership and unwavering commitment to inclusion, empowerment and community-building.

"Tim's visionary work has transformed lives, shaped policy and inspired generations of professionals in the field of disability services."

Although Wiens officially retired in 2019, he surprised no one who knew him when he kept working. In 2020, he took a part-time position as executive director of Maryland Inclusive Housing Corporation (MIH), which develops and provides Housing Support Services (HSS).

Cooperating with the Maryland Development Disabilities Administration (DDA), MIH aims to create "a world in which everyone with IDD has the support they need to create their perfect home in affordable, accessible communities where people with and without disabilities live."

Wiens is also a private consultant on board governance, agency growth and transformation, and providing services for people with IDD in Maryland.

Wiens finished an associate of arts degree at Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College and then his B.S. in social work at Bethel. There followed a move to the Washington, D.C., area, where he earned a Master's of Social Work at Catholic University in 1976. In 1999, he completed his specialist degree in Health Services Administration at George Washington University.

Along with running and growing Jubilee over four decades, Wiens held a number of organizational leadership positions: twice president of the Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce; chair of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for People with Developmental Disabilities of Montgomery County multiple times; and a board member for 12 years of the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS), which comprises about 120 agencies that provide community services to Maryland adults with developmental disabilities, serving at various times as president, vice president and chair of the Quality Assurance Committee.

In 1999, Arc of Maryland named Wiens Outstanding Professional of the Year. On his retirement from Jubilee, he received a MACS Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2019.

Wiens has also been a leader at Hyattsville through the years, including chairing the congregation and various church committees.

Wiens and his wife, Mary Jo (Schumacher), live in Silver Spring, Md. They have two married sons and two granddaughters. He enjoys movies, traveling, golf, good novels and pan-seared salmon.

The 2025 alumni award winners will be honored and will speak in convocation on April 6, 2026.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

CLASS NOTES

Information received as of NOV. 10, 2025

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF:

ALUMNI EVENTS: bethelks.edu/alumni/alumni-events/ | ATHLETICS: bethelthreshers.com | ALL EVENTS: bethelks.edu/calendar

1960-69

Lauren Friesen '65, North Newton, had his essay "Vondel, Sudermann, Kliever: Stretching the Invisible Canon of Mennonite Dramatic Literature" reprinted in *In Search of A Mennonite Imagination*, edited by Robert Zacharias (CMU Press, 2025; originally published in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 74.2, 2000).

Kathryn (Dick) Kasper '62, North Newton and Asunción, Paraguay, recently launched a free series of vocal training videos on YouTube.

1970-79

Ed Epp '71, Portland, Ore., received an award for "outstanding educator, mentor or facilitator in the area of STEM" from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Region 6, recognizing his efforts to teach and promote machine learning and robotics concepts via hands-on workshops for K-12 students and teachers, and the public.

Dr. Barbara Fast '74, Norman, Okla., received the Frances Clark Center Lifetime Achievement Award at The Piano Conference: NCKP 2025, held in Chicago this past June (NCKP stands for National Conference of Keyboard Pedagogy).

Sherry (Esau) Krehbiel '72, Salina, Kan., has spent years gardening and nurturing butterfly habitats. Her first children's book, *First Comes a Butterfly*, tells the story of a girl discovering the secret life of the monarch. It is available from Miriam Laundry Publishing.

David E. Ortman '75, Seattle, took the bronze medal in the M70-74 age group pentathlon at the World Masters Athletics Indoor Track and Field Meet in Gainesville, Fla., March 23-30. His point total of 3,388 ranked #1 in the United States and #3 worldwide for the 2025 indoor pentathlon.

Rebecka Stucky '75, Austin, Texas, toured in Austria in June with Tapestry Singers, a women's vocal group in Austin. The choir performed in multiple venues in Salzburg women's vocal group in Austin. The choir performed in multiple venues in Salzburg and Vienna.

1980-89

Laura (Busenitz) Egli '85, La Junta, Colo., self-published *The Helmet of Salvation: A Study in Mental Health*. She spent a half-century struggling to find a diagnosis for her mental illness. Now, in her sixth decade, enjoying greater health than she has known all her life, she examines her past as a personal journey of discovery.

Michelle (Schrag) Goering '87, San Diego, published a collection of writing in various genres with Nine Petal Press, titled *Bird, Watching*. The work includes 13 whimsical conversations between the author and a series of birds, 18 poems and 35 short essays. **Lora Jost** '88, Lawrence, Kan., provided artwork for the cover.

Dr. Mark Jantzen '85, Newton, professor of history, led the "Mennonite Experience in Poland" history tour, with 31 participants, from June 6-17. He published "Revisiting Mennonite Guards at Stutthof Concentration Camp" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 99:2/3 (April/July 2025): 240-254.

Lisa Janzen Scott '84, Newton, associate professor of education and mathematics and faculty athletic representative, was named the 2024-25 Faculty Athletics Representative of the Year by the Kansas Collegiate Athletics Conference (KCAC), and then received the national NAIA Wally Schwartz FAR of the Year Award (see p.19).

Kristine (Flaming) Schmucker '88, Moundridge, Kan., started Aug. 1 as collections manager at Kauffman Museum. She spent the previous 19 years as coordinator of the Harvey County Historical Museum in Newton.

Dr. Cheryl Stucky '87, Franklin, Wis., has been selected to lead the Wisconsin Institute of NeuroScience (WINS) Pain Pillar.

John Thiesen '82, Newton, co-director of libraries and archivist at the Mennonite Library and Archives, published "Research Note: Correction of Ernst Penner's Identity" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 99:2/3 (April/July 2025): 347.

K. Mark Wedel '81, Salina, was recognized as a Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisor for 2025, the fifth consecutive year he has received this honor.

1990-99

Dr. Rachel Epp Buller '96, Newton, professor of visual arts and design, exhibited in July at Compound Yellow, a gallery in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. "Walking, Lost and Found" is a sound piece she created during a residency at the Sound Studies Institute in Edmonton, Alberta. The gallery commissioned two young textile artists to create visitor seating that echoed the themes of the text.

Jon C. Gering '94, president, was selected by his peers to chair the KCAC Board of Presidents, starting this past June.

Siblings **Kelley (Janzen) Donner** '97, Munich, and **Mark Janzen** '93, Wichita, created The Storybook Company LLC. Their displays are more interactive than similar outdoor books or "book walks," taking children back and forth between panels and incorporating other activities to make reading a fun, physical activity.

Gary Entz '90, Rhinelander, Wis., is a docent at the Pioneer Park Museum Complex in Rhinelander and serves as a resource guide in the Civilian Conservation Corps Museum.

Neil Hamill '99, Omaha, Neb., moved practices to the University of Nebraska Medical Center/Olsen Center in July 2024. He starts a new position as section chief for maternal/fetal medicine in January 2026.

Christine Neff '92, Bolanden, Germany, and her sisters, Sigrid and Esther, launched a website (geschichte-weierhof.de/en) to tell the stories of people buried in the Weierhof, Germany, cemetery. Mennonites have been living in Weierhof, in the German Palatinate region, for more than 300 years, moving there after the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618-48). The project was conceived as part of the celebration of 500 years of Anabaptism taking place in 2025.

Karin Kaufman Wall '95, North Newton, started as director of alumni engagement at Bethel in August. She was most recently a field coordinator for the StoryCorps "One Small Step" project in Wichita and before that spent a number of years as peace and justice coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Central States in North Newton.

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Support other Bethel alumni by using their amazing products and services. If you are a small business owner and a Bethel alum and would like to join our Alumni Business Directory, **SCAN QR TO SIGN UP.**



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, email to alumni@bethelks.edu or submit via the Bethel website at 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).

BETHEL COLLEGE

Jennifer Sears-Pigliucci '91, Brooklyn Heights, N.Y., won the 2025 John Simmons Short Fiction Award, one of two Iowa Awards juried by the Iowa Writers Workshop. Her book, *What Mennonite Girls are Good For*, was published by the University of Iowa Press in November.

2000-09

Russell Adrian '05, Goessel, Kan., started this fall as director of choral activities and associate professor of music at Bethel. He was most recently director of choral activities at Hesston (Kan.) College.

Tina (Schmidt-Tieszen) Graber '07, Freeman, S.D., an adoption specialist with the Children’s Home Society of South Dakota, was honored as one of three Recruiters of the Year through a program called Wendy’s Wonderful Kids (WWK), a signature component of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

Jesse Nathan '05, Berkeley, Calif., received the 2025 Hefner Heitz Kansas Book Award in Poetry for *Eggtooth*, his debut collection published in 2024 by Unbound Edition Press. The award is sponsored by the Center for Kansas Studies and the University Library at Washburn University, Topeka. “Panhandle,” a poem from Jesse’s upcoming second poetry collection, was featured in *Poem-a-Day*, an online daily publication from the Academy of American Poets, on Aug. 7.

Geraldine (Smith) Tyrell '07, Newton, was promoted to associate vice president of academic affairs at Newman University, Wichita.

2010-19

Kiera Broehl '19, Sterling, Kan., was named head softball coach at Sterling College.

Kelly (Reimer) Foudray '15, Hesston, Kan., joined the faculty of Newman University, Wichita, as assistant professor of nursing.

Lily Funk '19, Wichita, has moved into a faculty position at Bethel after working as an admissions counselor. She is an instructor in the Department of Health and Human Performance, after completing a master’s degree in exercise science at Wichita State University.

Alec Loganbill '19, Emporia, Kan., is the editor of a new imprint from University Press of Kansas called Plainspoken Books, a boutique trade imprint for nonfiction books that amplify the voices of the Midwest by telling local stories of national significance.

Julie (Wedel) Martens '15, Inman, Kan., was named assistant principal at South Hutchinson Elementary School, where she had previously been the music teacher.

John Reimer '12, Hesston, Kan., is a water tank maintenance consultant for Viking Industrial Painting, Omaha, working in Kansas and Nebraska.

Aimee Voth Siebert '10, North Newton, started this fall as assistant professor of psychology. She has an M.A. in international disaster psychology from the University of Denver. She was most recently a program manager in the Disaster Behavioral Health and Recovery branch of the Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Brian Skinner '13, North Newton, was awarded a national fellowship by the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes in Fort Scott, Kan.

Jocelyn Wilkinson '14, Newton, is associate registrar at Bethel. She continues as technical director of theater.

2020-25

Danen Kistner '23, Hartford, Kan., was named head football coach at Hartford High School.

Drannon Lenox '22, Hutchinson, Kan., joined the Bethel athletic training staff.

Cheyenne Lisle '23, Wichita, joined the Bethel athletic training staff.

Tobin Wise '25, Pleasant Hill, Mo., was awarded the Clinical Oncology Research Internship (CORI) at the University of Kansas Cancer Center (KUCC). Only one individual planning to apply to medical school is given this opportunity to spend one year performing full-time research at the Early Phase Research Unit at KUCC.

Marriages

Mika Patron '16 and Brad Hull, Haslett, Mich., June 28

Births & Adoptions

John '12 and Olivia Reimer, Hesston, Kan., Declan John, Aug. 18, 2024

Kristen (Schrag) '09 and Tyler Stucky, Moundridge, Kan., Axel Dean, April 11

Remembrances

Steven Banman '82, Goessel, Kan., Oct. 22

Ann (Hefner) Bowman '92, Hutchinson, Kan., Sept. 23

Dorene (Flaming) Claassen '68, Marlin, Wash., Oct. 5

Marion Deckert '56, North Newton, June 6

Walter "Wally" Dyck '57, San Antonio, Oct. 2

John Eck '66, Century, Fla., July 2

Florine (Voran) Eitzen '56, North Newton, Sept. 8

Donald Friesen '61, Reedley, Calif., May 13

Mary Lou (Voran) Gaeddert '52, North Newton, July 4

Ardith (Fransen) Garreffa '72, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 5

Samuel "Bob" Glick '74, Belleville, Pa., June 7

Homer Goering '57, Moundridge, Kan., June 7

Gertrude (Goering) Graber '50, Freeman, S.D., Sept. 7

June (Stucky) Graber '56, Moundridge, Kan., July 28, 2024

Gordon Harder '71, Mountain Lake, Minn., May 16

Eleanor (Weinbrenner) Herbel '60, Hillsboro, Kan., March 1

Susan (Martens) Kehler '64, Abbotsford, British Columbia, April 9

Victor Klaassen '58, Wichita, May 17

Hazel (Graber) Kliewer '48, Winchester, Va., Sept. 10

Loretta (Penner) Krehbiel '52, Goessel, Kan., Sept. 18

Arley Loeffler '57, Hesston, Kan., Oct. 17

Erwin Loeffler '58, Newton, June 11

Denard Loganbill '50, Tucson, Ariz., July 16

Dorothy (Jantzen) Luker '65, Glendale, Ariz., Aug. 2

Marianne (Krahn) Miller '67, North Newton, Oct. 28

Douglas Penner '69, North Newton, Aug. 29

Anna Marie Peterson '61, Wayland, Iowa, May 12

Rachel (Ruth) Poling '94, March 11

Carmen (Hofer) Powls '94, Garnett, Kan., Sept. 5

James Preheim '60, North Newton, Oct. 29

Arlin Ratzlaff '61, North Newton, May 3

Marvella (Penner) Ratzlaff '55, Moundridge, Kan., May 5

Waldo Renich '51, Columbia, Md., Sept. 15

Shirley (Hiebert) Reusser '56, Hillsboro, Kan., June 10

Murray Ries '76, Parker, S.D., Sept. 14

Lowell Roth '69, Hesston, Kan., Sept. 14

Esther (Deckert) Sayler '70, Albert, Kan., July 26

Ilene (Schroeder) Schmidt '54, North Newton, July 11

Lela (Kaufman) Schmidt '47, North Newton, Sept. 17

Sharon (Wiebe) Stucky '59, North Newton, July 11

Peter Trott '66, Busdorf, Germany, April 9

Paul Unruh '72, Greensburg, Kan., Oct. 14

Myron Voran '51, North Newton, June 12

Mariell "Mary" Waltner '02, Chicago, April 19

Gertrude Warkentin '62, Goshen, Ind., May 19

Robert Wiens '69, Carmel, Ind., Aug. 31

Ruby (Eck) Winsky '45, Moundridge, Kan., April 7

Lillian (Loeffler) Woelk '54, Marion, Iowa, Sept. 6



SAVE THE DATE

MLK DAY

MON., JAN. 19: MEMORIAL HALL, 7 PM

80TH ANNUAL BETHEL ALUMNI BANQUET

SAT., JAN. 31, 2026

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, REEDLEY, CALIF.

PHONATHON

FEB. 2-19

CORNERSTONE DAY

TUES., APRIL 21: ONLINE GIVING DAY

BETHEL / WUPPERTAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM 75TH-ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

BC CONCERT CHOIR

THURS., JUNE 4, 2026, CITYKIRCHE
ST. ANTONIUS, WUPPERTAL



WORK, LEARN, SERVE: HOW LIBERAL ARTS MEETS SKILLS-BUILDING

Dr. Navanté Peacock, left, and Kaz Kromwijk
AVA BROXTERMAN

It's an important piece of Bethel's mission: *to prepare students for meaningful lives of work and service*. And it's an essential block on which the Employment Experiences (EE) program stands, along with supporting academic programs by developing skills, giving students another way to reduce their education expenses, and strengthening students' work ethic and community service.

Starting in fall 2024, and employing a work-learning-service model, every student will graduate with a Bethel liberal arts education, along with robust work experience, a comprehensive resume, professional references and a verified work transcript. In addition, students receive up to \$2,500 per year toward reduction of tuition costs.

Well into Year 2, how is EE doing?

In a presentation to the Bethel board during their October meeting, Kip Wedel, associate professor of history, stated, "The liberal arts have always offered more than entry-level training because they build all-too-rare executive skills like time management, eloquence, empathy and analytical thinking — skills that last a lifetime, but can take a long time to perfect. Employment Experiences, combined with the liberal arts, puts students to work on them right away — and in a way that sets Bethel apart from its peers."

For Kaz Kromwijk, a senior psychology major from Dordrecht, Netherlands, and Navanté Peacock, assistant professor of psychology, EE has meant a job for Kaz as department ambassador and a way for Navanté to finally see some hopes for the department come to fruition.

Now in his third year teaching at Bethel, Navanté has wanted "an informal way for students to talk, discover and learn about psychology" — juniors

and seniors already committed to the program, as well as prospective, and undecided current, students. Now that he has a faculty colleague, Aimee Voth Siebert '10, he's had more time to give to making that real.

Kaz transferred to Bethel from a community college in Iowa, to play soccer and finish his psychology degree. Since he started college, his goal has been to start his own online business as a mental coach.

"I already have this written and reviewed, but I'm waiting to start until I finish the major," he says. "And I'm interested in playing professional soccer in Asia."

The idea came from his own mental coaching experience in the Netherlands. The coach was "one of the top mental coaches, and didn't even have a degree [in psychology or counseling], he had one in flower arranging. But he was able to market himself well, and he had the knowledge. That inspired me to know you don't need a master's degree to do this."

One of Kaz's major projects as psychology department ambassador has been to organize a Psychology Club.

"The whole idea for the job is to promote the department within and outside the school," says Navanté, "to help recruit prospectives, or students who don't have a major yet or are looking for another class to take. As a part of that job, one of Kaz's duties that seemed to make sense is to be the club president.

"There's a lot of overlap in spreading knowledge of psychology and creating a brand for us. It benefits Kaz, since he is interested in having his own business, so social media is relevant."

"I started this semester in another EE job," Kaz says, "but I wasn't learning anything that helped my major. I asked about a job in the psychology department. Navanté and I collaborated on the job description and came up with something that worked for both of us.

"The promotion of psychology helps me learn about marketing. I'm [helping to form] a community of everyone [at Bethel] interested in psychology. They are all invested in it, even if it's a project like the one we did sorting out all the books in the seminar room.

"I can actually learn from my Employment Experiences now. It's challenging — I've needed to learn marketing and communication to do this."

Marcus Jones has a somewhat parallel position in the history department. As the departmental assistant, he is also in charge of the history club, Clio. Unlike the Psychology Club, Clio has been around for decades, but went dormant after the Covid shut-down and limitations that started in the spring semester of 2020.

A sophomore from Gardnerville, Nev., Marcus came to Bethel because he wanted to play basketball and study history. The example of one of his high school teachers has given Marcus the goal of being a history teacher himself.

He is part of the first Bethel class (2028) who will go through all four years in Employment Experiences, and he's pleased that, as of midway through last year, his EE job is now directly related to his history major.

Marcus works with Kip Wedel and Mark Jantzen '85 in the department. A lot of it is research assistance and office work, and then faculty decided to add leadership of Clio to the job description.



Top left, Eliza Epp works with BCAPA costumes; top right, Mason Bolen runs the register in Thresher Shop; bottom, Marcus Jones, left, and Mark Jantzen in the library's New York Times room
AVA BROXTERMAN

"I didn't even know Clio existed before I started working in the department," Marcus says. "This year, right out of the gate, I was emailing [the Student Government Association] about funds, getting clerical things going, then started reaching out to people to get them to show up to events. We get about eight or nine at our activities." The total number of students who have listed history as a major or minor is around 20, he says, and now that fall sports have mostly ended, he hopes to draw a few more folks to Clio.

"It's a good way to connect with other people who are also interested in history — the people I hang around with aren't all necessarily interested in it. It's something outside of athletic competition."

He continues, "I like learning from the past, to see [how we can] maybe not fall into the same mistakes. We can see what worked in the past and if we can apply it to today's world."

"The history department has had an EE student in the departmental assistant position since there was an EE," Mark says. "We saw that it would help to make taking charge of Clio part of the job description. It's 5 hours a week that comes out to twice minimum wage, a much better hourly deal than regular campus jobs."

"Marcus is reliable and dependable — I ask him to do something and it just gets done. His research assistance is basic and phenomenal."

"His goal is to be a history teacher. Working with Clio helps — he's creating social connections through history and interest in history."

Junior Eliza Epp's EE job is with the Bethel College Academy of Performing Arts (BCAPA), where she is the administrative assistant and social media manager. She's no stranger to BCAPA, having been

in the dance program since she was 8 (she now teaches dance).

She started managing BCAPA's social media almost as soon as she was part of BCAPA staff. "Haylie [Berning, BCAPA director] had tried to keep up with it but she doesn't really have time. Now, she makes a schedule of what she wants, and I create a graphic, text, videos. We have noticed it's important and we've worked hard on it."

Her BCAPA job has helped Eliza build skills she needs for communication and marketing, her career goals. "It's worked well for both of Haylie and me," she says. "I was not used to e-mailing or texting people I didn't know, and now I'm much more comfortable with it. The social media work is a resume builder, requiring communicating with [a specific] audience and curating posts. I'm getting to experiment with social media things for a smaller audience, so I can grow in a place I'm comfortable in and where I've been for a long time."

"I'll be interning with the City of Newton in communication and marketing next semester, and a lot of places seem to want everything in one person. I've been trying to gather these skills during the years at Bethel."

Mason Bolen, a junior, is in his third year with Employment Experiences — as a freshman, he was part of the EE pilot program. He has worked in Thresher Shop since his first year. He found out about the initiative on his campus visit. EE "salaries" are actually a scholarship applied directly to tuition, and Mason knew that would be a big help.

"I do everything that a mailroom person typically does — deliver mail, hand out packages, deliver office supplies around campus. I run the register sometimes, and answer the phone."

Mason and co-worker Titus Wassom, a sophomore, also make Thresher Shop's promotional videos for social media. "That started my freshman year, when Shirley [Dietzel, store manager] asked what we wanted to do to spice up the shop."

One of Mason's favorite parts of the job is "getting to know other students better. I learn names when people come in and ask for their packages."

Perhaps the best benefit has been personal, he says. "It's great working with Shirley and Joan [Entz]. They're my work moms [since he's far from his own, in Buckley, Wash.]. They're not just my bosses, but people I can talk to. They've been there for me during hard times."

And the job is preparing him for life after college, Mason says. "I'm planning to be a teacher, so it connects — being with people a lot, learning patience and how to deal with people. I'm going to have to deal with students, peers and administrators."

"Thresher Shop has been a positive experience. How to work directly with a supervisor, time management, people skills — it's helping me build for the future."

MELANIE ZUERCHER

CAMPUS NEWS

FOR MORE STORIES, VISIT: bethelks.edu/news

PENNER, 11TH PRESIDENT, REMEMBERED FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND INTEGRITY



Doug Penner speaks during the groundbreaking for Krehbiel Science Center in 2000.
MENNONITE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Doug Penner '69, Bethel president from 1995-2002, died Aug. 29 after an extended illness. He was 77.

Penner was born in Reedley, Calif. After an early childhood in Hillsboro, Kan., Penner grew up in Reedley.

Encouraged by his pastors and Bethel alumni from First Mennonite Church in Reedley, Penner attended Bethel, graduating with highest honors in 1969 with majors in psychology and sociology.

After marrying fellow Bethel student Raylene Hinz from Liberal, Kan., right after graduation, Penner went on to the University of Kansas, where he earned master's and doctoral degrees in social psychology.

He returned to Bethel in 1972 and taught psychology there for the next 15 years.

Although Penner thoroughly enjoyed teaching, and also coaching women's basketball, at Bethel, he felt the need to develop other skills, and in 1987 moved into a role as an organizational consultant with Growth Associates at Prairie View Mental Health

Services in Newton.

In 1991, Penner became executive director of a regional education consortium, Associated Colleges of Central Kansas (ACCK), that included Bethel, Tabor and McPherson Colleges. Then in 1995, he was called to become Bethel's 11th president.

Penner regarded his seven years as president as a highlight of his professional life. Although he was proud of leading a \$20 million capital campaign that culminated in building Krehbiel Science Center and Voth Hall, his greatest satisfaction came from strategic planning, keeping the Bethel community engaged and focused on the future.

Sondra Bandy Koontz '70, Newton, worked with five different presidents as the head of institutional advancement at Bethel. "Not all college presidents can raise money," she said. "Doug was a pro. He knew how to listen to donors' wishes. He knew how to best present Bethel's needs and projects. His skill at developing relationships made every campaign for funds successful.

"Doug's Bethel legacy is obvious in Krehbiel

Science Center and Voth Hall. ... Less obvious to the eye but still making an impact is the strategic planning for Bethel's future that he spearheaded.

"Doug was a man of integrity, someone I deeply respected. It was my privilege to work with him."

In 2002, Penner left one small private Kansas college to serve all of them (19 at the time) as president of the Kansas Independent Colleges Association (KICA).

For the next decade, Penner spoke for "the Kansas privates" at the statehouse in Topeka, and helped them collaborate to strengthen each other.

Current KICA president Matt Lindsey succeeded Penner in the position. "[Doug] contributed enormously to the vibrancy of the Kansas college landscape," Lindsey told Harvey County Now.

"His work directly helped ensure so many of these small prairie jewels thrived — tens of thousands of private college students have been able to afford a college degree because of the work he did, in Kansas and in Washington, D.C., to protect and grow student scholarship programs. Many of those students

may not know it, but Doug Penner touched their lives for the better."

Jon Gering '94, 15th and current Bethel president, called Penner a person of high character and integrity, supportive and a good listener. "He knew what the presidency was about and [what it] entailed."

Reflecting that, the Douglas A. Penner Champion of Character Award was established in the athletic department, and goes to one male and one female athlete each year.

As Penner moved into retirement, he put more energy into a Topeka organization he had helped to start: Justice Unity and Ministry Project (JUMP), a coalition of 36 diverse faith communities with a mission to empower marginalized groups in Shawnee County to fight for affordable housing, mental health services and public school services.

Penner was active in his Mennonite congregations, dating from his youth at First Mennonite, Reedley. He deeply loved his church community of Southern Hills Mennonite in Topeka, and later Bethel College Mennonite Church when he and Raylene relocated to North Newton in 2021.

After he moved to Topeka in 2002, Penner was moderator of Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA for several years. When he returned to the Newton community, he served WDC, based in North Newton, as an organizational consultant.

Penner had a variety of interests and avocations, among them: fishing, especially with family in Minnesota; spending time as "the Four Ds" with his Bethel buddies Dale Schrag '69, Dave Janzen '69 and Don Schmidt '69, as well as their spouses, particularly at the cabin at Council Grove City Lake; cooking and eating good food; speaking Spanish, which he learned in high school, when he traveled to Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, and later Chinese when he and Raylene did an educational exchange in Sichuan in 1984-85; music, especially classical, hymns and pop of the '60s, '70s and '80s; and growing things, especially in a community garden in Topeka.

Current Bethel board chair Wynn Goering '77 first met Penner when Goering was a Bethel student and Penner a young faculty member.

"What I can say with certainty is that through-

out his life, Doug cared deeply about Bethel," Goering said.

"The college shaped him and he the college. He was talented and charismatic, and could have chosen many paths in life, but Bethel was always his lodestar, calling him back as a professor, then president, and finally, in retirement, a keen supporter. He will be missed."

Penner is survived by his wife of 56 years, Raylene Hinz-Penner '70; his mother-in-law, Willye Hinz; his granddaughters, Esther and Emmeline, and their parents, Karen Siebert '90 and Timm Walker; two sisters, two brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews and great-nieces and -nephews.

A memorial service was held Sept. 13, with memorial gifts designated to Bethel College.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

SCOTT WINS NATIONAL ATHLETIC AWARD



Lisa Janzen Scott
COURTESY PHOTO

In June, Lisa Janzen Scott '84, associate professor of education and mathematics, learned that the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference (KCAC) had named her the 2024-25 Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) of the Year. That made her eligible for the national award — and on Sept. 15, the NAIA announced Scott as the 2025 Wally Schwartz FAR of the Year.

Scott, has been the Bethel FAR since 2018, a role in which she works closely with student-athletes, coaches, registrars and athletics administrators to ensure academic eligibility and support.

She began at Bethel in 1998, and has taken on numerous roles and responsibilities over the years, in addition to teaching.

Among these are former director of Information and Media Services (IMS), user support specialist and campus assessment coordinator. She has taught in the math, computer science and teacher education departments.

In addition to her on-campus responsibilities, Scott serves on the KCAC Eligibility Committee and the Kansas Independent Colleges Professional Development Council. She has also been involved in program review work with the Kansas State Department of Education.

Tim Swartzendruber '81, athletic director, praised Scott's impact, saying, "I am extremely happy for Lisa and believe she is deserving of this award."

"Her proactive approach with students, her great communication with students and coaches, and her attention to detail make her extremely appreciated by our entire athletic department."

"Lisa is a great ambassador for Bethel College and I can't say enough about how much she means to the institution."

Scott becomes the second consecutive KCAC representative to receive the honor, following Dr.

James Zimmerman of the University of Saint Mary in 2024.

"It is an honor to receive this award," Scott said. "I didn't expect it, so that makes it extra special."

"My thanks to previous Schwartz Award winners from the KCAC, Joyce Pigge, Ed Loeb and Jim Zimmerman, for answering lots of questions as I learned the role of FAR. And a big thank-you to the Bethel athletics staff and student-athletes who I've had the privilege to work with over the years."

The award, named in honor of longtime NAIA Vice President of Legislative Services Wally Schwartz, recognizes a Faculty Athletics Representative for their loyalty, enthusiasm and honesty in bridging academics and athletics.

JARED MOCABY & MELANIE ZUERCHER

ENROLLMENT DOWN, NEW STUDENT ENGAGEMENT UP



After six years, Bethel's upward enrollment trend hit a bump.

Numbers for the fall semester are released on the official 20th day of classes, which was Sept. 15 this year. As of that date, the fall enrollment headcount was 443, compared to 507 in 2024.

"Our streak of six straight years of enrollment growth ended this fall," said Eric Preheim '16, director of admissions.

A combination of a larger-than-normal graduating class in 2025 and retention challenges played a role in reducing this year's enrollment.

Preheim went on to say, "I am proud of this incoming class of students, that is both larger than average and noticeably engaged with the Bethel

community through their first month of classes. A particular bright spot is the recruiting work done in the music department, headed by Dr. Christina Liu.

"We look forward to continued growth next year."

Bethel also continues its successful efforts to attract international students, despite roadblocks thrown up by the federal government, which "made life substantially more difficult for [them] this year," Preheim said.

"However, our admissions team was able to provide consistent updates and planning with these students, and [potential] future students. Our international student numbers remain very similar to years past, which is fortunate, because they

have a profound impact on our campus and we are eager to support them in their ambitions to graduate from Bethel College."

New students this fall come from 19 states in addition to Kansas: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Washington; and eight countries: Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Serbia, Tunisia and the United Kingdom, plus one exchange student from the University of Wuppertal, Germany. Bethel has a total of 35 new and returning international students from 23 countries.

THEOLOGIAN SAYS WE NEED JESUS MORE WHILE WE VALUE HIM LESS



Miroslav Volf speaks with a listener after his Fall Fest lecture.
MELANIE ZUERCHER

Miroslav Volf believes we are living through profound cultural change.

"We are in the midst of an epochal change, I think it's accurate to say. I mean that one form of the world is passing and another form is being born, and we are living in it."

Volf was speaking during Fall Festival on Oct. 4. His presence was made possible through the efforts of Djordje Maricic '07 of Belgrade, Serbia, and with financial support from several lecture endowments at the college.

Volf is a Croatian Protestant theologian who has taught at Yale Divinity School for more than 25 years and at Fuller Theological Seminary in California before that.

Widely read and respected, Volf is perhaps best known for his 1996 book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*. In 2025, he published *The Cost of Ambition: How Striving to be Better than Others Makes Us Worse*.

"Who is Jesus Christ [for us] in the midst of this particular change in which we find ourselves?" Volf continued in his Bethel lecture.

"Jesus has become a moral stranger to us. Sometime within the last century, we have lost our belief in Jesus as the ideal human being.

"We need Jesus more than we ever did before and we value him less than possibly any time in history, including during his ministry."

As he does in *The Cost of Ambition*, Volf critiqued “comparison culture”: the West’s obsession with competition and superiority.

He looked at three areas, starting with “attention economy.”

“This is what drives social media,” he said. “We seek attention and want to extract it from others”; we treat others as exploitable and are exploited ourselves.

Related to that is “instrumental value vs. intrinsic value.” Things (animate and inanimate) have largely lost meaning for what they are in themselves, but are valuable only in what they can do for us.

Finally, there is the relationship of those who have to those who don’t — fear of, instead of care for, the poor.

“We live in a culture in which we need to out-perform others. We are in a race, which means we hold on tightly to what we have — the poor end up being ‘a drag,’ and we are ‘failures’ when we try to care for those around us.

“We are generally not afraid of the stranger, especially if they bring things like cash and know-how. The ones not so welcome are those who are poor.”

And none of this, Volf says, in any way reflects what God is like or what Jesus modeled and taught.

In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul asks people who have formed factions around different leaders and are struggling for superiority: What do you have that you have not received? The answer is “Nothing. Everything we have, even the efforts we put in, has been given to us by God.”

“There is freedom from this fake, self-made greatness,” Volf said. “That’s the message of the gospel.

“We have been created by God. Each life, each day, each second. What to strive for is working to be worthy of the gift we have been given: ourselves, our country, our world.”

MELANIE ZUERCHER

BETHEL EXPANDS ACADEMIC OFFERINGS WITH SEVEN NEW MAJORS



James Goff in the HHP lab
EMILY TIMPERLEY

Seven new academic majors will be available beginning in the 2026-27 academic year. College faculty and the Board of Directors approved the new programs and the Higher Learning Commission has formally authorized them for student enrollment.

Three new majors will be housed in the Department of Business and four will be offered within the Department of Health and Human Performance.

Dr. Robert Milliman, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, emphasized that development of these programs reflects Bethel’s commitment to expanding academic opportunities while maintaining the strength of the liberal arts foundation.

“Each major is specific enough to achieve relevant career-preparations goals, while taught in the context of liberal arts education,” he said. “This combination will provide students with the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills to find success in

today’s occupational environment.”

The Department of Health and Human Performance (HHP), chaired by Melissa Siemens, will introduce majors in Exercise Science, Health and Fitness, Health and Physical Education Teaching, and Sport Management.

The Exercise Science major will provide “a deep understanding of human physiology, biomechanics, adaptations to exercise to body systems, and research methodologies” preparing graduates for advanced study and careers in athletic training, physical therapy, exercise physiology, and research, Siemens said.

The Health and Fitness major will emphasize nutrition, wellness programming, lifestyle behavior change, and fitness assessment. Students will be prepared for careers in “corporate wellness, community health promotion, personal training, and health coaching,” said Siemens.

The Health and Physical Education Teaching major will equip students to become licensed PreK-12 teachers. Coursework will include “curriculum development, teaching methodologies, motor skill acquisition, assessment strategies, and classroom management,” Siemens continued.

The Sport Management major expands Bethel’s longtime minor in the field. Milliman highlighted that faculty are “particularly eager to offer the new Sport Management degree” because it will appeal to students seeking careers in athletics while also preparing for leadership roles.

Led by the department chair Dr. Allison McFarland, the Department of Business will offer Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Administration, Management, and Marketing. According to McFarland, these programs align closely with Bethel’s liberal arts mission while preparing students “to assume

ethically and socially responsible roles in business and society.”

The Business Administration major includes coursework in marketing, management, accounting, economics, finance and organizational behavior. The degree is designed to help students “connect business concepts with broader societal, ethical and global contexts” while also providing a foundation for specialized graduate study.

The Management major will equip students with the practical leadership and organizational skills applicable to “large and small businesses, as well as for-profit and not-for-profit organizations,” said McFarland.

The Marketing major prepares students to understand consumer behavior and to develop ethical, effective marketing strategies. Students will receive training in “marketing strategy, marketing research, and integrating marketing communications,” preparing them for a wide range of mission-driven organizational settings.

Reflecting on the broader impact of these additions, Milliman noted that the programs will “provide students with the readiness to enter the job market in their preferred careers and excellent preparations for graduate study.” He emphasized that the expansions strengthen Bethel’s capacity to prepare graduates for the evolving needs of today’s workforce.

GOLDEN THRESHERS HAVE SUCCESSFUL REUNION, CHALLENGE OTHERS



From left, Jeanette (Rinner) Grantstein, Michelle Friesen-Carper, Warren Friesen, Bernie Kaufman and Carol Flickinger, members of the Golden Thresher class, visit on the Green during Fall Fest. AVA BROXTERMAN

The Class of 1975 has issued a challenge to the Class of 1976, and all upcoming 50-year classes.

The “Golden Thresher Class” at this year’s Fall Festival, Oct. 2-5, probably set a record — based on RSVPs, 78 class members (116 total including spouses and partners) attended at least one event.

Class members give a lot of credit for their high numbers to organized planning that started early.

A reunion committee began meeting online in February 2025, comprising Meribeth (Schmidt) Buhr, North Newton; Glen Ediger, North Newton; Rex Esau, Austin, Texas; Carol Flickinger, North Newton; Steve Friesen, Littleton, Colo.; Orlin Martens, Inman, Kan.; David E. Ortman, Seattle; Marsha (Andres) Schmidt, Newton; Russ Stucky, Moundridge, Kan.; and Tim Voht, North Newton.

Using an email list from the Bethel alumni office, Friesen created and sent out an online registration form. The committee also created a series of email blasts leading up to the October reunion, to encourage RSVPs and to solicit donations for a class gift (currently at \$105,000 in gifts and pledges).

The class has designated the funds to go toward renovation of Haury Hall, a central pillar in the newly launched *Foundations Strong and True* capital campaign.

Fall Fest each year has a Golden Thresher mixer on the Friday evening schedule, with snacks and beverages provided by the alumni office. This one also included a reception during the Fall Fest football

game on Saturday in the viewing suite of the Thresher Locker Room building, again with refreshments from the alumni office.

For the Friday mixer (which had to be moved to a larger campus venue when the Mantz Library lounge proved too small), historical photos collected by Dave Linscheid, North Newton, rotated on a laptop computer. Class members provided two cakes decorated with the special Class of 1975 logo that Ediger designed.

Ortman created a 50-page Class of ‘75 special e-edition of *The Bethel Collegian* that included a compilation of “Class Notes” for the Class of ‘75 from 50 years’ worth of alumni magazines, as well as editorials and headlines from many of the 1971-75 issues of *The Collegian*. He later put the e-edition *Collegian*, Linscheid’s collection of photos, and photos taken during the weekend by Ortman and Rod Wedel, Newton, into a Google drive, and sent a link to all class members.

In addition, the Class of 1975 planned and hosted their own booth on the Green on Saturday.

“Our reunion turned out to be all that we hoped for and more,” Friesen said. “Everyone who came had a great time and the class booth on the Green was exactly the magnet we hoped it would be, with almost constant conversations going on.”

The committee also planned an extra event, on Sunday afternoon. Stucky offered his barn in rural Moundridge and other class members organized

and underwrote the catered BBQ meal.

The special Class of 1975 logo was reproduced on swag that included T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, pint glasses and bookmarks — again, with class members footing most of the bill.

Friesen noted that “the commemorative T-shirts were omnipresent throughout the day.”

Members of the Class of 1975 planning committee now challenge subsequent Golden Thresher classes to do as well or better with their reunions.

“So much more can be done with the 50th reunions,” Friesen said, “and we discovered that, while it took some work, it was not that difficult to put together. Future reunions can be as successful as ours and even more so.”

After participating in his wife’s successful 50th-year class reunion at Knox College in Illinois in 2024, Friesen recommends starting to plan two years in advance. “Given the late start for our [Bethel reunion] planning, I think we did quite well,” he said. “I hoped it would establish a model for future 50th reunions, and I believe it did.”

Ortman, speaking directly to future Golden Threshers, said, “Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to outdo the Class of ‘75. Good luck.”

MELANIE ZUERCHER

FORMER DEAN WAS A GARDENER, HIKER, BIKER AND PHILOSOPHER



Marion Deckert enjoys time in Jamaica.
COURTESY PHOTO

Marion Deckert, retired professor and administrator, died June 6 in North Newton, just shy of his 91st birthday.

He was born and raised on a farm near Richey, in eastern Montana. He graduated from Bethel College in 1956, where he met his wife Lois (Duerksen) '55. He eventually went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy at the University of Chicago,

and later a master's degree in computer science at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Deckert's first philosophy teaching position was at the University of Southern Colorado in Pueblo. In 1972, he became academic dean at Bethel and spent the rest of his professional life there. His roles included acting president in 1978-79, as well as professor of philosophy and academic dean.

From 1993-96, he also held the part-time position of executive secretary for the Higher Education Commission of the General Conference Mennonite Church. He retired at the end of the 1995-96 school year.

After graduating from Bethel, Marion and Lois served three years with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), first in Morocco, where Marion helped villagers in the hills repair their cisterns after a major earthquake, and then in Halmahera, Indonesia. In 1979, Marion, Lois and daughter Alice went to Salatiga, Indonesia, where Marion took a teaching post at Satya Wacana University. These plans had to be cut short when Lois was diagnosed with cancer and they needed to return to the United States for treatment.

Deckert resumed his position as Bethel academic dean and began studying for a degree in computer science on the side, finishing it during a 1985-86

sabbatical. For a subsequent sabbatical, 1992-93, Marion and Lois went to Mussoorie, India, where Lois had attended boarding school as a "missionary kid." Lois taught writing and journalism at Woodstock School and Marion set up a computer lab for the school.

When Marion and Lois moved to North Newton in 1972, they built a house on three lots so Marion could have a very large garden and orchard. He was an avid gardener, hiker (including in the Himalayas and the Colorado Rockies) and bicyclist. He went on numerous bike trips, including in Europe where his son Alan was living.

Deckert kept in close contact with Bethel after he retired. He took on several short-term assignments, such as a sabbatical fill-in in the philosophy department.

He is survived by two children, Alan Deckert '84 and Alice Deckert '84, a daughter-in-law and son-in-law, two granddaughters, a sister, brother-in-law and two nieces.

A memorial service took place Aug. 16, with memorial gifts designated to MCC and Bethel College.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

LIU IS TOP MUSIC TEACHER IN KANSAS



Dr. Christina Liu with her KMTA award
COURTESY PHOTO

The Kansas Music Teachers Association (KMTA) named Dr. Christina Liu the Outstanding Teacher of the Year for 2025 at the KMTA annual conference, held Sept. 26-27 at Tabor College, Hillsboro.

"This prestigious award highlights Christina's exceptional teaching and other work with students in music at the local, state and national levels, [and] acknowledges her significant contributions to the music profession," said Dr. Robert Milliman, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, announcing the award to campus.

"We are proud to celebrate Christina's important achievements in the field of music, and are grateful [she] is a vital part of the Bethel College faculty, where we are able to witness her continual commitment to excellence."

Liu is associate professor of piano and music history and chair of the Department of Music at Bethel College. She began teaching at Bethel in 2019.

She has a bachelor's degree in music, piano performance with pedagogy emphasis, from Washington State University; two masters of music

(M.M.) degrees, one in solo piano performance and one in piano chamber music performance, from the University of Michigan; and a D.M.A., piano performance with pedagogy emphasis, from the University of Kansas.

Other professional accomplishments include Nationally Certified Teacher of Music (NCTM) and membership in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA). She is the president of KMTA as of the 2025 conference.

She has broad experience in teaching piano – in private lessons, as community music school faculty, and as an instructor at KU (graduate assistant) and the University of St. Mary, Leavenworth, Kan.

Liu is a familiar figure on the piano bench at Bethel, accompanying for both student and faculty recitals, choral and instrumental concerts, and music theater.

SYMPOSIUM SPEAKER, ALSO A SINGER, POINTS TO POWER OF SPIRITUALS



Dr. Luke Powery
COURTESY PHOTO

When Dr. Luke Powery takes the pulpit, expect singing as well as preaching. He would say the singing is (also) the preaching.

Powery was the featured speaker for Bethel's biennial Worship and the Arts Symposium, held on campus Nov. 2-4. He preached the Sunday sermon at Bethel College Mennonite Church on Nov. 2, spoke in convocation on Nov. 3, and held a preaching masterclass with area pastors on Nov. 4.

The symposium also included the annual choral showcase, Bethel Sings — the first as director of choral activities for Russell Adrian '05 — and the opening of "Between Earth and Sky," an exhibit of multi-media sculpture by former Bethel art professor Merrill Krabill, Goshen, Ind.

Powery is the dean of Duke Chapel (since 2012) at Duke University in Durham, N.C., professor of homiletics and African and African American studies at Duke Divinity School and the university, and an award-winning author or co-author of eight books. The title of the symposium, "Preaching Good News in a Troubled World," is the subtitle of Powery's 2023 book *Getting to God* (Cascade), with Jon Rottman and Joni Sancken.

Powery has graduate degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and the University of Toronto (Ph.D. in homiletics), and his undergraduate degree, from Stanford, is in music with an emphasis on vocal performance.

First-year student Mara Oswald heard Powery's Sunday sermon and was drawn by that, and by "his powerful and captivating delivery," to both his convo talk and the preaching masterclass.

His text for Sunday was from Matthew 4, Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and being tempted by Satan.

"I've heard this story many times, but there was one point he made that really captured my attention. He talked about how 'even evil knows Scripture' and that just stuck for me.

"In this current day and age, with the rise of Christian nationalism and the misuse of Scripture to fit harmful narratives, I feel that people often think their ability to quote more Scripture than someone else means they are 'a better Christian.' I do not think believe is the case because, as Dr. Powery pointed out, even the devil can quote Scripture."

In his convocation "sermon," Powery talked about "spirituals as preaching, teaching, telling the Good News." He interspersed his points by singing lines from several spirituals, usually getting audience participation.

"Spirituals are theological or homiletical paintings of the human soul," Powery said. "They show what it is to preach. Both spirituals and preaching are musical, textual, contextual, deeply communal in nature. Singing preaches and preaching sings."

He said that "preaching good news should sound four notes": the reality of human suffering; the reality of divine suffering (the cross of Christ); an ecology of community; and the viability of singing as a homiletical strategy.

In all his talks, Powery emphasized the need to face into suffering as "being part of the gospel." To deny that is to make preaching "a Sunday Chamber of Commerce exercise. It doesn't take into consid-

WORSHIP AND THE ARTS

eration what life is all about, which includes death, heartache, pain and sorrow.

"[These things are] part of our theological memory, and the spirituals press us forward. Preaching is not spoiled by tears. Catastrophe and disaster are at the heart of the gospel — there are no resurrections without crucifixions."

Powery reiterated his themes in the preaching masterclass, for which four local pastors — Shana Green from New Creation Fellowship Church, Newton, Jerrell Williams '15 from Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, Joanna Harader from Bethel College Mennonite Church and Katherine Goerzen from Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton — offered sermons on "Preaching Good News in a Troubled World," with Powery commenting after each.

First, however, he reflected on the question: What makes preaching "Christian" and how do we know it when we hear it?

True Christian preaching acknowledges human suffering, because "Jesus' ministry was right at the heart of a broken society."

It voices lament: "Avoiding pain and suffering in the pulpit doesn't bring forth life," Powery said.

And it voices hope amid suffering. "Hope is the spine of lament," Powery said, "therefore it's not cheap hope — it costs something. Hope is not the opposite of suffering — suffering is the necessary antecedent of hope."

He continued, "Hope comes despite grief and suffering but not without it."

He then related a story about "the best thing I've done at Duke in more than 13 years" — working with a group of incarcerated men in 2023.

"The lesson I learned from one of those incarcerated students was 'There's no 'lament' without 'amen.'" That sums up the whole gospel."

The Worship and the Arts Symposium, held at Bethel College every two years, is underwritten by the Reimer/Boese Worship and Arts Endowment, which celebrates the lives of Katharina Voth Reimer and Thomas U. Reimer, and Maria Schroeder Boese and Abraham L. Boese. The former are the parents, the latter the birth parents of the donor, the late Dr. Rosella Reimer Duerksen '48.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES CAPITAL CAMPAIGN, SAYS FAREWELL TO TWO MEMBERS



Thomas A. Adrian
AKINDOTUN OGUNBIYI



Roberta C. Franz Hodgson
AKINDOTUN OGUNBIYI

Meeting Oct. 1-3, 2025, the Bethel College Board of Directors approved the outline of a four-year, \$19.5 million fundraising campaign, *Foundations Strong and True*.

The campaign includes \$12 million for the renovation of Haury Hall, built in 1957. The board heard from Stan Shelden of Shelden Architecture about the potential benefits of adding the building to the Kansas Register of Historic Places, a strategy the board also approved.

"We believe that getting Haury Hall on the [state register] could add \$3-4 million to our fundraising efforts," said Pam Tieszen, vice president for institutional advancement. Advancement office staff have begun the application process with the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office.

Additional campaign priorities include student employment grants, restoration of homes on College Avenue funds for online academic programs, and new softball turf.

The board approved seven new majors, all Bachelor of Science degrees: four in the Department of Health and Human Performance (Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education Teaching, Sport Management) and three in the Department of Business (Business Administration, Marketing, Management). Acting on the recommendation of the Finance and Risk Management Committee, the board authorized a 3% increase in tuition, room and board for the 2026-27 academic year.

"No one ever wants to raise the cost of college attendance," said Roberta Franz Hodgson '73, Mountlake Terrace, Wash., outgoing committee chair, "but this seemed prudent and in line with the

current cost-of-living index."

In personnel actions, the board approved sabbaticals for Assistant Professor of Bible and Religion Peter Goerzen '07 and Professor of Education Allen Jantz '84, and granted emeritus status to Brad Born '84, retired professor of English.

At the end of the meetings, the board recognized outgoing members Hodgson and Tom Adrian, Newton. The two conclude their terms Dec. 31.

Adrian joined the board in 2013 as a board appointment. From 2017-18, he served as vice chair and from 2019-22 as chair. He also chaired the Directors Committee (2015-18) and, as interim, the Advancement Committee (2024-25).

In her tribute, current vice chair Lori Schmidt-Harrison '87 noted many things she and others have appreciated about Adrian, among them his "different perspective. You've been our resident Methodist and academic outlier [with bachelor's and juris doctor degrees from Washburn University] in a sea of Mennonites and Bethel grads, and we're better for it."

Schmidt-Harrison also expressed appreciation to Adrian's wife, Anne. Adrian came as "part of a dynamic duo," with Anne sharing his "commitment to community, service and faith," and also co-hosting much-anticipated receptions at the start of spring and fall meetings for board members, administrative cabinet members and partners during the years Tom Adrian was board chair.

Hodgson began her service to the board in 2011, representing Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA, by completing an unfilled term, and then was elected to two full

terms. She has been chair of the Finance Committee since 2012.

Hodgson never missed a meeting in her 15 years on the board, attending every one in person except spring 2020 during the Covid pandemic, which took place via Zoom.

In her tribute, board member Diana (Erb) Schunn '87 noted that Hodgson is the fourth in her extended family to serve, following her father, Robert Franz, a first cousin, Lucille Franz Harms '53, and her brother, Jay Franz '68.

"Those of us who have served alongside Roberta know she is incredibly detail-oriented, fast and accurate — a rare combination," Schunn said. "She can juggle multiple tasks with precision."

Schunn concluded, "You've given us an example of what it's like to live faithfully, work diligently and care deeply."

Spring board meetings are tentatively set for March 26-28, 2026.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

2025 HALL OF FAMERS ARE LEADERS IN EDUCATION, ATHLETICS AND COMMUNITY



From left: Virgil Penner, Dale Russell and Juan Aguirre
AVA BROXTERMAN

Bethel athletics and Booster Club celebrated the Hall of Fame Class of 2025 with a banquet and induction ceremony Oct. 3 during Fall Festival, honoring three individuals who have left lasting legacies on Thresher athletics.

Juan Aguirre '98, Omaha, Neb., helped redefine Bethel men's soccer during his four-year career, 1995-98. As a forward, he racked up 30 goals and 31 assists, setting the program's single-season (at the time) scoring record in 1998 with 18 goals, including three hat tricks.

Aguirre was instrumental in the 1996 team's KCAC postseason championship run, and his leadership and attacking flair made him a constant threat on the field.

After graduating with a degree in Spanish, Aguirre began a career in education and coaching that has spanned more than two decades. He has coached high school soccer in Kansas and Nebraska, and currently serves as Spanish instructor and head boys soccer coach at Millard West High School in Omaha. A former professional player for clubs in Argentina and with the Wichita Wings indoor team, Aguirre continues to share his passion for the sport with the next generation.

A four-year starter on the offensive line, Dale Russell '76, Punta Gorda, Fla., helped usher in a new era of Thresher football in the mid-1970s.

Known for both his relentless blocking and his leadership, Russell was named All-KCAC three

times, earned NAIA District 10 First Team honors twice, and received NAIA Honorable Mention All-American honors in 1976. He was the heart of a line that powered the 1975 team to an undefeated conference season.

This is Russell's second Hall of Fame honor — he also competed as a shot putter and was inducted with the 1975 championship track and field team.

After graduating with a degree in education, he returned to his hometown in Florida to coach and teach at Charlotte High School for more than 40 years, serving two decades as dean of students. A model of discipline and humility, Russell remains an example of Bethel's values on and off the field.

Virgil Penner '60, North Newton, is the embodiment of a lifelong Thresher, with an influence on Bethel athletics that has spanned more than six decades.

As a student-athlete in the late 1950s, Penner earned All-KCAC football honors three times and was known for his explosive play on the line. After college, he served Bethel in numerous capacities including head coach, athletic director and alumni director. He also played a key role in launching beloved traditions such as Fall Fest and Taste of Newton.

Beyond his professional service, Penner has been one of the most generous supporters of Bethel athletics. He has made significant financial contributions for facility upgrades, including the softball press box and the Thresher Stadium viewing suite

and locker room.

Known for hosting hundreds of team meals, along with his late wife, Kaye (Friesen) Penner '62, and mentoring countless student-athletes, Penner has a presence at nearly every home game. His legacy is one of servant leadership, generosity and unwavering school spirit.

"Each of these former student-athletes left their mark on Bethel College athletics and each has been extremely successful since graduating from Bethel," said Athletic Director Tim Swartzendruber '81. "Their stories of athletic excellence, leadership and lifelong service reflect the best of what it means to be a Thresher."

JARED MOCABY

BETHEL WELCOMES NEW FACULTY AND STAFF

The following faculty and staff appointments were announced for the 2025-26 school year (list includes those who began employment Jan. 1, 2025, or later):

Russell Adrian '05, associate professor of music and director of choral activities. He has a D.M.A. in conducting from the University of Minnesota.

Anthony Brown, assistant men's basketball coach

Mark Brown, director of Information and Media Services (from interim director and IMS support technician)

Taggart Brown, assistant football coach

Caleb Coats, assistant athletic director of operations

Darlene (Klassen) Dick '69, Memorial Grove caretaker

Bob Dittert, IMS support technician

Brandle Easter, KIPCOR Restorative Schools Initiative training coordinator

James Eddy, assistant football coach

Tiffany Freund, community impact specialist, advancement office

Lily Funk '19, instructor of health and human performance (from admissions counselor). She has an M.S. in exercise science from Wichita State University.

Elisabeth Graber, director of the Center for Academic Development and assistant professor of educational access and literacy (from instructor of English). She has an M.S. in curriculum and instruction from Emporia State University and a graduate certificate in English literature and composition pedagogy from Wichita State University, where she is pursuing a doctoral degree.

Camryn Harrison '21, director of first-year residential programs and student activities (from coordinator of first-year residential programs and special assistant to the VP for Student Life)

Joseph Husong, assistant vice president for Employment Experiences and student success (from director of student success and retention). He has an Ed.D. from the University of Dayton.

Hannah Jones, admissions counselor

Josh Lawson, head football coach

Drannon Lenox '22, assistant athletic trainer

Jim Lipocky, head women's soccer coach

Cheyenne Lisle '23, assistant athletic trainer

Mike Lockhart, assistant track coach

Kathy Murphy, Kauffman Museum visitor and education services coordinator

Laci Ownbey '25, assistant volleyball coach

Daniel Raschke, visiting assistant professor of English. He has a Ph.D. in English literature, media and culture from Florida State University.

Eric Reid, graphic design coordinator (from assistant basketball coach). He remains coordinator of outreach programs.

Larry Rice, director of residential life and student engagement (from coordinator of residence life for programming and first-year experience)

Jose Rojas '22, assistant men's soccer coach

Michael Schemenaur, assistant professor of economics. He has a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Arizona.

Kristine (Flaming) Schmucker '88, Kauffman Museum collections manager

Ciara Schott, head cheer coach

Madison Schrock, assistant professor of biology. She has a Ph.D. in biology from the University of Utah.

Jara Shoemaker, head women's basketball coach (from assistant coach)

Aimee Voth Siebert '10, assistant professor of psychology. She has an M.A. in international disaster psychology from the University of Denver.

Drametrice Smith, assistant football coach

Emily Timperley, director of marketing and communications. She continues as social media and multi-media coordinator.

Karin Kaufman Wall '95, director of alumni engagement

Angie Webb, assistant professor of education and director of elementary education. She has an M.S. in instructional design technology from Emporia State University.

Sheridan Weinbrenner, student success coach. She continues as career counselor.

Jocelyn Wilkinson '14, associate registrar. She continues as technical director of theater.

Allison Worley, assistant women's soccer coach

Juan Zamora, head men's soccer coach (from assistant coach)



1. Kyndall Longman, left, and Kaylee Linnebur; 2. Marlie Cooper, left, and Carley Littell in the Fall Fest parade; 3. Jack; 4. The women's cross country team with special guests Katelyn (Fatten) Wilson '19, former assistant coach, after finishing the Fall Fest color run; (1-5) AVA BROXTERMAN



ade; 3. Travis Reuter from Speed Sketchers KC draws a caricature portrait of Mary Johnson and baby Sadie
coach, and Kennedy Wilson, in the Fall Fest Parade; 5. Visitor Jazmyne Ford, Julie Wilhite and Caleb Koontz
6. The Golden Thresher Class of 1975
N (6) COURTESY PHOTO



Merry Christmas

from Bethel College



BETHEL
COLLEGE

300 East 27th Street
North Newton, Kansas
67117-1716

80TH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE REEDLEY BETHEL ALUMNI BANQUET

SATURDAY, JAN. 31, 2026

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, REEDLEY, CALIF.

CORNERSTONE DAY

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026

Cornerstone Day is 24 hours set aside for the Bethel community to support the college's mission and future. An opportunity for alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends to make contributions that directly strengthen Bethel's programs, scholarships and student experiences. A reminder of the strong bonds we share with Bethel and the lasting impact of the college on our lives.

Because the fall semester is already so full, Cornerstone Day has moved from its original date of Oct. 12 to the third Tuesday in April.

By participating in Cornerstone Day, you help ensure Bethel College continues to thrive and make a difference for generations of students.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION IN YOUR INBOX THIS SPRING!

75TH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE BETHEL / WUPPERTAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

BETHEL COLLEGE CONCERT CHOIR

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2026, CITYKIRCHE ST. ANTONIUS, WUPPERTAL