

News to Note

Carolyn Schneider (Fall 2011) is currently living in Cairo, Egypt and teaching at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. Carolyn writes, "My students are all responsible grown-ups working in various ministries. It's wonderful to be in class with them. I have been visiting them at their places of work so that I can get to know their world."

She notes, "What a change Cairo is from the tranquil setting of the Institute! The political situation is tense here, as demonstrations continue and elections for the president lie ahead. [However], I am trying to ensure that I can continue working on the project I started at Collegeville [by] registering to use the two big research libraries here in Cairo."



Carolyn (second from left) is pictured above with one of the students, Ayad Babawi. Ayad is explaining his work to Mark Nygard, the seminary's director of graduate studies, Carolyn, and Pastor Melad Markos.

Angelique Walker-Smith, former short-term scholar (Spring 2011), wrote the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. remembrance homily for the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. In addition, her homily was chosen as the front cover submission for the January 2012 issue of *Ecumenical Trends*, a journal published by Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute.

INSIDE
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Former scholar is Bishop-elect

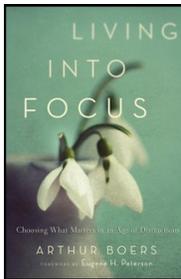
Former resident scholar **Ann Svennungsen** was recently elected Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Ann and her husband **Bill Russell** were resident scholars during the 2010/11 academic year.

While at the Institute, Ann designed and directed the *Presidents' Pledge Against Global Poverty*.

Ann will be installed as bishop on May 6. Elected to a six-year term, she is the first woman to serve as bishop in any of the ELCA's six synods in Minnesota, and will be only the seventh female ELCA bishop out of 65 bishops across the country.

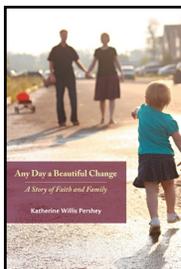
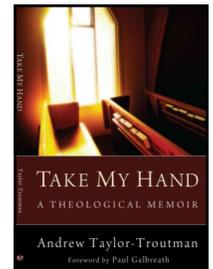
Ann is currently the interim pastor at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. Ann and Bill are the parents of three children.

The Book Nook



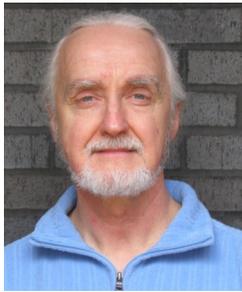
Arthur Boers' (Summer 2007, 2010) book, *Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions* was recently published by Brazos Press (2012). Arthur writes, "I'm convinced that a lot of the spiritual hunger and searching in our culture has to do with the sense of busyness and being off balance that so many of us feel. So I've written a book to explore what it is we long for, what factors today get in the way of that, and good ways forward." **Eugene Peterson**, summer workshop facilitator, short-term scholar, and Institute friend, wrote the foreword.

Andrew Taylor-Troutman's (Summer 2011) first book, *Take My Hand: A Theological Memoir*, was recently published by Resource Publications/Wipf and Stock Publishers (2012). Andrew wrote, "This is the project that I worked on with the help of Michael Dennis Browne and my co-participants in the *Believing in Writing* workshop last summer. I am grateful to Collegeville Institute for being an important part of this process."



Katherine Willis Pershey's (Summer 2009, 2010) book, *Any Day a Beautiful Change: A Story of Faith and Family* was published by Chalice Press (2012). According to Katherine, the idea for this memoir about ministry and motherhood was "hatched in preparation for the 2009 *Writing and the Pastoral Life* workshop and I worked on it during my stay." Katherine returned to the Institute the following summer to continue writing, and says, "I couldn't have done it without the Collegeville Institute."

What Happened to Me at Collegeville



By Vance Morgan

Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Development of Western Civilization Program for the Core Curriculum, Providence College

Presented on Easter Sunday, April 8, 2012 during a return visit to campus.

During the first five months of 2009, I spent a sabbatical semester as a resident scholar at the Collegeville Institute. My academic plans were set; a well-defined book project was ready to be written. But upon arrival, it gradually became clear to me that something else was going on. For most of my 50 plus years, I had struggled with the conservative, fundamentalist Protestant Christianity in which I was raised. What became clear was that what I thought was a long-term, low-grade spiritual dissatisfaction had become, without my being aware of it, a full blown spiritual crisis. Beneath my introverted, overly cerebral surface my soul was asking the same question that John the Baptist sent some of his followers to ask Jesus—“Are you the one, or is it time to look for another?”

The answer developed quietly, subtly, unheralded, over the weeks and months. As I tested the waters of daily prayer with the monks at St. John’s Abbey, I noticed a space of silence and peace slowly opening inside of me that I had never known. No voices, no visions, no miracles—but I was writing differently. The low grade anger that had accompanied me for most of my life began to dissipate. I felt more and more like a whole person instead of a cardboard cutout of one. The world looked different. I felt different. Eventually a few of my colleagues said “you’re not the same person you were when you first got here.” And they were right—I wasn’t. I began spending more time with the monks at prayer, often three times daily. Essays began to flow from a place I didn’t recognize, but really liked. Little had changed outwardly, but everything was changing.

As the day of returning to Rhode Island drew near, I was worried. Would these changes be transferable to my real life? Would this space of centeredness and peace be available in the middle of a typical 80-90 hour work week in the middle of a semester? Or would these changes soon be a fond memory, to be filed in an already overfull internal regret file? Two days before leaving, I attended daily mass. During the homily, the Benedictine presider quoted St. Catherine of Genoa, who said “**My deepest me is God.**” This was the answer. The space of quietness, silence and peace that had opened up inside of me, the one I’d never known—is God. I was stunned. Tears filled my eyes. I tingled all over. I’m tingling all over right now. Because what I had been looking for is here. And it **is** transferable. Trust me.

Jesus’s answer to John’s question was “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.” I used to think that this is all well and good, but **I’ve** never seen a blind person healed, **I’ve** never seen a cripple stand and walk. But I was looking in the wrong place. Because although I don’t see perfectly, I’m a little less blind than I was. My frequent tone-deafness to the needs of others is getting a little better. My inner cripple is now walking with a limp. Some days I even think I know what Lazarus must have felt like as his sisters started to unwrap his grave clothes.

Centuries ago, Meister Eckhart asked “What good is it for me that Christ was born a thousand years ago in Bethlehem, **if he is not born today in our own time?** The answer to that pressing question? **He is born today. In us.**

Yes, God became flesh. And God continues to be incarnated in you, in me. This is our heritage and the promise to us. Our deepest me is God. As William Wordsworth wrote, “**But trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home.**” This place, in the middle of nowhere Minnesota, unexpectedly became my spiritual home. It’s great to be back.