



Where did you and Ashlee grow up?

Ashlee: I was raised on a small farm near the community of Lashburn, Saskatchewan, about 20 minutes east of Lloydminster. The farm was homesteaded by my great-grandfather in the early 1900's. The town of Lashburn had a population of about 500 people.

Jeffrey: My family moved around a little as I grew up because of my dad's work in educational administration. Valleyview, a town of about 2000 near Grande Prairie, was where I grew up.

How did you become followers of Jesus?

Both Jeffrey and Ashlee had the privilege of Christian parents and roots in the Christian faith that extends back several generations. Ashlee committed her life to Jesus at a young age, and began working out the implications of that decision through her teen years. For Jeffrey, an early childhood commitment also matured during his teen years. Their local churches were a huge factor in their Christian development.

Who was instrumental in helping you discern God's calling in your life?

Ashlee: My parents were instrumental for me. They were always there to listen and encourage. As well, my Uncle Doug and Auntie Betts Unruh, and a mentor, Teresa

Williams, and several others in the church played significant roles by challenging me to think beyond limitations, and expectations.

Jeffrey: My parents were key people. Many times my dad would challenge me to pursue and discern **The'** truth and not be satisfied with any counterfeits. I see this modelled in his life.

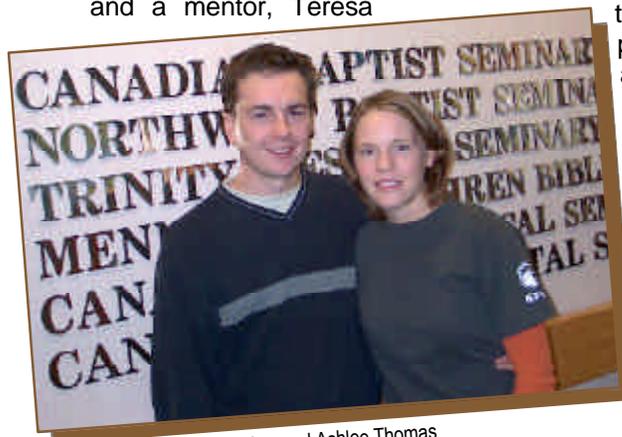
Jeffrey and Ashlee Thomas relocated to Vancouver so that Jeffrey could begin studies at Northwest@ACTS this September. He has enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies program with a specialization in Contemporary Christian Apologetics

A youth pastor I had in high school, Mike, showed me what it meant to make Jesus the priority in my life through hard work and consistent effort.

What challenges have you faced in accepting God's direction to attend Seminary?

Ashlee: Probably the biggest challenge involves discerning and reconnecting into a supportive Christian community. We were so blessed in Lloydminster with wonderful families – natural and spiritual – and we sense the need to develop similar connections here. We know only a few people and so this will be an exciting adventure and challenge. Then as God directs, we wonder how we will establish the kind of ministry He wants us to pursue. How will it be funded? Where should it be established? Who will partner with us?

Some have told us that the ministry of Christian Apologetics can be very discouraging - often being challenged, both by believers and non-believers, regarding the au-



Jeffery and Ashlee Thomas

thority of God and Scripture.

As you have come to Seminary, what vision has God given to you? What is it that you want to accomplish for Him?

Jeffrey: We have a passion to help young people develop a strong Christian identity. In our experience, growing up as Christians in a secular school system, we faced many challenges – intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual. Discovering and expressing our Christian identity was difficult, but we managed with the support of our families and churches. Young people need good models. Unfortunately many youth, both Christian and non-Christian, come from fragmented families and lack good models, morals, and beliefs. They are challenged every day and they need help to find rest in Christ. We want to help them discover truthful, affirming answers to their questions and nurture them in their development of a strong Christian identity.

In our view, young people represent our core future leaders. Their futures will determine the future of the world. So we need to reach them today and foster Christian growth by demonstrating radical obedience to Christ, and solid answers to those who would disparage the Christian faith. We think there are resources within the Church, particularly mature Christians, who have the wisdom necessary to help young people. We want to connect young people in relevant ways to this wisdom.

So I have enrolled in the Master of Theological Studies program, specializing in Contemporary Christian Apologetics to aid me to this end.

How do you see your educational training contributing to the health and vitality of the local church?

Jeffrey: In our complex society people need help to learn to analyse critically what is going on so they can learn how to respond Christianly and faithfully. Sometimes people sense danger in some current trend but react in fear and frustration because they cannot really discover what the problem is and how to develop a good Christian response. I want to help Christians in local churches understand their Christian worldview and encourage them to be change agents for God in our culture. I believe that spiritual and intellectual resources within the Seminary can prepare me to do that and in this

way serve churches and strengthen their people. I want to get these creative ideas into the minds and hearts of Christian people – to be the conduit for spiritual truth and encouragement.



Ashlee and Jeffrey chatting in Dr. Perkins' office

How can we pray for you?

Ashlee: God is good and we have confidence for His provision. However, we are praying for good accommodations and that I may find a good job - two things we are lacking - and that our financial needs will be met; but more importantly, that in the process of our training, God will help us to keep our marriage relationship strong.

Jeffrey: Life can be hard, but God is faithful. I pray that God will

continue to give us a clear vision for our future ministry and that we will take full advantage of the educational opportunity He has given us at Seminary. Please pray that God will help us apply what we learn to our own lives.

[Ashlee possesses a diploma in Administrative Assistance and Jeffrey has a BA in Bible and Theology from Prairie Bible College.]

NEW COHORT IN THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

This September Northwest@ACTS begins the second year of its new Doctor of Ministry program that helps mature ministry leaders reflect upon and deepen their understanding of ministry leadership and spiritual formation. Participants from Ontario, the United States and Western Canada enrich the learning experience. Two Fellowship Baptist leaders are involved – Pastor Colin van der Kuur (Castlegar) and Pastor Ricardo Domingo (Filipino Maranatha Baptist, Vancouver). Participants learn through online interaction, connected integrally with face-to-face seminar instruction. Each fall a spiritual retreat forms an integral part of the learning experience. Nine new students are beginning this fall.

ANNOUNCING THE 'BAPTIST IDENTITY' CONFERENCE SERIES

The J.H. Pickford Distinguished Chair in Theology of Northwest Baptist Seminary is pleased to announce a series of conferences on

Baptist Identity in the Canadian Context

The first conference is being planned as follows:

Date:.....**March 11-12, 2005**
 Theme:.....**Being Baptist in our Pluralist Canadian Culture**
 Featured Speaker:**Harold A. Netland, PhD**

*Harold A. Netland is professor of philosophy of religion and intercultural studies and the Naomi A. Fausch chair of missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Netland's areas of expertise include religious pluralism, epistemology of religion, apologetics, and missions in East Asia. He also speaks and writes Japanese. He is a member of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, the Evangelical Theological Society, and the American Academy of Religion. Netland's published works include *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* and *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission*, as well as numerous articles on missions, religious pluralism, and apologetics.*



Break out sessions will discuss the following relevant topics:

- *Lordship of Jesus: The scandal of particularity in the Canadian Baptist context*
- *Pluralism and Missions: Becoming a Baptist, 'missional church'*
- *Being a Religious Community Among Other Religious Communities: Sounding our voice*
- *Baptism in the Context of Religious Pluralism: Symbols of our identity*
- *Religious Pluralism and Baptist Ecclesiology- Opposing an ideology or an ideology of opportunity*

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM — DIPLOMA GRADUATION

Northwest YLTP Graduation —

Held at White Spot Restaurant

The evening of Thursday, September 23, 2004 saw a very different graduation format from what Northwest has witnessed in the past.

Four* of our **Y o u t h Leadership Training Program** students

completed their diploma level training through Northwest and we held a celebratory graduation meal together at the White Spot restaurant in Aldergrove, BC.

Each of these four men is involved in a mentored training relationship within a Fellowship Church as they have pursued their studies through the YLTP program at Northwest. Now they are continuing their education in a master's level program here at ACTS Seminaries.



Joel Neustaeter



Sam Bell



Paul Zalinko

*In Absentia—Rick Bugslag



Bruce Christensen chatting with the graduands at the graduation supper

The 'Heart for Ministry' Bible Study

Available January 2005

There are any number of people who begin to sense that God is leading them to expand their leadership potential. *Heart for Ministry* is a three-month Bible-study designed to connect such Emerging Leaders with a Church-based Mentor. Using the familiar environment of a Bible-study, these partners will explore four critical issues as a way to "connect the dots" of God's leading:

- ▶ Assess the quality of heart and character that forms the foundation of Spiritual Leadership...
- ▶ Define the nature of Spiritual Leadership in terms of Christlike service...
- ▶ Discern the components of God's call to ministry....
- ▶ Discover personal God-given talents for ministry.

This study is intended to produce very tangible, personal outcomes, the type of discoveries that would allow a person to compose a personal life statement of purpose, and prepare the person for the next step: designing a personal program of ministry leadership development.

The *Heart for Ministry* Bible Study will be available for use at any time during the year... It serves as a wonderful way for Emerging Leaders to discover a personal focus, and prepare for the next step... ***Pursuing God's Heart - Confirming God's Call...***

Pursuing God's Heart - Confirming God's Call

Retreat for Emerging Leaders—May 13-14, 2005

This retreat challenges men and women to consider expanding their abilities to respond to God's Call. Mentored by their pastor and affirmed in their ministry, these men and women show potential as future leaders. Over a Friday night and full Saturday, this retreat will enable participants to assess God's leading in their lives. Participants will be able to assess their own suitability for ministry and will be empowered to access the opportunities to grow to their next level of influence in the Kingdom of God.



Dr. Lyle Schrag—Director of NCFLD

This important event is built around two intentions:

- ▶ *Clarify the elements of personal direction:* participants will be able to express their personal life plan
- ▶ *Design a personal course of growth* participants will be presented with the available resources to equip them for further growth and future ministry.

With the support of the Ministry Centre of FEBBCY and Northwest Baptist Seminary, each participant will be able to appreciate the needs and opportunities to grow in service.

KHIDMUT: MISSIONS TRAINING THAT FACES THE ISSUES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

In the context of today's cultural milieu, how does one prepare effective and experienced international workers for God's kingdom? ***Khidmut***, from an Arabic/Urdu word meaning "service" or "ministry," is a joint project between Northwest Baptist Seminary and FEBInternational which utilizes the multi-ethnic environment within Canada, the academic excellence through NBS, the expertise of Gateway in cross-cultural and interpersonal relationships, and the international experience of FEBInternational to prepare people both academically and practically for overseas missions.

Missions is the activity of the local church and so the invitation is to *churches*, with candidates to whom they are committed, to join with NBS and FEBI in a training program that will result in equipped and competent missionaries sent to the field in a cost-efficient manner.

These are the key features:

- ▶ experienced-based development of ministry skills in cross-cultural settings
- ▶ on-site support and guidance of an experienced mentor
- ▶ biblical and theological education towards an accredited master's degree
- ▶ financial feasibility with the development of a support base with FEBI

If your church has someone with obvious heart and ability for cross-cultural ministry and who has a minimum of two years undergraduate studies, please contact Mark Naylor. Students who wish to begin the program in September, 2005 need to begin the application process soon. NBS and FEBI have a strong desire to ensure that your church's missions agenda is fulfilled through the individuals that God has gifted and placed within your midst.



Mark and Karen Naylor—Director of Khidmut

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

DR. LARRY PERKINS

Conserving Re-Formers

New ideas seem to emerge these days with increasing frequency. Old ways are critiqued, debased, and often discarded because of a desire to try new things. Sometimes the new ways are better, but sometimes they are not. In the realm of theological ideas and movements how does the church find its way through this ideological turbulence – so that as Paul says we are not “tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming”(Ephesians 4:14)?

Paul places clear responsibility for the theological health of the church in the hands of ministry leaders. But how are such qualified and effective ministry leaders to be developed so that they guide the church towards theological clarity and vitality? This is where seminaries find their role and function. To prepare ministry leaders well seminaries need to be conservers of theology, deeply aware of the church's theological centre and passionately committed to its careful teaching and preservation as expressed in God's Word.

Unfortunately twentieth century seminary history is littered with examples of seminaries that have not served the church well in this regard. Instead of helping the church discern its foundational beliefs and contextualize them well in the midst of social change, the seminary has sided too much with the new and discarded key elements of the churches' theological core convictions. Churches lost confidence and established new ministry preparation centres.

Northwest Baptist Seminary was birthed in the midst of such controversy, as Baptist churches in Western Canada struggled to prepare ministry leaders who were committed to their core beliefs and passionate about church planting and evangelism. This was and remains Northwest's mission. As we enter our sixty-fourth year of equipping effective ministry leaders, we take seriously the charge entrusted to us as conservers of our theological convictions and the mandate to pass on these convictions with passion to a new generation of spiritual leaders. Continuity in this regard is critical to the health of our churches and the vigour of our denominational vision.

The task of conservation, however, does not mean fossilization. Baptists have arisen from Reformation forces. They desire to be a re-forming church movement in the sense that they keep evaluating their beliefs and practices on the basis of God's Word. So while we hold carefully to our historic convictions, we concurrently want to calibrate these convictions to the truth of God's Word.



Church history teaches us that believers have not always got it right and God's Spirit continues to teach and guide His church. So alongside of the commitment to conservation, there is also the responsibility to be a prophetic voice within the church, calling it to re-form as God's Word may indicate. Discerning the direction of re-form requires great wisdom and careful consultation with pastoral and denominational leaders.

Northwest Baptist Seminary seeks to fill this responsibility of prophetic conservation among our churches with integrity and sensitivity. For example, our faculty are involved in assisting our churches develop a statement on Marriage that will give our churches a clear voice on this issue today. The **Baptist Vision Conference (March 11-12/05 — see page 3)** represents another way in which our faculty will help our ministry leaders explore and reflect upon Baptist worldview issues. In such ways we contribute to the formation of good ministry leaders who know our Baptist theological convictions, but who also are committed fervently to obeying God's Word. Fulfilling the role of a 'conserving re-former' (a necessary creative tension) requires prayerful wisdom and a keen heart for the health and welfare of our churches and their ministry leadership teams.

J.H. Pickford Distinguished Chair in Theology

Northwest has a distinguished chair in theology that is named after one of our very own Fellowship 'conserver/re-formers' and former Northwest President - Dr. J.H. Pickford. In a final address to the school he observed, *"...we are in real danger of forgetting our history, and being drawn into the swirl of contemporary nothingness that denies our peculiar position.... The uniqueness of our position arises from our convictions about the great historic truths. We refuse to hold these to be relative; to be alterable or to adulterate to suit changing conditions."*

"Jack and Alberta Pickford-Builders of a Baptist Legacy"—by Ian C. Bowie p.154

WWW.NBSEMINARY.COM

Parting so often brings with it a rueful mix of joys and sorrows...joys of new opportunities, new acquaintances and new challenges...but also the sorrows of goodbyes...of realizing that friendships must now continue from a distance.

We experienced some of these joys and sorrows here at Northwest this past month. **Susan Schlaak**, who, for the past five years has been the ever cheerful and consummately competent assistant to the president, has moved back to her home town of Sherwood Park, Alberta.

All of us at Northwest, in fact the entire ACTS Family will miss her! My desk has been adjacent to Sue's here in the Northwest office and in the past few weeks I found it very instructive to eavesdrop on the steady stream of well wishers who stopped by to let Sue know just how much they will miss her.



Susan Schlaak and Dianne Gleave enjoying a short break from three days of intensive orientation.

We do rejoice with Sue at the prospect of new horizons and new challenges. We know that she will meet anything that comes her way with the same smile and cheerful willingness as we have come to appreciate from her here.

May God bless you, Sue, and continue to make you a blessing.

The sorrow of a parting can be compensated by the joy of new acquaintances. In this light Northwest welcomes **Dianne Gleave** to the office. Dianne comes to us from Northwest Langley Fellowship Baptist Church. I am sure that as she takes up the role of assistant to the president, Northwest Langley's loss will be our gain. Welcome to the Northwest@ACTS family Dianne!! We are glad you have joined us and we are looking forward to getting to know you better in the days ahead.

PASTORS' & MENTORS' DAY

The Connecting Church is the theme of this Fall's Pastors' & Mentors' Day on October 25th. The keynote speaker will be **Randy Frazee**, senior pastor at Pantego Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas. Pantego Bible Church is well known for its work in spiritual formation and community. This event will be held at Broadway Church in Vancouver. More information can be found on the Northwest website at www.nbseminary.com.

NBS@ACTS FALL ENROLMENT

The ACTS Seminaries Fall semester is off to a great start. Our enrolment for 2004 currently stands at 351. This figure reflects a small decrease from last year. Keep praying for Northwest @ ACTS



Fall 2004 Student Orientation

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our financial year concludes December 31. Our goal is a balanced budget. To achieve this target we are trusting God for \$65,000 in gifts from those who support our ministry. To date we have received \$22,000 towards this goal. In the next four months we are trusting God to provide \$43,000. Your gifts would be received gratefully.

We are thankful that another believer, in planning their estate, made provision for the support of student financial aid. This gift will be in the range of \$60,000 when all matters are settled and will provide another \$3,000 annually towards the training of ministry leaders. Praise God.

EVENTS SPONSORED BY NORTHWEST

PASTORS' & MENTORS' DAY—THE CONNECTING CHURCH	OCTOBER 25, 2004
BAPTIST IDENTITY IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT CONFERENCE	MARCH 11, 12, 2005
EMERGING LEADERS' RETREAT—PURSUING GOD'S HEART—CONFIRMING GOD'S CALL	MAY 13, 14, 2005

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