

BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING

“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” Luke 24:45

Much of our formal programming is geared toward helping people understand the Bible and its related themes. This has traditionally included seasonal Bible studies offered by the seminary students doing their field education with us, our monthly luncheon lectures, and our annual Beck Lectures.

This year we brought the Beck lectures to Cape Cod for the first time and are actively trying to stagger our event locations to have a broader presence across the state. Beginning in 2009 we are also moving some of our monthly luncheon lectures outside of downtown Boston, taking our February lecture to Shrewsbury, our April lecture to Newton, and our June luncheon to the North Shore.

In May of 2008 we began filming our lectures and posting them on our website. All of our luncheon lectures as well as our two Beck Lectures are there. As of this writing, videos on our website have been viewed 1101 times, providing quality content to anyone in the world who visits our site.

This year also saw the first presentation of our Donald A. Wells Preaching Prize to a student in one of the BTI schools whose sermon was judged to be the best call to action for a social justice concern. This award, which came with a \$1,000 cash prize, was awarded to Bonnie J. Gatchell of Gordon-Conwell Theological School.

To enhance biblical understanding we also have created Ask-a-Prof. Thirty-five seminary professors from across the country as well as overseas have volunteered to answer questions about the Bible submitted through our site. The answers are posted on the site so that anyone can benefit from the responses. All questions receive multiple responses from any professor with the time and inclination at the moment to do so. This provides a diversity of perspective to help deepen understanding of the biblical texts.

Of course we are not the only ones offering biblical insights. In recognition of that, our Resource Director works to find books and other resources that might be helpful to our constituents and those who visit our website. Those who visit our online bookshop will find over 600 titles in 100 categories and can click through to make their purchase on Amazon.com, earning us a small percentage when they do so.

We continue to provide book tables at events and to do a small number of direct book sales, helping to get good information into the hands of the public. Beginning July 1, 2009 we will be formal partners with the bookstore at Andover Newton Theological School for our book tables and fulfillment of orders outside of the website.

This year we also partnered with The Boston Faith and Justice Network to bring a panel of speakers together for a discussion of economic justice. With a standing-room only crowd of young people at University Lutheran Church in Cambridge, the issues of the day were addressed from the perspective of biblical justice, living simply, and expressing gratitude.

Perhaps the biggest step forward in the area of biblical understanding was not in a program per se, but in the completion of the Massachusetts Bible Society Media Center at Andover Newton. Housed in the basement of the award-winning Wilson Chapel, we cut the ribbon on March 16, 2009. The DVD in the back of this booklet was produced through the

Center and represents a critical vehicle for MBS, the seminary and its students, and area churches to communicate biblical understanding.

In the past fiscal year we spent \$78,756 in the area of biblical understanding.

The Massachusetts Bible Society Media Center



**Rev. Anne Robertson
presents the check to ANTS
President, Nick Carter**

Through a \$500,000 grant from MBS, Andover Newton was able to open a state-of-the-art media center and television studio in the lower level of Wilson Chapel on campus. The MBS Media Center has full audio/visual recording, production, and broadcast capabilities. The ribbon cutting was held on March 16, 2009. This new facility will facilitate the MBS mission to promote biblical literacy and understanding using cutting-edge media technology. View a video about the Media Center on the enclosed DVD.

Beck Lectureship

Each fall, the Massachusetts Bible Society is proud to sponsor leading biblical scholars to present lectures in five different locations across the state. Past lecturers have included Barbara Brown Taylor, Walter Brueggemann, Marcus Borg, Joan Chittester, and many others.

Named for former Boston University professor Harrell F. Beck, three lectures are given in the evening, and two are luncheons. The evening lectures are free, while a donation and reservations are requested for the luncheons.

The 2008 Beck Lectures featured three evening lectures presented by Rev. Peter Gomes of Memorial Church at Harvard University. His topic was: *The Trouble with Scripture: What's So Good About the Good News?* Rev. Gomes lectures were held at the following locations:

October 19th - Federated Church of Hyannis, Hyannis

October 20th - Helen Hills Chapel at Smith College, Northampton

October 21st - Old West United Methodist Church, Boston

The two luncheon lectures were presented by Representative Byron Rushing, an active layman in the Episcopal Church who serves in the Ninth Suffolk District in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives. Rep. Rushing's topic was: *The Trouble with Scripture: The Politics*. The luncheon lectures were held at the following locations:

October 20th - Old South Church, Boston

October 21st - Western New England College, Springfield