

Comment

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ONE BOOK, MANY VOICES

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One thing that has yet to be selected is an appropriate graphic for the phrase. See the opposing column for a description of the contest we are sponsoring to find just the right artwork to represent our vision.

In my new position, I am also charged with giving us a greater presence in local churches. Watch in the coming months for a brand new website with greater interactive capabilities and an expanded set of benefits for our partner churches and individual members. I have also made myself available to speak at your church or religious group. As my schedule allows, I will gladly preach on a Sunday, do a retreat or workshop, or talk to a group about one of my book topics or other biblically-related themes. Just call or e-mail to find a date. Any honoraria for such work in the state of Massachusetts will go to MBS.

I'm excited about what the future holds for MBS and for the "many voices" we are committed to hearing.

Wishing you the joy and blessing of Christ,

Rev. Anne Robertson

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DESIGN OUR NEW LOGO!

MBS is pleased to announce a contest to design our new logo. As we approach our 200th anniversary in 2009, we are looking for a way to visually represent our new slogan, "One Book, Many Voices." We would like a pair of images: one to be used as our anniversary poster and another simpler but related piece to become our new logo.

"One book" obviously refers to the Bible. "Many voices" can and does mean many things: those voices speaking in the texts, those voices who have spoken the texts, and those voices that hear the texts still speaking are only a few.

Please submit the two related graphics (poster and logo), along with appropriate contact information, electronically in .jpg format or via regular mail to our offices at 14 Beacon St., Suite 510, Boston, MA 02108, Attn: Poster/logo contest. Entrants must be 18 years of age and legal U.S. residents. The winning work will be selected by the Board of Trustees of the Society based on their opinion of its creative representation of the vision expressed above. For full information and legal disclosure, please visit our website at www.massbible.org.

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From the Executive Director: Anne Robertson

ONE BOOK, MANY VOICES

As I write this, I've been on the job almost a month, and what fun I'm having! A special thank you to Don Wells for the grace he has shown me in the transition and for the amazing work he has done across his 19-year tenure here. His work in preparation has made my entry ever so much easier.

Some of you I have met, others I look forward to meeting as time goes by, but I hope all of you will contact me as you have ideas for ways that MBS can help you and/or your church better understand and communicate the Word of God. Each of you is included in the "many voices" of the new MBS byline: "One Book, Many Voices."

Of course the words also represent much more. While the "one book" is obviously the Bible, "many voices" is the way we acknowledge that our approach to Scripture is not monolithic.

We acknowledge that each of the biblical authors writes from a unique and personal perspective and that what was written generally came from what was first told orally across the ages. We hear the voices that speak in Scripture, but we also search and prod for voices that are only hinted at, encouraging the scholarship that might unearth those whose stories and perspectives are either muffled or absent.

"Many voices" also speaks of our openness to the enormous variety in biblical interpretation and criticism, both currently and historically. From those that a strict orthodoxy would view as heretics to those trying to be heard from the margins of today's world, we are committed to providing a safe platform for all to speak the truth of the "one book" as they have experienced it.

From my perspective, a faith that cannot hear a different or opposing view is too weak to carry me through this life. Who knows? I might discover that I have been (gulp!) wrong! A little humility goes a long way toward a better world. I won't just swallow whole everything I hear, but at least in my life so far, hearing those other voices has made me a better human being and has changed my mind on not a few things! Listening to the "many voices" that swirl in and around the "one book" keeps the Bible relevant, challenging, completely scary, and very much alive.

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Anne Robertson Joins MBS as Executive Director



Rev. Anne Robertson

The Massachusetts Bible Society is pleased to welcome Rev. Anne Robertson as Executive Director. Rev. Robertson officially joined the staff in the offices at 14 Beacon Street on Tuesday, April 17, 2007.

A Rhode Island native, Rev. Robertson is a graduate of Bucknell University with a B.A. in German and English. After working at a rare book library in Rhode Island, as a marketing director for a small press in Maryland, and as a trade book manager for a bookstore in Florida, Anne followed her call to ministry and earned her M. Div. at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Ordained as an Elder in the United Methodist Church, Rev. Robertson has served churches in Florida, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Rev. Robertson comes to the Society with strong experience in the field of biblical interpretation. She is the author of two books, *Blowing the Lid Off the God-Box* and *God's Top 10: Blowing the Lid Off the Commandments*. Winner of the Wilbur C. Ziegler Award for Excellence in Preaching, a number of her sermons have been published.

Anne brings a passion for stewardship, animals, and the arts as well as a love for technology that will help move MBS into the world of interactive media. Visit her website at www.annerobertson.com to subscribe to her email devotional or podcast. §

2007 Harrell Beck Lectureship

with

Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor

October 21-23, 2007

Details on page 2...

Boston Luncheons Continue...

The Society's luncheons for business and professional people provide an ecumenical setting for those who work in the Boston and Cambridge area to share a meal together and hear a presentation on biblical and theological themes to help empower faithful living.

Upcoming luncheons include:



Rev. Dr. Kirk B. Jones

♦ On Wednesday, June 20th, **Rev. Dr. Kirk B. Jones**, Adjunct Professor at Andover Newton Theological School, will speak on the theme *The Holy Play of Creating Your Purpose With God*. Determining one's calling in life can be an exuberant process of mining one's deepest desires that delight the God who wishes to inspire our choices, not dictate them. Come listen to Rev. Jones' ideas on how co-creating your purpose with God can lead to true joy.

♦ On Tuesday, July 17th, **Rev. Anne Robertson**, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Bible Society, will speak on the theme *Blowing the Lid Off the God-Box*. Explore the ways in which we try to limit what God can do and be in our world. From our images of God to forms of worship, social and political agendas, scripture and salvation, open the lid to find a bigger God.



Rev. Anne Robertson

♦ There is no program in August.

Reservations are needed for these luncheons. Please call (617) 542-2230, or e-mail admin@massbible.org. The suggested donation is \$10.00. We would be pleased to add your name to the luncheon mailing list via post or e-mail. §

2007 SEMINARY AWARDS

Each year, the Massachusetts Bible Society presents the *Award for Excellence in Liturgical Reading of the Scriptures* to graduating students at area seminaries and colleges, selected by their school's faculty, in order to recognize the importance of the oral reading of the Scriptures and to encourage a growing commitment to excellence in oral reading and interpretation by both clergy and laity.

This year's recipients: **Jennifer Munroe-Nathans**, Andover Newton Theological School; **Jill Rogati**, Gordon College; **Kristen Lee Forbes**, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; **John McCarthy**, Harvard Divinity School; **Katharine Gerne**, Weston Jesuit School of Theology; **Teva Regule**, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology; **John Tenhula**, Episcopal Divinity School; **Ami Sawtelle**, Boston University School of Theology; **Mark Wilson**, Bangor Theological Seminary. §

Beck Lecturer 2007 October 21-23 Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor

Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor, Harry R. Butman Chair of Religion and Philosophy, Piedmont College, Demorest, Georgia, will deliver the 2007 Harrell Beck Lectures for the Massachusetts Bible Society.



Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor

Identical evening lectures will be given at First Parish Church in Weston (Sunday, October 21st); at Smith College in Northampton (Monday, October 22nd); and at the First Baptist Church in Worcester (Tuesday, October 23rd). These lectures are free and open to the public. Each evening lecture will be signed for the hearing impaired.

In addition, two luncheon lectures, to which both clergy and laity are invited, will be held on Monday, October 22nd at Old South Church, Boston, and on Tuesday, October 23rd at Western New England College, Springfield. A flier with complete details will be available in early July. §

New England Preaching Academy Rolling Ridge Retreat Center July 11-13, 2007

Join the **Rev. Mr. Curtis Brown**, Director of Congregational Development in the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church, the **Rev. Dr. Matthew Myer Boulton**, Professor at Harvard Divinity School, the **Rev. Ms. Elizabeth Myer Boulton**, Pastor of Hope Church in Jamaica Plain, and MBS Executive Director the **Rev. Ms. Anne Robertson** for a weekend designed to inspire with new preaching ideas, enliven with dynamic worship experiences, and renew with time for reflection and retreat.

Designed to be a time of educational experiences, spiritual renewal, and quiet retreat, this three-day workshop will offer "preaching skills" classes in the morning for learning new ideas and "preaching colloquy groups" for practice and feedback. All participants will also be invited to join daily conversations on worship, preaching, and life.

There will be ample opportunity to enjoy the Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, which offers a variety of opportunities including massage, reiki, walking the labyrinth, and many outdoor activities on the center's 38-acre property.

The registration deadline is July 1, 2007. For more information, visit the Rolling Ridge website at www.rollingridge.org or call (978) 682-8815. §

Update on the Grants Program

The Society continues to provide Bibles and other related study materials to churches, prison and hospital chaplaincies, homeless shelters, and other similar institutions to assist in their outreach ministry. Recent grants have been made to:

Children's Hospital, Boston (25 Spanish Bibles for use by the chaplain with Spanish-speaking patients at the hospital); **Plymouth County Correctional Facility, Plymouth** (224 NIV Bibles for use in chapel services and Bible study programs for inmates facilitated by the chaplain); **Norfolk County Sheriff's Office, Dedham** (40 Good News Bibles and 20 Spanish Bibles for ministry to both the pre-trial and sentenced populations of the facility); **Massachusetts Treatment Center, Bridgewater** (50 NIV Bibles, 10 Portuguese Bibles, and 50 Spanish Bibles for Bible study groups and other programs with sex offenders); **Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, Brighton** (25 NRSV Bibles and

Appreciation from a Grant Recipient...

Again, the Catholic Community at Norfolk State Prison would like to thank all of you for your generous donation of Bibles.

Each year our Catholic Community grows both in body and spirit. The Bibles that you send are used by the inmates in the many various religious programs that we offer, including scripture courses, Catholic Home Study courses, prayer groups, and theological reflection groups. We are especially grateful for your recent donation of Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese Bibles.

Your gift is deeply appreciated by our brothers in prison. Thank you for your continued kindness to us.

Ruth Raichle
Catholic Chaplain, MCI-Norfolk

25 NAB St. Joseph's Bibles for ministry to patients); **Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, Jamaica Plain** (62 Bibles in various translations, 30 Good News New Testaments, 25 Spanish Bibles, and 5 Tanakhs for ministry at this inpatient psychiatric and medical hospital, including the Department of Corrections unit); **Straight Ahead Ministries, Worcester** (312 New Living Bibles for ministry with DYS youth involved in the many programs of Straight Ahead ministries); **Habitat for Humanity, Boston** (1 HarperCollins NRSV Study Bible and 2 Spanish Bibles for presentation to new homeowners); **Esperanza Academy, Lawrence** (50 Good News Bibles, 10 HarperCollins NRSV Study Bibles, and 12 Spanish Bibles for use in religion classes at this newly-formed school for young women, many of whom are ethnic minorities).

These Grants are made possible by gifts from individuals and Partner Churches. By the close of Fiscal Year 2007, which ends June 30, we will have given some \$55,000 worth of Bibles to various institutions and projects. §

A Message To Be Encouraged: A Book Review of Brian McLaren's *The Secret Message of Jesus* by Anne Robertson

What is a self-proclaimed evangelical doing in the pages of Comment?

McLaren's title, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, conjures up thoughts of the various Gnostic Gospels and writings where you might expect to find Elaine Pagels on the cover. As you read, however, you find that McLaren is dealing only with the canonical texts, saying simply that the Gospels we have are much more radical and challenging than their extra-canonical cousins. Which is what makes McLaren's book so refreshing and makes me, as a progressive, want to encourage him. Here is someone who, at least at present, has the ear of the evangelical community. And he is saying this:

"Instead of being about the kingdom of God coming to earth, the Christian religion has too often become preoccupied with abandoning or escaping the earth and going to heaven. Too often its members have forgotten the teachings of Jesus about making peace and turning the other cheek and crossing boundaries to serve people formerly considered 'outsiders.' We have instead launched or baptized wars, perpetuated racism, and defended an unjust status quo. We have betrayed the message that the kingdom of God is available for all, beginning with the least and the last and the lost—and have instead believed and taught that the kingdom of God is available for the elite, beginning with the correct and the clean and the powerful."

McLaren quotes Walter Wink and proclaims that the book of Revelation is not a coded blueprint for the future. While there are places where he slips back into traditional evangelical theology and rhetoric, when a card-carrying evangelical says,

"...if you start expanding the borders and working for a God-centered inclusive and reconciling network of relationships, you will quickly find that there are plenty of people willing to insult you, imprison you, torture you, and kill you. They prefer the rigid boundaries and impermeable walls of their narrow domains and constricted turf, not God's purposefully inclusive kingdom that calls the least 'the greatest' and welcomes the outcast,"

then I, for one, can overlook substitutionary atonement theories. So, preach it, Brian McLaren, at least one progressive has got your back.

MBS Book Services

Our physical bookstore may be closed, but we still offer a full line of Bibles and Iona Community books!
Contact Mike Colyott for all your religious books needs!
(617) 542-2224 or mcolyott@massbible.org