

# ROOTED

## A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE MATTHEW PETERSON

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## Unity in the Spirit?

As I write this resource, the United States is currently in the final stretch of yet another eventful presidential election. Such election seasons tend to raise the social temperature, as campaign rhetoric, horse race journalism, and social media algorithms combine to drive American citizens to both polls and poles. And while votes are cast on a single day, the effects of election season polarization endure. Within the past fifteen years, polarization of American society in general and American politics in particular has reached critical levels.

Such is the context of our discipleship as Brethren in Christ in the twenty first century. God has called us into community with one another, placing us in families, communities, and congregations where polarization is both a present reality and a persistent threat. We live, work, and worship in a world filled with messages of hatred and fear of others, whether at political rallies or in the palms of our hands. How can we hope to navigate the challenges of this season while keeping our churches, our workplaces, and our homes intact?

## Resource Spotlight

With this 9-session Small Group Study from Mennonite Central Committee U.S., your church will learn tools for healthy conversation & conflict resolution. Practice skills in empathetic listening, debate moderation, and more with this helpful resource.

**Available (for free) at:**

<https://mcc.org/resources/peaceful-practices-guide-healthy-communication-conflict>



**Peaceful Practices**  
A guide to healthy communication in conflict



The theme of this newsletter is **Unity in the Spirit**. Now, unity is not the same thing as *uniformity*. Differences of opinion will abound in any church, whether the differences are about theology, politics, sport teams, or pot luck dishes. Such diversity should be appreciated as the result of God's bringing together a people out of all the nations. But where these differences go awry is when they become the center of our identities and begin to threaten the unity to which Christ calls us.

*"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose"*

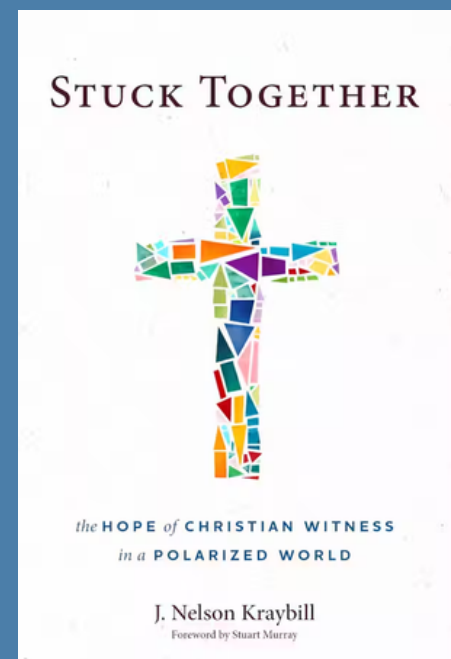
**1 Corinthians 1:10**

Although the circumstances were quite different, a parallel to our present day can be found in the first century churches of Corinth, where factionalism took root and brought in disunity and quarreling. Writing to these churches, the apostle Paul called for them to be "knit together" or "established" (in the Greek, *καταρτίζω/katartizo*) with a shared mind and a single goal that transcended their factions and was rooted in their shared love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

To pursue such unity required a shift in their thinking. And as is often the case in the Scriptures, this shift in thinking was best achieved by a change in the imagery with which they described themselves. At some point these churches had embraced the image of factions: being *of Paul*, *of Peter*, or *of Apollos*. Such images placed unity within the bounds of shared opinion rather than Christian devotion.

## Recommended Read:

In this book, J. Nelson Kraybill, former president of the Mennonite World Conference and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, writes about the good news that God aims to "*bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ*" (Ephesians 1:8-10). This message, coupled with stories from Scripture and Kraybill's own ministry contexts, is designed to help churches pursue reconciliation together - for the healing of their own communities and for the wider world.





In place of factions Paul challenged his readers to embrace the image of the church community as a temple: *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). It is not enough to think of the church community as a place where individuals gather once a week. We are God’s temple-people, together a dwelling place for his Holy Spirit. Like the bricks of an ancient temple, we can be united within the scope of our differences, and withstand each of the trials that come our way. Or we can embrace the division that the world seeks to impose on us, and so fall into ruin.

## A Model for Conflict Resolution

We are called to unity. But what are some practical steps that we can take to pursue unity when the political culture frames so much of our lives along dramatic and even violent lines? We are blessed with a helpful model for navigating high-stakes issues in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts. At the famous **Jerusalem Council** the earliest Christian leaders assembled to address a most contentious issue: *does God demand that the Gentiles embrace circumcision and food laws?* This debate

## Events Calendar:

### DQ & You: A Doctrinal Questionnaire Primer

**October 15, 2024 - 8:30 Eastern / 7:30 Central (Zoom)**

This session is designed to introduce the *Doctrinal Questionnaire* for BIC U.S. Great Lakes Conference ministers working through their credentialing process. Learn about the DQ requirements and work through responses to the section on The Scriptures.

**More Info at:** [www.theseed.online/credentialing](http://www.theseed.online/credentialing)

### Pursuing Peace in a Messy World

**November 15, 2024 (Grantham, PA)**

Drawing on our historic and biblical convictions as Brethren in Christ, this study conference seeks to renew our shared commitment to Christ’s way of nonviolent love and to equip attendees to face the challenges of pursuing peace in a messy world.

**More Info at:** [https://www.messiah.edu/info/20266/conferences\\_and\\_events/330/brethren\\_in\\_christ\\_study\\_conferences](https://www.messiah.edu/info/20266/conferences_and_events/330/brethren_in_christ_study_conferences)



was undoubtedly more heated than the single chapter summary of Acts suggests. At stake in it was a sincere question about *identity*. Who are God’s people, and who is God, if he does not demand obedience to certain commands? It is no wonder that opposing camps lined up and were even chasing each other across the Near East.

From the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) we learn a model for conflict resolution themed around **Conversation, Prayer, and Spirit-Led Consensus**. The Council allowed members to share their experiences and their concerns, reflect on the Scriptures, and together to seek the Spirit’s leading through recent events. After such seeking, they moved forward together in unity.

Such a model can be helpful in our own context as we explore unity in a polarized world. As church communities, we should commit to postures of conversation, prayer, and Spirit-led consensus. Through such postures we can create space for healthy conflict resolution within the bounds of committed fellowship.

I believe that we saw this model on display at this year’s *General Assembly* meeting. Those of you who were present will no doubt recall that our plenary sessions were at times contentious. Providing space for conversation was an important way of ensuring that all viewpoints were heard. An environment of prayer helped us to receive these viewpoints within the right spirit, even when we were in strong disagreement. And, Lord willing, we will move forward in Spirit led consensus together on each of the issues we voted about. My prayer is that our churches might be blessed with an even stronger commitment to unity in this season.

**—Matthew Peterson**

*Theologian in Residence*  
**BIC U.S. Great Lakes Conference**



# Resource Spotlight

**Shalom! A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation,** vol. 40.1 (Winter 2020): *Making Peace When We Disagree*

Explore approaches to constructive conversations and conflict resolution with articles from across BIC U.S.

**Available upon request at:** <https://bicus.org/resources/publications/shalom>

**THIS ISSUE OF SHALOM!**

- Beyond Sticks and Stones 2
- Lay Your Political Weapons Down 3
- Waging Peace By Listening 4
- Listening to the Enemy 5
- MIDNIGHT MUSINGS 6
- Seeking to Understand 7
- Fostering Peace 8



# Ministry Credentialing

In its broadest sense, the term “minister” applies to all Christians. Each and every follower of Jesus is called to use his or her gifts in service to the Kingdom of God. In its more restrictive sense, “minister” refers to men and women who have been recognized by the Church as having a more specific call from God and have the appropriate character and gifts to fulfil that call. ***Encompassing licensing and ordination, our credentialing process is designed to equip ministers for ongoing, transformative ministry with the BIC U.S.***

## Why Credentialing?

A licensed or ordained minister is a person who has been recognized by the Church as having met the requirements for serving as an assigned minister in a ministry position within BIC U.S. or serving as an assigned minister in a ministry position recognized by BIC U.S. This credentialing includes the following steps:

## License Types

- 1

### Provisional License

Non-renewable 3-year license issued to persons who have completed application/screening and serve in an assigned ministry position.
- 2

### Ministry License

Renewable 6-year license issued to persons who have completed at least two *Core Courses* and the *Doctrinal Questionnaire* while actively serving in an assigned ministry position.
- 3

### Ordination

Renewable 6-year license issued to persons who have completed the *Core Courses* and *Minimum Education Requirements* while serving in an assigned ministry position.

**Doctrinal Questionnaire:** A written questionnaire designed to assess doctrinal and ministry compatibility with the BIC U.S. It is intended to be completed within one year of receiving a Provisional License & is followed by an Oral Interview.

## Core Courses

### BIC History & Values

- *History of the Brethren in Christ*
- *Theological Influences*
- *Core Values*
- **August 11-13, 2025 (Mechanicsburg)**

### Leadership & Structure

- *Brethren in Christ Polity*
- *Local Church Ministry*
- *Pastoral Leadership Development*
- **June 16-18, 2025 (Orrstown)**

### Theology of the Church

- *The Kingdom of God*
- *The Church & Its Mission*
- *Peacemaking & Discipleship*
- **July 21-25, 2025 (Zoom)**

### Theology of Salvation

- *The Nature of Sin*
- *Salvation & the Work of Jesus*
- *Sanctification & Christian Living*
- **June 2-4, 2025 (Lancaster)**





# Directed Study Program

*The Directed Study Program (DSP) is a sequence of email/web delivered courses designed to meet the Minimum Educational Requirement for Ordination in the Brethren in Christ.* Courses are taught at a post-high school level and are a suitable education alternative for ministers who lack a completed Bible College, Ministry, or Seminary degree. Directed Study courses also satisfy lifelong learning requirements for Licensed and Ordained ministers.

## Directed Study Sequence

The full DSP sequence involves the completion of **eleven Required courses** and **one Elective course**. DSP courses are offered during 14-week terms (Fall, Spring, and Summer) and require approximately 5-8 hours of reading/writing work per week. They are delivered via an online/email format and do not require classroom attendance or travel to meet the course requirements.

## Required Courses

- [B101r] Bible Survey
- [B103r] Biblical Interpretation
- [B201r] Pentateuch\*
- [B203r] Synoptic Gospels\*
- [H101r] History of Christianity
- [M100r] A Study of Brethren in Christ Core Values
- [M102r] Evangelism
- [M103r] Intentional Discipleship
- [M106r] World Christian Movement
- [M202r] Pastoral Care & Counseling
- [T101r] Basic Christian Doctrines

## Electives

- [B203] Paul & His Letters\*
- [H302] Life & Thought of John Wesley
- [M105] Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- [M306] Spiritual Formation
- [T102] Life in the Holy Spirit

**Prerequisite:** Courses marked with an asterisk (\*) cannot be taken prior to [B101r] Bible Survey. It is advised that you take that course early in the DSP sequence to meet this requirement.

## Upcoming Terms:

### Spring 2025 (January 13 - April 11)

- B101r Bible Survey
- B103r Biblical Interpretation
- B201r Pentateuch
- B202r Synoptic Gospels
- H101r History of Christianity
- M103r Intentional Discipleship
- B203 Paul and His Letters
- H302 Life and Thought of John Wesley
- M105 Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- T102 Life in the Holy Spirit

### Summer 2025 (May 5 - August 8)

- B101r Bible Survey
- B103r Biblical Interpretation
- B201r Pentateuch
- H101r History of Christianity
- M100r A Study of Brethren in Christ Core Values
- M103r Intentional Discipleship
- M106r The World Christian Movement
- M202r Pastoral Care and Counseling
- T101r Basic Christian Doctrines
- M105 Discerning God's Call, My Identity
- M306 Spiritual Formation

**Directed Study Program Cost:** Each course carries a registration fee of \$150 (USD). Courses are limited to 15 participants each and scholarships are available based on need and available funding.

## More Information:



<https://bicus.org/training/directed-study-program>



# THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE

Providing biblical/theological resourcing to those in various stages of credentialing, to pastors, and to the Great Lakes Conference at large.

[TheSeed.online/deeper-theology](https://www.theseedonline.com/deeper-theology)



## HERE TO HELP

Are you curious about Brethren in Christ theology? Looking for a good Bible resource or Small Group Study to share with your church? Need help completing those Core Courses or Doctrinal Questionnaire for your Ministry License? If you said 'yes' to any of these questions, then Great Lakes Conference Theologian in Residence Matthew Peterson is here to help!

*As your Theologian in Residence, Matthew is tasked with equipping pastors, church leaders, and members in the Great Lakes Conference with tools for theological renewal and ministry development.*

With years of experience in theological research, the biblical languages, teaching, and small group leadership, Matthew can help you find the tools you need to enrich your ministry.

*Matthew's work and his support is available to all Great Lakes Conference members as well as the wider BIC U.S. family free of charge.*

## SERVICES

### 1. Theological Resourcing

Topical resources on theology, history, and ecclesiology from a Brethren in Christ perspective. Curated resource lists and Bible commentary recommendations.

### 2. Credentialing Help

Guidance for meeting Brethren in Christ U.S. Ministerial Credentialing criteria. Core Course, Doctrinal Questionnaire, and Directed Study Program assistance.

### 3. Research Assistance

Help with locating resources for Sermon Preparation and Small Groups, as well as training with Bible Software (*Logos*) and Brethren in Christ archives.

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

### DEEPER

- Three Streams (*Theological Traditions*)
- Think Theologically (*Politics, COVID*)
- Women in Ministry

### PRESENTATIONS

- Ministry Credentialing Q&A
- BIC Core Values
- Individual Salvation to Collective Shalom
- Reaffirming Our BIC Identity
- A Shared Life of Fellowship



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