Bioethics Conference Coming Soon to EMU

By Sarah Dick
News Editor

Students who enjoy a few days off from classes may be excited about the canceling of all classes on Nov 13th and 14th. However, in place of classes they may find themselves attending a three-day conference on bioethics.

Roman Miller, chair of the committee which organized the event expressed the idea that although Anabaptist community has entered a lot of discussion on other issues such as pacifism or homosexuality, “as Anabaptist’s we never have discussed what bioethics, which is a life and death topic”.

Subtitled “Viewing New Creations with Anabaptist Eyes,” the upcoming conference will attempt to shed light on the topic of bioethics. The discussion among faculty members which culminated in the organization of the conference began about two years ago. Since then, the organizing committee has worked to choose topics, engage speakers and make other arrangements. Just last spring faculty approved the motion to cancel classes so that students and faculty could attend the conference.

Since Bioethics is such a large topic, the conference will focus on four major areas: stem cell research, cloning, genetic therapy and genetically modified plants and animals. The conference features eight keynote speakers and two break-up sessions to discuss case studies as well as panel discussions, worship and personal stories.

Thursday sessions will begin by describing the science and technology in question. With a tightly woven structure, the conference will build on earlier informational topics until the Saturday presentations focus on synthesizing issues in the Anabaptist perspective.

The committee sought out speakers with national recognition for the conference. It was important that the speakers be capable of clearly communicating ideas since organizers want the subjects to be understandable at the level of a “sharp high school student.” “We were fortunate to get the people that we have,” Miller said. Attendees can expect speakers to use words and ideas familiar in popular press rather than highly specialized jargon.

Recently, the committee turned its attention to getting the word out, mailing posters and brochures to area high schools and in-state colleges as well as other Mennonite colleges. Advertisements have been placed in scientific journals and the Mennonite Church press.

While a better estimate of attendance will be available in a month, preparations have been made to accommodate around 1700 people. The committee made to accommodate around 1700 people. The committee made to accommodate around 1700 people. The committee made to accommodate around 1700 people.

The conference will be held in the University Commons, using a projection screen to make speakers visible for a large audience. The conference will be held in the Harrisonburg Community Center in Michigan, to the campus ministry departments.

Peachey, age 44, attended the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana where he received a Masters Degree in Divinity. An avid nature enthusiast, he enjoys hiking, biking, canoeing, as well as introducing new skills to his kids. He encouraged people to search out their calling, and find their ministry, here in this place,” and that “In times of challenge or conflict, rather than shut down in a defensive mode, to move toward it, to see what learning God has for us.”

The third member of the campus ministries team is Julie Haushalter. She, husband Rick, and their children Brandon, 23; Ryan, 20, Rebecca, 19, as well as an international student that lives with their family, have made Harrisonburg their home. An Ypsilanti, Michigan native, Haushalter received an undergraduate degree in Special Education from the Hearing Impaired, at Eastern Michigan University, and a Masters of Education from the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Before moving to Harrisonburg to attend EMU’s Seminary, where she received a Masters of Divinity, Haushalter worked for 10 years as a mission and weekday coordinator for a large United Methodist Church in Gulf Breeze, FL. Spending time in nature, hiking, and “seeking waterfalls around the area,” take up her free time. Haushalter said that Harrisonburg seemed to be the right fit for her family and she appreciated the “friendliness of the people when (they) came.” She also said that she would “like to see us all embrace a deeper understanding of what it means to show hospitality, as a reflection of God’s love for all of us.”

Peachey, Burkholder and Haushalter bring numerous gifts to the Campus Ministries program at EMU. The school community has the opportunity to grow in their personal spiritual walk, led by this devoted pastoral staff.