Hand-Made, Spirit-Filled

Asbury’s Margaret Park Smith teaches art, but also creates space for spiritual insight.

- The Soul of Small Business
  Increasing entrepreneurship via faith in the classroom

- Special Operations
  A calling to empower those with learning disabilities

- Also Featured...
  - Giving voice to the voiceless
  - Biblical principles in social work
A Difficult Task

Every 10 years, universities across the South undergo the process of reaffirmation — or reaccreditation. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a part of the reaffirmation process directed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional body for higher education. The QEP must be student focused and mission-driven. Many schools choose topics like information literacy or writing across the curriculum. In 2009, as part of our reaffirmation process, Asbury University chose to tackle as its QEP — the second half of our “tag line” — Academic Excellence and Spiritual Vitality.

Universities have data available to demonstrate academic progress and rigor. Numerous measures, exams, assessments, rankings and nationally normed surveys are conducted annually to yield results regarding academic excellence. Not so with a topic like “spiritual vitality.” How does a university demonstrate its commitment to spiritual vitality in ways that go beyond required Chapel, faculty hiring practices and campus-wide opportunities for Bible study, mission trips and community service?

In this issue of the Viaticum, we highlight just one way in which we seek to demonstrate this commitment — the way our faculty approach the difficult task of integrating faith and learning. We have named our QEP “The Cornerstone Project” because we identified four cornerstones of spiritual vitality that have been a part of Asbury University for almost 125 years — Scripture, Holiness, Stewardship and Mission.

We hope you enjoy reading how our faculty allow these “cornerstones” to inform and influence their teaching, research and scholarship, as we seek to be an institution that achieves both academic excellence AND spiritual vitality.
Making Room for Growth
Intentional Integration of Faith in a Liberal Arts Education

The goal of the Cornerstone Project is to demonstrate and improve the ways in which the University faithfully integrates academic excellence and spiritual vitality. Throughout the project, we seek to be even more intentional in how we practice the dynamic tension of a liberal arts education in a vital Christian community.

The integration of faith and learning in the classroom plays a key role in our mission, as the articles in this issue of the Viaticum will demonstrate. The engagement of the heart and soul in the classroom is as important as engaging the mind in Chapel. We believe authentic spiritual formation occurs best in our students when what they know (knowledge), do (behavior) and believe (values) come into contact with Asbury's cornerstones of Scripture, Holiness, Stewardship and Mission.

Scripture
As the Cornerstone Project has raised our level of intentionality in focusing on the role of Scripture in the process of Christian spiritual formation, students have been challenged campus-wide to do several things: to read through Scripture in a year (2010 calendar year), to read through the Gospel of John (Spring 2011), and to daily engage Scripture through the season of Lent (Spring 2011). Inside the classroom we are using pre/post testing to more accurately understand how our students are growing related to their understanding of Scripture.

Holiness
The Wesleyan perspective holds in tension personal holiness and social holiness. Using the Spiritual Transformation Inventory (STI), which measures a wide range of spiritual formation values and behaviors, Asbury freshmen revealed “high-impact” scores: living out God’s love in friendships, growing from moral/spiritual failures and working through spiritual stagnation. The high-impact scores for seniors are in different areas than freshmen, reflective of the collegiate journey and stage of maturation: career/vocational guidance, worship that moves me closer to God and working through long-standing emotional
issues. As the “My Voice” tool compared Spring 2013 to Spring 2012, students also showed positive growth in their understanding of Wesleyan-Holiness theology and how it impacts everyday life and spiritual growth. Also, an increasing number of students found their theological beliefs to be consistent with Wesleyan-Holiness theology.

Stewardship
Expanding our students’ understanding of stewardship involves the grasp of dominion — that all we’ve been given belongs to God, and we are to serve as stewards — of the environment, time, money, gifts and talents. This Cornerstone was critical in birthing a Financial Stewardship Course, which has gained immediate popularity with upperclassmen in the past two years. Our assessment indicates that students show growth that is statistically significant from 2012 to 2013 answering: “I believe creation care is a component of Christian maturity.”

Mission
An understanding of mission translates to students being able to articulate their role in the mission of the church. Graduating seniors finishing a capstone course in their discipline are challenged to answer the question: “While living out your vocation, how will you contribute to advancing the Great Commission?” The culture of integration at Asbury is making a difference in how students view servant leadership with more students indicating, “I am more apt to serve others.”

The Cornerstones of Asbury express the most important ways in which our students are spiritually formed, and the strength of the project depends on how the cornerstones are integrated across campus.

Opening with praise music from Worship Arts students, the entire undergraduate student body comes together three times each week for Chapel, where speakers from around the world visit and integrate faith with education and experience on a variety of topics.

Rev. Greg Haseloff is Chairman of the Cornerstone Council and has served as Campus Chaplain at Asbury University since 2008. He served as the Coordinator of Outreach Ministries at Asbury from 1997 to 2000 and became an honorary member of the Redeemed Class ’01. Greg, a Texas native, returned to Campus Ministries at Asbury after seven years as the Executive Director of the Texas Tech Wesley Foundation. Greg holds a Master of Divinity and an MA in counseling from Asbury Theological Seminary.
From the Archives
Providing Digital Access Preserves Asbury’s Past for the Future

Asbury University Archives is committed to collecting, organizing, preserving and sharing information from its historical repository of documents and artifacts that tell the story of the institution’s beginning and formative years.

In 2015, Asbury will celebrate its 125th anniversary as an institution. That year will also mark 100 years of student publications. Issues produced every three or four weeks included campus news, personal stories and updates from alumni around the world, as well as local events and reflections on national issues. Woven into each story is a glimpse of how faith impacted student and faculty experiences.

Until recently, those issues were carefully stored under archival conditions, both in print and microfilm, which has been the industry standard. But today, with greater opportunities to convert materials from paper to electronic formats, Asbury has embarked on an aggressive digitization project. In the first phase of that project, it has transferred more than 300 issues of the student newspaper — The Collegian — to PDF image files that are accessible online and keyword searchable.

This material holds a treasure of information for researchers in a variety of areas. Articles contain primary source information about Asbury’s history; material for family genealogy research; Asbury’s support of co-education and women in ministry; descriptive ads that document local businesses; higher-education practices and courses of study for small, liberal arts colleges; and even the impact of the stock market crash in 1929 on Asbury.

There’s no denying that we live in a digital age! The explosion of new technologies, connection to information from around the world, access to virtual exhibits from the ordinary to the exotic, and protecting fragile materials from damage has forever changed the way archives, museums and libraries operate. This has also opened up many more opportunities to share materials.

Digitization processes can be costly. As funding becomes available, Asbury will do additional stages of its history in segments. If you are interested in helping financially, please contact the Kinlaw Library Archives at archives@asbury.edu or (859) 858-3511, x2292.
Special Operations

A calling to equip and empower students with learning disabilities

In classrooms across the United States, there are several types of students. There are students for whom learning comes easily. There are students for whom some types of learning require extra work — a few more practice problems, some time with a tutor. And there are students with learning disabilities. This last group is Mark Butler’s passion.

“If you walked into a classroom today, regardless of age, you wouldn’t necessarily be able to pick out the students with disabilities,” Butler said. “Things like Down syndrome, profound autism and significant cognitive delays aren’t what we’re typically talking about in special education. Almost 65 percent of people in the system fall under the category ‘learning disability.’”

In an educational culture like the United States, that is both test-oriented and requires students with learning disabilities to be educated alongside their peers, teachers are under tremendous pressure to make their instruction efficient and personalized. And for students with learning disabilities, traditional methods of instruction often don’t connect — the challenge is not to do more education, but to do it differently.

Enter the research that Butler has been conducting as part of his doctoral program at the University of Kentucky, just 15 miles from the Asbury University campus. He and a team of researchers have been working with a math curriculum called Enhanced Anchored Instruction (EAI), which is a blend of problem-based scenarios that mixes hands-on applications with digital components such as video. In the past two years, the team has been in 58 middle schools across the state, working with diverse populations to first implement the curriculum in resources classrooms and then in inclusive classrooms.

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The Enhanced Anchored Instruction approach is to put a real-life challenge before the students — build a skateboard ramp with a budget, for example, or construct a hovercraft from a scale model. Students learn the necessary skills in fractions and problem solving and can see an immediate application of the skills, increasing their motivation and connecting the dots between the abstract ideas and materials in front of them.

“Students that have participated in Enhanced Anchored Instruction significantly outperform the students getting normal instruction in the classroom,” Butler said. “When students are given problems that are motivating and relevant, they’re interested. A word problem on fractions: not interesting. Building a skateboard ramp to determine how much wood you need: interesting.”

The change in perspective required to motivate these students to tackle skills that have previously frustrated them in the classroom seems a small price to pay given the stakes involved.

“Often students would tell me they would only ever work construction or fast food,” Butler said. “This reflects how they felt about themselves in part because of what they’d been told the ceiling was. But when they taste success and stay out of trouble a little, their view and aspirations change. They start to believe they can go to college. They start to dream a little. So much depends on lighting that fire and getting them to believe in themselves and see the power of education.”

For Butler, special education is not only a professional interest. It is a spiritual conviction stemming from Prov. 31: 8-9, which states, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

“I have a firm conviction that students with disabilities are some of those we’re called to care for — not do things for them, but equip them to be independent and empowered learners,” Butler said. “There is a deep Biblical foundation for serving those who are often disadvantaged socioeconomically, in their home situations or without a strong moral compass. As Christians we can stand in the gap for those students. As a special educator, I can help them believe in themselves and make good choices. Helping them to do that is, in some ways, doing justice.”

Laura Calkins (above) and Stacy Davis (left), masters students in Asbury University’s alternative certification program, teach students with learning disabilities one-on-one in public schools in Central Kentucky.

Mark Butler, after graduating from Asbury University in 2002, worked as a youth counselor at the Kentucky United Methodist Children’s Home for Children and Youth in Versailles, Ky. That time instilled a desire to work with at-risk youth and propelled him to further education to work with this population. His graduate course work at Asbury University and the University of Kentucky in Special Education has focused on using education as a vehicle for life-altering change. Butler is married to Dr. Krissie Hannah ’04 Butler, who is an assistant professor of Spanish at Asbury University.
Spirituality’s Impact on Entrepreneurial Intention
Researching the Reasons for Starting a Social Venture

Why would an American family move to a country in the Middle East, in the middle of a war, to start a women’s development center and later a small business? What would motivate a person to act in such a way? Asbury University Professor David Bosch, his wife Cynthia and their two young daughters moved to Iraq in 2005 to do just that.

In 2005, they started a not-for-profit women’s center outside a large metropolitan city in Iraq providing classes in literacy, health, computer, exercise, English and art. In 2007, they started a for-profit women’s fitness center, maintaining most of the same goals that they had when they started the not-for-profit women’s center. Bosch approached the project from a heartfelt desire to serve and use his skills and education in accounting, finance and investment. As he worked in a challenging business environment, however, he started wondering: What drives other people to do this? Bosch and his wife did not realize it at the time, but they were a part of a larger trend of social entrepreneurship, a perspective on business in which the bottom line is not as influential a motivating factor.

“We may be able to increase our student’s entrepreneurial intentions, both social and commercial, by proactively bringing our faith into the classroom.”

“Scholars do not agree on a formal definition of social entrepreneurship, as some argue that it should be used just to describe non-profit entities,” Bosch said, “while others contend it should be viewed as a continuum of enterprises, including those that have a profit orientation. However, there is general agreement among academics that social entrepreneurs are focused on social value creation by
advancing a positive social change regardless of whether they are launching a for-profit or not-for-profit venture."

For the dissertation stage of a Ph.D. program, Bosch is researching the question of why someone would launch a social venture, as opposed to a purely commercial venture. The literature points to the idea that an individual's values and level of spirituality impact a person's entrepreneurial intentions, yet there has been very little research in this area. There is even less research investigating if differing personal values and levels of spirituality impacts a person's intention to start a social venture as opposed to a commercial venture. The research has profoundly practical implications, both for Asbury students considering different career paths and for the millions of people in developing countries who depend on small businesses for their livelihoods.

“There's research that says values are enduring, but other research says through socialization and education, your values can be changed,” Bosch said. “If there are certain values that encourage entrepreneurial intention, how can we build on that? This is important because small businesses are the drivers of the economies in developing countries.

“Any knowledge that is gleaned from this study is not esoteric in nature,” he continued, “but can inform the way that we teach our business courses. An individual’s level of spirituality can be developed, and their values can be enhanced through interaction with others such as mentors and faculty members. Therefore, we may be able to increase our student's entrepreneurial intentions, both social and commercial, by proactively bringing our faith into the classroom.”

Bosch’s research and teaching on social entrepreneurship fit hand-in-hand with the Cornerstone values of stewardship and mission. The mission applications are clear: successful engagement in the worldwide business community can open doors of influence that remain closed politically and/or spiritually, regardless of where a student might choose to work. But underpinning the sense of mission is the understanding that the information, skills and values learned at Asbury are a resource to be used wisely.

“I teach a small-business management class, and in one of the first classes we talk about how we are one of the wealthiest generations in the world, and one of the most free in the world,” Bosch said. “Plus, our students have the capacity to be some of the most theologically sound people in the world. They’ve been blessed just by being here, and generally, God blesses people so they can bless others.”

David Bosch is an Assistant Professor of Business at Asbury University. He earned his B.S. in Accounting from the University of Kentucky, his M.B.A with emphases in Corporate Finance and International Business from the University of Notre Dame and is in the dissertation phase of a Ph.D. program at Regent University (exploring the relationship of values, spirituality and entrepreneurial intent). He is also a CPA, and before coming to Asbury worked in accounting and finance for an investment firm, large corporations and a regional bank. David and his wife, Cynthia, lived in Guatemala for two years and in the Middle East for almost six years.
When Assistant Professor Margaret Park Smith begins a class meeting in the pottery studio at Asbury University, life begins to imitate art … and the art imitates spiritual life.

The art in question is the pottery produced in Asbury’s classes in ceramics, 3-D design and sculpture. For the most part, it is practical work — plates and bowls, mugs and pitchers — meant to be part of the everyday world of shared meals and nourishment. For all its practicality, however, elements of transcendence surface in both the pottery and the teaching that guides it.

“I was drawn to art partly because it seemed like the most mystifying and challenging thing I could do,” Smith said. “At the same, I was drawn to ceramics, which is perhaps the most tactile and practical aspect of art. I saw in ceramics good possibilities for connecting with people around the world, since all people in all times have worked with clay. I could go anywhere in the world and be able to connect with someone making pottery.”

“There are endless great metaphors between making a vessel and God creating us.”

The connection Smith has established through making pottery is at the same time a practical outpouring of skills and artistic experience with the medium and a spiritual opportunity to let the inevitable metaphors of working with clay become personal in her students’ lives.

Hand-Made, Spirit-Filled
Teaching Art and Creating Space for Spiritual Insight
“There are endless great metaphors between making a vessel and God creating us,” Smith said. “A lot of times I present it loosely. The students here get so much verbal information already, and this is one of the classes that is physical and tactile. I let them experience a different way to think and engage. The best metaphors are experienced and lived, not presented in a verbal format.”

Thus, when the clay delivery from North Carolina has been delayed because the temperature has fallen below freezing and the product can’t be shipped, or when the humidity in the air keeps the class project from drying as quickly as desired, those are learning opportunities, too. The work of making an inspired creative vision both functional and beautiful requires problem-solving skills, reality-based course corrections and constructive criticism from others.

However, it’s not only the process of teaching students to work with clay that develops the mind and spirit. Smith finds the vessels themselves to be powerful symbols of a life lived in the Spirit. Take, for example, the humble ceramic pitcher:

• It is created to be filled. The “God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man” that Pascal spoke of refers equally well to people and pottery. When a piece of pottery contains a hollow space, generally speaking, the goal is for that space to contain something.

• People expect an honest relationship between the interior and exterior. When a person’s public and inner lives are incongruous — when, for example, people seem loving in public but are privately greedy, or when gifted leaders fail morally — it is uncomfortable. Similarly, a disproportionate or inconsistent relationship between the interior space and walls of a pitcher will either leave the pitcher fragile or create misleading expectations of its capacity.

• Its purpose has been fulfilled when its contents are delivered to another vessel, which has also been created to be filled.

“The field of ceramics and the people in it are some of the most generous people I know,” Smith said. “People freely give time, expertise and ideas without any sense of ownership and withholding — the general attitude is that the more you give, the more it comes back to you. That truth is a Christian truth. I try to live that generosity by giving truth to the students.”

When the humble medium of clay becomes the vehicle through which a Spirit-filled life shapes people who can then create their own unique interpretations of the Spirit-filled life, the seams dividing work and worship — and faith and learning — are smoothed away.

Margaret Park Smith spent 15 years studying and practicing ceramics before returning home to Kentucky to join the Asbury University art faculty in 2008. Her pursuit took her to such places as Penland School of Crafts, Odyssey Center for Ceramic Arts, Lillstreet Art Center in Chicago and the University of Minnesota (where she earned her M.F.A in 2004). Her husband, Josh, is a Graphic Design professor at Asbury.
Don’t look at us like we’re dirty. So often that’s how we’re perceived or how we’re treated: ‘I love you, but don’t come near me.’ Show me that you love me. Show us that you love us. … All we’re asking is for a little love.”

Kevin Bates is a recovering drug addict who has been on the receiving end of his share of slowly shaking heads and long sighs. Clean now for two years, he tells a story of bad decisions that led to redemptive relationships. But until recently, when two Asbury University students under the supervision of Dr. Doug Walker interviewed him for a video, his story had no vehicle to carry it to the people who could hear and understand.

This is the kind of story Walker, a Media Communication professor, loves to tell: professionally engaging and spiritually satisfying. He has made a career and a ministry out of telling the stories of people who do not usually have access to either a microphone or an audience. But through his work in the field and in the classroom, seldom-heard voices are gaining new strength.

“It’s hard to forget those words,” he said. “The interviews I’ve done often become part of student conversations about how our faith impacts our profession. In the Mass Communication theory course I teach, we discuss representation, the concept that one of our responsibilities as communicators is to give a voice to the voiceless. Audio and video can do that in a powerful way.”

It was while he worked at a Christian radio station in Haiti that Walker first noticed the propensity of the media to seek out the opinions of those who spoke English or held positions of power. His observations were confirmed during his doctoral research, which involved living with a Haitian
family in Miami to study how they used media to help them adapt to life in the United States.

When he examined how Haitians were covered by the media in Miami, he saw that they tended to be visible only during times of crisis. The daily lives of average families and individuals — both the dreams and struggles universal to all humans and the stories that were uniquely descriptive of their culture — were missing.

Now, as a professor, Walker has found ways to incorporate the lessons he learned through his research into the classroom. For example, he hopes to take a group of students next summer to a radio station in Alaska, where he has worked in the past, to help the station with survey research.

“I’ve done interviews with different people in the community there, and they have incredible stories,” he said. “Interviews in the Athabaskan Indian villages can show real cultural differences, and they open the students’ eyes that even within the United States, you can be left out of the discussion sometimes.”

As he teaches, he remains aware of the need to put his own lessons into practice.

“I’ve often been challenged by the story of the woman at the well in John 4, and how Jesus responded to her,” he said. “I pray that as a media professional I can treat others as people of worth, even when society doesn’t. I received an e-mail recently which said, ‘Your interview is one of the few times I can remember a formal acknowledgement that things I have to share are valuable or relevant. All of us must feel that way from time to time.

“I wish I could say that happened more. Yet, one of the most rewarding things about being a professor is the opportunity to multiply the number of people who use media to serve a God who ‘raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap’ (Psalm 113:7).”

Dr. Doug Walker is Professor of Media Communication at Asbury. In recent years he’s done audio and video interviews about Alaska’s history, challenges of immigrant adaptation and drug addiction. He’s worked for radio stations in Alaska and Haiti, as well as on the broadcast crew for six Olympics. He holds a Ph.D. in Mass Communications from the Indiana University School of Journalism and lives with his wife, Marilyn, in Wilmore.
Associate Professor Michele Mallett Wells is not afraid of being uncomfortable, and her goal is for her students not to fear discomfort. But to accomplish that, she sometimes makes them uncomfortable — and through those experiences, profound learning and spiritual development takes place.

Wells teaches in Asbury’s Master of Social Work program, which is accredited by the Council for Social Work Education and includes an emphasis on Child and Family Services, as well as a School Social Worker Certification track. A former substance abuse counselor, she draws on her experience in the field to challenge students’ assumptions and biases, with the goal of helping them to clarify their own beliefs.

“In the classroom, if I feel like someone needs to think critically a bit more, I’ll play devil’s advocate and ask them something that can make them speechless for a moment,” she said. “It may not be a position I fully agree with, but I want them to think about all sides of it. We can talk about what Christians do, but you have to look at the side that deals with people who have no belief system, or a system that is opposite of ours. I try to ask the questions that make people think about the other side.”

The hot-button social issues of the day — poverty, race, immigration and more — are issues that Asbury’s MSW graduates will face each day, regardless of the cultural arena in which they serve. To prepare, students examine their own viewpoints in the classroom and in context. For example, in a class on social and cultural diversity, students keep a journal from the perspective of a different ethnic group and discuss situations in which they might encounter discrimination or stereotypes. They also complete multiple sessions of field instruction in which
“A Christian social worker learns all the skills, but takes faith, grace and a spirit of prayer into the encounter.”

They can see the principles they’ve learned in action in venues ranging from homes for at-risk youth to community schools and health centers.

As practicing social work professionals, the issues they learn about in class will be wrapped up in the lives of families, with children who need to succeed in school and parents who need to make healthy choices and achieve worthwhile goals. The stakes in American culture are high. Wells’ task is to deepen her students’ empathy, even when it requires putting themselves in the shoes of someone who makes them uncomfortable, as a path to increasing their capacity to advocate.

It’s a mission that is both professional and personal to Wells. Her experience in the social work field has led her to pursue a doctoral degree in ecclesial leadership and research on the ways men and women share leadership in different faith traditions. She also grew up in a financially struggling family with a substance abuser, and she knows first-hand about the information, systems and assistance that can help. And when the issues at stake include physical, mental and social health, the difference between a social worker and a Christian social worker matters.

“A Christian social worker learns all the skills, but takes faith, grace and a spirit of prayer into the encounter,” she said. “They may not drop on their knees at the door or mention God, but there’s a dynamic of bringing the respect for the inherent worth and dignity of people to a level where it’s not just nice words but really Biblical principles. This is what we do because this is how our Savior would treat people, or how our Savior would act in the situation. To do that, you have to understand your value system, understand what you believe, act on your convictions but not disrespect other people’s convictions and beliefs.

“Social Work is a profession of service as indicated by the values the profession upholds — service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. Training Christian social workers through the lens of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition presents the privilege of developing the kind of leaders who serve as Christ served and become people that help to transform the lives of others.

“In the face of sin, how does the heart remain pure in Christ while serving people and the profession?” she asks. “My role is to teach them how to meet the challenge.”

Michele Wells is a native of Fort Wayne, Ind. She completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at Indiana State University, her Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership from Regent University. Michele is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and was Department Coordinator for Social Work at Taylor University, Fort Wayne, where she taught for six years.
When Douglas Gresham (left) was 8 and met the author of “The Chronicles of Narnia” for the first time, he had no idea that C.S. Lewis would soon become his stepfather and beloved friend. Nor did he know that, as an adult, he would serve as the Director and Creative Consultant for The C.S. Lewis Company where, among other duties, he would help to produce the three Narnia films.

Please join Asbury University Professor of English Dr. Devin Brown (right) — a C.S. Lewis Scholar, author of four books on C.S. Lewis and Narnia and also a member of the C.S. Lewis Study Bible Advisory Board — as he talks with Gresham about life with C.S. Lewis, the making of the Narnia films and Gresham’s own amazing journey of faith.