

---

As I look back on the school year just completed, two events stand out as deserving special mention in this report. The first is my serving as the resource person for the Hyattsville Mennonite Church retreat back in October. I was warmly welcomed, and the responses to my presentations, the conversations generated, were deeply appreciated!

The second event worthy of special mention is the spring break tour with the Bethel College Concert Choir visiting churches [primarily] in the Central Plains Mennonite Conference, with brief forays into Mountain States Mennonite Conference, and Western District Conference. The tour was absolutely fabulous, characterized by outstanding music (frequent comments like “this is the best college choir that has ever sung in our church”), exemplary behavior (“the finest students we have ever hosted”), and profoundly meaningful worship. This last claim may require some explanation.

I tend to measure the power of worship, at least in part, by its ability to generate a strong emotional response—in particular, tears. And on that basis, this year’s tour was unique. Last June, William Eash, director of choral activities, chose to add Eric Whitacre’s *When David heard* to this year’s choir repertoire. It’s an amazing piece. Based on II Samuel 18:33, the song describes David’s response upon hearing of the death of his rebellious son, Absalom. The song is very difficult and very intense. It is over 12 minutes in length; it has, at points, 16 parts instead of the usual four. It was given added poignancy at Bethel by the fact that one of our students, Seth Dunn, a rising senior, was killed in a tragic skateboarding accident a month before school began. The song was first performed on campus in a chapel service in October (a service I described in the fall *Church Relations Update*, which can be seen at [http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/news\\_publications/church\\_relations\\_update/?urlid=279](http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/news_publications/church_relations_update/?urlid=279)). In venue after venue, *When David heard* moved both audience members and choir members to tears. And, not surprisingly, I’m convinced that it contributed to what many choir members said was an uncommon—and much appreciated—sense of community among the members of this choir.

There is much else that I could—and should—mention about this year at Bethel College:

- A roadmap (strategic plan) for Bethel College that is in place and being followed with excellent results;
- A second year of an almost ten per cent increase in enrollment;
- The scheduled completion of the Academic Center next month;
- The addition of a graphic design major with a distinctive Bethel interdisciplinary focus, and minors in sports management and computer science;
- The approval of a new on-line RSN to BSN program;
- Another year of positive and well-attended worship experiences in weekly chapels.
- Eager anticipation of a Fall Festival celebration on October 12-14 which will celebrate Bethel’s 125<sup>th</sup> year!

But still basking in the glow of that choir tour experience, I wanted to share it with you. For ten days I was privileged to see Bethel College at its very best, and I thought you’d like to know.

Thankful for the prayers, students, dollars, and good wishes of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference, we humbly ask for your continued support.