

## PERSPECTIVES ON AN ENDURING EDUCATION

### A CONVERSATION ABOUT CHURCH, EDUCATION, AND THE 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY STUDENT

A significant challenge facing Christian educators is the recovery of ways for Christian education, especially post-secondary education, to serve the church. This past fall we surveyed a number of church leaders, ministry leaders, and educators to identify ways Faith Builders Training Institute can faithfully serve the church. We invited several people who responded to the survey to expand their responses here.

**You value commitment to a local church. Why should a young person want a committed relationship to a local body?**



Many of us have felt some level of disappointment with our experience of church. So often, our ideals do not match the realities we experience in church life.

This has caused some to question the value of commitment to a local body. Yet the New Testament makes clear that the church is the vehicle God has chosen to carry forward His purposes on earth. That is, the church is at the very center of God's redemptive activity in the world today. This sounds lofty and noble as long as the global, universal church is in view.

But the reality is that the universal church is comprised of flawed, imperfect congregations—local bodies of believers joined together in committed, submitted, accountable relationships. The astounding, humbling reality is this: one of the necessary conditions for genuine spiritual growth and effective participation in God's ongoing work in the world is meaningful connection to a local church—warts, imperfections, and all. David Goetz argues that "genuine spiritual progress doesn't happen without a long-term attachment to a poky local church."<sup>1</sup>

That "poky local church" needs you. Rather, you need it. Your spiritual development and long-term effectiveness depend on it.

<sup>1</sup> David Goetz, "Suburban Spirituality," *Christianity Today*, July 1, 2003

Javan Bender, pastor

**Young people today are immersed in a world of opinion and contrary voices. How do critical thinking skills prepare them to face this world? How, in other words, do critical thinking skills help students to discern right from wrong?**



As Christian educators, we value critical thinking—the ability to analyze the problem presented and make a reasonable, nuanced judgment. We give priority to teaching critical thinking skills and to asking students to use them, not only in math, literature, history, science, but also in considering life choices, interactions with each other, and decisions about who and what deserves preeminence. We want to see the young people we care for make wise decisions, choices that position them to love Jesus with their hearts, souls, and minds. At times, we may fall into the trap of thinking that, if only students can think well enough, it will automatically lead them to right choices.

But people, young or otherwise, don't become like Jesus through critical thinking alone. We all need to love Jesus, and, impelled by that love, we need to do the hard work of implementing habits and practices that support the values we espouse. And we must be willing to say that some habits, practices, and choices help us walk toward Christlikeness and some do not.

The demand for tolerance presses in. Today's young people, including those within our schools and churches, may find it hard to make or accept definite

applications of truth to their own lives. Perhaps it is the sense that defining what they will or will not do levies an implied criticism on people who are not making the same decision. Perhaps it is the very human tendency to push against anything that seems to get in the way of what they want, that moves the options from limitless to limited.

As a teacher, I find it too easy to stop just short of asking my students to make the clear applications that push them to make choices, establish personal lines, and value the lines that exist within their communities, churches, and families. As people, we need to call and be called to moving beyond *thinking* about values towards *acting* on them.

Piper Burdge, grades 7 & 8 teacher

**You discern that today's young people face the challenge of constant connection. What does today's connectedness tend toward, and what do you see as an alternative?**



Technology has provided us with powerful time saving devices which, absurdly enough, have the ability to steal back all that time ... and more besides.

Additionally, the lingering side effects often include multiplied stress, growing dissatisfaction, and nagging fears, all wrapped in a life that is increasingly publicized.

I find it fascinating that the Gospel with the most quickly moving narrative

presents a viable solution to the stresses, dissatisfaction, and fears induced by constant connectedness and fast-paced living. Mark's trademark word (often translated immediately or straightway) is used no less than 43 times in his record of Jesus' life and ministry. However, in the first chapter (vs. 35-38) he also outlines the discipline of Jesus' life: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

It is in our time of solitude with God that our mind is again cleared and our will brought into line with His values. This is where the purpose of our being is brought into sharp focus. It is then that the words "All men seek for thee" do not lead to frenetic and fruitless living.

*Ken Gehman, FB pastoral council member*

In the survey, you prioritize visionary leadership. How can young people practice leadership, avoid self-limitation, and build on what's been given to them? What would you suggest as an alternative to the too-easy impulse to 1) reject Anabaptist heritage and 2) burn everything to the ground and start over?



I recently heard a minister say, "The Anabaptist church has had a good run." The sense I get is that too many young people hold the same dark sentiment. They feel that the Anabaptist church has become outdated

or irrelevant. One reason for this is a lack of visionary leadership. Lack of vision can lead to complacency, dissatisfaction, a focus on self-fulfillment, and even a lack of appreciation for our godly heritage.

Millennials require discipleship and teaching. Many are searching for answers beyond: "We've always done it this way." Leaders teach us why we do what we do, and why we are who we are, and then cast a vision for carrying that torch of faith onward to the next generation.

We do not need to cast aside our heritage to have a vision for the future. For starters, Anabaptists value and practice:

- marriage for life
- integrity
- nonresistance
- financial solvency as a community
- literal interpretation and application of Scripture
- strong family units
- mutual aid
- modesty and moral purity
- brotherhood accountability
- godly education and godly parenting

The Anabaptist church is not an irrelevant sect with a rulebook. It is not a blind tradition. It gives us compelling ways to follow Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When we lead our young people to develop a vision for who we are and to value what we have, we will find many ready to commit and carry the torch.

*Tyler Hochstetler, attorney*

Technology has had a far-reaching impact on our young people. How do you describe that impact? What skills do you believe young people need to learn to cope with this?



Smart phone technology in particular is hindering people from thinking deeply or being able to interact with material of depth. The instant

entertainment of omnipresent screens trains users that worthwhile media content is that which is most entertaining and that boring equals bad. This problem manifests itself by people reading and writing less, and the inability to pay attention and appreciate even well-crafted sermons or lectures. Of course, these are not new concerns, but they have intensified proportionally to screens multiplying.

The problem with screen technology is the media content that comes with it. Young people need the skill of discerning between content that gives them a deeper understanding of the real world and content that distracts from the real world. They need to develop the discipline to choose the former.

More important than discernment and discipline, however, we must help young people cultivate correct values. Unless young people value the ability to study and think critically more than entertainment, they will not have the motivation to learn discernment or the discipline to turn away from the allure of the screen.

*Nolan Martin, high school teacher*

You indicate that young people should live with some consciousness of the long term or big picture of their lives. Could you describe what that big picture is like? What stands in the way of this way of seeing life? How do we prepare young people to live for the long term?



It will take more than simply teaching Johnny to be a good boy. A child's purpose is bigger than him, his family, and his church. We need to teach an awareness of the world and the spirit world with eternity as a greater reality than the temporal. I need to be about advancing the Kingdom in my family, the community, the whole world, and even bringing glory to God in the spirit world. This is the purpose of the church (Eph 3:10). This concept needs to be in the mind of parents and in all child training.

The giftings and capacities of adolescents are usually greater than we think. We need to lead adolescents in spiritual warfare and proclaiming the Gospel in every

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## COURSES OFFERED IN 2020

Foundations of Education.....	Steven Brubaker
Creative Writing.....	John Coblentz
Principles of Teaching I.....	Patrick Heatwole
Chemistry for the Non-Scientist.....	John Mark Kuhns
Teaching Secondary Math.....	John Mark Kuhns
Beginning Choral Conducting.....	Brandon Mullet
Choir.....	Brandon Mullet
Class Voice.....	Brandon Mullet
Music Fundamentals.....	Brandon Mullet
Growing Into a Godly Woman.....	Marie Mullet
Anabaptist History.....	Stephen Russell
World Geography.....	Stephen Russell
Child Development.....	Jonas Sauder
Integrated Studies: the Progressive Era.....	Jonas Sauder
Teaching Literature.....	Jonas Sauder



suitable way possible. They need constant engagement in Kingdom work, personal development (which includes play), and preparation for future work. Discussing their timeline with them is important. How do they picture themselves in five years? In ten? What will their life look like at 21? 25? Or 35? How are they preparing now for then?

Often, low expectations, majoring on minors, temporal pursuits, and a commitment to being happy and comfortable (basically selfishness) stand in the way of these ideals. Not equating cross-bearing with following Christ is also often a hindrance.

If parents don't picture their children being leaders by the time they are 16 and 18 years old, they won't become leaders. Children and adolescents need to be raised with the mindset of going into the world to advance the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not need protection but promotion. It is potent and proactive!

*Leonard Mast, Hillcrest Home pastor*

### How does the study of history prepare young people to resist the subtle allurements of the post-modern West?



Historical awareness builds into a student the ability to compare present movements and beliefs with those of the past, to recognize both pitfalls and paths forward in issues the church faces, and to understand better the foundational principles or beliefs of Christianity in order to apply them to the situations we now face. In short, history provides us patterns about both beliefs to hold and actions to take.

One of the movements challenging the church today is postmodernism. It denies both universal truth and any narrative that claims universal validity, such as the gospel. Not only does it reject reason, but it also aims to undermine all previous approaches to understanding reality.

Historical orthodox Christianity has striven to understand reality through God's revelation (Jesus and the Bible), rational investigation (the intellect), and the intuitive and imaginative (the heart). The Enlightenment and modernism rejected this view and elevated the intellect and the individual above all else. Postmodernism rejects the elevation of the intellect but emphasizes the importance of the individual until there is no sense of universals or any objective truth.

As we Christians reconnect with our past to understand how the West turned away from its Christian heritage, we will see the illusory nature of postmodernism's allurements and the dangers of its destructive program.

*Stephen Russell, FBTI instructor*

### You value the critical engagement of Christian thinkers from a variety of eras. How does this study enable young people to grow into people of godly influence and skill? Why should a young person aspire to become this person?



Of all the rich experiences a young person could have (and there are many to choose from in North America in 2020) one of the richest and most broadening experiences is to read Christian thinkers of the past.

The guidance of godly teachers is critical to this process—teachers who demonstrate lifelong humble scholarship and service, instructors who have themselves learned to wield their ever-deepening knowledge with grace-filled humility. Their example provides an antidote to the knowledge that puffs up, of which Paul warns.

In company with these instructors, young people learn to note how Christian thinkers of other eras simultaneously held great wisdom and petty errors of thought. This calls them to consider their own potential arrogance and parochialism. In addition, young people learn to ask:

- How did Christian thinkers of the past two millennia seek and communicate truth in response to the heresies of their generation?
- How did they envision building strong communities of faith capable of withstanding social pressures?
- How did they follow Christ?

Through guided study, young people establish a framework for wise thinking and living, inspiring them to ask and answer these life shaping questions in their own generation.

I am encouraged to see young people invest in the future of our communities laying down the short-term pleasures of exotic experiences to pick up the long-term yoke of study and learning.

*Anna Zehr, grades 3 & 4 teacher*

## APPLY TO STUDY AT FB!

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- Christian Ministry
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1. Complete the student application.

Find it at [fbep.org/academics/semester](http://fbep.org/academics/semester).

2. Apply for scholarships.

See options at [fbep.org/aadmissions/scholarships](http://fbep.org/aadmissions/scholarships).

3. Wait for your acceptance letter.

We review applications in May.

4. Arrive on August 22.

Studies begin with a four-week apprenticing term.

### WE WELCOME YOUR QUESTIONS

Email [fbep@fbep.org](mailto:fbep@fbep.org)

Call (814) 789-4518, ext. 241

## BE A STUDENT FOR A DAY

APRIL 2 - 3

Are you curious about what happens at FB? Join us for a day!

Open House guests meet staff and students, attend classes, and eat and sleep on campus. They learn about our tracks of study, our approach to mentoring, and find out about scholarships we offer all students. Attendance is free.

### REGISTER TO ATTEND

Visit [fbep.org/open-house](http://fbep.org/open-house).

## UPCOMING EVENTS & TERMS

### SUMMER TERM | JUNE 29 - JULY 31

Apply at [fbep.org/st](http://fbep.org/st) by June 15.

### COLLEGE STUDENT WEEKEND | JULY 10 - 12

Register now at [fbep.org/csw](http://fbep.org/csw).

### TEACHERS WEEK | AUGUST 3 - 7

Registration opens the first of May.

### TWO-YEAR STUDIES BEGIN | AUGUST 24

We have space for more students in all three study tracks! Download your application at [fbep.org/academics/semester](http://fbep.org/academics/semester).

### TEACHERS CONFERENCE | OCTOBER 9 - 11

Registration opens mid-August.

### WINTER TERM | JAN. 4 - FEB. 5, 2021

Registration opens early August.

### REACH 2021 | MARCH 4 - 5, 2021

Registration opens this fall.

# PERSONNEL NEEDS

## BOOKSTORE MANAGER

Faith Builders operates a bookstore on campus that provides textbooks to students, distributes Living History Threads, and offers resources for families, churches, and schools.

The bookstore manager plans the daily work of the bookstore and guides efforts to help the bookstore serve more people. We need a man or woman with an entrepreneurial attitude and an ability to carry ideas to completion.

This is a year-round paid position at the Faith Builders campus with a long-term opening.

### APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Contact Matthew Mast with referrals or questions:

[matthewm@fbep.org](mailto:matthewm@fbep.org)  
(814) 789-4518, ext. 240

## OFFICE ASSISTANT

Faith Builders Training Institute needs a man or woman to assist Lucy and Vivian with bookkeeping and secretarial work.

Proficiency with computer applications and finances is essential. This is a full-time paid position.

### APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Contact Steven Brubaker with referrals or questions:

[srb@fbep.org](mailto:srb@fbep.org)  
(814) 789-4518, ext. 239



## PLANNED GIVING

Faith Builders provides Christ-centered training and resources. We invest in the work of training students because we long to see flourishing churches, effective schools, and joyful homes across the world.

The partnership of hundreds of men and women makes this effort possible. In addition to the regular gifts that donors make from current income, Faith Builders benefits from one-time gifts that donors make from the sale of real estate or the distribution of an estate.

### CONTACT MATTHEW

For more information about giving non-cash assets or including Faith Builders in your will, email or call:

[matthewm@fbep.org](mailto:matthewm@fbep.org)  
(814) 789-4518, ext. 240

# APPLY FOR COLLEGE STUDENT WEEKEND JULY 10-12

At College Student Weekend, we gather to explore our calling to humility and faithfulness in education. Experienced instructors discuss topics such as Christian anthropology and bioethics. Attendees share their stories in small groups and pray for each other. Speakers, staff, and students mingle for food, fellowship, and recreation.

In the 42 hours we have together, we seek to nurture a faithful, reverent pursuit of learning that deepens love for God and equips us to serve His people. This year, we are developing a program that includes topics of anthropology in literature, LGBTQ+ issues, and civics.

## BREAKOUTS INCLUDE

- My Body, My Choice: Assisted Suicide..... Ryan Hoover
- LGTBQ: Created in God's Image ..... Rosanne Bauman
- Our Mutually Derived Humanity ..... Kyle Stoltzfus
- How Literature Helps Us Think About Equality..... Lori Eby
- Transhumanism & an Orthodox View of Man ..... Stephen Russell
- Core Liberal Arts as Wisdom & Understanding..... Jonas Sauder
- Tolerance & Acceptable Forms of Hate on Campus..... Nathan Zook

## PLENARY SESSION

- What Does it Mean To Be Human?..... Nathan Zook

## REGISTER TO ATTEND

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**FAITH BUILDERS NEWSLETTER** The Faith Builders newsletter is published quarterly and serves to inform, inspire, and equip its readers. Subscription is free upon request.

# VOLUNTEER POSITIONS OPEN!

Do you care about creating more than consuming and giving more than taking? Are you looking for a place for voluntary service?

Consider joining our volunteer team! A lifestyle of service provides opportunities to give, create, and become more like Jesus.

Volunteers at FB serve a one-year term beginning this summer. They participate in the mentoring program and take classes with students.

- MAINTENANCE** Building upkeep, janitorial, grounds, handyman work
- KITCHEN** Food preparation and service for students, staff, and guests
- HOUSEKEEPING** Cleaning, decorating, hospitality
- BOOKSTORE** Customer care, shelf-stocking, shipping

## APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Applicants must be at least 18 and supported by their church.

If you are interested, or can recommend someone to us, please contact our office at [fbep@fbep.org](mailto:fbep@fbep.org).

