

## The Origin and Design of the Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Storytelling Program by Dr. Tom Boomershine

I've had doctoral students doing biblical storytelling since the late 1970s when I was teaching at New York Theological Seminary. The D.Min. program itself actually began in the late 1970s. It was a new program for seminaries. This is now the third group of D.Min. students I have worked with since coming to United Theological Seminary.

I created the Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Storytelling program to extend the knowledge, research and practice of biblical storytelling in ministry. The implementation of biblical storytelling in ministry needed to be explored. There was a whole series of facets and dimensions that no one knew about, and so the only way to discover that was to recruit and train a cadre of highly skilled pastors who were willing to undertake that research.

The primary motivation in developing the program was to create more knowledge and experience in the various dimensions of biblical storytelling in ministry. Almost all of these D.Min. students have become powerful leaders for the Network of Biblical Storytellers as well. Now the Network has a high quality of leadership through people who have a solid understanding of the various dimensions of biblical storytelling and have been through my D.Min. program.

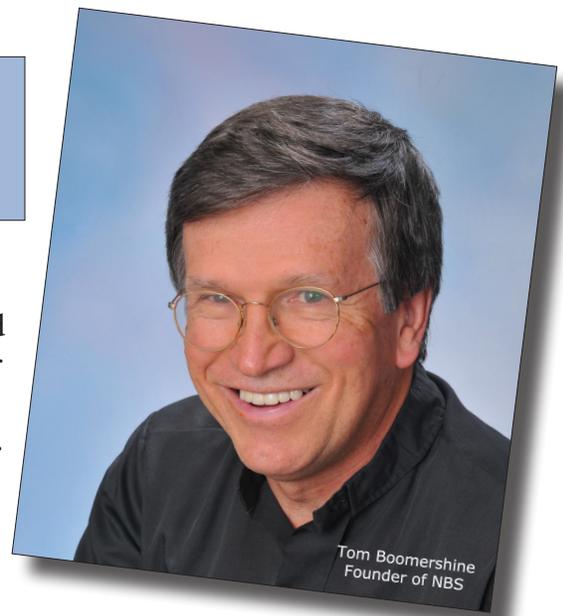
It has been very rewarding but also very demanding. A fundamental problem in designing and execut-

ing this program is that there is a very wide range of knowledge and experience that is needed in order to do projects in a way that will have both credibility and viability.

The pastors who are attracted to this program are willing to embrace a new paradigm in biblical studies. First off, they need to have a solid working knowledge of the Bible through biblical performance criticism. They need an M.Div., or its equivalent, so that they have some basic knowledge of the Bible in its original context and of biblical exegesis. They need experience in the basic processes of biblical storytelling, both in learning and telling stories, and in teaching others. Because there are so many dimensions to the program, they need both an excellent intellectual capacity and a broad-based education and, of course, experience in telling biblical stories.

This is highly demanding work. Ideally, this work would be done by Ph.D. students, who would study the texts in their original languages, but that hasn't yet been possible.

A focus of the program is learning about the connection between changes in communication culture and changes in the interpretation of the Bible.



At the core of that is the recognition that we live in a digital age and we need a new paradigm for interpretation of the Bible for the post-digital culture. That is something that I push in the program and require doctoral students to investigate.

Then, there are all of the areas of the implementation of biblical storytelling in ministry. These include liturgy, pastoral counseling, social action, evangelism, children's ministry, prison ministry, Christian education, preaching and so on. All of these areas focus on the Bible as performance literature in active ministry.

I encourage the D.Min. students to develop their own level of expertise in all these areas and then to do projects in these various areas of ministry. At the completion of the program, the students will be able to apply biblical storytelling to every facet of their pastoral ministry. This is truly transformative for ministry in the local church.