

FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF LIVING SKIES REGIONAL COUNCIL

ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE
 1121 College Drive
 Saskatoon, SK S7M 0W3
 P: 306-966-8970/F: 306-966-8981



Dear friends of the Living Skies Regional Council,

Greetings in name of the Crucified and Risen One.

Another year has come and gone since our last Council Gathering, and still we find ourselves in the midst of the pandemic. In the year that has been, so much has changed. With the swift advent of vaccines there is finally light at the end of the tunnel. With God's help, many of the disciplines and restrictions we have endured together are loosening. There is much vigilance still required, but it feels as though a corner has definitely been turned.

The year of the plague has left no one untouched, and St. Andrew's College (like so many other venerable institutions) has been buffeted by the storm. On top of covid, the College has also experienced the unexpected withdrawal of the University of Saskatchewan from a 40+ year lease relationship and the termination of pay-for-fee-services. These emergent financial challenges have resulted in a massive loss of revenue. As we begin to evaluate and seek new tenant relationships, it will take some time (probably no less than three years), before that revenue stream is renewed. With this reality in mind, the Board of Regents gathered in late February to make some very tough and prayerful decisions. Closure was seriously considered. In this time of discernment, the college was able to rely on the fall 2020 approved strategic plan. With this resource in hand, it is clear that the College still has a role to play in God's ongoing mission here on the prairies, and beyond.

The gut-wrenching decision was also made to inform all five faculty that, owing to the end of the academic program in June 2023, all positions will also end. New positions will be developed for the new program, but the number will be reduced to two faculty and one education director. As you can imagine, this has been a hard reality for all of us to come to terms with, especially faculty, who are much beloved in the College community.

The course of action which the Board chose was a path of radical renewal. The financial reserves of the College will be utilized for bridging to 2023, at which time a new academic collaborative curriculum with the Saskatoon Theological Union and increasing our commitment to continuing education will be implemented.

While we do not yet know the final shape of the academic environment, we know that it will include closer cooperation with our Saskatoon Theological Union ecumenical partners, it will entail a shift to intensive courses and a hybrid delivery model that will expand the College's reach for distance students, and it will include a major enhancement of the life-long learning and community education program. This latter feature may prove to be the most significant, as we seek to reach out into other communities beyond the church. SBNR (*spiritual but not religious*), social justice, and secular professional development and leadership programs will be fleshed out. The College will seek to re-engage with the local grassroots church to provide responsive programming for lay and clergy leaders, filling a void left by the closure of Calling Lakes Centre (PCTC) a number of years ago.

The take-away is that though these are challenging times, they are also exciting times for the College. New members of our Development Committee are bringing fresh ideas and energy around international recruitment abroad and intercultural engagement here at home. The hiring of a Recruitment Officer last year has galvanized a commitment to expand beyond the familiar catchment areas into the wider world, and to review every aspect of what the College does through the lens of recruitment (otherwise known as evangelism!) And the agility with which the College shifted during this past year into offering remote learning, worship, and community-building bodes well for our continued mandate of providing *theological education to embody compassion, hope, and justice*.

So, in the midst of loss, there is new life! The College is relying heavily on our Strategic Plan. Though the timelines have been accelerated by the pressures of the past year, we are sticking to the course upon which we believe Spirit has been inviting us. To that end, we are happy to provide the Regional Council (and its Communities of Faith) opportunities to support the vital work which we do. Here are several concrete development programs we would like you to consider and share widely:

- The 2021 #NoGalaGala
This year's event features our own Registrar, Greg Torwalt. Greg is not only a wizard of a registrar, but he is also a successful recording artist and founding member of the band Too Soon Monsoon. This concert is available online for exclusive viewing by ticketholders, and contains music, conversation, and guest appearances that include student reflections and an introductory meditation with our Pastor in Residence. <https://bit.ly/39ShU2T>
- Companions of the College
This new initiative of St. Andrew's College builds upon its ongoing commitment to develop deeper relationships with supporters and friends. College Companions are those who have committed to support the college, on an annual basis, at one of two initial tiers:
 1. Cypress \$500/annum with a yearly commitment to increase the gift by 10% annually; and,
 2. Tamarack \$1 000/annum with a yearly commitment to increase the gift by 5% annually.

This initiative invites new donors to give at these levels; existing supporters, at either of these two-tier levels, are invited to commit to the annual increase. Each tier will have access to ongoing new digital content, which the college has and will continue to create:

1. Cypress: This donor level will have access to the College Sunday Digital Worship Library. This resource allows individuals and faith communities to download and/or stream full worship services developed by members of St. Andrew's. Currently there are 6 worship services, which range from thematic to stand-alone. The college will be adding at least 2– 3-year new worship experiences per year; and,
2. Tamarack: At this donor tier, supporters will receive access to the College Sunday Digital Worship Library and exclusive access to all previous and future #NoGalaGala events. Currently the college has hosted two online premieres and intends to have 1-2-year.

If you or your faith community want to know more about this exciting initiative and the digital resources which accompany the tiers, please contact Melanie Schwanbeck, College Secretary, melanie.schwanbeck@usask.ca

- **College Sunday Digital Library**
St. Andrew's College has a long tradition of visiting communities of faith, large and small, to bring greetings, share the Gospel, and strengthen our bonds with the wider church. The covid era has invited us to consider innovative ways to continue that tradition, and so we are pleased to offer our new College Sunday digital resources. These include a growing digital library of full worship services, including sermons, hymns, liturgical notes, and conversation-starter questions. Current themes include leadership, stewardship, compassion, vocation, humility, and much more.... For more information, contact Melanie Schwanbeck at the College office (melanie.schwanbeck@usask.ca).
- **Classroom Enhancement Initiative**
As the college prepares for renewal over the next few years, we are also continuing to update our classrooms to offer hybrid learning. This will allow students to learn together whether onsite or remotely. Please consider giving to the College's *Second Century Fund*.

Above all, we would ask for your continued prayers. St. Andrew's has been a vital part of the United Church landscape here in your Region for over a hundred years. During that time, three things have remained constant: challenge and change, the resilience of prairie folk to adapt and endure, and the faithfulness of the Creator to see us through. The College shares in the same burdens and joys which mark the reality of our Communities of Faith ... we do not stand apart in some famed ivory tower! We know what it is like to have to make tough decisions about existential questions, and to listen for the Spirit's guidance on the long journey of faith. So please continue to pray for us, as we pray for you.

And may the peace of Christ dwell within you richly, this day and always. Amen.

Dea. Dr. Richard Manley-Tannis
Principal

Designated Lay Ministers Program

For the students and program team of the Designated Lay Ministry program, the Rev. Mary-Jo Tracy and Marc Grenon, the two learning circles of 2020-2021 have required creativity, adaptation, and patience. Our ten-day learning circles have been conducted synchronously on Zoom over five time zones. Sixteen students are currently in progress. Since June 30, 2020 four students have completed their programs, one has transferred to a different program, and seven have begun (four in October and three in March). The pandemic has not diminished enthusiasm for ministry preparation through experiential learning as I continue to talk with prospective students at various stages of the Candidacy Pathway process.

Rewards of On-line Learning

The rewards of teaching fully online include learning from experts across the country without burdening their schedules or our budget with travel and accommodation. For instance, in October 2020 ("Organizing Community" Learning Circle) we had speakers from Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, and Saskatoon, including the Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Richard Bott, the Rev. John Pentland, and the Rev. Alf Dumont. In March 2021 ("Leading in Community" Learning Circle) the teaching was shared by St. Andrew's faculty, the DLM director, and Tracy

Murton, but we also had sessions on empathy with Dr. Cindy Wallace, a professor in English from St. Thomas More College, (University of Saskatchewan) and the Rev. Robin King (Rising Spirit Ministry, Bashaw and Ponoka, AB) who spoke about maintaining community through on-line worship. The Faculty of St. Andrew's College have generously offered to assist in the fall 2021 learning circle "Living Diversity in Community" when we engage in such topics as ecumenism, the intercultural church, anti-racism, social justice, and right relations. Because students come from the Maritimes to BC and everywhere in between and must make travel plans well in advance, the mode of delivery in the fall of 2021 is likely to be online again.

Challenges Ahead

Despite lively interest in the DLM program, the message about the termination of faculty positions at St. Andrew's College has caused confusion among potential applicants. While the program and the position of DLM director continue at St. Andrew's College until December 2022, I anticipate seeking more subject experts from outside the college as St. Andrew's faculty wind down their work with students in other programs.

Gratitude

A teaching ministry of the United Church of Canada, the DLM program is primarily funded through your giving to the Mission and Service Fund. In addition the national church contributes to bursaries for travel and tuition for DLM students. This support is deeply appreciated. Beyond finances, the program is also blessed by the volunteer program team, Marc Grenon and the Rev. Mary-Jo Tracy, whose tireless efforts make the program possible.

Although we live in uncertainty, I feel enormously privileged to contribute to the education of our designated lay ministers. I am inspired by their dedication to their call through serving their communities of faith while learning to be servant leaders.

Respectfully submitted,
(The Rev. Dr.) Kathleen James-Cavan,
DLM Program Director

CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES



A Year of Imagining Everything Differently

Pandemic - *The pandemic (re)shaped everything in 2020*

Spring - onset

With the pandemic onset in Canada, within days we went from wondering whether our plans would be impacted to making the decision to move all circles and events online. Our staff began working from home as cities shut down. It was a time of enormous uncertainty. Students and staff plunged into online life. Our spring learning circles were creatively and quickly adapted for online gathering. Our Banquet and Annual Service of Celebration in person events were cancelled, and graduation instead marked with a Virtual Tea.

Summer – space to breathe

Online learning continued with the Relationship learning circle. Our Learning on Purpose circle was cancelled; and new students were invited to participate in a LOP-Lite orientation program. Woodsworth House re-opened to staff.

Fall – second wave

Staff continued to flex working from home or at the school. Our learning circles continued to be online, including: Integration Year, Ministry as Listening, Eco-Justice, Ministering by Word and Example. Some students proceeded with field placements, while others focused on external courses, which were widely available online.

Progress – *Sometimes just pressing on felt like progress, but we did more...***Education**

We continued to innovate online pedagogy. In April we held a series of pandemic responsive workshops on topics such as Online Annual Meetings and Trauma Informed Pastoral Care. We held 10 Learning Circles online, including three new one circles: Power and Privilege Circle, Eco-Theology Circle and Ministering by Word and Example Circle. We continued with free-of-charge public workshops with our CCS Fridays series, exploring topics including Queer Biblical Interpretation, Apocalypticism and (the still popular) Online Annual Meetings. Members of our learning community presented and participated at conferences including the Christian Left Conference (Emmanuel College), Competency Based Theological Education Conference (Competency Based Education Network) and Liberating Our Bodies: Sexual Politics, Queer Resistance and Religious Alliance Today (Jakarta Theological Seminary).

**Justice**

2020 started with Indigenous blockades of rail lines that brought an early silence Winnipeg from absent railcars. A deeper silence accompanied the first months of the pandemic, along with stark truths about who was vulnerable in our society. The silence was broken in the summer by Black Lives Matter protests raging against George Floyd's murder. CCS renews our affirmation that Black Lives Matter, our commitment to right relationship with Indigenous Peoples and stands against anti-Asian racism and violence.

Transformation

In the midst of change, challenge and response, we learned more about the resilience of field based education – students have continued to learn with local committee and in local context, including field education. Our networks of connection were strong and flexible enough to hold us together through isolation. We found this to be true for our staff team as well – practices of connection with out-of-province staff proved invaluable when everyone was dispersed and isolated at home.

Our new social media partnership with Strategic Charm has refreshed our online presence, connecting us with old friends and reaching new folks.

One of our actions arising from our commitment to #BlackLivesMatter has been revising assigned reading lists with an anti-racist, decolonial lens. We are more stringently assessing the whiteness of our assigned authors, and making changes, circle by circle.

Planning - *while trying to plan for the future in 2020 often felt like gazing into a foggy crystal ball, some things became crystal clear...*

Recruitment

Theological schools can no longer rely on a steady intake of students being identified and encouraged through denominational processes of call and discernment. We will be moving forward with hiring a part time Recruitment Coordinator in 2021 to connect with potential diploma, certificate and continuing education learners.

Sustainability

A longterm future for the Centre must include financial sustainability. Denomination funding is decreasing. CCS donors remain committed to diaconal education, and blessed us with extraordinary generosity in 2020. Our investment in Development education resulted in large fundraising increases.

Partners

We are blessed with collaborative, generative partners, including:

- Anglican and United Churches
- Diakonia of the United Church of Canada
- Anglican Deacons
- Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean
- Diaconal Mentors, Field Placements, Learning Facilitators, Local Committee members, Council and Committee volunteers
- St Andrew's College
- St Stephen's College
- Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
- Strategic Charm (social media managers)

Our Year Book, Financial Statements and Annual Report may be found at:

<http://ccsonline.ca/event/ccs-annual-general-meeting-2021/>

Michelle Owens
Principal

ATLANTIC SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Greetings from Atlantic School of Theology!

As it did for every other organization under the sun, 2020-21 brought many challenges for Atlantic School of Theology. The shift to online-only learning in our summer, fall, and winter terms required us to stretch and grow our technological and pedagogical muscles. Our students also worked with great faith and diligence to adapt. It was especially difficult for those with pastoral charge and family responsibilities, or with healthy challenge. We're very proud of them and grateful for them. We all did our best to support one another and to keep in touch. Nothing about "ALL THIS" has been easy! Yet we persevere, in the hope that our attention to and cooperation with God's leading will help us to make good decisions and to continue to serve faithfully.



AST's total enrolment was down slightly, to about 180 students, but the total number of courses taken by those students was up. We decided to wind down our Diploma in Youth Ministry program due to a lack of demand, but we are about to launch our new Diploma in Missional Leadership. The first cohort of this part-time program will begin in June and travel together as learners for two years. Warm thanks to the General Council Office and the United Church Foundation for their support and partnership in this new initiative.

After 12 years of exemplary teaching, research, and leadership, Rev. Dr. Susan Willhauck has decided to retire at the end of June. We shall miss her very much! She has been a very inspiring and encouraging professor and colleague. In July, we will welcome Drs. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis, Andrew O'Neill, and Evangeline Kozitza Dean into tenure-track faculty positions. We're excited about what each of them will bring (and continue to bring) to AST's mission of learning and faith.

With lockdowns and limited movement the norm in so many places, we offered several series of online Continuing Education programming, including "Field Notes" and "Decolonizing Theology." As the summer term approaches, we will once again have all our courses online. Several of them are available to lifelong learners, including "Transitional Ministry Skills," "Mysticism and Monasticism in Context," "Evangelism Rediscovered," "Dying, Death, and Bereavement," and more. We would be delighted to welcome you to these online programs in June and July of this year. Similarly, we invite you to discover our emerging Leadership Learning Initiative and its promising array of programming.

It is an honour to share the work of theological education with the many supervisors and lay support teams who work with our students across Canada and beyond. As one of the theological schools of The United Church of Canada, we remain committed to sharing in mission with all the congregations, regions, and the General Council. Thank you for your support and friendship.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Rob Fennell
Academic Dean

EMMANUEL COLLEGE



EMMANUEL COLLEGE
OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Office of the Principal
75 Queen's Park Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7
ed.office@utoronto.ca
www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca

Dear Friends,

I pray for God's blessings on your regional meeting and bring greetings from Emmanuel College. As the end of my term as Principal approaches, I write to share some exciting developments at the College.

The COVID-19 pandemic has handed us the unexpected opportunity to dive head-first into online teaching and learning. We are currently discerning a distance model for the Masters of Divinity (MDiv) program, which may interest candidates in your region, for whom moving to Toronto would have been an obstacle. Students starting the program this fall can expect access to online courses, with opportunities for community and spiritual life both online and in person. Our John W. Billes Grant affords 100% tuition support for United Church of Canada members enrolled full-time in the MDiv and engaged with the candidacy pathway process. We also offer ample bursary support, which has been bolstered during the pandemic by Annual Fund gifts from generous alumni donors.

Emmanuel College recruits and educates leaders to be attuned to the changing context and mission of the church in Canada. We have broadened ways that courses, continuing education, and community life implement the calls to action delineated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. With the appointment of Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo as Special Advisor on Indigenous Issues and teaching-stream Assistant Professor of Theology, the College now offers courses on Indigenous theological worldviews; Indigenous ways of relating to faith, church, and the community; and the legacy of residential schools. We have also increased the presence of Indigenous Elders in ceremonies and as guest lecturers. New Canadian faculty have joined us, with expertise in postcolonial and decolonial theories and practices. As a result, we have instituted an innovative curricular requirement in Coloniality and Power for all basic degree students. Our pluralistic context and our multireligious Master of Pastoral Studies program also enhance the MDiv. Students become more deeply rooted in their own religious and spiritual traditions as a result of engaging one another across difference. Each of these distinctive emphases prepares our UCC candidates for contemporary ministries.

Our continuing education partnerships with the United Church emphasize leadership in diverse settings. We are currently co-sponsoring a multi-year Innovative Ministry Project with the Toronto United Church Council. In early March, General Secretary Michael Blair delivered our Gandier Lecture, addressing the current reality of anti-black racism, the church's historic complicity with practices of exclusion, and the UCC's commitment to transformative discipleship as the beloved community. This summer, our Centre for Religion and Its Contexts will gather a preaching symposium, and we will also host the second annual Christian Left Conference with Trinity St. Paul's UCC, EDGE, and other sponsors. Please consider joining us at these events, online and free of charge. Future initiatives will integrate the training of candidates for ministry with workshop opportunities for ministers, including a series of workshops that draw on the College's strengths in mental health education.

Our faculty contribute theologically to the United Church of Canada. We are thinking through emergent theological issues that matter to congregations and their ministers. Recent publications include Pamela McCarroll's volume, *Christian Theology after Christendom: Engaging the Thought of Douglas John Hall*; and *Postcolonial Preaching: Creating a Ripple Effect* by Timothy Eaton Memorial Church Professor of Preaching, HyeRan Kim-Cragg. Our faculty and students continue to join your congregations as guest preachers via Zoom.

Looking back over my three years as Principal, I have been grateful to participate in each of these facets of our engagement with the United Church of Canada. I look forward to new ways of connecting after June 30, under the leadership of our soon-to-be-announced Interim Principal. On a personal note, I look forward to continuing my journey as a member of the Emmanuel College faculty and as a person in ministry in the Admission process with the UCC.

This concludes my report to you as Principal, but it is not "goodbye."

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Dr. Michelle Voss Roberts
Principal and Professor of Theology

STEWARDSHIP AND GIFT OFFICER REPORT

Vicki Nelson
 Stewardship and Gift Officer for the Northern Spirt,
 Living Skies and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils
 Philanthropy Unit, General Council Office



Generosity is a practical expression of love. Gary Inrig.

Greetings,

My name is Vicki Nelson and I am the new Stewardship Animator serving Living Skies Regional Council. I live and work from Regina, and am looking forward to the opportunity to get to work alongside the people and communities in Living Skies.

My role is to provide resources and support to individuals, communities of faith, and other ministries in the areas of stewardship, congregational giving, Mission & Service, and the work of the United Church Foundation. If you have ideas, questions or inspiration to share, please get in contact [with me \(vnelson@united-church.ca\)](mailto:vnelson@united-church.ca).

One way we may connect is through an online learning program, **Called to be the Church: The Journey**. These trainings are designed for congregational leaders, working as a team, to learn and develop a stewardship plan to help increase giving and deepen connections within your community of faith. Cohorts are currently being assembled for Module 1: Stewardship Best Practices. After 4 weekly gatherings, participants will have developed a custom stewardship plan for their community of faith. Following that we will work together to realize this plan, inviting more people to make generous use of the gifts God has given and expressing gratitude for shared abundance. If this type of training would be valuable in your faith community, please [reach out](#) and we will find a time that works for you.

Speaking of gratitude for shared abundance, the Mission & Service Fund is our Church's most powerful vehicle for helping to save and transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Together we can do more than we can do alone. In 2020, Mission & Service funding supported life changing and life saving work in Living Skies Region. From *River Bend Integrated Community Ministries*, to *The Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry*, to *The Micah Mission*, the vulnerable are being cared for and their worth celebrated. Your Mission & Service also supported camping ministries—*Lumsden Beach Camp* and *Camp Tapawingo* had programs generously funded. And that wasn't all. Your donations to Mission & Service are changing the lives of your neighbours—both here in Living Skies, and around the globe. Thank you for your gifts.

Sharing stories about Mission & Service is an effective way to hold up and celebrate this amazing work, and to encourage generosity in your community of faith. The pandemic has changed many things, including the way Minutes for Mission are distributed and told, however

they certainly have not gone away. New stories are frequently [posted](#). For those who utilize videos in worship, there are also [videos](#) that tell personal stories of the life changing work of Mission & Service. If you want to bring more Mission & Service inspiration into your community of faith, and would like help finding resources, please let me know.

Finally, I want to thank you all. It has been a hard year, with lots of uncertainty, but you have persisted. You have found meaningful ways to be a person of faith during a dark time, and are still generously giving of yourself to provide leadership to this Regional Council. It is amazing. Thank you.

In gratitude,
Vicki Nelson
VNelson@united-church.ca
1-800-268-3781 ext. 2045