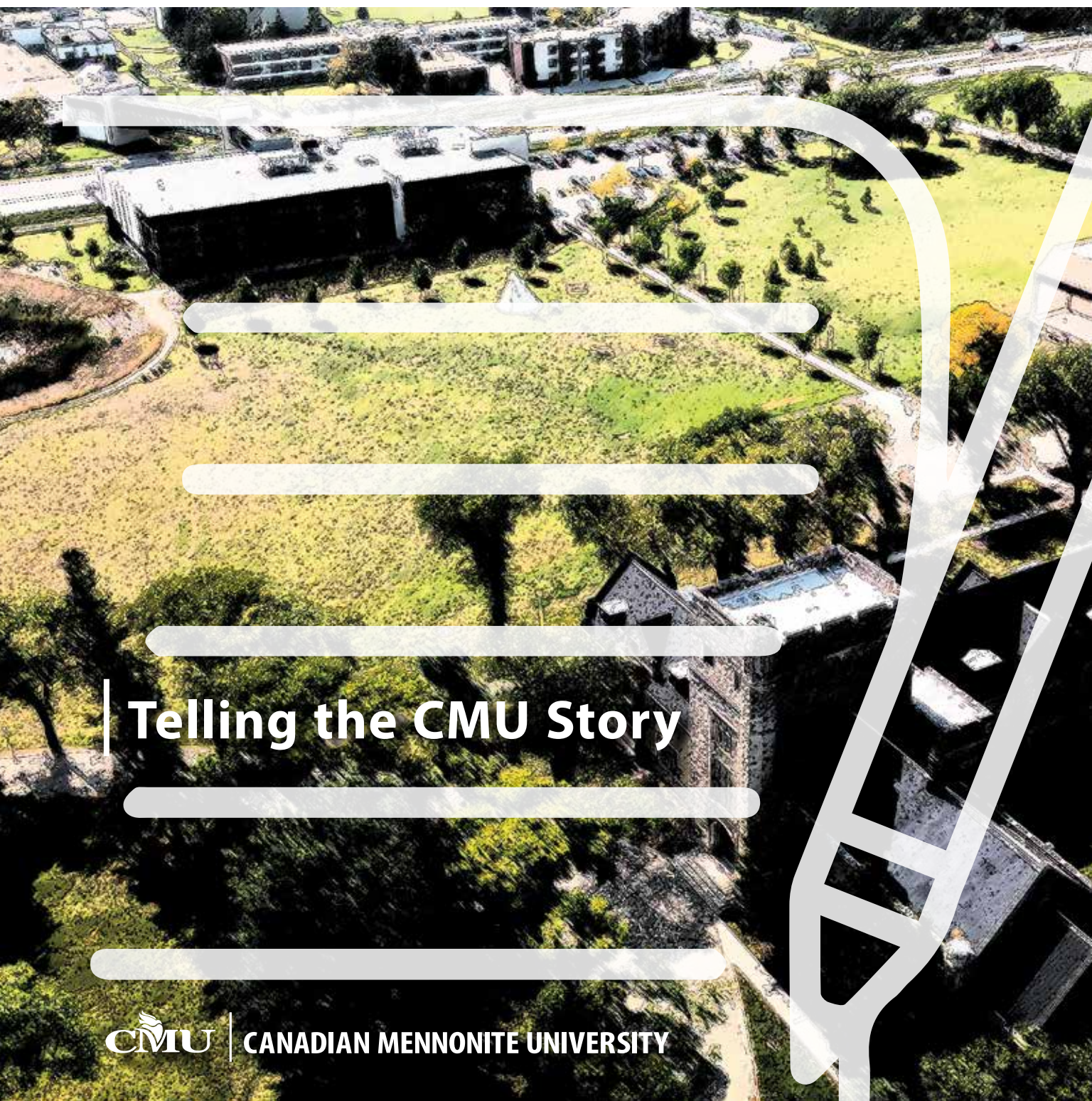


The BLAZER

CONNECTING ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF CMU

SUMMER 2024



Telling the CMU Story

The BLAZER

Welcome to the Summer 2024 issue of *The Blazer*. Last issue's opening message quoted CMU alumn Deanna Zantingh, as she said, "We must be willing to embrace change and be prepared to learn, unlearn, and relearn." Learning and relearning is an endless loop at a university. Older material is reviewed, as new material is studied. While engaging us in relevant conversations, this cycle of learning requires intentionality and an openness to the realization that we live in a changing world. In storytelling, this relearning, or rather this evolution is known as character development, and leads us to new and exciting insights.

In the fall 2023 issue of this magazine, we considered the concept of uprooting to make space for new plantings. CMU's *A Time of Reckoning* symposium was an opportunity to look at what the university has learned over the past 24 years. We acknowledged what was good in our understanding of CMU as a university of the church for the world, while also realizing that many facets of the church and the world have changed over that same span.

Our feature article delves into presentations made at the symposium, underscoring the achievements of CMU graduates in their lives and careers and the impact they've had around the globe. On the cusp of its 25th anniversary, we know that CMU has done good work. The university continues its character development by engaging young people in new ways. As faculty and staff, we equip students for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation through co-curricular activities and the introduction of new programs.

A good illustration of CMU's evolution is the recently announced Uphold residence renewal campaign for upgrades to Poettcker Hall (see page 14). Thanks to good bones and a good foundation, what was built many years ago still stands today. This is a testament to CMU's heritage and the care provided by the church, constituents, faculty, alumni, and students over the decades. Now with investment, attention to detail, and a vision for the future, this university of the church can better equip young people to make positive change in the world for years to come.

Kevin Kilbrei
CMU Director, Marketing & Communications



Table of Contents

- 1 President's Message
- 2 Campus News
- 6 Telling the CMU Story
- 14 Uphold: A Poettcker Hall Residence Renewal Campaign
- 16 CMU Grad 2024
- 20 People and Events
- 22 Alumni News
- 24 Alumni Profile

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Institutions of faith, love, and hope

Trust in institutions is way down. I hear the line often. How does it land with you? Do you nod your head in agreement? Engage the statement's suppositions? Propose a counter view? Put energy into strengthening institutional trust? Desire for institutions to dissipate altogether? Work to replace them with some better way of serving projects and commitments that none of us can carry out on our own?

For years I've called Canadian Mennonite University a *learning community*. I seldom say *institution*. As a mediating expression the former has proven effective to draw people together in shared work and sensibilities. Yet I grimace when I hear multi-billion-dollar corporations claiming not to be businesses but communities. I also wonder what's lost by sidestepping rather than confronting concerns about the term institution.

At the recent CMU *renew* conference for pastors, Rev. Bonnie Dowling, Rector of St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Winnipeg, offered a framework to reimagine the term institution by not leaving it stranded but instead placing it in dynamic relationship with two other terms. Drawing on New Testament models, Dowling described the church as being as much a movement as a community as an institution. Neither favouring nor minimizing any one form, she then called out the lives of these forms by mapping onto them the three theological virtues: faith, love, and hope. As a *movement of faith* the church upends and reorders life with a compelling vision in Christ, as a *community of love* each member is

...Dowling described the church as being as much a movement as a community as an institution.

cherished and cares for the other within the body, and as an *institution of hope* trustworthy balance and responsibility (including sound employment practices as much as theological understandings)

are sustained by remembering the stories of God with us as we face ever new conditions. Yes, within Dowling's dynamic triad the institution node carries trustworthiness; it is not the source of distrust.

Participants found this three-part imagery enlivening for their congregations—and other places too. I was moved to consider how well CMU lives up to being a university institution, a learning community, and a responsive movement in ways that are dynamic across theological and



other disciplinary fields. Indeed, Dowling gave words to storytelling practices already underway, as you'll read about in this issue of *The Blazer*. The insights of alumni, faculty, and church leaders from this year's symposium, *A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story*, are giving direction to this university movement/community/institution towards CMU2030—and on! I invite you to extend this conversation in relation to the movements that compel you, the communities through which you express care, and the institutions that bring steadiness to your lives. May we be heartened in the dynamic trust that we share.

Peace and joy,
Cheryl Pauls
CMU President

Students connect to global project

by John Brubacher, Associate Professor of Biology

Near the end of a research leave that I spent at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I had the opportunity to train as a partner instructor in the Tiny Earth program that's headquartered there. This program, launched in 2018, is a microbiology lab curriculum being pursued by a growing international network of students and instructors. The program's goal is to "studentsource" the discovery of new antibiotics—one avenue of response to the emerging crisis of antibiotic resistance in disease-causing bacteria. Tiny Earth is the brainchild of one of my scientific and pedagogical heroes: Jo Handelsman, a soil microbiologist and director of the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery at UW Madison.

The 17 students in my Microbiology I course in winter of 2023 worked with me to integrate Tiny Earth into the lab curriculum for that course. The basic idea is straightforward. Students isolate pure strains of bacteria from a soil sample. We used about a quarter teaspoon of humus from the woods just south of the Director of Student Life's residence on the CMU campus. Each student assembles a library of about 20 strains of soil bacteria, and screens these strains for antibiotic production by growing them on lawns of "tester strain" bacteria. The tester strains are non-pathogenic relatives of species that have been identified by the World Health



Organization as pathogens of critical concern. From these screening experiments, students identify soil isolates that inhibit the growth of one or more tester strains: those isolates are producing something that is acting as an antibiotic.

Students are engaged and empowered by participating as scientists in a project of genuine public interest

Over the semester, the students learn the microbiological skills and techniques that are standard for an introductory microbiology course. But they learn in the context of doing real science, asking questions that no one knows the answer to, and seeing where their observations lead them. Students are engaged and empowered by participating as scientists in a project of genuine public

interest. Studies of such course-based undergraduate research experiences routinely demonstrate the benefits of this discovery-based approach.

The 2023 iteration of Microbiology I, plus three biology students who continued the project in independent-study courses this past fall, have so far identified nine strains of interest from local soil. The likelihood of any of these nine being the source of a new antibiotic is quite low, but the growth of the Tiny Earth network around the world greatly increases the odds of discovering something useful. Along the way, students may also gain a new appreciation for some timeless theological lessons, about the beauty and complexity of small things, and of the need to use the gifts of the soil reverently and wisely.

For more information and updates on Tiny Earth, see tinyearth.wisc.edu.



LINCZ project update spring 2024

by Alrika Rojas, LINCZ Learning and Research Hub Coordinator

The LINCZ project, short for Locally-Led Indigenous Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation in Zimbabwe, is a new endeavour aimed at boosting climate resilience and preserving biodiversity in Zimbabwe. With support from Global Affairs Canada, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has teamed up with CMU to embark on a multidisciplinary research journey across the diverse districts of Gwanda, Binga, and Mwenezi. As part of this collaboration, an interactive online Learning and Research Hub will be launched to spark conversations and inspire action toward innovative climate solutions.

Since the project began in November 2023, the CMU research team—comprising Dr. Rachel Krause, Dr. Jonathan Sears, Dr. Jobb Arnold, Dr. Wendy Kroeker, Dr. Ray Vander Zaag, and Dr. Kirit Patel—has been actively forging connections with partners and collaborators across borders. In the upcoming two years, CMU researchers, alongside local CMU student research assistants, will journey to Zimbabwe. Together, they'll work hand-in-hand with partners to conduct crucial research centered on climate change.

As part of her focus on citizen science and community-led biodiversity monitoring, Dr. Krause spent several weeks in Zimbabwe in January 2024 working with research partner Global Biodiversity Information Facility colleagues to carry out river and wetland surveys. These surveys will provide information about the variety of living organisms present before project activities are underway and will support local community members in conducting independent monitoring of the health of nature in local forests and rivers. Dr. Krause plans to return to Zimbabwe twice more to carry out biodiversity surveys—once at the project's midpoint in 2025,

and once near project end in 2026—to see how biodiversity has changed.

In the beginning of summer 2024, Dr. Sears will travel to Zimbabwe to study how much the country's policies, from national to local levels, take climate change into account. The goal is to understand where there are gaps in these policies and to suggest ways to make them better. This research aims to create policies that can help people in Zimbabwe deal with the effects of climate change, making them stronger and more adaptable. Meanwhile back in Winnipeg, the CMU LINCZ team has been growing.

In the upcoming two years, CMU researchers, alongside local student research assistants, will journey to Zimbabwe.

Dr. Jodi Dueck-Read, Director of Research and Program Grants, welcomed Alrika Rojas, Learning and Research Hub Coordinator, and Chantel Mierau, Financial Analyst, to the team earlier this year, and a post-doctoral collaborator is set to join the team in summer. The team has been working diligently behind the scenes to prepare for the launch of the Learning and Research Hub. Set to launch mid-summer, the Hub will provide Canadian and Zimbabwean audiences with exciting opportunities to learn more about CMU's research and the faculty and students involved in the project.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to engage with the LINCZ project.



2024 PAX award: Dr. Joss Reimer

Dr. Joss Reimer is Chief Medical Officer of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and incoming president of the Canadian Medical Association. She is well-known as the former medical lead and official spokesperson for Manitoba's COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation Taskforce, through which she led the largest and most successful vaccine campaign in provincial history.

Reimer is a leader who embodies compassion, integrity, vision, and determination. Her previous work includes being medical director of public health for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, a lead medical officer for the Government of Manitoba, and a director for the University of Manitoba's undergraduate medical education program. She continues to operate a clinical practice in maternity care, labour, and delivery at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg.

From Winkler, MB, Reimer spent time living around the world studying language, political science, and international relations before earning her Doctor of Medicine and Master of Public Health. She is an expert in physician wellness, public health, infectious diseases, harm reduction, science communication, and much more.

CMU is inspired by Reimer's willingness to face complex challenges for the health and the good of all, her passion for collaboration, her drive to improve the world, and her commitment to maintaining hope amidst crisis. Her dedication to promoting peace—that is, well-being, health, flourishing—in exemplary ways lies at the very heart of CMU's mission.



On April 30, 2024, Dr. Cheryl Pauls presented Dr. Joss Reimer with the CMU Pax award, honouring a life of service, leadership, and reconciliation.



Social work at CMU

by Alex Sawatsky, Professor and Chair of Social Work



A flurry of work has taken place at CMU as we prepare to launch our new social work program. In order to proceed in an informed and good way, we consulted with members from Indigenous communities, the field of social work practice, and academia to name a few. The result is a program that is both reflective of the current context of social work education as well as the unique perspectives of Manitoba communities. This includes the distinctive environment of CMU. We are excited to share that our curriculum seeks to stress a focus on families, groups, and communities, as well as the physical environment.

Social work courses at CMU will prepare students to be critical thinkers who are aware of their own social location, practicing in anti-oppressive ways. Their CMU-based education will emphasize a cross-pollination of ideas from related fields of study, a core strength of CMU academics. Students will become more aware of how we are all connected and that we are all better off if we strive to heal our communities and, by extension, the world. Hence, our curriculum includes content unique to CMU, such as conflict resolution and restorative justice along with a greater focus on families and communities. Students can expect their Bachelor of Social Work to include education that promotes new ways of seeing themselves and others that challenges conventional thinking around human behaviour and development. This must include a respect and valuing of Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing in the social work curriculum.

With the ongoing crisis of global warming, our social work students will also be prepared to learn about the environment in ways that connect them with the broader CMU curriculum. This is unique to CMU and aims to not

...CMU will prepare students to be critical thinkers who are aware of their own social location, practicing in anti-oppressive ways.

only redress concerns that social work has not done enough to address the physical world, but will prepare students to be effective practitioners given climate anxiety, climate refugees, and environmental racism. To practice principles of social justice, critical tools to analyze, evaluate, and develop skills to engage in advocacy and allyship are central to this degree. As this year of preparation and development comes to a close, we have had the privilege

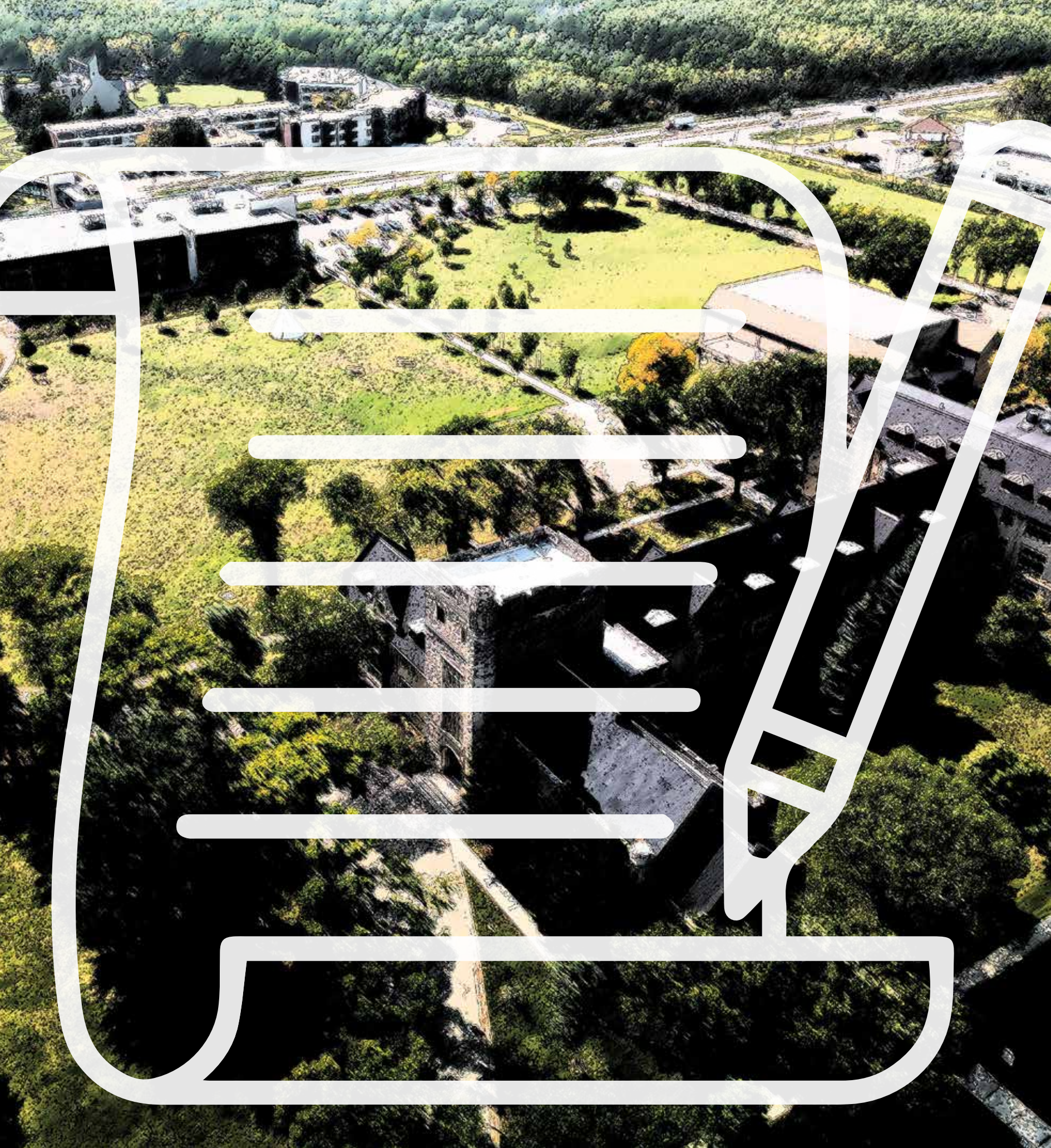
of getting to know students in the Exploring Social Work courses, a required course for admission into the program. As they learned about social work through readings, discussions, and guest lectures it has been wonderful to see the compassionate and enthusiastic responses by students contemplating social work as a vocation. We look forward to the fall as we begin the journey together with our first cohort of CMU social work students.

**Social Work
at CMU**



**Bachelor of
Social Work**

**Small university
Big opportunities**



TELLING THE CMU STORY

A time of reckoning

Introduction by Dr. Paul Doerksen, Associate Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies
Stories by CMU Staff Writers, Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe and Myles Tiessen

CMU hosted a symposium titled *A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story* on October 27-28, 2023. The symposium was occasioned by an initiative of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC)¹ in recognition of considerable disruption, vulnerability, and soul-searching for many of its member institutions today. The title of CIC's initiative, *Reframing the Institutional Saga*, reflects its purpose: to engage, reckon with, and account for the story of each institution's missional entrustment in relation to its current context and to possibilities for moving forward. The symposium occasioned reflection within a time of institutional strain, renewal, and new development for CMU.

The symposium began with a chapel worship service, with the most public session being the J.J. Thiessen Lecture delivered by Dr. Willie James Jennings, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale Divinity School, titled *Gathering the Pieces That Remain: Weaving Life Together from the Fragments of Faith, Race, and Land*. Sessions included presentations from faculty members, external voices, and CMU alumni. The latter sessions added an important dimension to the symposium, as we were exposed to the ongoing work and reflection of presenters from Korea, Amsterdam, London, Toronto, and several Manitoba Hutterite communities. The lively wrap-up of the symposium featured brief reflections from

1. A project of NetVUE (Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education) division of CIC, supported by the Lilly Endowment Inc. CIC consists of over 650 schools of 500-3000 students, the majority in United States. See <https://cic.edu/opportunity/reframing-institutional-saga-grants>.

Jennings, along with several faculty members.

The work begun by the symposium carries on in several forms. CMU staff and faculty have met four times over brown bag lunches to extend the conversation. In addition, the presentations are currently being edited for the purpose of publishing a forthcoming book (CMU Press). Overall, the preparation for, delivery of, and reflection on the symposium have generated what I take to be constructive and edifying conversation. President Cheryl Pauls, in reflecting on all of this, asserts that she “found the Symposium to represent the CMU learning community at its best. Presenters spoke effectively from vantage points of personal experience, vocation, and wrestling as they gave voice to CMU’s collective reckoning.” Please consider this issue of *The Blazer* an invitation to participate in CMU’s extended Time of Reckoning.

The presentations were recorded and are available for viewing on the CMU website: cmu.ca/reckoning.



their experiences at CMU and its predecessor colleges led to the work they do now and shaped a larger movement.

“CMU’s role was very significant for developing the Korean Anabaptist movement,” said Bock Ki Kim (CMBC ‘99). He explained that two CMBC alumni of ‘95, Chris and Laura Mullet Koop, helped birth the first Anabaptist Church in South Korea. Many students from the country have also travelled to CMU to study theology and peacebuilding.

Kim chose to become an Anabaptist-Mennonite while studying at CMBC. He is now an international witness worker with Mennonite

churches do, especially through MCC [Mennonite Central Committee].” He went on to spend a decade developing peace programming at Korea Anabaptist Centre (KAC) in Chuncheon.

From there, Lee helped create numerous organizations, including Northeast Asia Regional Peace Institute and Korea Peacebuilding Institute, of which he is now director. These centres offer training in peace skills like restorative justice, and create support



CMU’S ROLE WAS VERY SIGNIFICANT FOR DEVELOPING THE KOREAN ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT.

Church Canada in Seoul, where he has been developing a Korean Mennonite church since 2017.

Jae Young Lee (CMBC ‘99) also studied at CMU and became impressed by “Mennonite theology and the practice Mennonite

networks for like-minded people.

Young Pyo Jun (CMU ‘02) came to CMU because he wanted to witness Christian communal life in practice. He found it exemplified especially in Hutterite communities. “This experience made a great difference in my life,” he said. After graduating and returning to Korea, he translated several Hutterian confessional writings into Korean. He has been trying to develop a Christian communal life in Buyeo, being a small-scale vegetable farmer, but succeeding at creating a self-sufficient community has been difficult. Even so, he’s thankful for his Hutterite-modelled vision of living a quiet, simple life in the land.



While Anabaptism and peace movements are still relatively new and small in Korea, it’s a different landscape than when Cheryl Woelk (CMU ‘03) did her practicum at KAC. “It’s exciting to see how, over the last 20 years, the Korean, Mennonite, and Anabaptist movement has continued to grow and deepen in ways that we couldn’t have expected or imagined when I first went as a CMU student,” said Woelk, who is now an educational consultant and language coach in Seoul.

“I hope this connection will continue so more people know about peacebuilding and continue to work in the field of restorative justice, peacebuilding, or conflict transformation, which we in Korean society and Northeast Asia definitely need more than any time,” Lee said.



Friends, Relatives, and Other Addictions

JOSEPH WIEBE (CMU ‘04) WAS THE VALEDICTORIAN of his graduating class. Almost 20 years later, at CMU’s Time of Reckoning symposium, he returned to his convocation speech to “reflect on what friendship, dialogue, and truth means to CMU in a time of reckoning.”

Wiebe is Director of the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life at the University of Alberta’s Augustana campus and Associate Professor of Religion and Ecology. In a series of presentations from church and external voices, he spoke about relationality at CMU and both the challenges and opportunities it holds.

His valedictory address made an assessment of the future that he still stands by: “CMU’s graduates are... addicted to the quest for truth through conversation and friendship and this addiction would stick with us. No matter our vocation or who we would become, it would rely in some way on friendship with CMU.”

Wiebe referred to philosopher Agnes Callard’s definition of a university as “a place where people help each other access the highest intellectual goods.” Since learning is a social activity, the access to this truth comes through conversation and relationship. He drew on Indigenous critical theory to break down the question of why CMU matters through the lens of this definition.

Firstly, these “highest intellectual goods” are something experienced, with emotion and physicality, rather than something that can be possessed. Wiebe said we have to overcome what scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls “white possessiveness,” the idea that we can own knowledge.

If the meaning of knowledge and learning comes through relations, Wiebe said, then a purpose of the university is to make “good kin.” The active “settler property regime,”

CMU’S GRADUATES ARE...ADDICTED TO THE QUEST FOR TRUTH THROUGH CONVERSATION AND FRIENDSHIP.

as defined by scholar Kim TallBear, works against this purpose. Treating a relationship, whether between humans or earth, as something over which one can claim ownership, makes bad kin.

Most Mennonite traditions in North America are highly relational, playing



CMU and the Korean Anabaptist Movement: talking to alumni

CMU ALUMNI LIVING ACROSS SOUTH KOREA shared a vibrant patchwork of life stories to start off presentations on the theme, “Telling the Story of CMU,” at the Time of Reckoning symposium. They spoke about how

“the Mennonite game” of discussing genealogy to situate themselves in a larger picture. Many other cultures do this—Wiebe exchanged similar stories with his Métis friends—but “the Mennonite temptation is to turn relationality into identity.”

He referenced experiences of his own family, whose unfamiliar last names automatically made them outsiders, and students of colour at Goshen College who talked about being unable to get through the “Mennonite wall” of exclusive white Mennonite group identity. “For Mennonite relationality to be about making kin, it needs to be understood as more than family membership,” he said.

“Help make situated relations the ethos of Mennonites,” was Wiebe’s call to CMU. “What do your relations here, in this place, on this land, mean for what you teach, how you research, and why you write?”



Hold In Common

WHAT MOTIVATES A SENSE OF BELONGING in a place like CMU?

In her presentation at the Time of Reckoning symposium held at CMU this past October, Claudia Dueck, Research Coordinator for the recently conducted Hold in Common study organized by CMU and the Centre for Community Based Research, sought to find that answer.

To get at the heart of what makes people feel drawn together, Dueck was part of producing a qualitative study aimed at CMU alumni and friends. The goal was to find out how a pluralistic university like CMU maintains relations with people who otherwise hold no formal mutual accountability with each other.

Through focus groups, interviews, and roundtable events, Dueck said participation, partnering, and holding an investment in the greater mission of CMU are fluid.

As the church and society change over time, a concern is that the strength of CMU as an institution may be at risk when these constituents change or lose their sense of ownership or belonging at CMU.

“What does it mean to partner or “hold” in either church or society when there is so much change and growing polarization and discouragement in these contexts?”

Dueck said that their research found CMU represents a middle ground between differing groups or ideas.

“[CMU does] the difficult work of trying to make the conditions where learning and conversations can

take place amid a changing society and changing constituency.”

She also mentioned strategic risk-taking through vulnerability and humanizing the institution of CMU through openness. Drawing on the work of Sharon Welch, Dueck said, “When we become vulnerable—sharing challenges and joys, honestly acknowledging things that go wrong and how we deal with them and learn together—we open ourselves to love and to care.”

Toward the end of her presentation, Dueck adroitly stated where and how we grow as a community and “hold in common” the institution of CMU:

“In boldly occupying a middle ground that is encouraging a collective, collaborative, and transparent discussion, CMU is taking a risk grounded in community that might redefine responsible action and a way forward in an uncertain time, equipping lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation for church and society.”

CMU IS TAKING A RISK GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY THAT MIGHT REDEFINE RESPONSIBLE ACTION AND A WAY FORWARD IN AN UNCERTAIN TIME.



The Hutterite-CMU Relationship: A Story of Transformation via Friendship and Hospitality

AT THE TIME OF THE SYMPOSIUM, 15 Hutterite students were enrolled full-time in CMU courses. Although this might not seem like an impressive number, it’s a significant leap in Hutterite attendance and represents a growing relationship fixed in friendship and hospitality.

Two Hutterite alumni, Jesse Hofer (CMU ’08) and Kenny Wollmann (CMU ’18) spoke at the symposium, offering their reflections on how CMU gained the trust of the Hutterian community, and thoughts on guiding principles the institution should follow as it navigates the future.

With Hofer—the first Hutterite student to complete a degree at CMU—at the lectern, he informed the audience on the origins of the Hutterite-CMU relationship.

Hofer referenced courses, professors, and teachings that “filled an urgent need for serious reflection on [the Hutterite] heritage.”

“At CMU, I learned to attend to a larger conversation. To read my own story as a complex amalgam of blessings and burdens and to hopefully and faithfully inhabit this tension,” said Hofer.

AT CMU, I LEARNED TO ATTEND TO A LARGER CONVERSATION.

After these short reflections on the history of the relationship, Hofer encouraged CMU to retain its fundamentally Anabaptist roots “while also rooting more deeply, more radically into the church’s broader tradition for nourishment at a time when our temporal bandwidth appears to be rapidly diminishing.”

“How can CMU tell the Christian story in compelling, hopeful, unapologetic ways in the context of a deeply anxious and divided world?” asked Hofer.

Immediately following Hofer, Wollmann offered a personal account of how he found himself at CMU. After being asked by his community to attend university to become a teacher, Wollmann enrolled at Brandon University without questioning or thinking.

“Ten years ago, I would have been happy to leave the Bible and God out of everything,” said Wollmann. “There is a reason I had that attitude. It was forged in the furnace of my childhood in a Hutterite community in rural Manitoba.”

“Christianity as I knew it had failed, and it was time to throw off the shackles. This was the foundation of my skepticism as to whether CMU could serve a good purpose,” said Wollmann before proclaiming: “My suspicions, as they often are, were wrong.”

At CMU, Wollmann said he “was given the tools and skills to rehabilitate the warped and partial reading of scripture I had inherited.”

“I discovered a community that

taught this life-long Hutterite communalist how I could enliven and animate my existing beautiful tradition in a time when I was more aware of its worn corners and vast stretches of spiritual desert.”



Student Audio Project

AS AN EXTENSION OF THE SYMPOSIUM held on campus in October, two CMU Communications and Media students, Chidinma Samuel and Kara LeBlanc, envisioned a media project that would explore how CMU has shaped the lives of alumni from the past 24 years.

The audio project features 10 alumni and acts as an oral history of the student experience at CMU. It aims to gain insight into what happens behind the doors of the courtly brick castle on the north side, the radiant windows of Marpeck Commons, and the perennial study rooms of the South Campus. The creative project aims to tell the CMU story from the voices of the people who help to shape it: its students.

One such alum was Onome Irikefe, who graduated from CMU in 2019. Born in Nigeria and eventually making her way to CMU by way of Ottawa, Irikefe initially described her time before coming to CMU as “a bit of a roller coaster ride.”

“I felt like because I was on a journey of coming out of my bubble, I didn’t want to do it in a place that didn’t feel like a community. CMU felt like a community,” Irikefe told Samuel and LeBlanc.

Irikefe told the student interviewers that she was initially drawn to CMU for the Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies program and because of

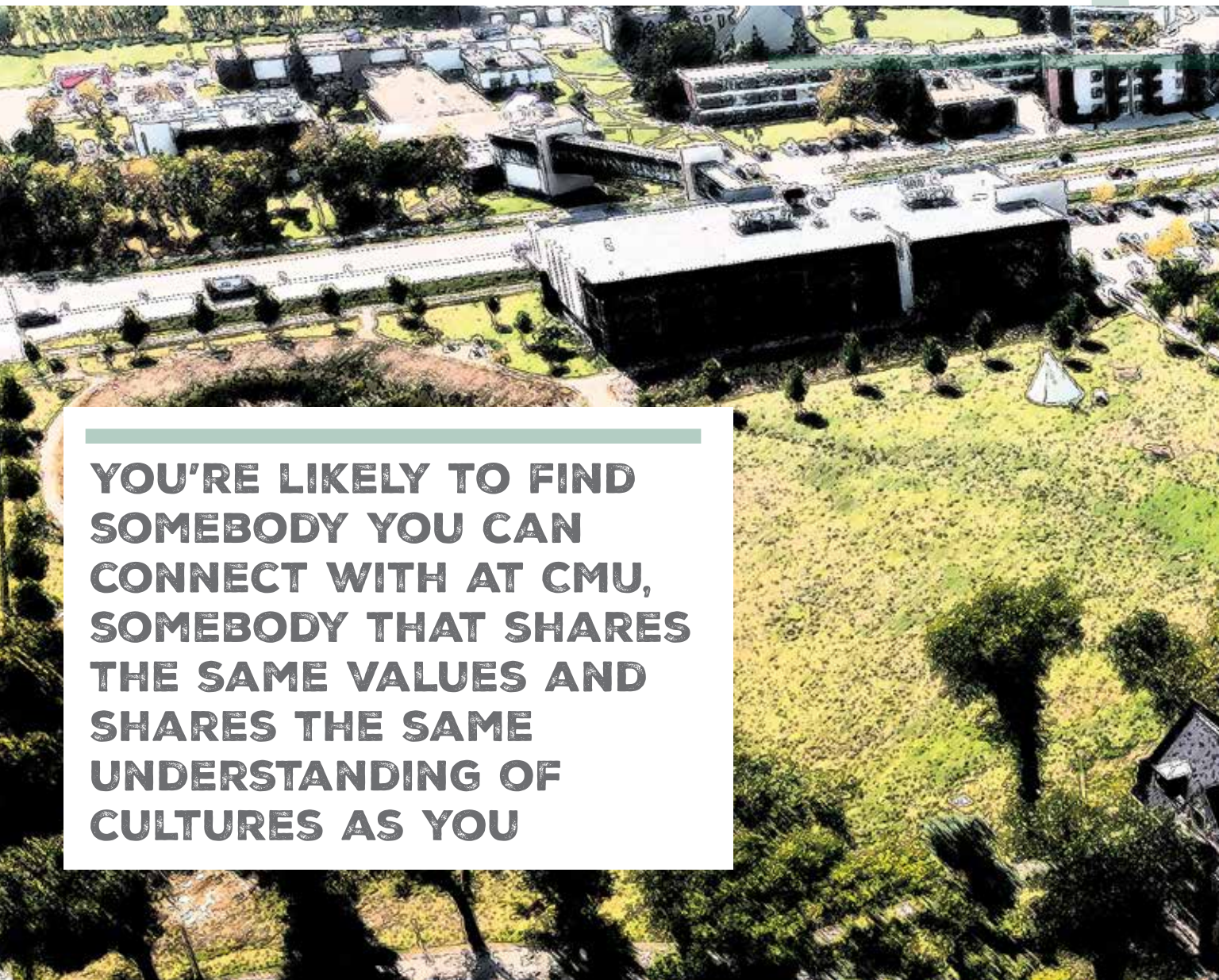
her family in Manitoba. But once she discovered the revelatory social dynamics at the school, she knew it was a special place.

“You’re likely to find someone from your culture at CMU. You’re likely to find somebody you can connect with at CMU, somebody that shares the same values and shares the same understanding of cultures as you.”

Attending a Mennonite university as a non-Mennonite did not prove to be the challenge that some in her family expected. She laughed that people naively asked her if “the Mennonites” would make her do or say certain

things, or were intrigued—and maybe slightly concerned—with her choice to study at a small university with a tightly-knit religious community.

“I did my research well enough to know that the majority of the people I see [on campus] won’t necessarily be Mennonites,” Irikefe told the interviewers. “I knew that I would have a space to thrive not being a Mennonite.”



YOU’RE LIKELY TO FIND SOMEBODY YOU CAN CONNECT WITH AT CMU, SOMEBODY THAT SHARES THE SAME VALUES AND SHARES THE SAME UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURES AS YOU

The Music of Mentoring and the Songs we Share

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WILL SET YOU ON THE PATH that ends up defining your life. For Kelsea McLean (CMU ’10), it was a transformative conversation with Janet Brenneman, CMU Associate Professor of Music.

The two developed a mentoring relationship, which remains strong after more than 15 years. At CMU’s Time of Reckoning symposium, McLean and Brenneman shared about this special connection and what it has meant for their lives and work.

McLean described herself as a reluctant student when she enrolled at CMU for music therapy in 2006. “While I had been going through the motions and doing well in my classes, I lacked passion and drive,” she said. Brenneman’s encouragement for her to dig deeper and rethink her time at CMU influenced McLean’s decision to change her degree focus, ignited her engagement in classes and campus life, and led her to graduate with a Bachelor of Music in music education.

Brenneman knows the power of mentorship because she has experienced the profound effects of being mentored, too. It greatly influences how she leads classes and rehearsals. “Leadership shines brightly when the conductor serves as guide and mentor in an interactive learning context that purposefully works against a top-down patriarchal approach,” she said. “My mentor was keenly aware of the patriarchy as pedagogy in her generation and she worked tirelessly to break down that model.”

McLean explained that mentorship is not one-sided, but a reciprocal exchange of learning and support. Both parties need to be invested in maintaining the relationship and acknowledge that “the mentor cannot be the keeper of all knowledge and the mentee has something to offer.” She’ll never forget her feelings of pride and



value when Brenneman asked her for choral repertoire ideas.

McLean lives in Prince Edward Island, working as a school music educator and Artistic Director of the award-winning choir Sirens and its younger counterpart, Harmonia. She counts Brenneman as one of her closest friends.

“CMU afforded me an incredible gift. This institution effectively worked to shape my ideas and values that I now hold as an adult and an educator. However, CMU’s greatest affordance is in the mentorship relationship I developed with Janet. She empowered me to own my abilities as an educator,” McLean said.

Brenneman added, “CMU encourages us by making space for learning and interacting with each other—space that is initially curated in the classroom but that quickly expands beyond the classroom walls,” whether in chapels and forums, folio café, or open office doors.

McLean has launched the Athena

THIS INSTITUTION EFFECTIVELY WORKED TO SHAPE MY IDEAS AND VALUES THAT I NOW HOLD AS AN ADULT AND AN EDUCATOR

Mentorship Program, an opportunity for younger singers in her choral organization to join the older choir for rehearsals and a concert. “Because of my CMU mentoring experience, I see the value in supporting young people in my life, especially in a world that is increasingly focussed on the individual,” she said.

Poettcker Uphold Hall

Introducing Uphold: A Poettcker Hall residence renewal campaign

By Sandra Koop Harder

It was September 1991. I remember, like it was yesterday, my arrival at Poettcker Hall (although back then it didn't hold this name). I remember tentatively stepping into the dorm room that would be my home for the next eight months and meeting my new roommate who had already settled in to her half of the space. I can still taste the spicy stew of anticipation, excitement, and plain old nerves – the hallmark butterflies of young adult new beginnings. I'm sure many of you have similar memories.

The old cement structure is sound. All of the systems are being entirely replaced. This project will make living in Poettcker Hall an entirely new experience.

This spring marked 30 years since my graduation and, truthfully, not much has changed at Poettcker Hall during these three decades (it's also true that not much changed in the three decades that preceded me either!). The air still doesn't move, the bathrooms are still less than optimal, and the building is still very beloved. Despite all the problems that come along with a 60+-year-old building, this place is inextricably woven into the relationships of the people who have lived here. My own experience in the dormitory was wholly inseparable from my experience as a learner; a sentiment we hear time and time again from students who

live on campus. Poettcker Hall, and the community that thrives within it and because of it, is still the beating heart of the CMU campus.

The student experience of living on campus is not only about affordable student housing or making friends and having fun. While not a required component of CMU's degree program, it remains a central illustration of the academic project of CMU as students both learn through living together and live through learning together.

Poettcker Hall was built in two phases, in 1958 (first dormitory wing) and 1964 (second dormitory wing and dining hall). Since that time, only limited improvements have been made, including the addition of student lounge spaces, cosmetic enhancements (e.g., paint, flooring, etc.), and window replacements. Major mechanical upgrades have become urgent as they reach their end-of-life expectancy. The building's liveability is currently very poor due to the lack of adequate ventilation, frequent sewage back-ups, an inability to control room temperature, a limited number of electrical receptacles in rooms, and outdated washroom facilities. All of these factors negatively affect the student experience.

It's time to fix Poettcker Hall.

The Poettcker Hall renewal project is a transformative initiative aimed at restoring and revitalizing this cherished residence building, the centre of our on-campus community. And this is an invitation for you to join in this critical undertaking through our Uphold campaign, as we collectively call CMU forward together.

At the heart of this project is the well-being and flourishing of our students.

Students need fresh air, functioning washroom facilities, temperature control, electricity/connectivity, and accessible spaces to grow and thrive. This is as critical to their ability to develop relationships and community as it is to their capacity to learn and achieve academically. Living closely with people who are not family profoundly sharpens one's communication, negotiation/conflict resolution, and problem solving skills. Studies demonstrate that students who live in on-campus housing enjoy better mental health, stronger personal relationships, and higher grades than those who do not. This project will address these basic student needs.

This project is also rooted in CMU's commitment to environmental stewardship. By upholding/upcycling the building's sound concrete infrastructure and incorporating sustainable mechanical elements such as geothermal heating and cooling systems, we aim to significantly reduce carbon emissions and lessen our reliance on third-party electrical power. This project not only revitalizes our residence building but also strengthens our commitment to a greener, more sustainable future. This project will reduce CMU's total greenhouse gas emissions by 16.6%.

Like the CONNECT campaign for Marpeck Commons in 2012, the Uphold campaign is an investment in innovation and future-proofing for CMU. By incorporating leading-edge technology and sustainable design practices, Uphold sets a precedent for future campus development. CMU is committed to creating spaces that not only meet the needs of today's students but also adapting to the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

The proposed project aims to complete the renovation of Poettcker Hall by August 2025, transforming the residence experience for current and future generations of CMU students. The scope of work includes major upgrades such as a geothermal heating and cooling system, ventilation, electrical, and plumbing upgrades, gender-neutral and accessible washroom facilities, interior retrofits, a new roof, fire alarm upgrades, wheelchair accessibility, and the addition of a shared kitchenette. These renovations will extend the useful life of the building and create vibrant, comfortable, and sustainable spaces for students to live and thrive.



We need your help to make this a reality. The total cost of the project is \$8,200,000.

This project will:

- Transform the living experience for 124 CMU students
- Reduce CMU's total greenhouse gas emissions by 16.6%

We need your help to make this a reality. The total cost of the project is \$8,200,000, to be funded through a combination of mortgage financing and fundraising. The fundraising target for the Uphold campaign is \$3,750,000. Recognition and naming opportunities will be available to donors who contribute. Grant funding is also being actively solicited to supplement the fundraising efforts.

Please join us in upholding the legacy of Poettcker Hall at cmu.ca/give.

Faspa on the Lawn: The Original Charcuterie

All are invited to join us in person on Thursday, June 20, 2024 for a **garden party fundraiser on the south side lawn at 600 Shaftesbury Blvd.** Activities for the evening include garden games, music, and tours of Poettcker Hall. Tickets required: cmu.ca/faspa.



CMU celebrates Class of 2024: largest graduating class to date

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe



Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) celebrated the accomplishments of 106 graduates, CMU's largest graduating class to date, as another academic year came to a close with a convocation ceremony at Bethel Mennonite Church on April 27, 2024.

CMU President Cheryl Pauls presented the class of 2024 with diplomas and certificates before an audience full of family, friends, faculty, and staff. "We offer public witness to our trust in them as they convocate, for they have proven worthy and willing to be called out together for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation. They embody bold empathy and skilled discipline in their ways of knowing, doing, and being," Pauls said in her opening remarks.

This year's President's Medals were awarded to Liam Berry (Bachelor of Music, Comprehensive) and Miriam Huebner (BA, Four-Year, Social Science), in recognition of their qualities of scholarship, leadership, and service.

Each graduating class chooses a Bible verse to reflect their time at CMU and send them onward. This year's verse was John 14:27—"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you;

not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Undergraduate valedictorian Bryant Neufeldt (BA, Four-Year, Social Science and Counselling Studies) addressed his fellow graduates: "As I look around me, I see immense resilience in all of us." He reflected on how most of them began their degrees in the global pandemic and faced countless additional challenges. He also expressed deep gratitude for the immense effort faculty and staff put into adapting to teaching online and their dedication to return to in-person learning. Neufeldt used the image of a folio, a sheet of paper folded to form two leaves of a book, as something that "embodies and encapsulates this idea of what it means to be a university student now about to graduate." The front page represents the background students brought with them as they arrived at CMU, the inside is the story of their time at university, and the back page symbolizes the tools graduates leave with as they go out into the world.

Graduate valedictorian Terrence Chan (MA, Peacebuilding and Collaborative Development) said his speech was the last

of the many 500-word reflections he wrote during his degree and thematically spoke on blessings. "As CMU students, we are blessed," he said, referencing the quality of education and richness of relationships he encountered. The greatest takeaway he learned at CMU was sharing. "Sharing is a natural, convenient, and powerful tool to peacebuilding," he said. "At CMU, we learned and experienced the power of breaking bread together. It's not the food that is important...for sharing is not just an invitation to dinner, it's an invitation to a relationship." He wished his fellow graduates, "may peace and cookies be always with you."

Dr. Joss Reimer, recipient of the 2024 CMU PAX Award, gave the graduation address—through an interview-style conversation with Pauls. Reimer is Chief Medical Officer of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and incoming

president of the Canadian Medical Association. She is well-known as the former medical lead and official spokesperson for Manitoba's COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation Taskforce.

Reimer spoke about her longing for everyone to have access to the resources they need to be healthy and to thrive. "What I love about public health is that I genuinely feel like I was being paid to try to make the world a better place," she said. "To go out, look at my community, figure out what they need, and try to make it happen. That's such an incredible honour to have a job like that."

She encouraged the assembled graduates to find or continue pursuing what they are passionate about and to question how they can use that to help the world. "I really hope you take a moment right now to memorize how you're feeling, to really absorb this moment. You're going to face a lot of challenges in whatever you go to next, but I want you to think back to how you felt today and the achievements you've gotten to and how hard you worked to get here...that you'll remember why you're doing this, why you wanted to make a difference."

The day before convocation, CMU held its annual Spring at CMU event that included With Gratitude, a time of sharing where five graduates reflected on their time at CMU.

Danika Warkentin (BA, Four-Year, Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies) shared about the deeply interdisciplinary nature of her degree and how it transformed the way she approached her practicum at a community organization. “My interdisciplinary program has taught me not what to think, but how to think. I’ve honed my question-asking ability and increased my tolerance for complex problems, and this I think should be the goal of every university’s education.”

TINGTING (Master of Business Administration) spoke from the perspective of someone who was already established in a profession before studying at CMU. She started her degree primarily to pause and reflect during her fast-paced corporate career. “Reflecting on this journey, it’s been more than just academic achievements. It has shaped my understanding of leadership, management, and the balance between short-term gains and long-term sustainability.”

Kennedy Froese (BA, Four-Year, Biblical and Theological Studies, Counselling Minor) expressed the difficulty of choosing only one thing to reflect on “because there is very little from my time at CMU that I did and then just put away and never thought about again.” Ideas, readings, and conversations stuck with her as she wrestled and re-engaged with them throughout her degree. One example of this was her final project for a class called The Bible and Emotion.

She combined her course material with learnings from psychology classes and therapy, and created a painting. “It was a really beautiful and moving experience for me to create that piece of art and it has continued to shape the way I think.”

Cameron Wollmann (BA, Three-Year, History) reflected on two courses that bookended and captured his education: Exploring Christian Spirituality and Theological Ethics. They taught him how to pray, to be with God, and to wrestle with scripture and its meaning for our lives—all within community. “Through engaging with classmates of different backgrounds, faiths, and Christian traditions, the presence of God in a world that so often seems void of it became as real as the people around me, and in no small part because of the people around me.”

Grace Bruinooge (BA, Four-Year, Communications and Media) explained that she learned in her course, Nonverbal Communication, that around 70 percent of communication is nonverbal and therefore bodies matter a great deal to communication. Her realization about the body’s importance prompted her to connect in a physical way with her Métis culture, a part of her identity she has known little about due to the consequences of colonization. For a course assignment, she created a physical ritual of going down to the Red River and smudging, an Indigenous practice of cleansing with sage smoke. “I feel beyond grateful to have been in a place where I discovered more about myself, my culture, and my identity and was able to fall in love with my major of communications.”



People and Events



Violinist wins the 19th annual Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition

The 19th annual Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) reached a rousing crescendo this year as the night's final performer, Will Harder, was awarded first place.

Harder is in his third year at CMU, working towards a Bachelor of Music focusing on music performance. This was his second time performing in the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition. Last year, he came in second place.

Harder has been playing the violin since the age of five, played in the Winnipeg Youth Symphony Orchestra for three years, and held the position of Assistant Concertmaster. He has also been playing in the Winnipeg Music Festival for many years and has played in numerous trophy classes, including the Aikins Memorial Trophy. In 2023, Harder received the Victor Feldbrill Trophy, awarded for the most outstanding Solo String performance during the Winnipeg Music Festival.

Winning the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition awards the musician the opportunity to perform a solo with the Mennonite Community Orchestra.

The first-place award also included a \$700 prize. Soprano Ava Campbell-Enns finished second and received \$500. Third place was vocalist Vina Dimayuga, who received the \$300 prize.



Midwinter Together: an evening of food, books, and music

Imagine a long dinner table down the castle's first-floor hallway, with music and visiting in the Blaurock to follow... and books! This was the experience that took place on CMU's campus on March 1.



CMU friends, old and new, attended the midwinter interlude in support of student bursaries. With food prepared and served by CMU faculty and staff, as well as good conversation, good music, and good books, it was undoubtedly a fun event for an important cause.

The event featured musical entertainment by Geräuschbiest – CMU alum Jesse Krause, Thomas Krause, and friends, as well as a free copy of Sue Sorensen's new book of poetry, *Actually Life*.

With an attendance limit of 70 people, the intimate event was a unique way for CMU-era alumni to reconnect and pay forward their CMU experience.



In Memoriam: Dr. John Derksen

It is with deep sadness that we share of the recent and sudden passing of Dr. John Derksen. John served CMU through Menno

Simons College as a beloved professor of Conflict Resolution Studies from 2000 to 2021 and for 20 years before that in areas of Ethics, History, and Biblical Studies.

From Dr. John Derksen's obituary:

John had a strong faith in God and was a committed follower of Jesus. He was a faithful participant in various church communities throughout the course of his life. His concern was for those who were less privileged, and his life was one of service. In our final goodbyes to John, several of us noted how he set an example for us of compassion, caring, and dedication. We know that the memories of John's life will stay with us for the rest of our days.

Blazers Athletics close out a season unlike any other

The dust has settled on the 2023/24 Blazers Athletics season, which gave cause for celebration at the annual Green & Gold Awards in the Great Hall on the CMU Campus.

While the awards ceremonies largely honour the personal academic and athletic achievements of individuals in all of the Blazers programs, team accomplishments from the season should not go unnoticed.



Five Blazers teams—men's and women's volleyball, men's and women's basketball, and men's futsal—made the MCAC finals, with two of those teams taking home the provincial title.

For women's volleyball, it was their first championship win since 2020, the second for head coach Jayme Menzies, and the first since the MCAC fully joined the CCAA, leading to the first CCAA Women's Volleyball National Championships berth for the program.

For men's basketball, it was the first title since 2017 and the first under head coach Scott Martin, who was named MCAC Coach of the Year for men's basketball prior to the championship weekend.

This year, an incredible 57 student athletes earned a 3.5 GPA or higher in the fall term, achieving honour roll status at CMU and a Scholar Athlete Award certificate.



2024 John and Margaret Friesen Lectures - Revisiting the Mennonite Experience in Ukraine

The 2024 Friesen Lectures were dedicated to understanding the history of Mennonite communities in Ukraine. Addressing diverse themes from distant historical periods, Ukrainian professor Dr. Nataliya Venger allowed listeners to immerse themselves once again in the unique world of Mennonite history.

The first lecture delved into the 19th century, a period of significant change for Mennonites in Russia. As the nation underwent modernization and nation-building, Mennonites faced a new societal challenge. Often acting independently from the traditional institution of monarchy, this nation posed unpredictable challenges that required Mennonites to adapt and shift their patriotic focus.

The second lecture followed the Mennonites return to Ukraine during the 1920-1940s. This return to historical memory helped the ethno-confessional group address its longstanding social trauma resulting from the loss of their homeland and the unjust policies imposed on them.

Venger is Professor of History and Chair of the World History Department at Dnipropetrovsk National University, Ukraine, a visiting professor at CMU and the University of Winnipeg, and a sessional instructor at the University of Manitoba.

To view the lectures visit: media.cmu.ca/events/lectures#jmf

CMU theology student receives prized Canada Graduate Scholarship

CMU student Karissa Durant has been awarded a prestigious Canada Graduate Scholarship Master's award worth \$17,500. The Government of Canada announced the results of the competition for the 2022/23 academic year in March.

Durant is a CMU Graduate School of Theology and Ministry student, working on a Master of Arts in Theological Studies. The Canada Graduate

Scholarship supports the work she is doing on her thesis, titled "Critical Community Hermeneutics: Exploring the Construction of Community Hermeneutics in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Church."

Her project focuses on the Anabaptist practice of community hermeneutics, which originated from 16th-century Anabaptists who discerned that the Bible was best interpreted when done so in community and by the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, of which Durant is a part, specifically names community hermeneutics as an important practice in its confession of faith.



As disagreement grew within the conference on matters like LGBTQ+ inclusion in the church, a petition circulated in 2021 calling for people to listen and engage in community hermeneutics before furthering the divide. Yet since then, numerous congregations have been removed from the conference, and pastors have had their credentials revoked.

Durant's thesis explores the call for unity in the church when we disagree. She asks how the church defines and practices community hermeneutics, what the associated challenges and opportunities are, and how this fits into the Mennonite Brethren ecclesiological framework.



CMU appoints experienced social worker and professor to faculty

CMU continues to establish its new Bachelor of Social Work degree program as it welcomes Ms.

Buetta Warkentin. She will serve as an Associate Professor of Social Work and Field Education Coordinator for Social Work.

Warkentin comes to CMU with a wealth of experience both in academia and in the field. She is a Registered Social Worker and a member of

the Manitoba College of Social Workers. She spent the last 18 years teaching social work at Booth University College in Winnipeg, where she joined the faculty in 2006. Her professional experience includes working in child welfare and as a therapist for children, youth, and families—both in Manitoba and Ontario.

Warkentin is on the Board of Directors for the Canadian Society for Spirituality and Social Work and holds a Master of Social Work and Master of Theological Studies from Wilfrid Laurier University. She is also an alum of CMU, having graduated from Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

"Joining the faculty at CMU feels in many ways like a homecoming. That time in my life was so formative with deep and meaningful learning conversations and experiences with faculty and fellow students, exploring the social implications of the scriptures and our role in working towards justice," she says.

Celebrating the life of a longtime CMU supporter

On November 25, 2023, CMU hosted the family of Philipp R. Ens (CMBC '63) and Ilse K. Ens as a gesture of appreciation for nearly five decades of giving to CMU. The Ens and Elias families and their extended Triple E Canada Limited family were acknowledged for entrusting CMU to carry out their vision for educating for ways of life and livelihood that build vibrant communities and networks across the arts, business, spirituality, education, and more.

CMU joins the Ens family in celebrating the life of Philipp R. Ens who passed on May 11, 2024. Thank you, Phil, for the gift of witness of your work and life and for faithfully extending your trust and generosity to CMU for so many years.





Garth Doerksen (MBBC '83-84), Blumenort, MB, became the Assistant Curator of the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach, MB in December 2023. His role includes cataloguing the 17,000 items in the museum's collection and working on exhibits with the senior curator. His interest in Mennonite history originated from his father's and grandfather's passion for the field. Doerksen had a career in education for over 30 years before retiring and transitioning to the museum sector. He worked as a teacher, school principal, and assistant superintendent in the Garden Valley School Division in southern Manitoba. He and his wife Mary-Anna love to travel—together they have visited more than 50 countries on six continents.



Derek Suderman (CMBC '93), Waterloo, ON, is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo. This fall, Suderman will be teaching a graduate level joint on-line course between Conrad Grebel University College and CMU called "Minor Prophets." Suderman is an Old Testament scholar who teaches courses on topics like the prophets, wisdom literature, and violence in the Bible—and its use and abuse in the broader Christian tradition. He has taught in Thailand, Cuba, Colombia, and Benin, where he has enjoyed resourcing and learning from the global Anabaptist church.



Evan Klassen (CC '02), London, ON, is the incoming Executive Director of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, Canada's oldest English-language regional theatre. He is currently the Executive Director of the Grand Theatre in London, ON and will begin his new role in August

2024. Klassen is passionate about advocating for the arts and is known for his collaborative and empathetic leadership style. Klassen worked in theatre stage management across the country for 15 years before taking on leadership roles at the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops, BC. He has served on the boards and councils of countless arts organizations and is currently Treasurer for the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres.



Rebekah Mahar (Thiessen, CMU '06), Fredericton, NB, is a songwriter, vocalist, and multi-instrumentalist who records and performs under the name Becka deHaan. She has released three studio albums, which have garnered numerous nominations and received an award, and independently published a memoir. She also created a solo production comprised of songs, spoken narrative, and theatrics that tell the story of Mary from the Annunciation to Pentecost, which she will perform in concert again this December. Mahar is the leader of music and worship at Lincoln Baptist Church in Lincoln, NB, where she has served since 2016. She enjoys facilitating worshipful experiences through music for people of all generations, any skill level, and across genres, from contemporary worship songs to traditional hymns.



Jodi Plenert (CMU '12), Winnipeg, MB, graduated with a law degree from the University of Manitoba's Robson Hall in 2023 and is now articling at Cochrane Saxberg in Winnipeg. While studying, she immersed herself in advocacy through Robson Hall's Rights Clinic and the Cochrane Saxberg Indigenous Community Clinic. She served as council chair of the Manitoba Law School Association, edited the Manitoba Law Journal, and volunteered with numerous organizations.

Outside of the legal world, Plenert is a musician in the post-punk, shoegaze band, Tired Cossack, alongside her husband. She was a member of the former indie rock band, Yes We Mystic, with whom she toured across North America and Europe.



Gavyn Stroh (CMU '16), Squamish, BC, works in material handling and logistics at a sawmill and dedicates a lot of time and energy off the clock to his passion: running. Stroh started running casually while attending CMU and it was a fellow alum who challenged him to run his first marathon (42.2 kilometres) in 2020. Although the pandemic cancelled the Manitoba Marathon that year, he completed the distance anyway in 3 hours and 52 minutes. He has run three more marathons since then: the Manitoba Marathon in 2022 (4:20), in which Stroh persisted despite another cancellation due to almost 40-degree weather, and the BMO Vancouver Marathon in 2023 (3:18) and 2024 (3:09). His goal is to run a marathon in under three hours and qualify for the Boston Marathon. Part of Stroh's journey has been shifting his mindset of exercise as a compulsory activity to one of discovery, betterment, and gratitude.



Kenji Dyck (CMU '19), Tamba, Japan, is an assistant language teacher with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, an opportunity for university graduates, sponsored by the Japanese government. He is teaching English at elementary and junior high schools in the small rural city of Tamba, Hyogo Prefecture. In addition to English, Kenji teaches about Canada and Winnipeg, from Canadian culture, geography, and cuisine to local festivals such as Festival du Voyageur. Before his move to Japan last August, Kenji worked as a freelance videographer, filmmaker, and camera salesperson in Winnipeg. His most recent videography credit was being the videographer for the Memories of Migration: Russlaender 100 Tour last summer. The footage he captured will be used in a documentary about the train tour made by filmmaker Andrew Wall.



Courtney Kuhl-Schlegel (Kuhl, CMU '21), Winnipeg, MB, is a music therapist working at St. Amant, an organization that supports Manitobans with developmental disabilities. She recently completed the NICU-MT (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Music Therapy) Certificate from the National Institute for Infant and Child Medical Music Therapy in Tallahassee, FL. The program educates and trains participants to employ music therapy strategies and practices specific to the needs of infants and families in the NICU. To receive the certificate, participants complete coursework in infant development and music therapy, hands-on clinical fieldwork, and a final exam. Kuhl-Schlegel was motivated to complete this training because there are currently no music therapists using this approach in a NICU in any Winnipeg hospital and she hopes to one day provide these services. NICU-MT combines her passions for medical music therapy and music's impact on development and trauma. She also spends time making music outside of work, particularly by singing with the Winnipeg choir Prairie Voices.



Daisy Woelk (Belec, CMU '23), Winnipeg, MB, works as a digital broadcasting journalist with Global News Winnipeg. Her days are filled with meeting and talking to interesting people (including Manitoba's premier), then writing about their stories for TV, radio, and online articles. Sometimes, she even gets to pull out a camera to do some filming or video editing. Woelk can often be heard doing live hits for radio during the 5:00 PM news and voicing over B-roll for Global Winnipeg's 6:00 PM newscast. In fall 2023, she was part of a regional award-winning team for Best Broadcast Show. In her downtime, Woelk loves to write creatively, read historical fiction, hike, and eat good snacks.

Marriages

Chris Epp-Tiessen (CMU '13, Outtatown Site Leader 2017-19) and **Janelle Dyck** (Outtatown Site Leader 2016-18), Winnipeg, MB, June 3, 2023

Kierra Ferguson Edwards (Ferguson, CMU '18) and **Braeden Edwards**, Winnipeg, MB, August 5, 2023

Nathan Sawatzky-Dyck (CMU '16) and **Kara Joseph**, Winnipeg, MB, November 25, 2023

Births and Adoptions

James DeGurse (CMU '19) and **Jenny DeGurse**, Ottawa, ON, a daughter, **Clare Beatrice DeGurse**, September 1, 2023

Nina Schroeder-van 't Schip (Schroeder, CMU '12) and **Mark Schroeder-van 't Schip**, Amstelveen, Netherlands, a daughter, **Emily Maria Schroeder-van 't Schip**, November 24, 2023



Rachel Robertson (CMU '18) and **James Nikkel** (CMU '18), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, **August Jane Robertson Nikkel**, November 25, 2023



Danika Thiessen (Epp, CMU '14) and **Nolan Thiessen**, Altona, MB, a daughter, **Brianna Epp Thiessen**, January 2, 2024

Lizzie Wipf (Schrag, CMU '20) and **George Wipf**, Mitchell, MB, a daughter, **Natalie Joy Wipf**, January 12, 2024



Lauren Harms (CMU '15) and **Jonas Cornelsen** (CMU '16), Calgary, AB, a child, **Avery Nelsen Harms**, January 25, 2024

Katrina Woelk Balzer (Woelk, CMU '16) and **Evan Woelk Balzer** (Balzer, CMU 2014-17), Winnipeg, MB, a son, **Rowan Henry Woelk Balzer**, February 7, 2024



Sarah Driediger (CMU '17) and **Will Switzer** (CMU '18), Thompson, MB, a daughter, **Adrianna Switzer**, February 8, 2024



Raven Nickel (CMU '15) and **Jonah Langelotz** (CMU '15), Rosenfeld, MB, a son, **Solace Leo Langelotz Nickel**, February 8, 2024

Emma Hamm (Boddy, CMU '14) and **Simon Hamm** (CMU '14), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, **Lennon Mae Hamm**, March 8, 2024

Laura Lynne Hildebrand (CMU '15) and **Donny Adri Putro**, Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, **Adyaputri Setianingsih Hildebrand**, April 13, 2024



Passages

Margaret Bergen (CMBC '57), Winnipeg, MB, October 26, 2023

Elma Brandt (MBBC '71), Morris, MB, November 17, 2023

Vernelle Buller (Berg, CMBC '80), Winnipeg, MB, November 17, 2023

Marlys Jantz (Epp, CMBC '64), Drake, SK, November 22, 2023

Kurt Wagner (MBBC '59), New Hamburg, ON, November 26, 2023

Peter Hiebert (CMBC '73), Winnipeg, MB, November 30, 2023

Henry Esau (MBBC '57), Chilliwack, BC, December 25, 2023

John Derksen (MBBC '72, CMU emeritus faculty), Thorold, ON, January 14, 2024

Audrey Goertzen (MBBC '81), Winnipeg, MB, January 18, 2024

Helen Isaak (MBBC '58), Winnipeg, MB, January 29, 2024

Harold Jantz (MBBC '60), Winnipeg, MB, February 7, 2024

Anne Neufeld (Hiebert, CMBC '53), Winnipeg, MB, February 10, 2024

Pearl Richert (Janzen, CMBC '56), Swift Current, SK, February 10, 2024

Vernon Ratzlaff (MBBC '68), Saskatoon, SK, February 16, 2024

Andrew Sawatzky (CMBC '50), Calgary, AB, February 17, 2024

Leona Enns (Zacharias, CMBC '57), Portage La Prairie, MB, March 14, 2024

Gary Harder (CMBC '65), Waterloo, ON, March 18, 2024

Lynn Wanamaker (MBBC '87), Surrey, BC, April 6, 2024

Adolf Ens (CMBC emeritus faculty), Winnipeg, MB, April 21, 2024

Philipp R. Ens (CMBC '63), Winnipeg, MB, May 11, 2024

Alumni are invited to submit recent news—marriage, job change, addition of a child, award, promotion, graduate school, retirement, and so on—to the Alumni Relations Office. Mail to **500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2**, email to alumni@cmu.ca, or visit cmu.ca/about/info-update. Model your information after the current listings above, beginning with name, graduation year, city, and province or state.

Tying the notion of faith with a life of service

By Myles Tiessen

“I’ve never found science and faith to be opposed, but it is an area that can be one of tension. But, not when you think of truth wherever you find it, whether in the book of scripture or the book of nature,” says Dr. Heather Prior, Associate Professor of Biology at King’s University. “This is all God’s truth. It’s all part of what he has created and given us gifts to be able to explore.”

“And to me, that was really liberating.”

Prior grew up collecting frogs, tadpoles, leeches, and almost any other critter or creature she thought would disgust her mother. Her summer days were spent climbing trees and looking through a magnifying glass at water drops or grass blades. Her life has been, and always will be, spent in awe of nature and biology.

Initially wanting to be an elementary school teacher and then considering a career in medical sciences, Prior eventually decided to pursue her lifelong passion for the living world. “I do really have a heart for serving people, and yet somehow, the joy and thrill I got from just the basic level of understanding biology was captivating.”

She ties the very notion of faith with a life of service. She alludes to the fact that her various careers in education—whether it be teaching English in China for two years or organizing for the Canadian Scientific Christian Affiliation—have been extensions of theology that she was able to explore deeply while attending Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC), one of CMU’s predecessor colleges, where she graduated in 1986.

“Honestly, the experience I had at MBBC was transformational in my life,” explains Prior. “I was amazed to

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see that all of my professors were saints. They wrestled seriously with scripture, they lived lives of integrity and faithfulness, and they did not shy away from seeking the truth in all things.”

Prior says she found in MBBC a tradition of valuing integrating perspectives and intentionally reflecting on one’s preconceived worldview. She participated in choir, went out of her way to take various classes, and spent her summers back home in Alberta as a student worker in an organic chemistry lab with her friend and mentor, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour.

This multifaceted outlook or approach to education is reflected in her current work at King’s University. Beyond her own research on zebrafish and their potential to



ameliorate human cataracts or attempting to find a natural treatment to fight bacterial infections in honeybees, Prior is passionate about collaborative research with her colleagues at King’s University.

One such project is with Dr. Joanne Moyer, an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Geography who also happens to be a CMU alum, having graduated from Canadian Mennonite Bible College in 2001. By analyzing how Christian communities are impacted by and respond to the climate crisis, they hope to better understand how we can better resource our churches to support members impacted by these challenges.

Another way she ties an interdisciplinary approach to her work is by teaching a course called *The History and Theory of Biology*. “It’s been a real privilege to [teach this course], and I am extremely passionate about advocating for the value of this kind of undergraduate education. It’s so broadening; it’s so foundational.”

“I’m truly blessed to be able to do this kind of work,” notes Prior. “It’s a joy, and I feel the gifts that I received as a student at MBBC have stayed with me. I’m humbled to try to share the same kinds of gifts with my students by walking in the footsteps of my own professors.”

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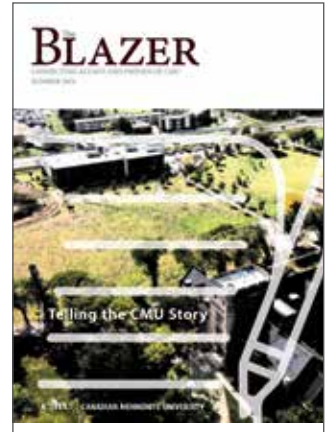
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