

Academia Nuts

Official Newsletter for the Christian Reformed Campus Minister's Association (CRCMA)

Jesus' Sacred Family Were Immigrants Too!

By Hernan Zapata Thomack

On campus, Pedro, a Hispanic student, asks his classmate, "If Jesus' Sacred family would have sought refuge in America instead of in Egypt (*Mt. 2:13-15, Hos.11: 1, Psalm 11:1*), would they be involved in rallies across the USA in favor of immigrant rights?" In certain ways many priests and ministers from different denominations have not only understood this theological implication but also have been leading this massive immigrant rights movement. Manuel, Pedro's classmate, answers, "Sure! You know if this HR4437 becomes a federal bill, Christian churches will suffer persecution as well, as the book of Revelation prophesied." ...How? Why? Manuel specifies, "Because the U.S. House of Representatives passed bill HR-4437, which criminalizes immigrants who do not have the appropriate documentation in order to live in the USA. It also implies that millions of undocumented immigrants should be deported. In addition, it criminalizes people among them like religious workers who provide help to these illegal immigrants." Therefore, anyone (employers, social workers, lawyers, clergy, etc) who assists them should be imprisoned and charged with a felony. Of course! Today the most challenging issue for the Hispanic community across the USA is this immigration reform.

This proposed HR4437 has unexpectedly woken up a sleeping giant. Now there is a gigantic nationwide immigrant rights movement. It is because illegal residents left their fear and silent shadows behind to protest along with legal residents and citizens through crowded rallies from coast to coast in the USA. To illustrate, in Los Angeles one million immigrants have been protesting, half a million in Chicago, and hundreds of thousands in other bigger cities in which Latinos live. These large rallies have reminded us of Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, and the civil rights movement. Nevertheless, the particularity of this unique nationwide movement for comprehensive immigration reform is that High school and college students have taken places in the front line of this immigrant rights movement.

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Immigrants, Students & Baby Jesus

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Why? First, the current law does not allow undocumented students to get a college degree. However, some of them attend some schools anyway, but under special conditions. They must pay double fees and tuition rates paid by international students. In addition, they have to pay cash (because most of them do not have checking accounts or credit cards). Besides, they do not have the right to apply for financial aid, scholarships, and loans. As a result of this financial treatment, these students normally are part time (PT) because for them it is too expensive to become full time (FT) students. Consequently, for PT undocumented students it takes too long to accomplish their degree. Despite this long-term stress, only few of them successfully graduate.

“What were the sins of these undocumented students?”

Therefore, these students are mostly commuters. Normally they work full-time or have several part-time jobs. They also need to work over time, and every weekend in order to pay their school bill and other bills.

Unfortunately, immigrant workers receive less money than regular American workers. If this worker is a girl, she receives even less. When a worker is a student, it is worse. But it is worst when this immigrant is illegal. Normally they earn half of the official state wage. Plus, they have no benefits like vacation, medical insurance, any day off, etc. If undocumented students cannot work because they are sick, this absence will not be waived. Because of the reality under this underground undocumented world, students who are illegal cannot handle this social situation that forces them to pay double tuition, but to earn half of the average wage. In conse-

quence, they usually drop their classes. Although they have good scores and transcripts, they quit from the school.

What were the sins of these undocumented students? When they were children or babies, their parents brought them to this country. Pedro complains, “You know Manuel, nobody asked me if I wanted to live in America! Then, indeed being illegal is not my fault!” Manuel consoles him with the reminder, “Did Dad and Mom ask Baby Jesus if he wanted to go to Egypt? Even the Angel ignored Baby Jesus' will. Because of the hardship, the angel just commanded them to immigrate to another country. Therefore, don't blame your parents! Look, Jesus' parents went to Egypt because they looked for the best for their child just as your parents brought you here.” Manuel remembers, “When my parents decided to come to the USA, our family members, neighbors, and friends excitedly congratulated us because we came here. They imagined coming to America like getting into celestial heaven. But for me, it has turned into hell”

Finally, because of the hardship, God gave a fair chance to Jesus' Sacred family to immigrate to Egypt. So, many Christian students dream for a similar opportunity in the USA too. Hence, for Pedro and Manuel it makes sense to stand at the vanguard of the immigrant comprehensive reform movement.

*Hernan Zapata Thomack
is the CRC Hispanic Campus Minister
at Passaic County Community College, Paterson,
New Jersey, USA.*

Incarnation and Discernment

By Joyce Suh

When I first went to Nigeria, there were two things that really bothered me. The first was being passed over. Whenever people came to our door, they always greeted me nicely and then, unless they came merely to greet, immediately asked for “the head of the household,” my husband. Sometimes, I’d later find that they had come to ask for the equivalent of \$1 or \$2 for some immediate need or perhaps to ask whether they could catch a ride with us when we went somewhere. Sometimes they wanted advice about school or permission to leave for a funeral. It angered me. Was I not capable of answering or helping out? Was I not capable of making decisions and giving advice?

The second thing that often bothered me was being called by a title or role rather than a name. People of all ages, shapes and sizes called me Mama or Mommie. “Am I your mother?” I protested inside, “I don’t think so.” To begin with, I wasn’t that old. I also resented the feeling of responsibility. I resented being pressed into a relationship that might imply some obligation simply by the name I was given. Mothers, after all, have to look after their children.

As time went on, I lived into the culture more and more. And these things bothered me less and less. I became closer to some of the student’s wives and saw that they had certain authority and spheres of influence apart from and alongside of the authority of “the head of the household.” I learned that Mama, and even more so, Mommie, were terms that implied respect and embodied affection, not only did they entail obligations. My resentment melted away and sometimes I even saw that, in the way of things, I should have some obligation to look after those who called me Mama.

I think that people who seek to live incarnationally in a certain setting—whether cross-cultural ministry overseas or ministry in a setting such as a secular campus—need to live into the culture. The risk and danger

is, however, that they live into the bad—that which needs redeeming in that culture—as well as the good. Had things melted away too easily? Had I lost my prophetic edge? Had I lost my ability to discern what was grace and what was sin? Was there still something that needed redeeming in these practices?

We were in Nigeria when the Monica Lewinsky affair was big news. Frankly, some of our students, even while recognizing that President Clinton had done something wrong, wondered why anything had been made of it. “Why is this woman allowed to speak?” they asked. The culture would simply permit and even expect such behavior from high officials.

I wonder whether campus pastors need, from time to time, to step back from their immediate situation and take stock. Perhaps they need the input of those outside of their context to keep balance and perspective. I suspect that the dangers for most are not obvious. Campus pastors have a pretty objective understanding of the secular nature of the institutions that they deal with. It’s not the Lewinsky-type issues that blur our spiritual eyesight and dull our discernment. It’s the things we grow into and live into every day that make us lose our objectivity. Have we maintained a biblical perspective about the life of the mind? Have we maintained a healthy balance of work and family? Have we taught and modeled practice as well as theory? What has our environment been telling us every day? Is the level of our cultural and intellectual engagement good for our souls? Is it time, this summer, for a furlough of the mind?

Joyce Suh is the CRC Home Missions Educational Mission Coordinator (US) stationed in San Jose, California, USA.

First Impressions or Birth Stories: From Wet Behind the Ears to Wet Feet in Halifax

By Brad Close

In mid-April Grace Miedema asked me to write an article reflecting on my “experience” as the new Christian Reformed Campus Pastor at Dalhousie University. Since I’ve only been in Halifax for four months, I was a bit apprehensive about doing this. But after thinking about it I figured I would give it a shot.

I can safely say that things have been crazy busy for us over the past few months. After moving from Toronto, Ontario, Julie (my wife) and I arrived in Halifax on January 2nd. We closed on our new home January 3rd and I “officially” started my work at Dalhousie that same morning. Our moving truck arrived on the 4th and we started the long process of unpacking. Oh yes, I haven’t told you this happened in the final trimester of Julie’s first pregnancy! And so, on February 22 our son, Micah Willis Close, was born. Looking back, this experience was a good precursor to the challenges and demands involved in working on a university campus.

Since campus ministry is all about people, I’d like to mention those who’ve encouraged me in the early days of campus ministry. First, I’ve greatly appreciated the support and patience of my campus committee this semester. Their help in giving direction to the ministry has, and will continue to be invaluable. Peter Schuurman has also been a great resource person and has helped me settle into campus ministry. In January Peter was able to visit us in Halifax and preach at my commissioning service. Finally, my predecessor, Steve Martin, has helped me settle into my new position. Before Steve left in 2004, he created a manual for those engaged in Christian Reformed campus ministry in Halifax. This manual has become a valuable resource for me. I’ve also talked on the phone with Steve about the challenges of being a campus pastor at Dalhousie.

I have already realized that one of the great challenges *and* joys of doing campus ministry at Dalhousie is working in an ecumenical and inter-faith Chaplaincy Office. The Chaplains at Dalhousie represent many different faith traditions and, as you can imagine, we disagree on a number of theological issues. This was highlighted in a recent discussion I had with the United Church Chaplain. We were talking about the kingdom of God. We agreed the theme of the kingdom was central to Jesus’ message, and that the kingdom is about God’s rule; brought to bear in Jesus and implemented through God’s people. The difficulty is: that’s about the extent of our theological agreement. The rest of our conversation revealed that we have radically different beliefs about the Creator God, the person, work and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture, and many aspects of Christian ethics.

Looking ahead, I have an important “visioning” meeting scheduled with my campus committee at the end of June, which will help shape the direction of this campus ministry in the coming year. I have also started planning for our fall Lecture Series. Overall, it’s a great privilege to connect with Dalhousie students, faculty and staff on a regular basis, and I’m very excited to be a part of what God is doing in Halifax. Although I’ve been very brief, I hope this gives you a snapshot of my experience thus far and of the future direction of the CRC Campus Ministry at Dalhousie.

*Brad Close is the CRC Campus Minister
at Dalhousie University, Halifax,
Nova Scotia, Canada.*

Finding a Better Posture

By Paul Verhoef

I always wonder to myself, “Why am I writing for the *Academia Nuts?*” For me, it’s a function of feeling both young and new. I really don’t have much ‘put together’ yet. And I’d really rather listen, read, and learn than somehow pretend that I have something worthwhile to tell, write, or teach. And it feels like a strange sort of spiritual discipline, mixing together vulnerability with some sort of rightly-measured confidence to just keep diving in – though the water might be too deep.

So here I go again. I want to share a couple of the experiences that have shaped my posture towards this campus ministry over the last years, and tack onto the end two of the ways that my new posture might actually be helping me to situate myself helpfully within the community at the University of Calgary.

Meeting Bill

It was my last semester of seminary. I was dreaming about staying home with our first baby for the next year while Monique kept working as a Resident Director at Calvin College. It’s true. I was pumped – it looked like a win-win-win situation. 1st win, I’d be delaying the whole ‘find a church’ thing for one more year (another function of my insecurity). 2nd win, I’d get to play daddy full-time. 3rd win, living in the Calvin dorm while being full-time care-giver for a baby, I’d certainly learn how to play Frisbee golf with our kid wrapped close to my body in the Baby Bjorn – that’s gotta be marketable.

This holy triumvirate of victories was hard to pass up...until I met Bill. Some Dutch guy with a big ol’ beard (I think it reached his navel when we were sitting down). He’d called me up because I had been fumbling around with the possibility of campus ministry at the University of Calgary. “Why don’t you come on by the CRC offices [we call it Mecca] so I can give you my take on campus ministry,” said Bill. By the time I was done, I’d learned a few

things. His real name is Willis. He likes to say and write “G’day!” And I’m glad he speaks a lot with his hands and face, because sometimes he uses words that are a bit too big for me.

But by the end of the meeting, one image had stuck with me. He’d talked about our local churches and how they find themselves in communities. “Wouldn’t it be great,” he said, “if when one of our churches had to close down, the community around that church would mourn its absence?” He went on to talk about how campus ministries are called to function the same way in their academic communities.

“Would the community around us mourn our absence?”

It was a strange picture. A bit bleak, with churches closing their doors and all. But the sense of it stuck with me – some idea of integration and service. And I told myself, “I should meet with that guy more often. Weird, yes. But intriguing. Even inspiring.”

Sitting with the big wigs

During 2005, I had the opportunity to take advantage of Lilly Foundation money to go to sunny Southern California. I bicycled along Venice beach, walked around Hollywood, and watched *Million Dollar Baby* – all on the Lilly dime. I’d recommend it during your next reading break.

We had dubbed ourselves *The Cultural Exegetes*: a group of 8 of us that were reflecting together on ‘preaching culture.’ But we had to come down to So. Cali because we had the audacity to ask Richard Mouw to sit and talk with us for a day. As a bonus,

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A Different Posture

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we enticed him by saying we'd grab Neal Plantinga and make him come too.

Well, it worked (little did we know that Richard and Neal were pretty much buddies, and love almost any excuse to get together). So we were stuck. We had to go Pasadena, meet with these two presidents (of Fuller and Calvin Seminaries), and attempt to keep up with them as they batted this 'preaching culture' idea around between them for the day.

I suppose it would be inaccurate to say, "and one thing stuck with me" since we've got the whole conversation on tape, but here's what I'm pulling off my mental recording for this context (not guaranteed in its accuracy). We were talking about how to approach culture, and Neal said, "With grace and truth. And perhaps best in that order."

“Has the church lost its voice because it was always looking first for what’s wrong?”

A different posture

"And perhaps best in that order," said Neal or Richard or somebody (it wasn't me anyway). "Wouldn't it be great if...," said Bill.

These two things started to fuse together in me, and the slow percolation of thought began. Has the church lost its voice because it was always critiquing, looking first for what's wrong in the world, in the culture, in *Harry Potter* or *The DaVinci Code*? Is our knee-jerk reaction to first reach for 'truth,' to fix the errors of the world's ways? And by doing so, have we made ourselves quite unwelcome? So that when we close up shop, people are only too happy not to

have to hear our in-unison refrain "But this is what you're missing..."

Is this the movement from a modern to a post-modern culture? To become more like Dan in Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christian* who sees a dream-catcher hanging next to a crucifix from someone's rearview mirror and instead of speaking about how misguided that syncretistic display is, he instead speaks about how it might rightly critique the current Christian culture. Rather than posing "What's wrong?" he wonders "What's right?" He doesn't approach this cultural expression with the diagnostic lens of truth, but wears glasses of grace and looks for the Spirit's imprint – at least as a first instinct.

It's like the flip-side of Total Depravity. We've always said that the total means 'pervasive into all realms' rather than 'absolute, without anything good remaining.' So if the brokenness is not absolute, might there be something good there yet? And can we learn the spiritual habit of seeking and celebrating that 'bit o' goodness' before we point our finger at and turn our nose from the depravity?

In the end, for me, it feels like a different posture. Rather than that older defensive posture, ready to pull out our handbook of apologetics, always prepared to diagnose the problem, we stand differently at the crossroads. We become the first hearty laugh when we spy the Spirit at play, the ears that listen expectantly, wondering, "What is God saying in this?" Everywhere we walk, we move confidently knowing that 'this is our Father's world' and so we're sure to find him working, lurking even in the shadows – like a great cosmic game of hide-and-seek. And though we bring what we understand of the truth-revealed with us wherever we go, we're first ready to look grace-fully at whatever we see for that touch of glory, that taste of God-at-play. And perhaps we'll have our version of the truth-revealed tweaked a bit – 'cause we just might not have it all put together in final draft form.

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Conversation Café

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But that posture. Rather than a defensive stance, it's an embracing one. With a glint in your eye that makes everyone a bit suspicious: "Are you seeing through me?" Ready to be surprised by that peek-a-boo Spirit.

Situated at the University

We've probably all got a list of different things on the go in our own environment, but here's two things that I've started up lately – two things I think have been a result of my discovering this new posture.

***“Conversation Café:
Everyone comes with a
question.”***

First, a conversation café. It was a simple little thing actually. The Grad Student Association was looking for ways to 'create community.' And I walked in at the right time. I'd been peeking around at www.conversationcafe.org, and attended one in a local coffee shop. It seemed like a low-investment, high-return kind of situation. People come, anyone, random folks from all worldviews of life; everyone comes up with a question (Why be honest? What is love? What is mercy? What's most important to you? Are there useless emotions? etc); together, we pick one; and then we follow the pattern for conversation, a pattern which makes certain everyone has voice at the table.

Amazingly fun conversations, but not at first. At first, they were miserable. I think everyone else was enjoying themselves (especially when the Grad Stud Assoc pays for drinks and desserts), but I was struggling with issues of inadequacy. Isn't this the perfect type of conversation for me to blow them away with

the truth? To display how my fully coherent worldview wonderfully answers all these questions from a God-centered ground motive? This is my opportunity to witness, but I just keep blowing it. One guy, whose pursuing a Ph. D. in feminist and anthropological philosophy, always confuses me. I just don't get his philosophical jargon – he should talk to Bill, not me. Bill would have the right way of cutting up his ideas, exposing his certainly dualistic ground motive.

I spoke with Bill about this a couple weeks ago. He laughed at me. Told me to lighten up. Join the journey with this guy, he said. And I thought, "Wouldn't it be great if this guy actually missed me if I had to leave?" (Okay, I didn't really, but I thought it worked well for this little article.)

It's made it much more fun thinking that I don't have to have all the answers. And even more than that. That perhaps God is lurking behind some of the thoughts of my café comrades, getting ready to surprise me – to reveal just a bit more about Himself and his world through their insights.

***“No door for the 90% just
seeking something more”***

This posture has also lightened the anxiety around our new Multi-Faith Student Community. Since I got to the U of C, it was obvious to me that our Multi-Faith Chaplains' Centre was helpful to only about 10% of the population. We had doors for them to go into. We had our 'Catholic' door, our 'Lutheran' door, our 'Baptist' and 'Pentecostal' and 'United' doors. We have some doors that aren't open much: 'Muslim' and 'Jewish.' And most recently, that infamous 'Christian Reformed' door ('What's that mean anyway?' I'm often asked. 'Does that mean you're Christian or that you're not Christian?').

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Measuring Sticks vs. New Community

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But no door for the other 90% that were ‘just seeking something more,’ that were ‘spiritual, but not really religious,’ that ‘didn’t really like institutions, but kind of like yoga’ – to these students, we were completely unhelpful.

So we’ve got a new community. And you only have to walk through the front door to get in. I suppose it’s a ‘community of explorers.’ People can walk into this community from any of the interior doors (we encourage it, actually) – so that we have some folks who’ve grounded themselves in some faith community and practice. But we hope to have lots of folks that haven’t ‘joined up’ anywhere yet.

We’re hoping it’s a great idea. You’ve probably all had it already. But my point is that this new posture makes it a great deal easier to operate effectively (and even playfully) in this ‘environment of journeying.’ It’s invitational. Rather than standing at the gate for

the community and checking doctrinal height with my measuring stick of truth (‘you have to be over 3 feet tall to take this ride’), we throw everyone in the room and I get to listen hard, to listen expectantly, to listen with ears of grace to what they’ve experienced as ‘holy’ and ‘good’ and seek out what the Spirit is saying about God in their voices.

Well, that’s all I’ve got for now. If you see Bill, say “Hi” from me. But if you want me to get your books autographed by Neal and Richard, I probably won’t have the opportunity to help you with that. My apologies. But if you’re starting a new peer group that might include a trip to California, I’ll gladly join up. Hawaii’s good with me too – I’m pretty sure the Spirit’s work needs to be discovered there.

*Paul Verhoef is the CRC Campus Minister at
U of Calgary, Calgary,
Alberta, Canada.*

“Some Leadership Quotes”

A leader is a fellow who refuses to be crazy the way everybody else is crazy and tries to be crazy in his own crazy way.—**Peter Maurin**, from "Easy Essay" in *The Catholic Worker*

We would do well not to be enamored by the kind of leadership that is so prized by politicians and CEOs, the kind that is conspicuous and, as we say, "effective." Forget about charisma, go for character.—**Eugene Peterson**, *The Unnecessary Pastor* (adapted)

He who sacrifices his conscience to ambition burns a picture to obtain the ashes.—Chinese Proverb

Only by learning to accept God's forgiveness as we see it in the life and death of Jesus can we acquire the power that comes from learning to give up control.—**Stanley Hauerwas**, *The Peaceable Kingdom*

Excerpted from *Christianity Today*, October 1, 2001, Vol. 45, No. 12, Page 69

The Question of Coaching

By Peter Schuurman

Ironically, in spite of all their great learning, or perhaps *because* of their vast scholarship, academics have a notorious reputation for dismal teaching skills. The lecture, for example, which involves pacing in front of a huddled mass of students and pontificating on an esoteric topic, is no way to grow wise souls. This method teaches students how to doodle, catch up on sleep, and ask that burning question: “Is this going to be on the exam?”

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” We might even add one more line: “I reflect on what I do with a good coach, and I become wiser.” Coaching is as old as Elijah and Elisha, but it is an art that has been lost in the knowledge factories of our day. I recently bumped into some literature on the subject and thought it apt for the company of campus ministers. Pedagogy is as much an issue in our calling.

“Coaching is an art that has been lost in the knowledge factories of our day.”

Because even campus ministers fall into the “teaching” trap. How quickly we could tell students our clever ideas regarding the Danish cartoon fiasco, how freely we can offer them a critique of the local student evangelism campaign, and when working one-on-one, we can be so quick to offer our time-worn solutions to their dating woes. I suppose we are, after all, a product of academic culture, and we come from a church with a magnificent teaching tradition. We all love to know and tell.

Training students to become mature disciples of Christ, however, requires more than telling. Coaching, like the apprenticing of days of yore, can equip the saints more effectively for vibrant ministry. It puts the student and their experience front and centre, and stretches and pulls from there. Coaching, according to the handbook *Coaching 101* (ChurchSmart, 2003) by Robert Logan and Sherilyn Carlton is the art of walking along side a student, clarifying goals, brainstorming plans, revising goals, and celebrating successes. It is listening to God’s whisper in their life, drawing out their gifts and affirming their calling for kingdom service.

Coaching is different from spiritual direction or mentoring. Walter Wright, in *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Paternoster, 2004), suggests that coaching is more focused on the behaviours and projects of a person, while mentoring goes deeper into relationships and character, and spiritual direction excavates further into one’s thoughts and feelings about God. Coaching, then, can focus on the ministry activities of a student and empower them for fruitful service.

What is a coaching relationship like? Logan and Carlton focus on the five “Rs”: relating, reflecting, refocusing, resourcing, and reviewing. What is most essential through all five, first and foremost, is listening. Listening, unlike telling, requires steady nerves on behalf of the coach. It involves opening up space for the students to express themselves and then asking judiciously considered questions that probe deeper into God’s movements in the student’s work and life. The goal of the coaching relationship is not downloading a quantity of information, but a far greater jewel: self-awareness for the student.

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Coach Jesus?

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Students are a universe of kingdom possibility, and the right questions awaken the imagination for wild and creative ministry. What the pastor thinks with regard to ministry is marginal in coaching. What is vital are the dreams and confidence of the student. "What can you do?" is a question that pushes a student to own their actions. "What else?" is a question that goads them deeper into themselves and God's alternative worlds. A good example is Jesus, a rabbi who knew the power of good questions.

One might argue that the mean, Machiavellian coaching tactics in the world of sports today are hardly a model for Christian disciple-making. The book *Season of Life* by Jeffrey Marx, however, demonstrates an alternative perspective on the coaching relationship at Gilman High School in Baltimore. "What is my job?" asks coach Joe Ehrmann of his football team. The players yell back, "To love us!" The coach shouts, "And what is *your* job?" "To love each other!" the boys respond. This is no win-at-all-costs approach. Ehrmann, who is also a pastor, says, "I... help boys become men in the context of sports."

Campus ministers can help students become leaders in the context of higher education. Coaching can be one way of helping young people grow from eager volunteers into self-motivated spiritual adults. It is an art that cannot be gleaned, however, from a short article such as this. The best training is to have a coaching experience yourself.

*Peter Schuurman is the CRC Home Missions
Educational Mission Leader
stationed in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.*

Seizing the Opportunity

By Francois Kruger

Fanshawe College is one of the largest community colleges in Ontario, Canada. With a student body of 15,000, and approximately 1200 full-time staff, the college is positioned well in South-western Ontario as a major alternative to university studies.

One program run by the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) has created a unique opportunity for the chaplains. Many students require financial assistance to be successful in their studies. OSAP has created a program that enhances the assistance available through the Work Study Program. The Financial Aid Office encourages the hiring of students by college departments and will provide up to 75% of the funds to a college department in order to facilitate this hiring.

For over 6 years, the Chaplain Centre has been approved to hire a Chaplain Centre Attendant. The chaplains interview potential candidates and come to a mutual decision as to hiring. The successful student candidate becomes a part of the ministry team by staffing the Chaplain Centre during the student's free hours, and filling time slots in the Chaplain Centre when the chaplains are not present there. Not only does this allow the centre to remain open for longer hours each week, not only does it provide additional earnings for a student, but the entire focus of ministry on campus is enhanced by this program. And the funding of a student attendant is reimbursed by 75%!

Again, we see the hand of God at work in a public institution, and we seize an opportunity God has provided to make ministry more effective and more visible in London, Ontario.

*Francois Kruger is the Coordinator of Chaplains
at Fanshawe College, London,
Ontario, Canada.*

Hope Enters: The Passive Thrust of Campus Ministry

By Jamie VanderBerg

There are certain cracks through which the light enters, certain fissures in which hope is given voice. Leonard Cohen, whose artistic verse I just brutalized, may have inadvertently described the project and the passive thrust of campus ministry.

When Dr. Ronald Wells came to Guelph's campus, he spoke about the stories of grace and of hope that run beneath the acts of violence in Northern Ireland. Although its history is told as a series of brutal attacks perpetrated on specific dates, the collective memory of Northern Ireland is shaped far more by the stories of hope that have woven their way into the tapestry of its tenuous peace. In the fissures of war and violence, the friendship of Ken Newell and Gerry Reynolds took on new meaning. Their friendship was a beacon of light that appeared through the cracked walls of violence. Dr. Wells argued that it's an historian's obligation to draw attention to these beacons of light.

But it's not just through the major cracks in human history, like the Holocaust or September 11th, that the light enters. In March, a student passed away on this campus. Her death was due to complications with her diabetes, and I was asked to lead her memorial service.

Annie had five housemates. The six of them had grown up together, attended high school together and went to the University of Guelph, renting a house for several years . . . together. It was her housemates who found her in her room after she didn't wake up to her morning alarm.

Up until that time, all six of them had checked their faith at the door of this university; church was something they had done in high school. Other priorities had called "shotgun," and their faith was sentenced to the back seat. After meeting with them to discuss the memorial service, they wrote in an e-mail, "We'd like to hear a few words of hope in the service. We'd like it to

be a "Christian service," but we're not sure what that would look like today or on this campus."

The memorial service was a much needed event. 110 people showed up—family, faculty and students. I spent some time reflecting on the story of Lazarus, noting the fact that we believe in a God who not only weeps with us, but who also promises new life. There was some genuine sharing that followed and a few emotional moments. They told stories of grace, and, in the end, I'd have to say that it was one of the strongest displays of community I've seen on this campus. In the end, it was a pastoral moment—a crack through which the light entered.

Marcel Proust once wrote a novel entitled, *In Search of Lost Time*. If I were to write a novel about my experience on campus, it would be entitled, *In Search of Lost Hope*. In my work with Make Poverty History and its call for justice, in my faculty and staff small groups, in the conversations I've had with students, I constantly find myself drawing attention not to the cracks in campus life, but to the light that's entering through them.

As such, this past year has been far more about what God has done than about what I have done. There's a beautiful passivity to the project of campus ministry. God's light will enter when it will; his words of hope will subvert what needs to be quieted; and his grace will permeate even the most concrete of campus realities.

Jamie VanderBerg is the CRC Campus Minister at the U of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

The Exhaustion of a Contemplative Rhythm

By Virginia Miller Lettinga

In June 2003, the Catholic community in Prince George, BC hosted a young adult conference with Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities. In early January the Catholic lay chaplain at the University of Northern British Columbia invited us to serve on the steering committee. So we dutifully showed up for monthly meetings in which we had little to offer but from which we gained a great sense of how things are done in our local diocese and struck up a friendship with the local bishop. And we recruited conference attendees from our university students and the local protestant churches. We *did* think to warn them that it would be a thoughtful, prayerful conference. We weren't prepared for how much of a surprise they would find that to be.

After each lecture by Jean Vanier, the conference crowd was asked to sit still for five minutes of silent reflection. Next, people were encouraged to discuss their reactions in small groups, or to walk and talk together in trios or pairs. After that, there were refreshments and random chatter before a lively praise band began booming from the auditorium.

"Is this the way all Catholic youth conventions are?" asked a young Christian Reformed woman, wide-eyed after the first evening. "This feels so odd. This isn't *at all* like our youth conferences. I like this... but I've never been part of anything like this before. It's hard work to be quiet." After the conference concluded explained, "I was very surprised that we were not asked to solve any problems this weekend – world problems, that is. Instead, we were asked to look at the state of our brokenness. We were asked to meditate, to reflect and rest. I've never been asked to do that before – and given the space and time to do it. It was so different from any other conference I had ever attended...at the end of the weekend I was exhausted. This weekend forced me to examine my life and my relationship with God."

We were fascinated by her reactions and tried probing some of the other student attendees – and consistently heard that they felt discomfited, challenged and renewed. We began to experiment with asking students to pause three quiet minutes after reading Scripture together – and found it created focus and enriched conversation. A deliberate step toward more contemplative learning has been a rich challenge. Although contemplation is a tradition that is not necessarily foreign to protestants, it is typically foreign to youth groups and young people's conferences. Some students hypothesized that the contemplative pace felt odd "because of the Reformed tradition's emphasis on action." I wondered what kind of action they perceived as the hallmark of the reformed tradition, or whether the slow and contemplative pace felt odd because of the increasing emphasis on activity within general protestant and evangelical circles. As we have become an Americanized, middle-class denomination, programmed activities have become the focus of time and energies in our churches. The Christian Reformed student who talked with us the first night was prepared for a discussion of how to mobilize to offer care to the poor, the handicapped, the marginalized. She was ready for committee work and time commitment. It was shocking for her to instead slow down and examine herself and realize that we ourselves are broken, poor, and unworthy.

"Do you think you might do a retreat a little bit like that conference?" she asked me this spring, a somewhat wistful tone in her voice. "Everything always feels so busy, and I feel like I'm often asked for my reactions without time to sort them through myself."

Virginia M. Lettinga (along with her husband Neil) is the Chaplain at U of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia, Canada.

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