



CALGARY CAMPUS MINISTRY

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Reflections of a first time chaplain...

Let me start out by saying that I feel quite blessed. I was not planning on being a Chaplain this year nor, for that matter, had the thought of being a Chaplain ever crossed my mind. Paul and Sam were gracious enough to invite me into this experience and believed that my God-given gifts would be of use in this setting. It took me a little while, but I finally decided that it would be just plain silly not to take them up on the offer.

My background is in Music and Theology; I received a bachelors' degree from a Bible college about seven years after I allowed God fully into my life. It was during my time in college that I was shown the great love of God through the many one on one meetings I had with a couple of my professors. They spent their time listening to my story and my struggles, discussing with me my questions,

praying with me and sharing their own journeys. I am unable to express how greatly these experiences impacted my life; I know that I would not be where I am today had it not been for this love that was shown me.

I believe that the ways in which we have been loved by God through others is deeply

connected to how He created us as unique individuals. The encounters that we've had with this love are then translated into our work, through and with God, to positively impact the lives of others. This is one of those beautiful intricacies of Creation.

It has been amazing to see how God has been using my past experiences and the gifts that He gave me in the University setting. There are plenty of opportunities to connect with students one on one and being able to do so has been my great joy. I believe that we, as human beings, have a deep inner need to know that we are special; that we are worth listening to and spending time with. We need to know that our questions and concerns about relationships, spirituality or whatever they may be will be received and engaged with. Not only that but we need to have our stories heard and to learn from the stories of others. Having this outlet and to receive guidance is particularly important during the formative years of our lives. It has been a privilege for me to be engaged with the students of the University in this way.

It has been a great seven months and though it will be hard to leave I know the Chaplaincy is in the good hands of Paul and that God will continue to work in and through the lives of the students that I have had the pleasure of getting to know.

~Darcie Gutierrez



Darcie and Sam Gutierrez, interns for the Calgary Campus Ministry.

Meaningful Mid-Week Musings

The middle of the week is always an awkward period of time. It is two days after the weekend and two days before the next weekend. Often we find ourselves in need of reprieve from the drone of classes, exams, labs and notes. Fortunately there exists Wednesday night dinner and fellowship. A place where people can come to gather together in fellowship over food and provide a well needed rest from the academic grind.

In the quiet room of Cascade 101, every Wednesday night at 5:00 pm, a gathering occurs. People come

together to talk, to eat and to engage with one another on (hopefully) a more relaxing and restful note. I will admit that recently being placed in a position to move these dinners along has come to change my outlook on the purpose of the dinners. As a student I connect with the need to find friends and food on a regular basis as a meaningful event. Now being in charge of creating an engaging and relevant conversation for the people to take part in, has shaped my understanding to realise the full potential of the dinners. Although we all need a place to rest in, I have come to understand that rest is not the absence of everything in our daily lives. It is

finding the needed rest within God that will rejuvenate our souls and allow us to take on everyday worries without becoming overwhelmed.

Paul Verhoef laboured hard to create an engaging and open space for students to think about, wrestle and move through a life with God, often just starting us off on a note from his past week of pondering about life, the universe and just about anything. I understand now why he tried so hard to make Wednesday night a place of safe conversation. People need to wrestle with God and know why we follow him, and at the same time need to feel that any question can be asked without repercussion.

It needs to be a place where a Christian can invite their non-Christian friends and know that it is a safe and open place to be. Although it has been an interesting semester for me to plan these nights, I look forward to the thoughts and ponderings of the people every week. All I can say is that if I can end this semester with people having engaged with an aspect of faith that they never have before, I feel that these dinners would be a success. I mean, if it was not for this wrestling (which all started for me when I first attended Wednesday night dinners), I would not be following Christ. Thanks for reading.

~Dustin Pearson

Does God Exist?: A Campus Debate



For the last couple of years, Christian Reformed Campus Ministries has participated in campus wide outreach events at the University of Calgary. This year, we partnered with the Navigators, Baptist Student Ministries, Campus for Christ, and InterVarsity to present to the campus a “debate,” style outreach featuring the theme: *Is it reasonable to believe that God exists?* Planning began in early September and culminated on Jan 27th, at 4pm in Mac Hall on the University Campus. The debate featured Michael Horner, an adjunct instructor in Philosophy at Trinity Western University who argued the affirmative, and Dr. Richard Carrier, a professional historian who argued the negative. Over 800 students, faculty, and staff attended the debate, and was the largest non-student union activity on the university campus in the past few years.



Sometimes it can be difficult to measure the effectiveness of such a debate. Debates can often lead to little change, and instead result in an “entrenching” of already held ideas. However, we heard stories of God touching hearts and meeting people through the event, and we praise God for that. Also, for many of us, especially those who have been Christians for a while, we were reminded that the question of God existence is still a relevant and perplexing question for many people. Who won the debate you might ask? It depends on

whom you talk to. The important thing was that for 2 hours on a winter afternoon on a large university campus, 800 people thought about God and entertained the idea that faith in God is in fact “reasonable.”

~Sam Gutierrez

Summer Prayer Requests

- Safe return for Paul and family in June from his sabbatical
- Guidance and direction for Sam and Darcie as they apply for positions for next year
- Relaxation and productive work for students over the summer as they work and prepare for next year
- Inspiration and productivity in planning for next year’s leadership team and student community

The House of Commons: Student Community in Calgary

Student housing is an issue. We need something affordable, with natural light, and generally close enough to an academic institution--preferably the one we're attending. We end up with basement suites, no back yards, and because we spend most of our time buried with our heads in books (or on pillows or in front of TV screens) we don't even know if we have neighbors. As a student I know what I'm expected to do with my mind. But what am I supposed to do with my heart?

One of the communities near the U of C is Bowness. Known for its bumper stickers, Hell's Angels' club house, coffee shops that close at 4pm, and main street angle parking this little town-gobbled-up-by-the-big-city is filling with students who have local missions on their hearts. As a result, a couple of community houses have been set up to build intentional community (modeled after places like The Simple Way, and Jacob's Well). Intentional community breaks down as such: create unity and strength within a small group of people that overflows with peace and hope and spills love onto the sidewalks and streets of the community. I've been fortunate to belong to one of these houses: the House of Commons (www.houseofcommons.ca). Every Thursday all friends and neighbors are welcome to attend a community dinner in which we practice hospitality in sharing food and fellowship. We partner with Community Kitchens to provide enough food for these meals and make hampers for a few different neighbors and families. We also bring in different musicians and artists to bring students and young adults into our house to build foundations with other groups and individuals

with Calgary on their hearts. Currently, there are several community gardens in Bowness and the House of Commons is developing most of our property into garden space (a big project). Most of us attend a local church called Awaken where we are supported, fed, and loved as we refuel our passion for Bowness every week. Many members of Awaken come to our community meals and music nights and bring news of what's going on with their neighbors allowing us to establish a sort of grid map which we use to cover as many needs as possible. Bowness has been around for a long time and we are constantly introduced to projects like the House of Commons that have been in operation for a long time from where we can seek advice and encouragement. Most of the residents in Bowness have been living there for decades and as much as we want to help the community, we've found gems in the community that have come to our rescue time and time again.

There are many students from the U of C that are now looking to move into separate houses to create a bigger community of Bowness enthusiasts. In the fall we are hoping to have a total of 3 community houses within Bowness to exercise our passion for learning, for Calgary, and for each other as incarnational local missionaries. We, as students, as members of the Kingdom, are hungry to expand our minds and our hearts equally. And we've finally found a place that feels like it fits; a place that is beginning to feel like home.

~Jess Lefebvre

A Recent History: A Student Perspective on Campus Ministry

Wow. This time here is almost over for me. Officially I have 15 days left of my university career! Then it will be out into the big, scary world known as "real life". While the future is somewhat daunting, the past five years have been truly incredible. The first day I arrived in residence I had nothing to do. I was bored and a bit lonely so I decided to go for a walk and learn my way around this new place. On my wanderings I stumbled into the Chaplain's centre. The first person I saw when I walked in was Paul. We chatted briefly and he loaded me up with flyers and bookmarks of things that were going on. One of the first things he told me about was this dinner that happened every Tuesday in Mac Hall. It was free and a chance to get to know others and have discussions about things. So come Tuesday I decided to check this out, after all what first year student doesn't love free food? It was just what Paul had described. We ate, we laughed, and we had the same meal every Tuesday. It was awesome.

"...topics presented at dinner would follow me and my roommates home for tea later."

Slowly others began to join. Lots of rez rats took up the free food offer. Eventually the location changed to house the growing numbers. Paul even had other people cook for us, which was incredible! As things grew, the conversations that were had at the dinner times began to progress beyond the tables at the now Wednesday night dinners, or Paul's dinner as most of my friends call it. Conversations concerning how we think about the world, and think about God and engage with other people were never resolved for us at dinner and topics presented at dinner would follow me and my roommates home for tea later. These conversations grew into relationships that came and went, with a few that stay strong now. Working and eating with the group of people at these dinners has been the highlight of my week for the past 5 years. I have been challenged in what I think of life and God and happiness. The dinners were always a place to refresh, have some great home

cooked meals... or pizza, and be with people. And while it may not look like a church at all, this has become what I always thought the church should look like. My time here is almost

over, it has been great. I can't wait to hear about the next first year who stumbles upon Paul's office and the Wednesday night dinner!

~Jocelyn Grant



Shaping Love

Recently I've been reading a book called "*Desiring the Kingdom*" by James K.A. Smith. In it, Smith makes the case that human beings at their fundamental core are not empty containers for beliefs, but lovers who desire. He writes "To be human is to be such a lover—a creature whose orientation and form of life is most primordially shaped by what one loves as ultimate..." (p51). He goes on to state that humans beings engage in communal practices and habits of the heart that shape our love or "aim" it towards certain ends. Smith goes on to point out that institutions are not merely "neutral" but are liturgical in the sense that they involve the person in practices that directs their love towards certain ends. He walks his readers through two cultural liturgies to highlight his point: the mall, and the university. The university is a love forming/shaping place (although it may deny this and claim that it is merely the depositor of ideas and concepts). The university through its rhythms, its language, its curriculum, and its practices, shapes a person's love towards a particular vision of "the good life." Smith points out that the university shapes students and prepares them for a life of "careerism" that promises material goods, efficiency, productivity and freedom from economic restraint.

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I've been thinking about Smith and his book for much of this past semester. I've been wrestling with his ideas because I am someone who works with students, faculty and staff at a university. In our work here, we invite people into practices that aim their love towards the Bible's vision of the good life, or what Jesus called "the Kingdom." Contrary to the teachings of other religions, the problem isn't that we love or have desires, but that we desire the wrong things and our love is aimed towards unworthy ends.

I'm beginning to think that ultimately campus ministry is about shaping love. A provocative question that flows out of this is: After being involved with Christian Reformed Campus Ministry for any length of time, will the students that we build relationships with love deeper? In essence, the question is: will they be better lovers? This question challenges the notion that if we can just get students to believe the right things; right behavior will follow. I want to affirm that beliefs are important and Smith in his book doesn't dismiss beliefs, but all of us know too many people who "believe" the right things, but whose lives (loves) don't match. However, if we are trying to cultivate "lovers of the kingdom" – how might we do that? How is love nurtured and cultivated?

~Sam Gutierrez