

The BLAZER

CONNECTING ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF CMU

FALL 2023



| Time to plant,
| time to uproot

The BLAZER

In today's rapidly evolving world, disruption has become the new normal. Yet, it's a term that often brings about a sense of unease, even fear. After all, who among us finds comfort in the prospect of our routines upended or our norms challenged? However, disruption isn't necessarily a force to be feared, but harnessed for improvement.

The theme for this issue of *The Blazer* is time to plant, time to uproot. This biblical reference (see Ecclesiastes 3) is about the transformation that happens to life "under the sun." While uprooting plants that have yielded their harvest may still look strong, it is necessary to uproot these plants to prepare for the upcoming season—a disruption of what was.

Disruption, at its core, is about displacing existing systems, processes, or in the case of CMU, perhaps traditional pedagogies with something new, more efficient, and sometimes even revolutionary. See page 12 for the roundtable faculty discussion on the new Ways of Knowing course to get a glimpse into a new approach to introducing first-year students to CMU and how to get the most learning out of their university experience.

The recent CMU symposium *A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story* was a gathering of the CMU community—alumni, faculty, staff, church representatives—to reflect on where CMU has been, where it is now, and what the trajectory is for the upcoming 25 years. These conversations are healthy but not always easy. The event was a "profile in courage," as described by Dr. Willie James Jennings who identified the need for institutions like CMU to clarify Christian education in the evolving modern context.

As we learned, such reflective tactics are uncommon in post-secondary education and require meaningful input from different parties, as well as unique perspectives from a number of new stakeholders. To paraphrase symposium presenter and alumna, Deanna Zantingh, we must be willing to embrace change and be prepared to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

The CMU mission statement identifies CMU as "...an innovative Christian university...that inspires and equips...". The future belongs to the bold and the curious, the disruptive and the innovative.

Kevin Kilbrei
Director, Communications & Marketing

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On the cover: *Farmhouse in Provence*, Vincent van Gogh, 1888. (Public Domain)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What time is it?

When I was a child, we neighbourhood kids played a game called, "What time is it, Mr. Wolf?" We would clench our little muscles, breathe in more than out, and brace for the moment when we'd hear, "Time to eat you!" Then we'd squeal frantically, run in circles, and wonder if this was the time we'd be captured and named wolf. A game of adventure and trepidation, it lent energy and urgency to asking the time.

The question, "What time is it?" isn't only about clockwork data. It enables a qualitative judgement on whether it's time for this or for that. This ancient formation is most pronounced in Ecclesiastes 3, a clear yet evocative passage that calls us to pay attention to context in seeking direction. The passage frees us to step out or hold back with assurance, knowing that wisdom lies in some opposite action at some other time.

Ecclesiastes 3 gives witness to God's trust in human creatures to read the time well. Sometimes this means noticing that both this and that are present simultaneously, although in differing dimensions. Consider a fallen tree—what draws your attention? The rotting tree that's torn down, the new growth sprouting up within it, or both? Are you attentive to multiple processes happening elsewhere, with one thing decomposing while another is cultivated and taking root?

Ecclesiastes 3 gives witness to God's trust in human creatures to read the time well.

The current era is viewed by many as a time to tear down institutions; that long ago time—the 20th century—is seen wistfully as a time when people had desire and capacity to build institutions. Often

existing institutions are described as untrustworthy and society's institutional space too cluttered. Indeed, systemic harm, disease, and overcrowding are sound reasons to promote institutional decomposition. Yet there's usually also something else going on—energy and action towards new policies, practices, and possibilities. Laments are turning into hope and aspirations into tangible outcomes of restored institutions along with renewed hearts and minds.

As I seek to name what time it is at CMU, I take heart in seeing students, alumni, and many friends in church and society attending to both what's being built and renewed and what's being torn down. I'm grateful to see people



exercising God's gift of trust to tell the time well through critical, constructive, and creative action. Together may we find peace in this prayer.

Holy God,
whose presence is known
in the structures we build,
and also in their collapse;
establish in us a community of hope,
not to contain your mystery,
but to be led beyond security
into your sacred space,
through Jesus Christ. AMEN

Peace and joy,
Cheryl Pauls
CMU President

CMU launches spiritual care concentration for master's program

Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe | CMU Staff Writer

CMU has added a new stream to the Master of Arts degree within its Graduate School of Theology and Ministry (GSTM). As of fall 2023, students are able to earn a Master of Arts in Spiritual Care, in addition to the two pre-existing concentrations: Master of Arts in Theological Studies and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry.

The Master of Arts in Spiritual Care will equip students to do chaplaincy work in a vast array of settings, like hospitals, schools, personal care homes, and prisons. CMU is collaborating with St. Boniface Hospital and the Selkirk Mental Health Centre to offer Supervised Psychospiritual Education (SPE) courses as part of the degree program.

To carry this out, CMU has welcomed Chenene Layne and Tim Frymire to the faculty as Adjunct Professors of Biblical and Theological Studies. Layne teaches SPE at St. Boniface Hospital, where she is the coordinator of spiritual care education, and Frymire teaches SPE through the Selkirk Mental Health Centre.

The Master of Arts in Spiritual Care will equip students to do chaplaincy work in a vast array of settings...

Students will complete the SPE portion of their degrees with these instructors through their institutions. This includes teaching sessions, case studies, interpersonal group work, and clinical practicum days on a unit. CMU faculty will teach the rest of the curriculum, covering topics like sacred texts, historical study of faith communities and

traditions, professional ethics, counselling, Indigenous studies, and more.

CMU is following the requirements set out by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care and is moving towards



Chenene Layne

accreditation with the national body. CMU will thus become an institution of record for students wanting to take SPE training, a significant role given that the University of Winnipeg was previously the only institution in Manitoba to offer these credits.

The development of a Master of Arts in Spiritual Care came about when Karl Koop, GSTM Director, started having conversations with SPE instructors and staff at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and heard about Manitoba's significant need for spiritual care providers. With only one other spiritual care master's program in the province—at Providence University College—some institutions are hiring spiritual care providers even if they lack full qualifications, to meet the demand.

"Every year there's always way more people interested in [SPE] than the spots we can fill," Layne says. "A lot of people, as they are continuing to hear and learn about spiritual care, are really interested in seeing how to do ministry in a practical way or outside of a church structure."

This interdisciplinary degree is relevant for people working in congregations, too, as it teaches many pastoral care skills, Koop says. The program will also explore the traditions of many denominations and faiths. "We're increasingly thinking about the interfaith dimensions of this," he says, adding that he hopes people from other faith traditions can find this program "accessible and hospitable."



Tim Frymire



"Zimbabwean farmer", by Inash Photography, licensed under CC BY 2.0

Mennonite Central Committee, CMU collaborate on Climate Change Adaptation Project in Zimbabwe

Canadian Mennonite University is pleased to collaborate with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada in a new project, Locally-Led Indigenous Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation in Zimbabwe (LINCZ).

This project is made possible with the support of Global Affairs Canada, which has allocated up to \$15 million to MCC. This initiative will include funding to CMU to collaborate with Zimbabwean academic and development organizations involved in the project.

"I am thrilled to be involved with collaborative efforts that monitor and report on the successes and challenges of responding to climate change. CMU's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity combined with our commitment to care for the environment is woven into this partnership," says Jodi Dueck-Read, Director of Research and Program Grants at CMU.

As part of this collaboration, CMU will establish a dedicated learning and innovation hub where it will examine stories and statistics to reduce vulnerability and increase biodiversity within terrestrial ecosystems in Zimbabwe. CMU is dedicated to learning with and from Zimbabwean partners as it seeks to honour the environment and help us live sustainably.

"With this partnership, we can learn with and from Zimbabwean people—devoted professionals in the fields of biodiversity and peacebuilding and communities committed to sustainable living," says Dueck-Read.

This global partnership aims to bolster Indigenous-led, nature-positive, conflict-sensitive and climate-resilient livelihood opportunities, particularly for women and girls, through sustainable use of biodiversity in the Mwenezi, Binga, and Gwanda districts.

"There are just a multitude of ways this will advance our programs in development, peace and conflict studies, environmental studies and public policy, and make CMU's

CMU is dedicated to learning with and from Zimbabwean partners...

work be of service both here and in Zimbabwe," says Ray Vander Zaag, Associate Professor of International Development Studies at CMU.

CMU's research endeavours will involve a multi-disciplinary team of academics, project coordinators, and student researchers spanning various scientific and international development disciplines. Members of CMU's research team include Dr. Wendy Kroeker, Dr. Jobb Arnold, Dr. Jonathan Sears, Dr. Rachel Krause, Dr. Ray Vander Zaag, and former CMU Associate Professor of International Development Studies Dr. Kirit Patel.

"[LINCZ] will make the research of these CMU faculty directly useful to a large development project in Zimbabwe, help make our teaching here in Canada more relevant, and strengthen our relationship with MCC," says Vander Zaag.



Faculty in their own words: Dr. Alexander Sawatsky

Dr. Alexander Sawatsky is Professor and Chair of Social Work. He joined the CMU faculty in 2023.

What are you enjoying about your work here so far?

I'm enjoying conversations with faculty who are different from me and talking about ways we could work together; it's really exciting. That's something I'm really looking forward to doing more. There's connection amongst different faculty and we can start thinking about things outside of those boxes, and that's where new ideas come up. I'm very excited about that and I'm already having fun with it.

If you [as social workers] are no longer needed, then the world has gotten better.

What are your plans and vision for CMU's Bachelor of Social Work program?

The whole point is we're trying to let in as many voices as possible to speak into it. I'd hate for one person to claim it all and say, "This is my idea." The best process is to listen, to help find ways to bring these ideas together so that as much of a vision can be incorporated from all those different voices. My vision is that it's the kind of social work program that is embedded within the context of the school, but also within the context of the realities of social work in Canada and more specifically in Manitoba, and that it can help students deal with that process. I've heard this many times, and I kind of believe it too: education shouldn't be safe or comfortable. But

it should be that students, as they're going through this, feel like they have tools for how to challenge some of their own ideas, to address their own privilege, and find ways to bring about a better world.

What do you most long for in your work?

Probably it's the strangest answer: to be irrelevant. It's what I say to social work students. The reason why there is such a need for social work is because there's a real problem in the world. I don't want to communicate to anybody that the point is you're supposed to become essential or indispensable, because with that you end up not necessarily challenging the way things are. If you are no longer needed, then the world has gotten better. I think that's the starting point and what I long for. It's maybe strange, but I'm not excited that we need so many social workers. I'm excited about the fact that social workers can maybe do something to stop the need for them in the first place—and that's how we have to teach them.

What saying or motto inspires you?

It's something in Low German my grandma used to always say: "After this time comes another." What I like about it is that on some level, that's not really profound, that's just telling us how time works. But on some level, it's also deeply calming and reassuring. I think the reason why it speaks to me so much is because it actually normalizes the idea that change happens. If you keep looking for stability and sameness, you're not going to find it and you're just going to get more anxious because you don't know what happens next. Or you embrace it and say, even if this moment is one I'm not doing well in, I know there's other times.

CMU welcomes new Registrar, Assistant Vice-President



Jeremy Perrott brings a wealth of experience and a passion for post-secondary education to the university. Perrott brings six years of experience as Registrar at Booth University College, where he built and implemented Populi as Booth's new Student Information System (a system recently deployed at CMU) and Learning Management System, led a registrarial office team, helped to develop strategic enrolment management (SEM) initiatives, and collaboratively served all students and faculty. Most recently, Perrott served as Academic and Career Advisor at the University of Winnipeg. He also brings international advising experience at the George Washington Academy in Morocco, where he implemented a new counseling/advising model.

Perrott started at CMU on July 4, 2023 as CMU's new Registrar, replacing Stephanie Penner who transitioned to a new position as Assistant Vice-President Academic for Program Development and Associate Registrar for Student Data. In her new role, Penner will guide processes of new program development and of program review and revision at CMU. She will also lead in the development and use of a coherent set of student data, which may inform CMU program development and review. Penner served as Registrar since 2017.



Professor Emeritus appointed

Pierre Gilbert has no small plans for retirement; it's time to follow a new calling.

Gilbert joined Canadian Mennonite Bible College, a founding college of CMU, in 1999 and now retires from his role as associate professor of Bible and theology after 24 years.

Even after all those years, he says he still has a passion for education. He jokes that he wants to keep himself useful and says, "I want to promote Biblical literacy in any way I can." Between working on a new book and mentoring young leaders, Gilbert hopes to continue shaping minds and supporting the community.

"I really do think these directions are now my life's calling," says Gilbert. "I'm looking forward to continuing this path."

"In these 24 years, I was to serve the school and use [my position] to serve the constituencies," says Gilbert. "Without CMU, I wouldn't have been able to do that."

Gilbert has been appointed Senior Scholar, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament.





Time to plant time to uproot

Introduction by CMU President, Cheryl Pauls

Stories by CMU Staff Writers, Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe and Myles Tiessen

Dear CMU friends and alumni,
I invite you to receive these words of blessing,
much like those I offered at Opening Convocation
this fall:

You are trusted to tell time. For you notice turns
for the better—what is lovely and healthy and just,
signs of God’s ongoing restoration. And you are
trusted to be like those who dream, those whose
mouths are filled with laughter and tongues with
shouts of joy.

The blessing has a source, Psalm 126, the CMU
chapel theme for this year. Let’s go down a story
path to let this blessing take root.

In 2016 my family visited an old city. We began
by walking downtown, surrounded by splendidly
carved fountains and hand-crafted buildings. I
wanted to linger with every step. But our sons just
wanted to bolt and said, “We’ve got to get out of
here.” I rolled my eyes and said, “Please. We didn’t
travel all this way for 10-second excursions. Are
you not intrigued by the stupendous artifacts of
ancient times?” They responded, “You don’t get
it, Mom. It’s not that we don’t want to stay. We
love the look of things. But we need to get out of
here... the sound is excruciating.” I continued,
“What sound? A few dogs barking, other tourists
who talk louder than us?” They responded, “No,
Mom, you still don’t get it. You don’t hear what we
hear. There’s a continuous high-pitched screech
in the air. Our ears pick it up. So do the dogs,
that’s why they’re all barking. Your old ears can’t
perceive this high frequency. This is a thing some
neighbourhoods do to keep kids away. The area is
sanitized to be lovely for people like you and to get
rid of people like us.”

I remained incredulous and went on, “It can’t
be that bad. You’re exaggerating. I’m a trained
musician, my ears are finely tuned to pitches. I
don’t hear an invasive sound. And besides, are you
calling me old?” They insisted that it was that bad.
I then became curious and envious of their better



hearing, still somewhat in denial. I asked, “How about you sing the annoying pitch down an octave or two? That way you’ll help me hear a related sound, which I’ll then imitate. From there I might be able to pick up the resonances of the super high frequency.” The boys continued, “No, Mom, this is not a game. We’ve got to go now. This sound is painful.”

Finally, I was willing to get it. Through their account, through their ears, not mine, I believed that the pitch was real. Then I got the offence of unwelcoming sounds—the false loveliness of a place that is good for some but definitely not good or just for all. The trip went on without any more encounters with screeching sounds and we mostly agreed on how much time to spend here and there. Yet the incident continued to haunt me. It was also a gift to me. While I never heard those frequencies, my hearing got better that July day. In a very tangible way, I became attuned to how places can be altogether lovely for me and awful for other people, places about which I learned to change my mind on how I perceived them.

Here’s the definition of loveliness that I find sound: that which rings true to conditions of justice and joy not only for me but also for those who hear and see different stuff than I do.

What does that definition of loveliness have to do with being trusted to see when things turn for the better and being like those who dream and laugh with joy? After all, as our sensibilities on what others hear improves, won’t we always recognize our understandings as partial and impartial on some new plane? Won’t we come to see every place to be screeching for somebody?

Well, yes and yes. That’s why we need to take heart in small things that tune us to reasons to share joy as much as to ever more needs for justice. Every day there are small things that turn around for the better. Every day there are things to celebrate and be grateful for, small things that ring true to the dreams by which we live. We need daily joy and laughter as much as we need food and sleep. For just as there’s no joy without justice, there can’t be justice without joy.

Psalms 126 gives expression to noticing and celebrating things that turn for the better and to calling for justice on that which is not well. It encourages us to be attuned to when it is time to tear something down, like screeching barriers, and when it’s time to build something up — organizations, people, and communities that seek healed conditions. Along the way take heart, dear friends, for you are trusted to tell time. And dear readers, take heart as you encounter stories of CMU alumni who tell time well, who discern and follow through on when it’s time to plant and when to pull up, when to tear down and when to sow. May your mouths be filled with laughter and your tongues with shouts of joy.

Uprooting life to plant music



Heitha Forsyth (CMU ’19) had to uproot everything

when she decided to go back to school to study music therapy at CMU. Having completed her undergraduate degree in 2008, it had been almost a decade since she’d been a student. She had an established career, a mortgage, a partner. “I had to basically pivot life as I knew it,” she says.

Learning when and where to uproot and plant is part of the human experience, she says. “The idea to me is that you’re navigating your life in a way that’s authentic and sometimes uprooting and letting go of things that no longer serve you is integral.” When you uproot something, you leave room for planting—and what grew from that opportunity shaped what she does today.

Forsyth is the Executive Director of the Manitoba Conservatory of Music & Arts, a non-profit organization that runs music education programming through individual instruction and through their Music Equals program, which brings music education and performances to people who wouldn’t otherwise have access due to economic and social barriers. For three years prior to this position, she was the Program Manager and Choir Director for U-Turn Parkinson’s, a non-profit serving people living with Parkinson’s Disease.

The other half of her life is performing. She’s a well-known and sought-after vocalist in the Manitoba music scene, performing in bands like The Solutions, Retro Rhythm Review, and her solo act, Sol James. She’s a self-described “journeyman singer,” working gigs ranging from weddings to funerals, backing vocals on another musician’s album to headlining a show.

“In one degree or another I always wanted to be a musician. As a musician I feel like it’s a service to your

community,” she says. “You’re around for people’s most vulnerable times: weddings, funerals, as a music therapist.” She longs for more politicians, schools, and communities to recognize the importance of music and the arts.

Forsyth has held a vast array of non-music jobs over the years, too, as working musicians trying to make a living often do. She has been a tutor for children with autism, a psychiatric nurse’s assistant, a nanny. “I think intrinsically I’ve always known I’m a caregiver, those are all caregiver roles.”

This posture of inclusivity is something the world needs to plant a lot more of..

She wanted to find a job that would combine this field of work with her music skills and pay her a consistent income so she could continue developing her performance career. “It dawned on me that all of those things have that commonality and I could apply that into a music direction through something like music therapy. It really was an epiphany: look at all these caregiving aspects of my career and life that have nothing to do with my music career, but then there’s this way to intersect them all!”

Forsyth’s experience studying at CMU included not only music therapy but also some biblical and theological studies courses, as required by every degree at CMU. As a secular person entering a faith-based university, she was somewhat wary. But she found that it took apart some of her biases about religion and challenged her to examine if she was really approaching a perspective she didn’t understand or believe with an open heart—an approach she values highly.

She’s been able to observe from some distance many different faith groups and cultures as a result of being non-religious, which she feels is a strength. “It has given me the chance to see things a little bit differently and I appreciate that because it allows me to see the beautiful things in all of these communities..”

This posture of inclusivity is something the world needs to plant a lot more of, she says. In a world of polarization and upheaval, she is holding fast to her commitment to “live in the grey.” She has decades-long friendships with people of many religions and viewpoints that differ from hers. It’s not always a popular stance in the current societal climate, but for her it’s important that people feel she is a safe and trustworthy person.



Planting seeds of change, inclusion, and belonging

“Twenty years ago I would have said, Canada doesn’t have racism!”

We’re such a welcoming place! Then I noticed not everyone was having that same experience.”

Robyn Penner Thiessen (CMU ’13) is a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Consultant, focusing on workplaces. She started working in the field for a very personal reason—her two oldest children are Black. Now in their early 20s, they’re entering the workforce themselves. “I realized...even here in Canada or in Winnipeg, the experience my kids would have in the workplace would be very different than what I was having.”

When applying for housing, her daughter, with the last name Thiessen, was readily invited to view apartments—but after meeting in-person, she was repeatedly told they were no longer available. Penner Thiessen asks her clients: what would my children’s experiences be if they were applying to work at your organization?



She helps companies develop strategies for building equitable workplaces and coaches leadership on managing their diverse staff. Inclusion of people commonly on the fringes of race, gender, ability, and so on, is not only the morally right thing to do, she says, but also practical for a business’ success by increasing team innovation and productivity and decreasing staff turnover.

Reflecting on the theme of planting and uprooting, she describes her work using the metaphor of a garden. “Some of the flowers are thriving. They’re getting lots of fertilizer, watering, attention, sunshine,” she says. “There are other plants that are on the fringes. They don’t get quite as much water from the sprinkler and less fertilizer reaches them. Some are in the shade of the plants that have grown really big and they’re not getting much sun, so they’re struggling. You might say, same garden, same experience—and yet actually it’s not the same experience at all.”

Her work educating people about cultural intelligence, microaggressions, unconscious biases, and good intentions that cause harm, can make many feel uncomfortable. “When you start to realize the ways your actions or your words have impacted others, it can be really unsettling for people. That’s how I see [myself] being an uprooter.”

She tries to approach these situations with balance, not



by coddling those struggling with the realization of their privileges and the systems that prioritize them, but by being understanding and compassionate. “I can also be a planter. It’s this idea of rearranging the garden and articulating a vision for, how can we create a garden where everybody thrives?”

The murder of George Floyd, an African-American man, by a police officer in 2020 and the discovery of unmarked graves on the sites of former residential schools across Canada created a big shift in people’s interest and openness to inclusivity work, Penner Thiessen says.

She’s felt drawn to anti-racism work even before she had kids. While an undergraduate student studying social sciences in Virginia, she was on a team that would enter schools experiencing racial violence and do workshops with students about conflict resolution and inclusion.

While living in Kenya for seven years, where she adopted two of her kids, terrorists bombed the US embassy and anti-Muslim sentiment ran rampant. In response, she organized a chapel celebrating diversity at the Christian school where she was a guidance counsellor. Students from different religions—Muslims, Hindus, Baha’is, Christians—each shared messages of peace from their sacred texts and teachings.

Penner Thiessen went on to study interreligious dialogue when her kids started school and she did her master’s degree at CMU’s Graduate School of Theology and Ministry. She took a class alongside Shi’a Muslim women scholars who were visiting from Iran as part of a longstanding Mennonite-Muslim interfaith dialogue and academic exchange.

Learning from those brilliant women’s perspectives, comparing holy scriptures with them, and being challenged to articulate her own beliefs was “an experience to me that was very significant and shapes the work I do today in a pretty meaningful way,” she says. “It made my life richer and I’m so grateful for that opportunity.”

A lifelong journey of rediscovery and renewal

“I had a t-shirt that I picked up at a thrift store a while back that said, ‘Start Something,’” says Marcus Rempel (CMBC’94). “I used to joke that it’s a better t-shirt for Marcus Rempel than ‘Finish Something.’ Although, the finishing is maybe what I need the most encouragement in.”



Whether it’s working with Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Pastoring at St. Julian’s Table in Beausejour, finishing his master’s degree in marriage and family therapy, or even helping organize and run Ploughshares Community Farm, Rempel is someone who dives headfirst into projects.

“I’ve planted a lot of things, but I think tending to them properly is something that takes more discipline,” says Rempel.

Rempel sees that discipline as a lifelong journey of rediscovery and renewal.

I think CMBC gave me a sense that one could be a Christian radical...

Rempel talks about the “clearing space” as a necessity for reformation, and the story of St. Julian’s Table is one which Rempel says comes from that tradition.

Several years ago, Rempel found himself drifting from the Mennonite world. Call it church fatigue, call it a new doctrine of faith, call it what you will, but Rempel had had enough. He was still deeply tied to the aspects of Mennonite theology that resonated with him—particularly peace and community. But he started to sense there ought to be a shift in the conduct and liturgy of a Sunday service.

St. Julian’s was born. Its ecumenical constitution means members from any faith tradition participate without disowning their affiliation with any church or spiritual practice. The service also incorporates Indigenous teachings

and ways of praying into the service.

Rempel says his value of inclusive worship can be traced back to his days studying at university. “I think CMBC gave me a sense that one could be a Christian radical, and as an act of faithfulness to and in the church, rather than as some kind of departure or repudiation of the church.”

Rempel says there is a danger in complete disruption. “One of the things that I learned [at Ploughshares] is the danger of tearing open too much ground too fast.” He says there’s “a real risk of being careless and too confident of our own righteousness and rightness in tearing down what we see as maybe oppressive structures.”

In a socio-political climate that Rempel describes as the Titanic “heading for the iceberg,” he says, “I’m very grateful to be connected to a tradition that doesn’t lose its sense of who it is and what it is.”

Rempel says the story of the Good Samaritan is an essential guiding principle as we look to renew or replant. “The genius of that story is that the guy in the ditch is the religious insider, and the one who comes along to help is the outsider. What that implies is that it could very well be you, broken down in the ditch, and you need to be open to that possibility.”

At its basic, most fundamental, Rempel says, “All the commandments can be boiled down to love your neighbour as yourself.”

Shattering the silence: a crusade for trauma-informed justice

Every day, Cecilly Hildebrand (CMU ‘12)

works with people who’ve experienced unprecedented levels of trauma.

As Executive Director of Candace House—a daytime refuge in Winnipeg for families navigating the court system after the criminal death of



a loved one—Hildebrand provides support for families through some of the most challenging times of their lives.

“Research shows again and again that homicide loss is a very different type of loss than any other kind. It’s not just grief,” says Hildebrand. “It creates such a shattered worldview, and all the things that you assumed before really aren’t there anymore.”

Hildebrand says Candace House works with that in mind as it provides a safe and trauma-informed environment. Located just one block from the Winnipeg Provincial Law Courts, Candace House is a reprieve where families can take a break from the court system to heal, rest, and work with justice professionals, victim services, and other supports.

She says this is in direct response to Manitoba courts’ cold and oppressive environment. “When you wander court buildings, especially the King’s Bench, the walls are filled with portraits of judges and every single one of them is a white male.”

Hildebrand says it’s reflective of a fallible system. “Not to say we should throw everything out, but there are a lot of ideas and ways that the justice system works that need to be uprooted in order for new ways. New ideas need to be planted that support families impacted by violence. A lot of that comes down to recognizing privilege and to recognizing place.”

... there are a lot of ideas and ways that the justice system works that need to be uprooted in order for new ways.

As a kid raised in an upwardly mobile family in Steinbach, Hildebrand said she had much to learn about the instability and damage caused by the wilful ignorance of privilege and place. “I think relationship and humility are really important in terms of creating space for dialogue and conversation and repairing wounds that have been opened from uprooting.”

Hildebrand says that due to the emotional gravity of her work, she expected her clients to have a cold detachment from spirituality, so alienated from the agency of their life that they cast off any form of faith. But what she has witnessed time and time again proves different. “What I tend to see is a lot more holding tightly to and really getting in touch with those spiritual beliefs that provide a lot of protective factors for families.”

That also means Candace House works within a culturally informed framework. They partner with the Southern Chiefs’ Organization, community elders, and knowledge keepers to provide support networks for Indigenous clients. Or, creating space where pastors and members of various Christian denominations can aid in additional support.

Hildebrand says the death of her brother, familial hospitalizations, and other traumas she witnessed at a young age were a catalyst for what she does now. “I think those experiences really shaped in me a desire to walk with people

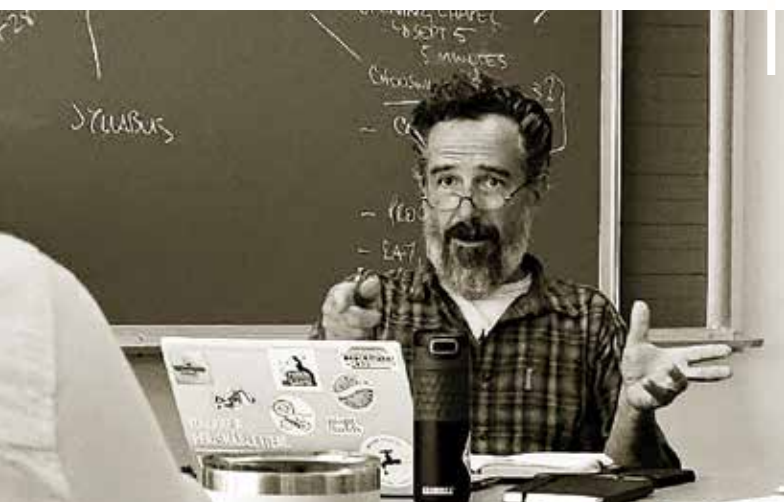
who have also experienced loss,” says Hildebrand. “It was something that I had gone through, and when I look back, I just think of how lucky we were to have the people in our community and to have the family that we did.”

“These individuals are going through arguably the worst time of their entire life. Yet, they’re letting me and my staff into their lives and letting us walk with them. And that’s something I don’t take lightly. It’s an incredible honour and privilege that inspires me to keep going.”

Designing the course of tomorrow, today: A roundtable discussion about Ways of Knowing

Sometimes, a little curiosity is all you need. Quite literally, in the case of the newly developed course *Ways of Knowing* offered at CMU. Designed for first-year students to introduce them to the university, academia, and to develop their own ideas, *Ways of Knowing*’s only prerequisite is curiosity.

Taught by six instructors from across multiple of CMU’s academic streams, *Ways of Knowing* is a radically new way of conducting academia in the university setting. Featuring seminars, roundtable discussions, and lectures, instructors teach curriculum outside their area of expertise, modelling learning in all its dynamic capacities. The pass-or-fail course doesn’t emphasize grading, but in turn, the instructors ask students to holistically engage with the material and each other, situating them in an environment that provides an interdisciplinary understanding of how CMU’s learning community operates.



...what we're trying to do here is pull back the curtain on what it is that we do at university.

CMU’s staff writers sat down with the six instructors of *Ways of Knowing* to lead a roundtable discussion about how *Ways of Knowing* both plants and uproots students as they move through CMU and beyond.

What is Ways of Knowing? How do you hope this course disrupts the traditional classroom pedagogy?

Rachel Krause, Associate Professor of Biology:

I think what we’re trying to do here is pull back the curtain on what it is that we do at university. We’re going to explicitly talk about how there are different ‘ways of knowing’ and different kinds of texts that you need to read in different ways. You’re not going to read a philosophy essay the same way you read a biology textbook. But we never say that to students. We just expect them to figure that out. So, that’s a big part of what we’re doing.

John Brubacher, Associate Professor of Biology: We might be disrupting things, but our primary goal is not just to be disruptive. What we’re asking of students is to return to a wisdom tradition. And maybe what’s disruptive is that instead of viewing education just as acquiring knowledge, we’re asking students to think about what wise use of that knowledge is.

How does the course structure facilitate the development of students’ independent ideas beyond the traditional approach of teaching? Would you see this course challenging or reinforcing their beliefs?

John Brubacher: One example we will be using is what we call ‘commonplace books,’ which are like intellectual scrapbooks. It will be a place for students to collect quotes, thoughts, ideas, images, and experiences, all in a handwritten book. It’s kind of like field notes on life.

Janet Brenneman, Associate Professor of Music: We talk a lot about and advertise that we are an interdisciplinary institution, meaning that we’ve been interdisciplinary in terms of our students being able to take different courses across various disciplines. But this is the first time we have team-taught from this approach, and I think this is a real-life example of true interdisciplinary learning.



Given the wide range of subjects and instructors involved, do you envision this course re-establishing a redefined CMU identity across the diverse academic disciplines?

Karen Ridd, Teaching Associate Professor, Conflict Resolution Studies: We talk about CMU being an innovative university, and this is clearly an innovative course. We also talk about CMU as being a university where teaching is really important. But again, we don’t have time to explore that practice, and this course allows us, as teachers, the opportunity to model learning for the students.

John Boopalan, Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies: There’s a certain kind of collegiality that we’re trying to foster not only between the six instructors here but also with the students. That is one major goal of *Ways of Knowing*. Even though it’s a bit of a microcosm that we’re trying to create here, it has real embodied consequences for what students might do after they graduate.

How could this course help students become planters and uprooters in and beyond CMU?

Kenton Lobe, Teaching Assistant Professor, International Development and Environmental Studies: That’s where the planting metaphor gets real. We’re going to be working with the students on continually figuring out what needs to be uprooted and how to discern. We’re walking into the garden, helping students understand how to be curious and pay attention.

How should we navigate the potentially risky act of uprooting as we seek to renew a community and provide quality education to students?

Janet Brenneman: Because **these** students are in their first year at CMU, just coming to CMU has uprooted them. So that’s already done in many ways. I think what this course is going to do, rather than a complete uprooting, is that it’s going to start immediately to plant them with new ways of exploring the world.

We're walking into the garden, helping students understand how to be curious and pay attention.

Rachel Krause: A central theme of this course is to pay attention. It’s something that we want to help students develop, and we’re trying to develop in ourselves. That is how we navigate risky territory, by paying attention.

What are your hopes for this course? How do you qualify the success of the approach taken with Ways of Knowing?

John Boopalan: This course is a pass-or-fail, so we’ve shifted the criteria for high expectations, which I think is one of the beautiful things about this course. Here at CMU, we are trying to embody a certain kind of student in which character, listening, formation, and ethics are at the heart and center of what it means to be a student and what it means to receive a university education.





2022/23

CMU Report to the Community

Your Gifts at Work

With deep gratitude to God and to you, our dedicated supporters, we recognize the profound difference your generosity makes. Thank you for all the amazing things you make possible at CMU.



You champion CMU's academic programs

Your generosity directly supports:

- Tuition affordability
- Academic programs
- Research/design/launch of new academic programs
- Faculty research, service, and excellence in teaching
- Scholarships and bursaries

You equip churches and engage communities

Your generosity directly supports:

- Ministry formation for leaders
- Resourcing the wider church and community
- Indigenous reconciliation and collaboration



You nurture the student experience

Your generosity directly supports:

- Students' mental health
- Spiritual life
- Athletics
- Student accessibility
- Student-led Indigenous initiatives
- International student support
- A culture of belonging, inclusion, and engagement

You provide warmth and light

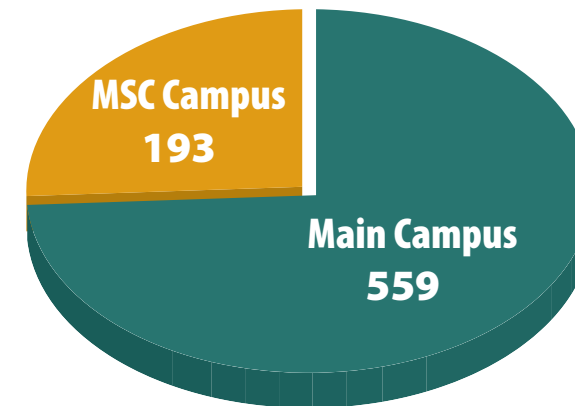
Your generosity directly supports:



- Buildings and property
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- Cleaning and maintenance
- Grounds keeping
- Support services
- Sustainable campus operations
- Long term relationship building with church and community

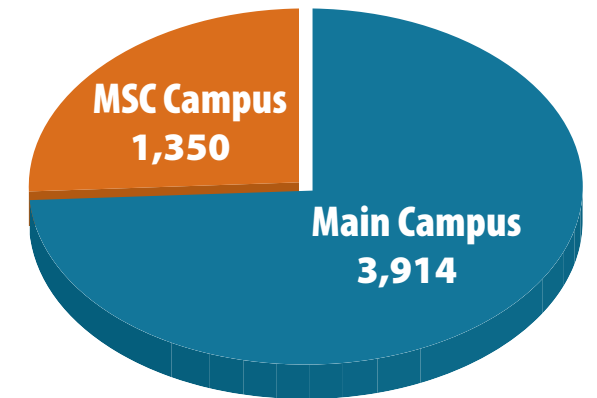
Enrolment numbers

Full-Time Equivalent Students
Total CMU = 752



Course Enrolments

Total CMU = 5,264



Over the past four years, CMU's rate of student retention has continued to increase even as the size of incoming classes has dipped, mostly due to dynamics related to the pandemic, such as a sharp drop in the number of international students receiving study permits. The smaller incoming classes from the last few years will have an effect on overall student body numbers for a few years.

As CMU announced earlier this year, in response to changing student interest MSC programming has moved primarily online, with academic offerings focused on a three-year Conflict Resolutions Studies degree.

CMU Finances 2022/23

In the 2022/23 fiscal year, CMU demonstrated remarkable financial stability while continuing to face pandemic-related strains on overall infrastructure and to navigate a time marked by significant external challenges. CMU's finances provide a glimpse into the institution's enduring resilience and adaptability.

With a budget of about \$14 million, CMU ended the fiscal year with a shortfall of only \$45,000. Ancillary revenues exceeded expectations due to a particularly strong season of movie production rentals. Fiscal restraint was exercised with underspending across many units; this approach can help for a time but is not a viable ongoing strategy. And as we reported in the May 2023 issue of *The Blazer* magazine, tuition revenues were below budget. CMU is most grateful for the steady trust and generosity of all who offer charitable gifts through these volatile times.

This overall balance is healthy; however, growth in all areas is needed...

CMU revenues for education program and for capital infrastructure are provided by three primary sources: student tuition

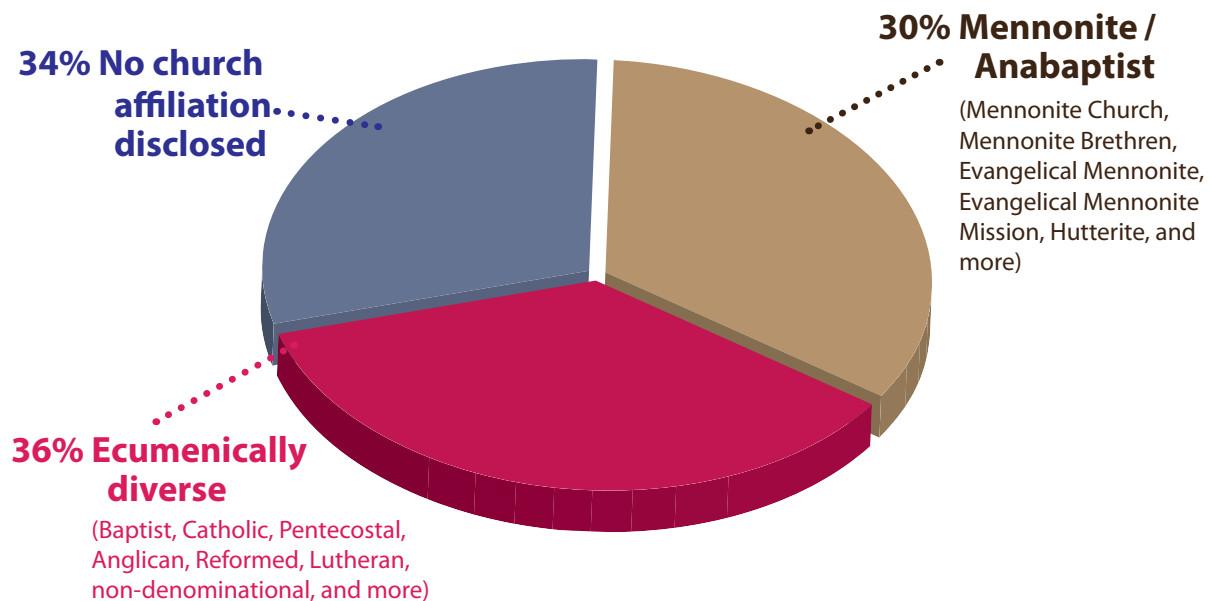
and fees (the highest proportion), charitable gifts, and government grants (proportions of latter two are approximately equal). This overall balance is healthy; however, growth in all areas is needed to sustain an institution capable of facing inflationary increases while building and renewing programs that are transformational and serve the needs of church and society now and into the future.

The generous support of donors through annual and multi-year gifts remains vital to keeping tuition affordable and to renewing programming. CMU has made significant strides in launching new degree programs in social work and spiritual care. Contributions to the **CMU Fund** and to the **New Programs Fund** support ongoing quality of education and enable CMU to build new and innovative programming.

CMU offers profound gratitude to God for its supporters and their enduring trust in the CMU mission. Planning for the years ahead, CMU remains committed to stewarding your investments wisely and effectively.

Audited financial statements are available at cmu.ca/communityreport for your reference.

Student Church Affiliation



Denominational Diversity at CMU

CMU students come together as a learning community from many different starting places. We're grateful for the communities, congregations, schools, and homes in which students have been shaped. Eighty-five percent are from rural and urban places in Canada, and 15% from 30 countries globally. Students are invited but not

required to indicate their church home. Here's a glimpse of the congregational and denominational diversity of our students: in all, it's 201 congregations within 25 denominations. About 30% of the congregations are represented by only one student; for 70% it's 2-10 students.

Alliance: 10 congregations
 Anglican: 9 congregations
 Associated Gospel: 1 congregation
 Baptist: 14 congregations
 Be in Christ: 1 congregation
 Catholic: 14 congregations
 Evangelical Covenant: 2 congregations
 Evangelical Free: 3 congregations
 Evangelical Mennonite: 8 congregations
 Evangelical Mennonite Mission: 2 congregations
 Hutterite: 7 congregations
 Lutheran: 6 congregations
 Mennonite Brethren: 21 congregations
 Mennonite Church Canada: 35 congregations
 Non-denominational: 23 congregations
 Other Mennonite (international): 5 congregations
 Other Mennonite (Canada): 5 congregations

Orthodox: 5 congregations
 Pentecostal: 13 congregations
 Presbyterian: 2 congregations
 Reformed: 3 congregations
 Salvation Army: 1 congregation
 Seventh Day Adventist: 1 congregation
 United: 8 congregations
 Vineyard: 2 congregations

These stats represent 70% of CMU students. In addition, 3% of our students reflect another faith tradition and 27% do not disclose a faith community.



Bursary and Scholarship Highlights for 2022/23

S.J. Warkentin Employment Award – Rebekah (CMU, '09) and Erwin (OT, '01) Warkentin created an award to support students who demonstrate a dedication to hard work and perseverance by balancing a post-secondary education with on-campus employment.

W.C. Miller Award – John (CMBC, '71) and Norma (CMBC, '72) Thiessen created an award to encourage students from Altona's W.C. Miller Collegiate to consider CMU as a post-secondary education.

First Mennonite Church Kelowna GSTM Scholarship – After selling their building First Mennonite Church in Kelowna started a scholarship for students studying in the Graduate School of Theology and Ministry program.

Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative – Did you know that for every \$2 you donate to CMU Scholarships and Bursaries, our provincial government gives us \$1 for scholarships and bursaries? In 2022/23, we received \$190,000! Thank you, Government of Manitoba, for supporting CMU students!

Bursaries and Scholarships by the Numbers

Total distributed to students through established bursaries and scholarships:

\$734,864

Total distributed through gifts to our CMU Fund:

\$228,344

Total bursaries:

\$415,182

145 students received bursaries

Total distributed through annual donor gifts and endowment earnings:

\$435,823

Total scholarships:

\$319,682

169 students received scholarships

Total distributed through church matching gifts and external scholarships:

\$70,697

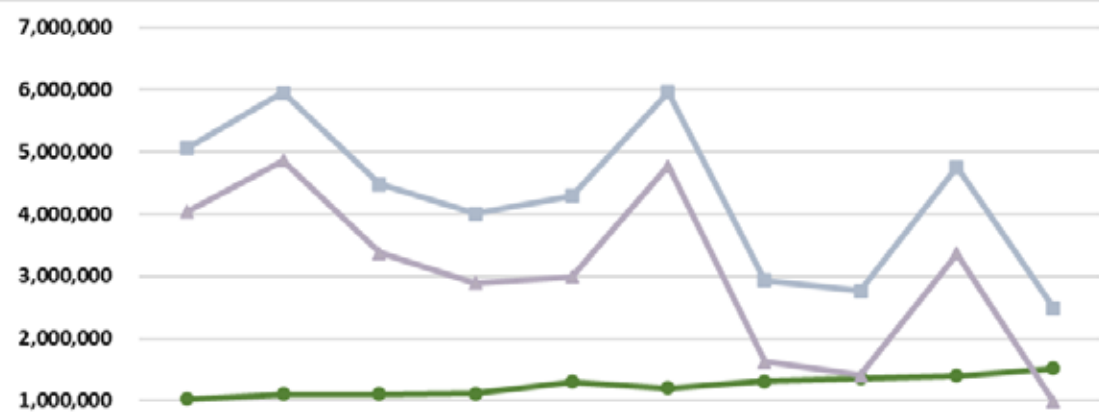
Giving to CMU

Thank you to all of our supporters who continue to give generously to the CMU Fund for annual operations. These gifts make the health and sustainability of CMU possible.

Giving to All Funds: Fiscal Years 2013/14 to 2022/23

The chart below reflects giving from individuals, corporations, and church bodies to the CMU Fund for annual operations, as well as to many other designated initiatives including scholarships and bursaries, capital projects (notably Marpeck Commons), various programs (notably the Redekop School of Business), endowments, bequests, and gifts-in-kind. Generous giving in support of constructing Marpeck Commons and support for the Redekop School of Business form a bulk of 'Other Designated' giving from 2013/23.

Ten-year giving history: all funds



	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total CMU Fund	1,023,52	1,097,88	1,100,90	1,112,41	1,296,14	1,193,81	1,303,62	1,352,38	1,391,82	1,512,58
Total Other Designated	4,032,67	4,859,09	3,375,69	2,896,79	2,992,60	4,773,70	1,624,59	1,409,75	3,361,12	980,380
Overall Total	5,056,20	5,956,97	4,476,60	4,009,20	4,288,74	5,967,52	2,928,21	2,762,14	4,752,95	2,492,96



816 donors/donor households supported the CMU Fund for annual programs/operations



604 alumni (representing 412 households) gave to the CMU Fund for annual programs/operations



\$1.51 million was gifted to the CMU Fund for annual programs/operations

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CMU's mission is made possible by the gifts of an incredible network of generosity. Thank you to the 908 donors and sponsors below whose support sustains CMU's educational program, student bursaries and scholarships, capital projects (e.g., Marpeck Commons), and more.

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 Westside Community **Church**
 Whyte Ridge Baptist **Church**

In addition, 30 congregations, agencies, and organizations supported individual students or student related projects.

A total of 198 individuals and congregations supported the MHC Gallery or Mennonite Heritage Archives.

This report has been prepared to the best of our ability. If there are errors of any kind, please contact us with corrections at development@cmu.ca or call 204.487.3300.



Introducing CMU's New Programs Fund

CMU has embarked on an exciting phase of growth and development in our academic offerings, aiming to be even more relevant to rapidly evolving needs. We recently launched our new Bachelor of Social Work and our new Master of Arts in Spiritual Care.

Over the coming years, we plan to introduce several other initiatives, also designed to meet the changing needs of students, employers, churches, and our world. These are exciting days as we look ahead and envision the future of CMU. We invite you to be part of this future.

Like our programs in social work and spiritual care, the new areas we are exploring will directly address our society's big problems.

CMU's new programs will produce job-ready grads who have the knowledge, skills, character, and credentials to work as agents of change in an ever-changing world.

You already know the transformative power of a CMU education—education shaped by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. You understand how CMU grows generations of leaders, problem-solvers, and trailblazers in the church, in the workplace, in the community, and in the world. We need your help as a driving force for continued academic excellence.

Your generous support of CMU's **New Programs Fund** will enable us to pay for the research and development work required to assess, build, and launch new inventive, in demand, and viable academic programs.

Your gift will not only uphold CMU's legacy of academic excellence and innovation, but ensure that we continue to lead the way in producing grads who have a lasting impact on the churches, communities, and organizations they serve.

Will you join us?

Beyond our annual operating budget, we need \$300,000 per year for the next six years to financially bridge us from the program inception phase to full program enrolments (and the corresponding tuition revenues).

CMU receives far less government funding than public universities, and no financial support for program development.

We need your help to sustain the future—CMU's future and the future our grads will help build.

cmu.ca/give



These are exciting days as we look ahead and envision the future of CMU.



A visioning and planning process to chart CMU's ongoing entrustment into the second quarter of the 21st century—and of CMU life

Major 2030 projects: highlights of key initiatives

- Redesign the undergraduate curricular commons (completed and implemented)
- Research, design, and launch a new Bachelor of Social Work and a new Master of Arts in Spiritual Care (completed and launched)
- Renew existing programs across all fields of study, undergraduate and graduate (underway)
- Research, design, and launch at least two additional academic programs (underway)
- Renew residence and commuter programs (underway)
- Enhance interface of academic programs, curricular activity, work-integrated-learning, and spiritual life (advising dimensions completed; further dimensions underway)
- Engage in campus-wide dialogue towards intercultural health and create an Equite, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) action plan (underway)
- Diversify and strengthen revenue streams (underway)
- Grow networks of church and community who see themselves as part of CMU through interdependent relationships (underway)
- Build and implement a sustainable campus plan (underway)

Primary outcomes

- Confirmed the enduring resonance of CMU's mission statement and four commitments
- Determined terms of scaffolding for initiatives of institutional renewal and advancement in the form of four strategic directions

CMU Mission Statement

CMU is an innovative Christian university, rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Through teaching, research, and service CMU inspires and equips for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

Four Commitments

The CMU Four Commitments flow from this mission into all dimensions of CMU programs, activities, and culture.

1. Educating for Peace–Justice
2. Learning through Thinking and Doing
3. Welcoming Generous Hospitality... Radical Dialogue
4. Modelling Invitational Community

Consultations and community engagement events

- CMU Board of Governors and Council
- Alumni, donors, and friends
- Church leaders
- Staff and faculty





RELATIONSHIPS

Cultivate and build depth of connection and interdependence in church and society.

Major initiatives:

- » Strengthen alumni collaboration through mutual engagement
- » Deepen and broaden inter-Anabaptist, inter-ecumenical, and inter-faith partnerships
- » Grow the networks of communities and individuals who see themselves as part of CMU, promote it, and invest in it
- » Re-stabilize enrolment and intra-cultural dynamism with students from across Canada and global locations
- » Live into who we are as Treaty people; reconcile relationship with the land and all creation

PROGRAM RENEWAL

Respond to needs for people of character and competence.

Major initiatives:

- » Research, design, and launch new programs: social work, spiritual care, and at least two more
- » Redesign the undergraduate curricular commons and the interdisciplinary interface for all students
- » Strengthen and sharpen the CMU vision through program renewal and development across all fields of study, attending to transferable competencies and needed credentials
- » Achieve an effective balance of undergraduate and graduate programs
- » Leverage strengths and links across education and research in service of church and society



CMU 2030: Four Strategic Directions

LIVES

Facilitate healthy outcomes in the lives and livelihoods of students and alumni.

Major initiatives:

- » Renew residence and commuter programs with continued focus on learning by living together and living by learning together
- » Enhance the interface of academic studies, co-curricular activity, spiritual life, and work-integrated-learning
- » Extend education opportunities for non-traditional students
- » Augment life-long learning opportunities for broader audiences



RECKONING... with life out of balance

Attend collectively to the betterment of society, extend the peace-justice imagination of the church, and implement tangible initiatives, measures, and outcomes.

Major initiatives:

- » Strengthen institutional resilience through stewardship and innovation: sustainable campus planning, diversified and strengthened revenue streams, affordability for students, and sustainable habits of life and work for students, staff, and faculty
- » Cultivate a community of belonging, equity, and inclusion across diversity
- » Confront our blind spots, honour the community's collective desire to be better neighbours and ancestors, decolonize education through our ways of knowing, doing, and being
- » Refresh collective understandings of the CMU mission, attentive to the hope, concerns, and institutional transitions of this time



People and Events



CMU alumna brings climate action into the provincial election

Bethany Daman is one of those who leads the charge for climate action in Manitoba. Daman (Communications and Media, '17) is part of an advocacy group that recently started a new grassroots campaign called Consider Climate, Manitoba (CCM), aimed at prioritizing climate action for elected officials and candidates ahead of the October 2023 Manitoba provincial election.

On July 12, Daman and her colleagues officially launched the campaign at the Manitoba Legislative Building, marking a turning point in the province's fight against climate change.



CCM is asking elected officials to guarantee the support of five commitments to climate action. The commitments all revolve around reducing greenhouse gas emissions within provincial transportation and infrastructure, creating a just transition of jobs, and helping Manitobans adapt to the effects of climate change.

The CCM campaign might be focused on the climate but is also trying to address many other issues like healthcare and affordability, all of which are intrinsically linked, said Daman. Before packing up her supplies at the legislature and getting on her bike, Daman left with a comment on the effect CMU had on her.

"I'm very thankful for the lens that CMU provided me through my communications studies.

Understanding that listening to people and their perspective is very important when we're looking at building communities and making our province a better place."



Fall at CMU 2023

Hundreds of people gathered at CMU on September 22–23 for Fall at CMU. Celebrated at the end of each September, Fall at CMU featured

opportunities for students, alumni, friends, donors, and community members to connect, learn, play, and celebrate the CMU community.



A variety of Fall at CMU events offered something for all ages, ranging from bouncy castles and buskers to food trucks and a farmers' and makers' market to name a few attractions. In its 16th year, the MennoCross cyclocross race attracted well over 200 Manitoba cyclists who tested their mettle in the mud and rain.

This year's Fall at CMU reunion events kicked off on Friday, September 22 with a gathering of CMBC, MBBC, and CMU alumni in Marpeck

Commons to enjoy connecting and coffee house entertainment. The classes of 1953, 1963, 1973, and 1993 gathered throughout the following day



to reconnect and enjoy the variety of Fall at CMU attractions. The 70, 60, and 50-year class reunions culminated in a banquet in the Great Hall.

CMU graduates chosen for prestigious Manitoba Legislature internships

Two Canadian Mennonite University graduates have been accepted into the highly competitive Manitoba Legislature Internship Program. Kyla Willms and Nicholas Harder, both graduates of 2023, will be a part of the prestigious 10-month internship from September to June.



Awarded only to six Manitoban students each year, the program provides opportunities for recent university graduates to experience firsthand the legislative process within the Manitoba legislature.

Interns are assigned to work with the incumbent or opposition caucuses where they will participate in various government operations, seminars, and many other legislative processes.



As political studies majors, Harder and Willms spent years analyzing, evaluating, and often judging the form and function of government. However, as they thought more about their desire

to make a difference in their community, they became increasingly drawn to the internship program despite skepticism about the political process.

Regardless of the swirling nerves, Harder and Willms say they feel prepared for the role.

Harder spent his practicum with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba Office, which he says helped him develop skills that will transfer to the internship program. "I'm excited to do this because interns do a lot of different things in a day, and it's very important to me that I have a job that has a variety of tasks," says Harder.

In Willm's instance, an independent study at CMU led her to conceptualize and draw political cartoons satirizing government officials. "In a way, I was doing critique from the public's view, so it'll be interesting to see the process from the inside," says Willms.

Harder and Willms aren't the first CMU graduates to participate in the program. Hannah Drudge (CMU '22) was among the select few chosen this past year.

Nathan Dueck (CMU '21)—currently in law school, went through the internship just a few short years ago—says, "CMU prepared me by setting consistently high expectations for my writing throughout my degree. I went into the internship with a much more refined ability to write well than I would have had, had I undertaken my undergraduate studies at any other school in the province."

Jonathan Daman (CMU '17), Redekop School of Business graduate, was also selected to participate in the Manitoba Legislature Internship Program in 2018/19.



Unraveling the modern Mennonite story, one panel at a time

Jonathan Dyck (CMU '09) is the author of the award-winning graphic novel *Shelterbelts*, which explores themes

of queer identity, inclusive churches, the history of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and much more, all set in the fictional, sleepy Mennonite community of Hespeler.

Associate Professor of English at CMU, Sue Sorensen says Dyck is a "rare beast that understands the world of words and the visual world equally well. The result is that *Shelterbelts* is an unusually nuanced and insightful graphic novel—and really, it's linked short stories. Jon often places little clues within the pages that indicate what might happen next, but often it's up to the reader to take the story forward."

From sitting on the CMU Press advisory board to teaching an "Introduction to Comics" course this upcoming semester, Dyck remains deeply connected to the institution. Sorensen says, "Jon is super hard-working; he's passionate about everything he does."

Shelterbelts tackles many diversified themes within a complicated rural community. It's the Mennonite story, but one that refuses to rose-tint

past or present. Ultimately, however, the novel recognizes the shared values of hope and empathy as the path to understanding and building a more equitable world.

Dyck recently won the McNally Robinson Book of the Year award at the Manitoba Book Awards.



CMU hosts acclaimed Yale professor for lecture and symposium

Renowned scholar and theologian Dr. Willie James Jennings was the speaker at the 2023

edition of the J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series. He also participated in a panel at CMU's symposium, "A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story."

He delivered his lecture, titled, "Gathering the pieces that remain: Weaving life together from the fragments of faith, race, and land" on October 27, in person at Marpeck Commons and via livestream.

Jennings is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut. He is known for his contributions on liberation theologies, cultural identities, and theological anthropology.

"He challenges the Christian reader in ways I think are really quite important," said Paul Doerksen, Associate Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies at CMU. Jennings' writing "teaches the church a lot about how our imagination went astray and got distorted," Doerksen explained. "He shows us a way forward that remains faithful to Christ."

Jennings holds an MDiv from Fuller Theological Seminary and a PhD in religion and ethics from Duke University. He is also an ordained Baptist minister. He has written numerous books, including *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale, 2010), which won the Grawemeyer Award in Religion, the largest prize for a theological work in North America. His recent book, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Eerdmans, 2020) examines the problems of theological education within western education.

View the lecture recording at cmu.ca/jjt.

A Time of Reckoning

Telling the CMU story

A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story was a two-day symposium hosted at the end of October that guided our broad community through reflections on the institution's learning journey and what influences help us navigate into the future.

The event featured lectures, storytelling, group discussions, and various presentations from alumni, church leaders, and supporters.

As several anniversaries significant to the CMU community approach—such as 500 years of Anabaptism and 25 years of CMU—Cheryl Pauls, CMU President, says, "It's a time of being honest with ourselves on how well the deep purposes for which the university was created connect with experiences over time."

Highlights from the event included "Church and External Voices," an ecumenical roundtable featuring spiritual and community leaders from across the prairie provinces. A session titled "Embodying the CMU Project," turned attention to the faculty and staff who have epitomized the work and mission of CMU.

The annual J.J. Thiessen Lecture was integrated into the event, featuring Dr. Willie James Jennings, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale Divinity School. Dr. Jennings received the American Academy of Religion Award of Excellence in the Study of Religion in the Constructive-Reflective category in 2011.

CMU's mission colours the university in all aspects. Through all programming, the institution's convictions to equip for lives of service and reconciliation are in all that we do.

As paramount as the mission of any organization or institution is to its continued success, Pauls says, "It's essential to reflect periodically on what we think we're doing and why."



News



David Wiens (CMBC '82), Grunthal, MB, was elected President of Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) at the organization's annual general meeting in July 2023. He has been a director with the board since 2009 and was Vice-President for the last 12 years. Prior to his election to President, Wiens chaired the board of Dairy Farmers of Manitoba and chaired several national committees including the Canadian Dairy Research Council, the proAction Committee (DFC's assurance program for dairy farmers), and a committee that was responsible for reviewing and updating the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle. He farms with his brother Charles near Grunthal, where they milk 230 cows and tend 1,600 acres of cropland. He is married to Denise and they have two children, Liz (they/them) and Jasmine (she/her), and son-in-law Nick Portengen.



Jonathan Neufeld (CMBC '95), Oakville, MB, is Co-Pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, a position he started in January 2023. A few months earlier, he also began working as Indigenous Relations Coordinator for Mennonite Church Canada, where he connects and resources the country's regional churches in their relationship-building with Indigenous communities. Neufeld previously spent 15 years as Pastor of Community Ministry and Just Peace at Seattle Mennonite Church in Washington, USA. He organized services and offered support to people experiencing homelessness in Seattle and intergenerational trauma from the effects of settler colonialism. During this time he was also involved in forming the Coalition to Dismantle the

Doctrine of Discovery, a movement of Anabaptists addressing the violence done in the name of Christ to Indigenous people and land.



Noelle Enns (Koop, CMU '09), **Rebekah Miller** (Koop, CMU '15), and **Mariette Koop** (CMU 2013-14) ran the full Manitoba Marathon

together in June 2023. The three sisters have been avid runners for years, but it was Enns' and Miller's first time doing the 42-kilometre race and Koop's second. Enns (Winnipeg, MB) is a physiotherapist at the clinic Elite Sports Injury, and has specific interest in working with runners and their injuries. Miller (Morden, MB) is a music therapist, violin teacher, and early childhood music teacher in Morden. Koop (Winnipeg, MB) is a photographer, American Sign Language interpreter, and co-chair of public relations with the Manitoba Association of Visual Language Interpreters.

Jacqueline Sookermany (CMU '15), Victoria, BC, is working on their Master of Social Work at the University of Victoria, focusing on decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive community-centred practice. They also work as the Big Steps to Success Coordinator at Big Brothers Big Sisters Victoria, where they help connect children and youth in kinship and ministry care with mentors who have professional, shared, or lived experience with the system.



Karla Froese (CMU '16), Victoria, BC, is studying Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders at the University of Victoria, working towards two degrees: a Juris Doctor and

a Juris Indigenarum Doctor. The four-year joint degree program is the first of its kind in the world, combining classroom learning with field studies in Indigenous communities to equip students with the skills to practice law across multiple legal systems. Through this program she has had the privilege of learning from elders and knowledge holders in Coast Salish Territories and traveling to learn in community in the Dehcho Region of the so-called Northwest Territories. This summer, she worked at West Coast Environmental Law, a public interest environmental law non-profit that works to protect the environment through legal strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian Law.



Alyssa Sherlock (CMU, '18), Winnipeg, MB, published her first book, *this is a love story: poems and essays on friendship, love, and mental health* in April 2023. this is a love story

is an illustrated memoir of poems and essays, with contributions by fellow CMU alumni Amelia Warkentin (CMU '18) and Erin Toews (CMU '20). this is a love story follows the story of Alyssa becoming her own person while experiencing anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and the illness of loved ones, before exploring how complex friendships can be the support that is needed for recovery. Alyssa continues to pursue a writing career while working day jobs in administration and communications.



Nadya Langelotz (CMU '20), Winnipeg, MB, is the new Associate Program Director of Camps with Meaning, a ministry of Mennonite Church Manitoba that includes Camp

Assiniboia and Camp Koinonia. She is in charge of scheduling summer programming, hiring and training staff, and marketing the camps, among many other tasks. Langelotz graduated from the University of Winnipeg with her Bachelor of Education in April 2023. She replaced **Janet Peters** (Durksen, CMBC '97, CMU '15), who served in the position for six years and recently became the new co-pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.



Stephen Kang (CMU '20), Winnipeg, MB, is the founder and CEO of Prairie Solar Café, Manitoba's first solar-powered food trailer. The new mobile café made its official debut in September at Fall at CMU, serving up artisanal paninis and beverages. Sandwiches on the menu include Korean bulgogi and kimchi with garlic mayo and another with layers of prosciutto, green apple, Havarti cheese, and caramelized onions. He and his team renovated a former ice cream trailer themselves and partnered with local businesses for ingredients and drinks. The sustainable food truck is a combination of his passion for good food, the environment, and working with people. He hopes it can eventually become a social enterprise of sorts, to give back to the community and support people in need. Kang formerly worked as the food manager at Oak Table, a social services organization in Winnipeg.



Hadrian Bourdon (CMU '22), Portland, ME, USA, received invitations to study dentistry at four schools right after graduating from CMU. He's now working towards his Doctor of Dental Medicine at the University of New England in Portland, Maine. Bourdon is studying general dentistry, while still at the beginning of his degree, but is involved in numerous clubs for specialties like orthodontic, endodontic, and aesthetic dentistry. He's currently learning to perform class one and class two amalgam (fillings in between and on the biting surface of teeth).

Marriages

Julie LeBlanc (Godin, CMU '23) and **Michael LeBlanc**, Saskatoon, SK, December 30, 2022

Kezia Balzer Epp (Balzer, CMU 2018-19) and **Christopher Balzer Epp** (Epp, CMU '22), Winnipeg, MB, July 7, 2023

Valerie Alipova (CMU '20) and **Jim Cheng** (CMU '16), Winnipeg, MB, July 8, 2023

Anya Snider (CMU '17) and **Jackson Fregeau**, Vancouver, BC, July 8, 2023

Emilie Bergen (Roussis, CMU '18) and **Carter Bergen**, Edmonton, AB, July 14, 2023

Nadya Langelotz (CMU '20) and **Michael Veith** (CMU '16), Winnipeg, MB, July 15, 2023

Katrina Schroeder Williams (CMU 2014-2015) and **Ary Schroeder Williams**, Ottawa, ON, July 15, 2023

Ennet Bera (CMU '19) and **Clemence Muitire**, Winnipeg, MB, August 5, 2023

Chloe Friesen (CMU '22) and **Fisher Wohlgemut**, Winnipeg, MB, August 19, 2023

Meara Harrison (Sparling, CMU '17) and **Brett Harrison**, St. Malo, MB, August 19, 2023

Justony Genido (Vasquez, CMU '20, CMU staff) and **Jay Genido**, Winnipeg, MB, August 25, 2023

Births and Adoptions



Ellen Stothers (Wiens, CMU '13) and **Joseph Stothers** (CMU '13), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Indi Rae Stothers, September 27, 2022

Beth Downey (CMU '16) and **Scott Sawatzky** (CMU '14), Niverville, MB, a son, Robin Blythe Sawatzky, March 8, 2023



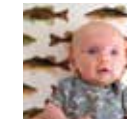
Alisa Wiebe (CMU '05) and **Bucky Driedger** (CMU '07), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Hattie Lou Wiebe Driedger, May 18, 2023



Tasha Voth (Enns, CMU '17) and **Joe Voth** (CMU '19), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Natalie Jade Voth, May 19, 2023



Charlie Peronto (CMU '20, CMU staff) and **Jocelyn Peronto**, Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Miel June Peronto, June 15, 2023



Kim Rempel Smith (Rempel, CMU '22) and **Jeremy Rempel Smith**, Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Hildegard Eve Rempel Smith, July 16, 2023



Passages

Carl Epp (CMBC 1959-60), Winnipeg, MB, March 6, 2023

Henry Loewen (MBBC '63), St. Paul, MB, March 19, 2023

Evelyn Ironhawk (Beck, MBBC '52), Pendleton, OR, USA, March 22, 2023

Ruth Hess (Bechtel, CMBC '74), Cambridge, ON, April 8, 2023

Helen Doerksen (MBBC 1946-47), Rocky View, AB, April 9, 2023

Lawrence Giesbrecht (MBBC 1946-47), Altona, MB, April 23, 2023

David Maxwell (CMBC '80), Canora, SK, April 29, 2023

Henry Patkau (CMBC '74), Saskatoon, SK, May 24, 2023

Daniel Sawatzky (CMBC '63), Winkler, MB, May 29, 2023

John H. Wiebe (CMBC '62), Winnipeg, MB, June 6, 2023

Jessie Zacharias (CMBC '64), Winnipeg, MB, July 14, 2023

Madeleine Enns (CMBC '67), Winnipeg, MB, July 14, 2023

Rodney Suderman (CMBC '83), Surrey, BC, September 2, 2023

Hartmut Schroeder (MBBC '64), Winnipeg, MB, September 3, 2023

Henry Rempel (CMBC '73), Brandon, MB, September 5, 2023

Melvin Loewen (MBBC 1949-50), Goshen, IN, USA, September 8, 2023

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.** Please model your information after the current listings above, beginning with name, graduation year, city, and province or state.

Alumna explores land, people, and faith

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Anika Reynar (CMU '17, Interdisciplinary Studies – Social Ecology) lives her life with one foot in the library and one foot in the garden—and also the classroom, the church, and around the table. She's pursuing her passions by doing not just one, but two, master's degrees simultaneously at Yale University.

Reynar is working on a Master of Arts in Religion through Yale Divinity School and a Master of Environmental Management through Yale School of Environment. She's in her third and last year of the joint program in New Haven, CT. "I broadly describe what I'm interested in as being focused around land use and how communities who potentially hold different value sets negotiate how land is used."

It's a clear continuation of the work she started during her

I'm grateful to CMU for setting up a space that allowed me to practice interdisciplinary work early on...

undergrad at CMU. Reynar earned a Bachelor of Arts with a major in interdisciplinary studies: social ecology. She was the first student to graduate from CMU's interdisciplinary degree program, which weaves together multiple disciplines of a student's choosing and has them develop their own major.

Reynar came to love sitting in the tension and questions between different types of learning. "I've continued to look for those spaces where I can exist between conversations that are being had and pull them together," she says. "That's always more challenging work, trying to figure out how to hold together multiple conversations, but it's always felt really generative to me. I'm grateful to CMU for setting up a space that allowed me to practice interdisciplinary work early on, and really encouraged me in that."

Her studies at Yale range from environmental ethics and theology to land dispossession and conservation. She's worked with a land trust in Massachusetts to generate ideas for combining farmland conservation and affordable housing development, specifically supporting young Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) farmers. Another project brought her alongside Indigenous groups in Utah who were exploring the possibilities for a carbon credit project on their nationally-protected land to generate income without extractive practices.

This summer, she spent six weeks in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, listening to the stories and experiences of a group of Maya (Indigenous peoples) and Low German Mennonite colonies nearby, whose farming practices are harming the earth and the Maya ways of life.

The project started seven years ago when this group of



Maya seed savers found a coalition of Mennonites working on decolonization initiatives in the US through an online search, and invited them to help navigate this conflict. Reynar joined the group almost two years ago.

"Our Maya partners have been really clear with us all the way through: Mennonite agriculture is damaging our ancestral land, and at the same time, we don't see Mennonites as our enemies. We see all of us as being impacted by these broader systems like capitalist, agro-industrial systems..."

Reynar and her colleagues did approximately 50 interviews, discussing the struggles of a changing climate, farming practices, and relationships with the land. They brought back the stories and insights of each community to the other, helping to build understanding.

Reynar will use these conversations in a capstone project for her degree, but shaping her learning into something she can offer to the Maya and Mennonite communities will be most important. "If there's anything that feels like it's at the root of the work I'm doing, it's figuring out ways to disrupt or uproot...possessive logics," she says. "As I'm doing work with Indigenous communities, how do I dispossess myself of control over the knowledge they're sharing with me and always give it back?"

The Maya group invited the coalition to participate in a seed festival back in May, and Reynar hopes this is only the beginning of an ongoing relationship.

For more alumni stories, visit CMU's Community & Alumni Blog at cmu.ca/alumniblog.

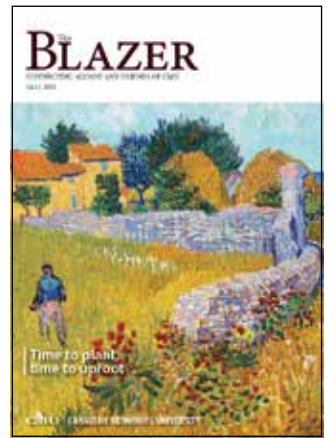
CMU CALENDAR

- November 15** Face2Face: This Event is Generated by Artificial Intelligence: Conversations with ChatGPT.
- November 24** Discover Day
- November 25** Christmas at CMU
- November 25** Calling CMU Forward Alumni Reception
- November 28** Giving Tuesday
- December 23**
- January 1** University closed
- January 8** First day of classes for winter semester
- January 18** John and Margaret Friesen Lectures
- January 31** Scientist in Residence Lecture with Dr. Allyson Menzies
- February 2** Discover Day
- February 5–6** **renew** 2024 | Leading with Hope in Anxious Times
- February 22** Open House

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