

# The **BLAZER** Digest

Connecting Alumni and Friends of CMU  
Summer 2022



| Educating for Peace-Justice

# Educating for peace-justice

**Cheryl Pauls** | CMU President

In recent years I've become intrigued by a common expression of consensus and conviction, an assurance that clarity of conscience and right action are self-evident and simply need be enacted. The phrase, "Make a difference for good," is a way of encouraging one another towards lives of service. However, this seems to be yesterday's language, and in its place, "Just do the right thing," often takes the stage. Listen for that expression, a pronouncement really, as you go about your days, and see how it elicits a nodding of heads. Notice when it rolls off your own tongue and reflect on why you utter it and what happens when you do.

There are skeptics, of course, who for good and bad reasons flinch when they hear "just do the right thing," wondering how, with all the possibilities that inhere in the world's stunningly beautiful and messy complexities, simple forms of "right action" are just there for the taking up. I'll admit I often catch myself confusedly nodding and shaking my head all at once when I hear the phrase, "just do the right thing." I'm heartened by what seem to be growing commitments to justice, courage, and right action.

Yet, in an era where we are reckoning with systemic harms—and attribute them mostly to "those people before us" who did the wrong thing when



they thought they were doing the right thing—I'm troubled by the presumption that we today dare think we're wise and good enough to simply get on with doing what we "just know" to be right. This is not to endorse lazy forms of relativism. Rather, it is a call to honour the myriad of daily forms through which we learn, reflect, and invent. It is through this practice that we are challenged, humbled, and transformed in our unlearning and relearning of whatever is gracious, righteous, lovely, wise, and true. This happens through disciplined studies, and as lifelong disciples of Christ. That's the call I hear in CMU's commitment to *Educating for peace-justice*. How about you?

# Taking time and making time

**Sunder John Boopalan** | Assistant Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies

Stolen and strained time. Life as we know it—embodied relationships, togetherness, intimacy—was simply not the life many of us lived during a time of pandemic and violence. When the net that supports our lives is strained, it throws us out of joint, doesn't it? As I think of the strain on our social fabric, I am haunted by images of crowds marching through the streets demanding justice for lives stolen before their time by structures of domination. In the face of these sobering realities, disillusionment seems to knock on the doors of our personal and collective lives. Whither from here? “God takes time in God’s time for us.”

*What we are called to is an embodied practice in every moment, with others.*

That line from David Kelsey’s, *Eccentric Existence* always sticks with me because it describes the person and work of God so beautifully. I wonder if that could serve as a model for our own lives and vocations. Taking time and making time for each other when time is otherwise heavy is one Christian response to disillusionment.

Jesus walked into a context of disillusionment and expectation. The many crowds that Jesus spent time with—and for whom Jesus, according to the gospel writers, had compassion—were disillusioned with the imperial violence that

surrounded them. They, like us, certainly expected more from life. Jesus joined them in their expectation and drew from the well of Jewish wisdom and practice. One such practice that Jesus drew from was the messianic banquet, which formed the background to Jesus’ open table fellowship and meals. While such table fellowship transcended notions of “insider versus outsider” and “us versus them,” it simultaneously transcended the weight of disillusionment.



It is worth noting that the meals Jesus shared with others preceded his death and followed his resurrection. There is a clue therein for educating for peace and justice. What we are called to is an embodied practice in every moment, with others.

On the one hand, this observation is quite ordinary. After all, an average day

... *Taking time and making time continued*

in the life of a university campus like CMU does involve meals in the cafeteria, class discussions, open forums, and chapel worship—a meaningful and embodied combination of heart, soul, strength, and mind. On the other hand, however, intentionality—to take and

make time for our collective selves—makes all the difference. Taking time and making time—university and elsewhere—is never a “waste of time,” but is rather how dawn breaks upon us and guides our feet into the way of peace.

## Forestry management helps alumnus find a just and equitable world

**H**earing Darcy Reimer (2015, Environmental Studies) reflect on this time at CMU, you see how CMU was a place of intersection, bringing together his passions and helping direct his career.

Reimer appreciated the small, interactive biology classes with Dr.

Rachel Krause where he had the freedom to explore individual curiosities. Important to these classes was how the dialogue between science and faith were incorporated into his education.

As Krause’s classes merged science and faith, Dr. Ray Vander Zaag’s Introduction to Geography created a passion for environmental care and the impact climate change has on humans, especially the underprivileged.

While living at CMU, Reimer nurtured significant relationships that played an important role in his career pursuit. CMU friends invited him to go tree planting in British Columbia, which he did. Here is where he learned of wildfire fighting and explored this new interest.

The combination of his environmental studies and three seasons of forest fire fighting in northern Manitoba has led Reimer to a forestry management career. He recently entered the University of Idaho’s Master of Natural Resources program to study fire ecology and management.

As he reflects on his career path and ongoing education, Reimer states that CMU laid the groundwork for his vocation.

“CMU instilled a passion that motivated me to find a discipline where I could do something that uses my skills, that feels meaningful and helpful to others,” Reimer says. “I hope that I can impact our public services and the way we manage our natural resources so that they are more sustainable.”



# Why peace journalism is necessary

**Grace Bruinooge** | Third-year student, Communications and Media

**A**t the start of the semester, I had no idea what Peace Journalism was. But am I ever glad it exists. I was blessed to be able to take part in a Peacebuilding and Journalism class taught by (the amazing) David Balzer. In this class, we learned how to recognize Peace Journalism and its counterpart, War Journalism. We learned how to write journalistic articles that make room for peace and justice to occur by using our language and voices, and we had conversations about the effects of journalism. Our words matter. How we use them also matters.

I'll be honest with you, I have had the tendency to avoid the news, and I understand my immense privilege in

*Our words matter.*

*How we use them also matters.*

being able to do so. But I avoided the news because I believed it would only give me grief and make me angry. But with this course, I have been given a toolkit that I can use to develop a particular lens when reading mass media and news stories. For example, to critique an article in the sense of its effects and usability in de-escalating (or escalating) the conflict it is reporting. Because of this course, I feel prepared and educated enough to reevaluate my news-consuming habits and not feel so exhausted by all the bad news.



I am very passionate about storytelling and the myriad ways we can tell people's stories. Going forward in my communications career, wherever it takes me, this course has given me a foundation to be aware of my privilege as a storyteller and that objectivity should not take the full reins in every scenario. Some conflicts and stories can gain from the storyteller using their voice in the story to use creative peacebuilding—for example, being mindful of the invisible effects conflict has on the people in its midst. I think it is crucial to be aware of the media we consume and to be able to recognize the power it holds in how we think and talk about the topics we read about in the news.

## CMU celebrates the Class of 2022

After two years of outdoor ceremonies and air hugs, the CMU community gathered on April 30 at Bethel Mennonite Church to celebrate the Class of 2022. With the conferral of 108 graduates, the event marked CMU's largest-ever graduating class. Beyond the 90 undergraduate and 18 graduate students' celebratory walk across the stage to receive their parchments, highlights included valedictory addresses from Odelia Duffus

(undergraduate) and Kim Rempel Smith (graduate), the presentation of the CMU PAX Award to Dr. Terry and Bev LeBlanc, and the subsequent convocation address from Terry LeBlanc.

Graduates Levi Klassen and Naomi Derksen were this year's President's Medal recipients, recognized for their excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service during their time at CMU.



Full Story



## Dr. Terry and Bev LeBlanc recognized with CMU PAX Award

Dr. Terry and Bev LeBlanc are theologians and community organizers who have worked tirelessly to support the development of theological capacities in the Indigenous community. In the 1990s, they collaboratively created and launched the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies, now known as NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community. Having dedicated themselves to the reclamation and healing of Indigenous identity, Terry and Bev also have co-founded several critical movements and organizations, including a rural church plant, an urban mission, and My People International (a ministry of Indigenous people dedicated to healing and restoration of identity). "Through the work of NAIITS and other projects,



Full Story

Terry and Bev have persisted for decades in cultivating the gifts of Indigenous theologians and ministry leaders," says CMU President Cheryl Pauls.

In recognizing both Terry LeBlanc and Bev LeBlanc, CMU commits itself to learn from their work and life journey. Pauls says, "CMU is honoured, challenged, and blessed as Terry and Bev receive the 2022 PAX Award."

The award was presented to Terry LeBlanc at the 2022 Convocation Service on April 30.



## Blazers celebrate local championship, prepare for a historic trip to volleyball nationals

March 6, 2022 marked a momentous day for CMU Blazers Athletics as the Blazers men's volleyball team became the first-

ever representative of the Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference (MCAC) at the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) Volleyball National Championship in Quebec City. Ranked 11th on the CCAA men's volleyball national ranking meant the Blazers were in a secure spot heading into the championship tournament, but with their work cut out for them. "No doubt it's going to be tough at nationals," said Blazers coach Don Dulder. "We are

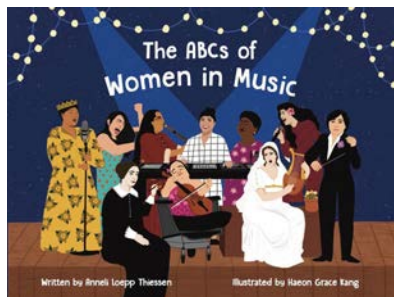


playing against much larger colleges with larger populations to draw from, but my guys have played a lot of club ball and have a good fundamental foundation."

In the end, the young Blazers team finished seventh out of the eight competing teams from across Canada, gaining valuable experience that will serve the team well in the years to come.



Full Story



## CMU alumni collaborate on book featuring women in music

Created by two CMU alumni, a vibrant children's book featuring 26 women in music hit bookstores on May 1. Anneli Loopp Thiessen (CMU '18, Music) first wrote *The ABCs of Women in Music* in fall 2020 as a creative project for a feminist theories class at the University of Ottawa, where she is a PhD student in interdisciplinary music research.

When Loopp Thiessen submitted the work for publication, she recruited Haeon Grace Kang (CMU '17, Biblical and Theological Studies) to illustrate the book.

Citing consistently low numbers of women represented in music, Loopp Thiessen says, "We need to encourage children to think about ... their musical role models. Whether they go on to a career in music or not."

Kang created her dynamic illustrations by using many different reference images to create a composite of each person's many facets. "I wanted it to be a holistic representation of who this person was."

The support Kang received at CMU was influential in her artistic development. "The encouragement and mentorship I experienced at CMU, even if it wasn't directly related to art, formed me as a person and therefore as an artist."

It was CMU faculty, too, that shaped Loopp Thiessen's work on the book. "I think of the influence of faculty like Janet Brenneman, who has done her own research on gender issues in music. I was really honoured to study under her."



Full Story

## You play a vital role in the CMU learning community.

CMU has received several larger gifts from alumni and friends to be used over five to 20 years. Their gifts support peace and environmental studies, instrument

### Upcoming dates

**June 15:** CMU Golf Classic, Bridges Golf Course

**June 16:** CSOP Lecture *Choosing Love in the Wake of Wounding* with Johonna McCants-Turner

**July 18 – August 26:** Blazer Sports Camps

**August 25:** Application deadline for fall term

**September 7:** First day of classes

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Find the latest alumni news at: [cmu.ca/alumni-updates](https://cmu.ca/alumni-updates)



maintenance, the annual fund, spiritual life, and more.

Explore matching your passions with long-term support for CMU students at [cmu.ca/nowandtomorrow](https://cmu.ca/nowandtomorrow).

**Correction notice:** The Fall 2021 issue of *The Blazer* incorrectly featured a quote attributed to the German thinker, Carl Schmitt in the piece titled "Beyond suspicion" by Paul Doerksen. The statement, "No secular power is going to tell us what to do, because we deserve freedom of religion—we obey God rather than any human authority" is not a direct quote, but rather a framing of a philosophical argument.

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