

The **BLAZER** Digest

Connecting Alumni and Friends of CMU

Fall 2020



| Practising Hope

Practising hope

Cheryl Pauls | CMU President

Practicing piano. People love it or hate it. Yet everyone gets that practicing is key to learning most anything. You become a basketball player, doctor, or lawyer by practicing b-ball, medicine, or law. But hope, is that something you practice? Isn't hope a state of being you have much or little of, a gift of disposition and life circumstances? Isn't practicing hope too abstract to mean anything at all?

CMU worship this year is shaped by Hebrews 11:1. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. This verse isn't suspended in mid-air, as if its gravity were a hoax. It's backed up with evidence: stories of women and men commended for forming relationships, habits and decisions on the basis of trust and not out of fear. And, for following through on—for practicing—everyday actions, even though they could not anticipate where God would take them through their practicing.

Here's a fine gem from Hebrews 11. Miriam, the sister of Moses, was touched by his beauty, chose not to be afraid of the king's edict, and practiced her hope—that Moses would live—by hiding him in the bulrushes. She watched and waited, with no capacity to control or anticipate what happened next—an Egyptian princess came by and found the basket. She, too, was touched by the baby's beauty, chose not to be afraid of what her father might think, and provided a safe space for



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
(Hebrews 11:1)

the child to grow up as her adopted son. And many years later Moses himself was touched by the beauty of a hurting people, chose not to be afraid of losing personal security and success, and practiced the hope set before him as he led these people from oppression.

Along with CMU students, staff and faculty, I invite you as friends and alumni to practise hope through the Hebrews 11 story. Because you are touched by what is beautiful, you will be commended for forming relationships, habits, and decisions on the basis of trust and not out of fear, and for following through on practices of restoration set before you.

Reimagining education during a global pandemic

Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

People who arrived on CMU's campus this fall were greeted by singing, soaring not through the windows of the music wing, but from outside.

In order to create a safe environment during COVID-19 but still continue voice lessons, CMU scheduled them outside.

This is just one of the many ways faculty have changed their teaching practices

halls of CMU too. Enrolment in Introduction to Global Health, taught by Rachel Krause, Assistant Professor of Biology, jumped from 30 to 50 students this year because of interest in COVID-19. Although they will also focus on many other key topics, she says the pandemic offers a unique lens through which the class will view the semester's different units.

Krause's students alternate between at-



to adapt during the pandemic. Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, has been meeting with her seminar graduate course outside. She says the “the outdoor classroom asks something of us that’s so different and it’s a gift.” Unable to depend on screens, or even notes, which tend to blow away in the wind, both class and professor are forced to remember what they read and interact with it in a new way. Fast Dueck says they sit in a circle and “get a level of conversation and engagement we just don’t get in the same way inside...something else gets created in that environment.”

Changes are taking place inside the

tending class in-person and on Zoom. She has set up small learning groups to help them connect, and has made classes more interactive to make the most of the precious time they have together on campus.

Amidst the challenges of shifting technology and modified learning, Krause feared her students would be disappointed with classes and struggle to adjust. Instead, she has continually witnessed their patience and resilience. “This is working because of the students that we have, that are doing their best too,” she says. “They have just really risen to the occasion.”

Pandemic fosters dynamic interchange

Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

When students enrolled in Wendy Kroeker's upper-level Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies (PACTS) course, they didn't expect to have classmates 12,000 kilometres away.

Kroeker, Assistant Professor of PACTS at CMU, is teaching Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace to 16 students at CMU and 11 students in the Philippines.

She has worked for 25 years in the Philippines, teaching at the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) for many of those years. CMU entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute last year, pledging to collaborate and share resources.

When MPI had to cancel their program this May due to COVID-19, they turned to CMU to put this support into action. Kroeker offered their participants spots in her course and they were filled within a day. To adapt to the new class size and demographic, she is co-teaching with Michael Alar, a Peacebuilding Consultant in the Philippines and Kroeker's long-time colleague.

The Filipino students in the class do peacebuilding work for non-governmental organizations and want to learn theory and skills to deal with challenges they face in their daily lives.

"The conversation has been so rich. Our students are with people who are now trying to take the theories they're studying and seeing how they work in a workplace. It's this really dynamic interchange," says Kroeker.



The conversation has been so rich, that our students are with people who are now trying to take the theories they're studying and seeing how they work in a workplace.

The Winnipeg students gather in-person in the evening and are joined real-time, over Zoom, by the students in the Philippines, where it is early morning. Halfway through the class, the students at CMU join the Zoom and get into small groups to foster face-to-face relationships. Kroeker says students return to class energized and eagerly sharing what they discussed in their groups.

Indigenous students in both Canada and the Philippines have been able to compare experiences, while two students working with women in Kenya and the Philippines have traded stories about work in the field. "We have to make good things happen during this time and I think this course is one of them," Kroeker says.

Cultivating wellbeing

CMU Student Life reimagines wellness and health on campus

Braden Siemens



Considering the complexity of wellness, CMU Student Life has reimagined how wellness can be cultivated on campus despite current social-distance conditions. Movement, Art, Conversation, and Spiritual Practice name four alternatives of wellness practice made available to students during this academic year.

Within the Movement alternative, Russell Willms, CMU's Director of Athletics, is heading up a running club four days a week. In addition to running, shanti yoga and dance classes, which include a variety of modern and classic choreography, are offered every Monday and Thursday to students in-person and virtually.

While Spiritual Practices of wellness on campus continue to include Tuesday chapel, Wednesday night worship, and student-led small groups, students are finding new ways of connecting, including what student leader Hannah Connelly calls, the "Encounter" group. Connelly explains "Encounter is all about asking what it means to build connection with people you do not know. As a student it is easy to stay on the edges. I am looking for friendships with people who I may not have met otherwise."

Several spaces on campus have been re-defined, including the new prayer room

which includes distanced chairs, sofas, a kneeling prayer bench, hymnals, icons, and Bibles available for students and staff. As for Art, the Mennonite Heritage Gallery continues to be used to display and create art, functioning also as a multipurpose space for students to study and Zoom into class from on campus.



On-campus counselling, forums, small groups, and drop-in lunch conversations make up the Conversation alternative. "Ultimately," Morton comments, "if we can create spaces where students can experiment with practices of wellness that work for them, then they will be able to take ownership for their own mental health and wellbeing."

For more information about wellness across campus follow @cmu_blazers on Instagram

On grace and good habits...in a time of pandemic

At the time of this writing, CMU is into week nine of classes—more than two-thirds of the way through the term. To date CMU has not become a news-story as a centre of a pandemic outbreak—a reality we hold with grace and deep gratitude.

CMU's hybrid learning model has worked well to provide a personal learning environment for students and faculty—even as current Manitoba-wide code red restrictions limit teaching to online only.

The work of teaching is taking up much of our energy and CMU is hibernating from many other activities which would normally define the rhythms of the university. It's what we need to stay healthy in mind, body, and spirit in the present time.

Through it all, students have been



remarkably responsive and responsible—indeed they are at the heart of CMU's success this Fall. Students are wearing masks in all teaching and study spaces; respecting the need for physical distancing in class and beyond; when feeling ill they are choosing to self-isolate for the well-being of themselves and the community; they are engaged in wellness activities including running clubs, Afro-dance on the lawn, outdoor prayer walks, photography groups, and more.

A legacy integrating life and learning

September 25 witnessed a bittersweet celebration and farewell as Werner Kliever and Marilyn Peters Kliever entered retirement. From 1986-2000 Marilyn and Werner had various roles at CMU. From 2000-2020, Werner served as Director of Practicum, and Marilyn as Dean of Student Life. Each uniquely awakened the good of a CMU education in their own way. Werner was instrumental in developing CMU's distinctive Practicum program through which all CMU degree students complete a work-integrated learning placement aligned with their interests, allowing them to explore



vocational callings. Marilyn was at the heart of building a vibrant Student Life, co-curricular program as an integrated and vital component of CMU's academics. Through it all, Marilyn and Werner modelled a deep investment in students and in the best of CMU's mission and vision. Truly a legacy worth celebrating!

Stability, connection, and safety



“I have appreciated that CMU is still putting so much effort into creating community experiences and connections among students—so that we don’t feel so isolated in our current physically distanced world.”

Lyn Hildebrand, Rosthern, SK

“Being able to live at CMU during the craziness of COVID-19 has really helped to bring stability to my life. I feel secure knowing that I am able to be here within my academic setting and have the support of my peers and best friends by my side.”

Maddie Neufeld, Virgil, ON

“I am so grateful to CMU for the care that has been taken to ensure our safety with in-person classes. Even as my friends and I have had to change how we interact with each other, it’s still incredible to be able to see and spend time with them. That’s something I cherish greatly!”

Kaitlyn Janzen, Rosthern, SK

“A friend told me in my first year that learning is a practice in community. I think being together is also a learning practice, and being able to physically share space with people has made this fall work.”

Marnie Klassen, Abbotsford, BC

“Taking classes at CMU during the pandemic—whether it’s been in-person or online—has helped me retain a sense of routine, community, and this vital attitude of hope, even throughout all the unknowns we are facing. I always knew that staff and professors cared about me, but their efforts to make me feel supported this year have blown me away.”

Chloe Friesen, Morden, MB



“I am amazed by the profound vision for the world that my peers at CMU have. Even during a time of such uncertainty, it brings me hope to see students who remain undeterred in their larger ambitions. It shows that our lives go beyond simply surviving a pandemic time.”

Danika Warkentine, Pincher Creek, AB



Masks Donated to the CMU Community

In support of CMU's commitment to in-person and virtual, hybrid learning, the following individuals and groups (from Alberta to Ontario) generously sewed and/or donated 1,829 cotton masks this summer. These masks were distributed to all students, staff, and faculty and have been critical in preserving the wellbeing and safety of us all. We are deeply grateful! Thanks also to Jess Klassen who kindly supported volunteers with technical, sewing-related questions.

Louella Bartel
Steve Bernjak
Shirley Bestvater
Rose Campbell
Days for Girls (Winnipeg Chapter)
Anna Dueck
Agatha Enns
Randy Friesen (Art Upholstery)
Esther Gerbrandt
Leona Hildebrand
Tina Hildebrand
Detty Juwe Kajuru

Fatmata Kargbo
Elizabeth Koop
Mary Koop
Eleanor Martens
Silverwinds Hutterite Community
Junbin Shi
Marianne Siemens
Kathleen Stoesz
Michelle Stoesz
Laura Wiebe
Susan Weier



Publications agreement number 40686550 | Vol 15, No 2 ISSN- 1715-5843
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Canadian Mennonite University,
500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2 | Ph.: 204.487.3300
Toll-free: 1.877.231.4570 | Fax: 204.487.3858 | cmu.ca