

# The **BLAZER** Digest

Connecting Alumni and Friends of CMU

Summer 2020 | COVID-19 issue



# Living into our longings

Cheryl Pauls | CMU President

**H**oly, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of God's glory. (Isaiah 6:6)

"This is a verse about longing. Isaiah's vision awakens our yearnings." So began graduate student Justin Eisinga's February 2020 chapel meditation. Justin opened my eyes to see the awesome holiness of God through what saddens us and what we hope for in a world that is not wholly good for all. Yet at the time I wondered this: How do we receive the resplendent prophetic promise of God's glory flung throughout creation? Little did I know that soon this COVID-19 time would feel akin to the year when King Uzziah died, when Isaiah saw the hem of the Lord's robe filling the temple and six-winged seraphs calling to one another, "Holy, holy, holy..." Little did I know I soon would wonder this: How dare we not echo and exercise Isaiah's prophetic call to yearn for the flourishing the world so desperately needs?

To express longings is to release what's bottled up inside us; it is to live into what we hope for but cannot control. Through longings we confess to God what we believe to be true and commit ourselves to embody. Longings need to be expressed, with prayer, generous spirits, diligent study and discernment, and acts of care and inventiveness. Longings need to be attended to—their small sprouts watered; their yields shared graciously.

CMU is entrusted to foster disciplined ways of awakening longings and living into them, in this pandemic time and al-



*How dare we not echo and exercise Isaiah's prophetic call to yearn for the flourishing the world so desperately needs?*

ways. We are grateful for the ongoing engagement and generosity of surrounding friends and communities through a time that is hard for CMU, as it is for everyone. The donations we received by the end of our fiscal year (April 30) were in total a bit above budget. While these gifts won't cover for significant revenue losses, they are signs that CMU is a cherished learning community. This we honour in God's grace as we join with you in living into longings.

CMU, together with all parts of society, is faced with the realities of COVID-19. As we work at many complex questions, we remain focused on our core task of serving present and prospective students. Thus we offer this summer *Blazer* in 'Digest' form.

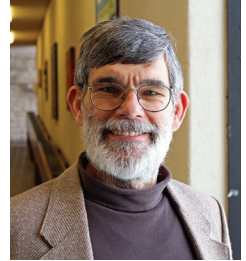
# Reflections on Zoom teaching

**Dan Epp-Tiessen** | Emeritus Associate Professor of Bible

**W**hen we teach far more is given and received than the factual information that is central to teaching. Teaching at its best comes out of our core identity, commitments, passions, joys, struggles and hopes. Such things are transmitted far better in person than over the internet. Thus, I feared that something powerful would be lost when COVID-19 forced us to end our semester by teaching and learning online.

But I was pleasantly surprised. Students participated in class discussions and engaged the course content with enthusiasm. I glimpsed how online teaching can still be meaningful, as we shared intellectual passions, explored human experience, and connected course content

to the isolation challenges posed by COVID-19. I even saw how it is possible to engage pastorally with students as I shared from my own life and faith experience and reflected with them on how Christian faith can help us live through the challenges of COVID-19. While teaching via Zoom is far from ideal, I witnessed how I could still be a channel of God's healing grace to students as they deal with the anxieties of our time, and as they prepare for meaningful vocational paths and lives of service in church and society.



## Resilience in a time of stress

**Beth Downey**

**C**ollectively, people all over the world are learning to overcome new obstacles due to COVID-19. But as Jonathan Sears, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of International Development Studies at Menno Simons College (MSC), points out, some communities are discovering their unexpected fitness for such a time as this. At Menno Simons College, CMU's program centre at the University of Winnipeg, and at

the Shaftesbury campus, there is an underlying culture of care, a pre-existing network of well-worn alternative paths that make these learning communities especially resilient under times of existential stress.

"If a life guided by Christ is almost



always countercultural, then it may be reasonable to suggest or expect that, in ordinary times, there's a bit of a rub with our natural inclinations or ways of being, which we have to navigate. But perhaps the flipside of this is that in hard times, there can be an unexpected smoothness and facility to our response. It's a great example of why diversity is adaptive—how our Christian difference as a community makes us resilient.”

Sears reflects that among CMU/MSC's gifts is vibrant community. “There's a word in South African culture, *ubuntu*, that might be translated as ‘togetherness,’ but its meaning is more nuanced than that. Ubuntu is a philosophy, an ontological claim about human reality that says ‘humans are only fully human through their relationships and interdependence with others.’ I feel that really expresses the best of what goes on at CMU—not just when

things are tough, but always.” That these values and ways of being are normal to the learning community is important, Sears says. It's the kind of deep-coded habit, almost like muscle-memory, that gives rise to what he calls “nimbleness” in CMU's ubuntu.

“A lot of what I witness at CMU represents a kind of microclimate of teaching, learning, and togetherness. I often think of that line from *The Vinyl Café* by Stuart McLean: ‘we're not big, but we're small.’ There are questions of scale that allow us to be responsive to students on a different level, that allow faculty and students to serve one another. The consequence right now, is that this culture of care is showing up really well, and consistently, even while mediated through new and unfamiliar ways of operating, including new media modes and teaching platforms.”

## Transforming the question

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Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

“**W**ho are you? What are you doing at CMU? Which courses have you loved? What people and communities matter to you?” These are some of the questions that Christine Kampen Robinson, Director of Practica and of CMU's new Centre for Vocation, asks students while discussing practicum opportunities.

She says the question that bombards university students, “What are you going to do with *that* degree?” is unhelpful. “There are lots of assumptions wrapped up in this question—assumptions about what education is for and about the value or return on investment of a university degree.” Kampen Robinson notes that the question assumes

that unless a degree leads immediately to a job in a given field its true value should be questioned.

Instead, Kampen Robinson emphasizes the question differently: “What are *you* going to do with that degree? What are *you* doing in the futures that you imagine?” This type of inquiry encourages students to imagine the stories they want to create, rather than simply check boxes off a list.

“I get excited when I have the opportunity to get to know a student and we shift



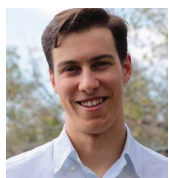
the conversation about their practicum from one of being a requirement to fulfill, to that of an opportunity to explore something about which they are passionate and curious”, she says. For example, when a student shares with her their desire for psychological research, working with children, advocacy and more, the possibilities

for newly expanded thinking emerge.

“I’m excited about the possibilities in positioning practicum as a much more intentionally integrated part of the university education of all students, and as a key component in educating for vocation at CMU.”

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## Graduate Reflections: The Impact of CMU



**Davide Verelli,**  
**Bachelor of Science**

At CMU I learned that good academic research takes time, patience and humility. Together

these virtues open deep listening and through them I learned that the best research addresses matters as they are and not how I want them to be. Ultimately, good research is about trust and a leap of faith into the goodness and virtue of a loving God—through whom all truth, in whatever form, is revealed.



**Hope Mwalugaja,**  
**BA International Development Studies**

CMU pushed the boundaries of my thinking and worldview,

and in the process deepened my beliefs and convictions about how I want to live. My fears about encountering difference were transformed at CMU. Here I’ve been gifted with confidence, inquisitiveness and most importantly openness to engage in dialogue and deep friendship with people who are different from me.

**Nicolas Willms,**  
**BA Biblical and Theological Studies and Counselling Studies**

I was unsure how CMU would shape my sense of who I am as a Christian, or my perception of the world. During these years of study, I read many great theologians and I was taught by many great professors who all asked questions that I would never have thought of. I came to realize that there are many ways to faithfully follow Jesus. And for that I am grateful.



**Kayla Drudge,**  
**Bachelor of Music**

Throughout all of the unexpected changes that took place during my degree, the CMU community of professors and friends have been present to me as I am. In their ability to be present to my experience—disorientation, joy, heartbreak, confusion, freedom, new ways of seeing—I have begun to learn to be present to myself. And it is here that my deep gratitude for CMU arises.



### Coordinated response

A COVID-19 task force is coordinating teaching, learning, and campus access decisions, with priority given to health and safety directives.

### Public access

Currently, and for the foreseeable future, CMU campuses are closed to the public.

### Mixed model for fall 2020

A mixed model of classes, both in-person and online, is currently being planned.

### Educational Commitment

All classes, regardless of delivery format, will support quality student-faculty and student-student interaction and relationships.

### Campuses

A spacious Shaftesbury campus, with small and medium sized classes only (12–40 people), allows for appropriate physical distancing. CMU is working with restrictions as determined by U Winnipeg, at its Menno Simons College campus.



### On-campus living

CMU is planning for on-campus living in fall, with changes in use of space. Dormitories will include single rooms only—no roommates—and ensure protocols that adhere to health and safety requirements.

### Food services

Dining Hall meals will be adjusted to accommodate physical distancing guidelines.



### Student responsibility

We will draw on student commitments to be responsible for their personal behaviour in order to support a broader, on-campus, cultural change.



### Student supports

CMU has reduced apartment rent, enhanced student emergency supports, increased available bursaries, and is assisting students with resume writing and job searches.



### Ongoing discernment

CMU will provide further details of fall education by **July 15**, recognizing that conditions or health directives may change the course of that decision.

**For more information please visit:**  
[cmu.ca/covid-19](https://cmu.ca/covid-19)

The CMU science lab won't be at the centre of finding a vaccine for COVID-19. But CMU education and research are vital to responding to these questions: *What if the crisis surrounding quality of life and livelihood for all creatures and creation were—and is—as extreme as COVID-19? What longings and inventiveness might emerge across church and society?*

**Climate Smart certified**

On Earth Day 2020, CMU announced



that we are officially Climate Smart certified, marking a significant milestone in CMU's effort to address our role in climate change.

"Climate Smart certification means we understand and are tracking our greenhouse gas emissions from year to year. Our hope is this sets CMU on a measurable path that embodies our care for the earth through the stewardship of our campus and the people who flow through it," says Julene Sawatzky, Campus Planning and Facilities Development Manager.

**NEW combined major in English and Communications & Media**

A new interdisciplinary major will give students the opportunity to develop professional communication skills for the modern market, informed by rich engagement with literature's best writers. This major offers training in up-to-date audio, video, and graphic design techniques, and an invaluable knowledge base in literary tradition, while honing students' skill and versatility in writing.

**CMU Farm celebrates 10 years**

CMU is celebrating 10 years of learning, growing, and farming for change. The Metanoia Farmers' Collective, a group of CMU students and alumni, now oversee operations on CMU campus and 14 acres of associated land near Neubergthal, MB. All of them are emerging farmers: lovers of God's good creation motivated by their faith to learn and develop skills they may or may not have grown up with, in order to learn and practice sustainable agriculture.



**Centre for Vocation launched**

This new Centre will complement the university's longstanding and exemplary Practicum program, and strengthen commitments to prepare students 'for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation'. The centre will locate and make visible new initiatives and ongoing work in the teaching and advising of vocation across CMU curriculum, helping students navigate career choices as informed by a life of Christian hope.



**Summer term courses**

Delivered virtually, including four new July-August undergraduate classes:

- Pre-calculus Mathematics
- Community Resilience in Pandemic Times
- Practicum: Social Innovation Lab
- Introducing Jesus: An Overview of the Christian Bible

[cmu.ca/intensivecourses](http://cmu.ca/intensivecourses)

**Gifts in wills**

The mission of CMU is to inspire women and men for lives of leadership, service and reconciliation. Use your will power to make this possible for years to come. Alongside gifts to your loved ones, a gift in your will to CMU lives on in students who will shape the church and society.

Join the others who have planned gifts in their wills.

[cmu.ca/giftsinwills](http://cmu.ca/giftsinwills)



## Fall@CMU 2020

Given travel and social distance protocols, alongside a commitment to focus on the health and safety of students, Fall@CMU will take the form of a virtual program featuring alumni voices from around the world. The September 25 program will also include faculty reflections on courses they are teaching, and highlight alumni entrepreneurs.



## Play Golf, Support CMU

The CMU Golf Classic: COVID Cup Edition, invites golfers anywhere in Canada (and beyond!) to register a round of golf in support of CMU at a course and time they choose this summer. Details at: [cmu.ca/golf](https://cmu.ca/golf)

# Live and Thrive at CMU

Stay in a single dorm room  
+ save the cost of your  
first course + get a  
**\$50 textbook credit**  
= a **\$809 value**

*\*Offer open to new  
domestic and USA citizens*



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