



120TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES Tapestry

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11

7 PM, YOUNG UNITED "Diversity, Transformation and Hope," a dialogue with Stan McKay and Raheel Raza

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12

9:30 AM, CCS Registration began. Open house featured tours, photos, displays and refreshments.

12 PM, YOUNG UNITED "Second Friday" lunch and learn on "Theology of Justice and Liberation," followed by an afternoon at the CCS. Registration continued and classes gathered.

7:30 PM, YOUNG UNITED "A Celebration of Song and Music" with Companion of the Centre, Carolyn McDade

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13

8:30 AM, YOUNG UNITED Registration continued. Continental breakfast.

9 AM, YOUNG UNITED "Principles of CCS—Past and Present"

11 AM, YOUNG UNITED "Moving Forward: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities," a student-led presentation

12 PM, YOUNG UNITED Lunch

1:30 pm – 5 pm, VARIOUS Choice of site visits, workshops, singing or free time. Site visits took place throughout Winnipeg, demonstrating diaconal ministry in action; workshops focused on disjoining, the leaning spiral and ecumenical perspectives; singing circle at Young United Church with Carolyn McDade.

6 PM – 10 PM, YOUNG UNITED Reception and banquet

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14

10:30 AM, THOMSON FUNERAL HOME Celebratory worship & anniversary photo.

12 PM, YOUNG UNITED Farewell lunch and departures

Celebrating 120 Years of Preparation for Diaconal Ministry

BY GWYN GRIFFITH

For four days in mid-October, the halls of 60 Maryland Street and Young United Church in Winnipeg were filled with the joyful sounds of old friends reconnecting and new friendships being kindled. From Oct. 11 to Oct. 14, 2012, almost 80 Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) graduates, former staff and friends joined with current staff and students in what the event invitation aptly described as "an opportunity for celebration, learning, and community."

The weekend began on Thursday evening with a public meeting, featuring what felt like an intimate conversation between the well-known Muslim writer and activist, Raheel Raza, and former aboriginal moderator of the United Church of Canada, Stan McKay. Each speaker shared experiences and perspectives on faith under the themes of diversity, transformation, and hope. This was a powerful beginning to our time together.

As participants registered on Friday morning at 60 Maryland, they were invited to look at displays and a myriad of photos collected over the years, before gathering at Young United Church for one of CCS's regular Second Fridays lunch and learn events. The theme of the panel presentations by Maylanne Maybee, Barbara Lloyd and Yoon Ok Shin was "Theology of Justice and Liberation" (see video at ccsonline.ca). Each woman shared from her experience and theological perspective, and was then given the opportunity to respond to one another as well as to questions and comments from audience members.

On Friday afternoon, graduates of each decade, staff members and friends gathered in small groups to share memories and discuss the current life of CCS. On Friday evening, Carolyn McDade, the first CCS Companion and a well-loved musician and composer, led a public evening of spiritual reflection and hymn singing. It was a wonderful way to end the day.

(Continued on page 2)



Visitors to the centre are greeted with a colourful display reflecting the past and present.

“This last weekend was a wonderful, joyous, intelligent, informative, uplifting and challenging event. I thank all of you for [your] work and creativity in preparing it all. “

What People Said

We received lots of wonderful feedback about the festivities. Here are just a few of the written responses we received.

“I know that there are many others who worked on this event, but you are the primary ones and I am so grateful. When I recall what the communications committee originally talked about a year ago, I kept reiterating that we needed a local planning team and then there you were, and what a magnificent job [you did].

I am well aware how much work went into this, but everything went so smoothly. The program was a perfect mix of plenary presentations and general discussion with lots of time to connect with other participants.

Having the students with us was a wonderful addition, and I was just so impressed with Raheel, Stan, Carolyn, and the others on panels—and to combine it with the awards at the banquet was icing on the cake. It was top quality.

I could wax eloquent about every part of it, but just know that I am aware of what each of you put into it. The energy was amazing. And what it said to me [was] that CCS is more than alive and well. Our shrub is thriving and I couldn't be more delighted.

I hope that the Maylanne's citation and Caryn's response can be made available either in Tapestry or in the newsletter. I think it would also be good to have Ann and Ted's responses—whatever you think can be included.

I'm exhausted, but I'm still glowing. Blessings on all of you.”

– Gwyn Griffith

“This last weekend was a wonderful, joyous, intelligent, informative, uplifting and challenging event. I thank all of you for [your] work and creativity in preparing it all.

It was wonderful to see so many friends gathered for a celebration and not a funeral or motions or debates or work. It was a time to breathe, remember, celebrate, hope and dream.

So, what's planned for the 125th?”

– Ken Delisle

“What human bundles of treasure were present at that gathering! In today's jargon—totally awesome.

And thanks to you for your part in the planning of the program. The whole thing seemed like perfection in planning and execution—[glitch-free]. I've been telling the story far and wide.

The next day, my book club here in our condo learned a whole lot more than I'm sure they wanted to about diaconal ministry! (It has taken them a while to appreciate check-in).”

– Dorothy Naylor

(Continued from page 1)

Saturday was another full day, beginning with a sumptuous continental breakfast. “Principals of CCS—Past and Present” featured Gwyn Griffith (1982-91), Caryn Douglas (1998-2008) and Maylanne Maybee (2011 to present) sharing special memories and the challenges facing the centre during their tenures, as well as outlining the current priorities for CCS. This was followed by current students in the social ministry year describing, through drama and songs, the current challenges for CCS, and inviting all participants to share their visions for the future.

The program on Saturday afternoon included several workshop options, site visits and free time to explore Winnipeg.

Our numbers swelled to 140 at the reception and banquet on Saturday. The highlight of the evening was the ceremony honouring Caryn Douglas as Companion of CCS and Ann Naylor and Ted Dodd as co-recipients of the 2012 Davidson Trust Award. The citation for Caryn, given by Maylanne, will be included in this year's annual report. The Davidson Trust Award was presented by Steve Willey from the United Church national office. Excerpts from the acceptance speeches can be found on pages 5, 6 and 7 of this publication. For full versions, visit ccsonline.ca.

The weekend culminated in a celebratory worship service led by co-presidents Carolynne Bouey Shank and Jim Boyles, and with the participation of others. The sermon was given by Marion Pardy (U'68), who spoke on “Shrub Seeds of Transforming Hope” (excerpt on page 8).

Those who took part in the weekend were grateful to the local planning team: Charlotte Caron, Barbara Barnett, Irene Rainey, Helen Reed, Gwenna Moss, Maylanne Maybee and Liz Bachman, with staffing provided by Lori Stewart.



Tim Sale finds a new dance partner in Dorcas the Deaconess



Terry Reilly & Michael Peers visit before the banquet dinner.



The banner exhibit was breath-taking.



Marion Pardy & Patty Evans share a laugh.



Stan McKay and Raheel Raza.

Diversity, Transformation & Hope

BY RAHEEL RAZA

The following was written and posted on Raheel Raza's blog on Oct. 13, 2012. To read more of Raheel's writings, visit raheelraza.wordpress.com.

What a joy, to travel the way of the heart. – Melvana Rumi

A month ago, I was invited by the Centre for Christian Studies to [its] 130th anniversary celebration in Winnipeg. The theme of the evening was Diversity, Transformation and Hope. I was to substitute for a great speaker, Joy Kogawa, poet and author, who could not make it. I was terrified that I would never be able to fill her shoes. But when I heard the title [of the event], it was like a calling. This is me, I thought, and [I] said yes immediately.

I was thrilled to find out that I would be in dialogue with a native elder, Stan McKay, originally from Fisher River [Cree Nation] in northern Manitoba. As a child, he attended Fisher River Indian Day School and the Birtle Indian Residential School. Stan's adult life has been focused on teaching and spiritual guidance as a source of healing for individuals and for communities. He is known widely as a wise teacher and elder, striving to educate Canadians about the consequences of colonialism in Canada, and especially the policy of assimilation and residential schools. [He works to] bring about healing to the deep harm caused to indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians alike.

I left on this journey asking, as always, for signs. I took this opportunity to carry my books on Rumi as I do most of my reading on long flights. It was a beautiful, bright autumn day with a blue sky and cumulous clouds, and I saw many formations of crosses as I have been wont to do for many years (I've finally concluded that it's God sending me kisses!).

I arrived at my hotel in Winnipeg and was dumbstruck to see the

telephone number [204-786-7011] [was the] the numerical code for [the Arabic phrase] Bismillah, [which means] "I begin in the name of God." Furthermore, the stationary in the hotel room had the word hope embossed on [it].

I had my signs and any trepidation I had about entering a new place, [being around] new people, doing my first-ever speaking stint without written notes, was allayed. I felt rejuvenated, inspired, anxious, and hopeful all at once—[and] rightly so.

When I reached the venue of the event, I was amazed at how many people I knew from my 15 years of interfaith work across Canada. We met and hugged like old friends. Stan and I met privately in a room to connect, and connect we did.

[To honour] tradition, I had taken Stan a gift of tobacco. I gave it to him privately but he decided to inform the audience as he was so thrilled. The audience was primarily women, mostly Christian but with a smattering of native youth, and later, I discovered, some Muslims.

I had decided to take Rumi as my muse and Stan brought a book of reading titled *God is Red*, which he is mailing me as a gift. I also took a CD of Sufi chanting, which was played as people came into the hall.

We were supposed to be in a facilitated dialogue but as we sat facing each other and started talking, the 250-plus audience faded away and it seemed we were two souls speaking as one. Facilitator and friend Betsy Anderson from Emmanuel College found herself with nothing to do—Stan and I clicked heart-to-heart and shared ruminations, readings and Rumi.

I read a universal blessing from Rumi and Stan shared a story about dreams. I have been fascinated since my arrival in Canada with the native ethos, which to me corresponds deeply with the spiritual message of my faith, drowned in the din of dogma. Stan shared that the native communities are very diverse and there is sometimes very little intra-faith dialogue, although inter-faith dialogue thrives. I was able to tell him the same [was true] for our communities.

[Stan] asked me about diversity within the Islamic faith, and he and the audience were surprised when I explained the different denominations and sects in Islam as they did not know [of them]. We agreed that unity does not mean uniformity and that diversity is a divine blessing. However, we also agreed that people can't be forced to "like" each other and move into a group hug, as long as differences are recognized and respected.

I shared the following reading on diversity from Rumi:

Every war and every conflict between human beings has happened because of some disagreement about names.

It is such an unnecessary foolishness, because just beyond the arguing there is a long table of companionship set and waiting for us to sit down.

What is praised is one, so the praise is one too, many jugs being poured into a huge basin.

All religions, all this singing, one song.

The differences are just illusion and vanity.

Sunlight looks a little different on this wall than it does on that wall and a lot different on this other one, but it is still one light.

We have borrowed these clothes, these time-and-space personalities, from a light, and when we praise, we are pouring them back in.

Stan and I then shared our thoughts on transformation. Stan spoke of the painful experiences of colonization and the residential schools. He shared that the wounds have been deep, leaving much conflict in the native communities—especially among the youth, who are angry and need to find ways to channel their anger, a concept that resonated with me. He spoke about his own transition from anger to hope and peace.

The key here is recognizing that a wrong has been done in history, creating awareness of it and then working towards forgiveness. The official movement for this is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which I have been part of. [Not coincidentally, its] pin is also [in the shape of] a circle.

Stan told a wonderful story about a grandfather who tells his grandson that each one of us [has] two wolves in our being. One is good; the other is evil. [The] grandson asks, “Which wolf is stronger?” and [the] wise grandfather replies, “The one you feed.”

Wow—I loved the story, as I am trying to share stories with my own grandsons. [It is] a tradition we have forgotten, but over time I’ve collected many stories, so they listen in fascination. It was a reminder to me that we need to bring back a storytelling tradition; one found among the Sufis.

I shared that my life has been a journey of change and transformation. I am not the person I was 25 years ago. Much of my journey towards spirituality has been in Canada as I find myself free to pursue the different paths that lead to the same Creator.

Change is positive, we agreed, and since the world is changing so fast in so many ways, if we want to be part of the larger change, we need to transform ourselves as well. The journey for both of us is an ongoing saga in our lives, bringing hope, hostility and happiness.

But, as Rumi says:

If you could, what could you do?

This being human is a guest-house. Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture.

Still, treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in.

How can we learn, live and grow to become our greatest aspirations if every opportunity for growth is an irritant?

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

On growth, Rumi says, “If you are irritated by every rub, how will your mirror be polished?”

How can we learn, live and grow to become our greatest aspirations if every opportunity for growth is an irritant? Not that it is easy to be on the receiving end of all that polishing. But the results—ahh, the results—they are the reason we pursue situations where we can be polished.

We spoke of hope, and I shared that I’m an eternal optimist. For me, the glass is always half full. Stan works in healing circles and shared his hopes. The concept of [a] circle is universal. The logo of the CCS is a circle, the Aboriginal People[s] are very circle-oriented and the Sufis embrace [the] circle as the circle of life. Our connections were getting stronger by the moment.

Stan asked me to share stories from the Islamic faith about the environment. I felt so blessed to be able to share the spiritual message of my faith, which most in the audience had never heard, thanks to hysteria and news about the extremists taking over the news. Stan felt the same has happened in his life and we were honoured to be able to showcase [our] spiritual messages.

By Allah, we must always have hope. Faith, itself, consists of fear and hope. Someone once asked me, “Hope itself is good, but what is this fear?” I said, “Show me a fear without hope, or a hope without fear. The two are inseparable.”

For example, a farmer plants wheat. Naturally, he hopes that wheat will grow. At the same time, he is afraid some blight or drought may destroy it. So, there is no hope without fear, or fear without hope.

After an hour of interaction, we stopped for Q & A, although we felt we could have talked all night long.

Later, there was a reception at which a young Iranian girl came up [to me] and said how inspired she felt.

When there’s no sign of hope in the desert,

So much hope still lives inside despair.

Heart, don’t kill that hope: Even willows bear

Sweet fruit in the garden of the soul.

- Rumi



2012 Companions of the Centre.
Left-Right: Barbara Barnett, Caryn Douglas, Charlotte Caron.

Being Shaped By Fellow Companions

BY CARYN DOUGLAS

On Oct. 13, 2012, Caryn Douglas was honoured as a Companion of the Centre by Maylanne Maybee. The following is an excerpt from Caryn's thank you speech. Read the full version at ccsonline.ca.

In the long contemplation of what I would say at this moment in time (having known about the award since last year), three faces have floated in my imagination. Try as I might to reboot my thinking, they simply reappear. So, I name those faces: Wendy Hunt, Daphne Rogers and Elizabeth Brain.

As some of you may know, I have been researching the lives of United Church [of Canada, or UCC] deaconesses in several ways over the last few years. I don't know as much about the Anglican side, but on the UCC side of the school's history alone there are around 1,900 graduates, and about 650 of them were deaconesses. I know there were men who graduated, but my focus is on the women and on the deaconesses prior to 1980, so I will speak about them.

Sure these women were ordinary; they were dispensers of charity, they were dutiful and often subservient and so on. But, they were extraordinary. Even if they were not spectacular—they were extraordinary.

When serving in public ministry as a woman becomes ordinary, it is extraordinary because the times and places when this opportunity has been afforded to women are so rare in the course of human history. Nearly every day that I sit at my computer to work on my research, I am humbled to remember that they broke the path for me and walk alongside me too.

Companionship can be gutsy, courageous and dramatic. I think of Nellie McClung's advice: "Never explain, never retract, never apologize. Just get the thing done and let them howl!" Not surprising, Wendy had that on her bulletin board in her 77 Charles St. office. I have it poster-sized on my wall.

Companionship can be quiet, assuring, uncluttered. Daphne had a small woodcut of an Asian-stylized Jesus with Japanese characters down the side, proclaiming from John's gospel, "I am the resurrection and the life," [and] the rest of that verse, "The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

Companionship can be wise, deep, steady. Undertaking the task of leading the community in prayer during the endowment campaign, these words from Elizabeth [drew] on the poetry of Carolyn McDade: "Spirit of life, bless us and enliven us, be present with us and sustain us through this time. Enable our future to be part of your future. May we be ever-responsive to your hand molding us, and giving life the shape of justice. Amen."

...I have spoken long enough. The action is to let the gift of this award—and the reflection it has provoked—take root, let it change me, and in that way change the world, because in the tradition of both/and, the personal is political.



Caryn Douglas receives her Companion of the Centre pin from Maylanne Maybee.



Jessie MacLeod



Marion Logan



Miriam Therese Winter

Companion Update

The Centre for Christian Studies has announced the names of three people it will honour as Companion of the Centre in 2013: (left to right) Jessie MacLeod, Marion Logan and Miriam Therese Winter. Details of the awards presentations will be announced soon.

Visit ccsonline.ca for more information about the recipients and for future updates.



Being Transformed for Leadership

BY ANN NAYLOR

The following is an excerpt from Ann's acceptance speech offered at the 120th anniversary banquet. Read the full version at ccsonline.ca.

Had most of the people who shared student life with me at the Centre for Christian Studies in 1977 been asked, at that time and eliminating age as a factor, which of us was least likely to be involved in ministry 35 years later, my name would have been near the top of the list. Too many questions, too many doubts, too unconventional. Not spiritual enough, not religious enough. Too quiet and yet, too opinionated. Too shy and yet, too rebellious.

I arrived at the door of the school at 77 Charles St. W. in Toronto on the Monday of a Labour Day weekend, carrying a bright orange backpack, a guitar, a strong dose of ambivalence, and a bit of attitude.

I arrived, haunted by a recent and intense introduction to the consequences of colonization for Aboriginal People, and the role of the churches in the harm caused.

I arrived, troubled and confused about my own complicity and my own privilege. I was pretty sure I didn't believe in God and I wanted nothing to do with the Christian church.

I arrived because, six months previously, it had seemed like a good idea and, in that September moment, I simply didn't know what else to do.

Enter the educational philosophy of the Centre for Christian Studies and the learning communities in which it was embodied.

Learners need to be intentional, taking responsibility for engagement, reflection, self-direction and goal setting. Education is enhanced when individual uniqueness is honoured and respected within community.

My questions—about everything—were heard and valued. My critique, my shyness, my anger, my confusion—all were accepted. My reluctance to take leadership was challenged, gently but firmly, patiently and insistently. My learning needs were taken seriously, as were the diverse learning needs of each student. The educational model—then, as now—depended on students being

Learners need to be intentional, taking responsibility for engagement, reflection, self-direction and goal setting. Education is enhanced when individual uniqueness is honoured and respected within community.

committed to their own learning and to the learning of all others in the learning community. Co-learners and co-leaders. This model of theological education called me into responsibility, into action, and into community. It was this learning community in which, despite a rocky start, I found home.

Twenty-two years later, having sustained connection in a myriad of ways, I felt called to be co-learner and co-leader as [a member of the] staff, in a new incarnation of the CCS learning community.

To be recognized for this work—work shared in team over the years with Ted [Dodd] and with other colleagues, and now with Maylanne [Maybee], is an honour—and it is humbling. I interpret the award as an affirmation of the model of theological education



Ted Dodd and Ann Naylor accept Davidson Trust awards from Steve Willey.

offered by the Centre for Christian Studies and as an affirmation of the value of teaming in church leadership.

I am grateful to the Davidson family and to The United Church of Canada for this award.

To receive it in this gathering is particularly meaningful. I give deep thanks for the elders present, for the cloud of witnesses whose vision, courage, and love has brought us to this place, and for the students and grads who, so ably, are shaping the future.



Gratitude For The Journey

BY TED DODD

The following is a speech given by Ted Dodd, who was one of this year's recipients of the Davidson Trust Award. As recipients of this award, Ted Dodd and Ann Naylor were recognized by The United Church of Canada for their excellence in teaching and scholarship as theological educators.

At the leadership development module, during a session related to education and learning, we show a variety of classic video clips reflecting [diverse] teaching styles.



In *Music of the Heart*, Meryl Streep plays a demanding, rigorous violin teacher who stretches her students by asking them to reach for high standards, work hard and push themselves.

In *Dead Poets' Society*, Robin Williams offers a portrayal of a teacher who encourages his pupils to reflect critically, think outside the box, view the world from another perspective, and imagine that world differently.

For comic relief, Ben Stein, in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, lectures his glaze-eyed, gum-popping, dead asleep, totally bored class on American economic history, asking [the students], "Anyone? Anyone?"

In *Mr. Holland's Opus*, Richard Dreyfuss is toasted at his retirement in a moving speech, which

culminates in an astounding, three-hanky affirmation of this educator's role in his student's lives: "Mr. Holland, we are your opus."

I consider this award a deep affirmation. Not that I view myself as the talented and beloved Mr. Holland, but I do hope that I have had my Meryl Streep moments of pushing and stretching. Not that I fancy I haven't had my own Ferris Bueller flashes of boring, but I do hope there is a part of me that embodies Robin Williams' ability to kindle the imagination.

Mostly, however, I consider this not a personal affirmation, but a salute to the CCS program. After all these years, we are still not the norm—we probably never will be. We are a strange stew of a school.

We work with individuals. We encourage our students to cultivate self-awareness, exhibit their ability to be self-directed and nurture their own personal strengths. I like the Nelle Morton concept of "hearing into speech."

But we do that in community—emphasizing [the importance of] relationship[s], all aimed at the ability to [work as a] team, to honour diversity and to respect differences.

We take a strengths-based approach—affirming gifts, recognizing talents, [and] valuing each learner as a child of God.

That being said, we evaluate and assess and offer feedback at every turn. There is always more to learn and places to grow as lifelong learners.

We offer a hands-on, creative, [and] experimental learning program with small groups, engaged learning circles, and practical placements.

Alongside all this direct and active connection, we pause. We journal. We spiral. We debrief and unpack. We articulate learnings. We reflect, reflect, reflect.

All of this is to aid integration—theory and practice, head and heart, action and reflection, justice and compassion, prayer and politics, [and] spirituality and social analysis.

In that combination of pedagogical magic, I stand before you, grateful—to work with students who engage and wrestle and care, and who have taught me so much; to connect with volunteers who support our efforts and who broaden our reach; to work with staff members, past and present, who have offered passion and vision, laughter and prayer; to be grounded in the CCS community, which witnesses faith and the crucial ministry of diakonia; [and] to be blessed with friends and family who, mostly, overlook my foibles and carry me in steadfast love.

Thank you. Much appreciation. Profound gratitude.



Shrub Seeds of Transforming Hope

BY MARION PARDY

The following sermon was offered as part of the closing service on October 14.

Scripture: Job 14: 7-9; Romans 8: 22-28, 31-39; Mark 4: 30-34.

In preparation for today's sermon, I attempted to purchase a bracelet with a small glass ball hanging from it, containing a tiny mustard seed. They were popular a few years ago—you may remember them. Usually the bracelets came with a verse [that read], "If you have faith as a tiny mustard seed, nothing will be impossible." Or, "If you have faith as a tiny mustard seed, you will be able to move mountains."

I think the creators of these trinkets missed the major message of this mustard seed parable, probably because they were more interested in profit than point. The mustard seed is a provocative, strange parable.

If Jesus had said to people living under Roman occupation, "God's reign is like the mighty cedars of Lebanon, as described in Ezekiel," the people might have yawned and said, "Of course."

If Jesus had said, "God's reign is like the apocalyptic tree of Daniel, with the crown of the tree reaching to heaven and the branches covering the earth, sheltering the beasts of the field and nesting the largest of birds," the people might have said, "Who is he trying to fool in our day and age?" Instead, we seem to have this message: If you can't have hope as in the majestic cedars of Lebanon and in the apocalyptic tree of Daniel, try hope as in a shrub.

People in Mark's gospel community needed transforming, credible words of encouragement and hope. Oppressed under Roman persecution, Jerusalem [was] rampaged and the majestic, "holy of holies" temple [was] destroyed. Hope was needed desperately, but [it was] credible hope [that was needed]—hope one could believe in and live by during hopeless times.

Images of majestic trees as a symbol of hope in this context would be too overwhelming. Instead, take a tiny mustard seed [and] plant it. It [will germinate] and [sprout] over time, [turning into] a glorious shrub. [It won't be] a great tree like the mighty cedar, but a shrub—a big shrub, [one that] will get to be four or five feet [tall], maybe larger. Small birds might perch on its branches, [but] finding a nest there is stretching the image a bit too far. At the time of nesting, the plant would be in the growing stage and certainly not large enough. Still, [the plant would be] quite impressive.

The point is the mustard seed does not grow to be [as strong as a tree] because it is an annual plant. Germane to its existence is the life of the seed and something beyond itself—the weather.

Jesus queries, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God?" or "What parable can we use for it?" Then, [he] responds, "A shrub!"

We might detect the humour of Mark and of Jesus, but also the realism. If, at this time, you don't have the faith to move mountains, or faith like a mighty cedar, try a shrub. It is a story told for the encouragement and hope of people in Jesus' and [in] Mark's day, and it's a story for our encouragement and hope.

I connect this parable with the verses in the book of Job, albeit taken out of context. A cut-down tree is hopeless [and] lifeless—but wait. There's a little green shoot on that tree and at the mere "scent" of water, it will grow again. There is hope for a hopeless tree. Transforming hope can occur at the mere "scent" of water, as in a tiny mustard seed.

Theology arises from the context of life. This is contextual theology at its best. If our broken world, dwindling church budgets and hopeless personal contexts make "faith to move mountains" incredible, try a tiny seed and a shrub; try a cut-down tree, a little shoot and the "scent" of water. "And of such is God's reign," says Jesus. It is credible; it is doable.

The roller-coaster history of the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) is marked with stories of shrub seeds transforming hope. Hear the names: Church of England Deaconess and Missionary Training House (1892), the Anglican Women's Training College (1947), the Methodist National Training School (1894), the United Church Training School (1921), Covenant College (1961), the Presbyterian (Ewart) Deaconess and Missionary Training Home (1897)—the change of names alone points to this transforming hope. We graduates have a legion of stories to illustrate.

It was 1966—my first year at Covenant College. Dr. Jean Hutchinson (Dr. Hutch, we called her) was leading us in a study of the synoptic gospels with her usual biblical depth, insight and questions. I was mesmerized.

Here on one page were the gospel parallels of stories [about] Jesus, expressed quite differently in Mark, Matthew and Luke. Being an avid reader, I would have read as much background material as possible for each session of the course. On this particular day, when I had read and heard just one too many interpretations, I put my head in my arms on the desk.

Everyone left, except Dr. Hutch. I lifted my head, looked at her, and

A cut-down tree is hopeless [and] lifeless—but wait. There's a little green shoot on that tree and at the mere "scent" of water, it will grow again . . . Transforming hope can occur at the mere "scent" of water, as in a tiny mustard seed.

The complexity of the issues in our world today suggests that we need to be cautious with answers. It may be more important to struggle to find the right questions and, having found them, to patiently and passionately push the horizons.

in hopeless desperation, I said, “Dr. Hutch, one of us has got to go—you or me!”

I wasn’t so naïve as to wonder which one of us it would be.

Calmly, Dr. Hutch responded, “Marion, I would like to treat you to lunch at the Arcadian Court in Simpsons.”

The day arrived and, thankful that I had spent four years at private school and had hosted Sunday afternoon tea at Covenant, I could relax around the amount of cutlery and china provided and pour out my concerns about her course.

I don’t remember the content of that conversation, [but] no doubt, in true Dr. Hutch form, she listened and questioned and commented and questioned again. The end result was that I engaged biblical studies with renewed passion, devouring every text I could find. In fact, [I] became a continuing student of the scriptures, with biblical and historical studies the chosen area of my DMin studies.

At the time, Dr. Hutch wasn’t even thinking of shrub seeds and I certainly wasn’t thinking of transformation. My anguished concern was survival, and I didn’t smell even a “scent” of water. It is one of my many stories of “shrubs transforming hope” and I am confident you have others.

The CCS, together with all theological schools, is faced with many challenges. Some see it as a crisis; others see it as an opportunity for change, continuity, growth and transformation.

In some ways we, in church and [in] school, still function as if we were in our glory days when people were numerous, budgets were large and new church buildings were being constructed frequently. We still tend to function as if the Church were a majestic cedar, instead of a shrub.

Maybe our transforming hope is in developing a “shrubs” theology. The Church has neither the dollars, nor [the] people it once had, and theological schools are the same. At the same time, the CCS has much to celebrate in its Endowment Fund Campaign.

A “shrubs” theology names the context we find ourselves in and [it] plants seeds—tiny seeds. Covenant College and the Anglican Women’s Training College did this in 1969. There weren’t too many United/Anglican shared ministries at that time.

There are still inter-church issues to be resolved. Now might be a time, however, to start planting seeds to push those boundaries further—to other denominations, to other partners in university and community, to other religious communities.

[There exists] Doctors Without Borders—[what about] “a theological centre without borders?” How much richer our education could be in the company of people of all religious expressions and, more important, how [much] more effective we would be in our justice-

seeking and peace-making in God’s world.

A related ingredient in a “shrubs” theology is a theological imagination that lingers with the “what” and “why” questions, that plays with the text and conversation, questioning and being questioned. [The] CCS has demonstrated that theological imagination in a number of ways:

The move to Winnipeg from Toronto amidst controversy and conflict (1998);

The reflection/action model of learning; [and] the spiral model of theological reflection.

That theological imagination has [the] CCS housed in the J.S. Woodsworth House. In the risk of the move to Winnipeg [and] the newness of curriculum development, you found a heritage home where social gospel and social justice thrived. Interestingly, Woodsworth, too, was born in Ontario!

A “shrubs” theology recognizes that we don’t have the monopoly on truth—there are always new truths to be discovered in other cultures, countries and theologies, and [the] CCS has already planted many seeds here.

In my DMin course of studies, I was privileged to take a course from Dr. Bernhard Anderson. His text, *Understanding the Old Testament*, was required reading in many schools, including Covenant College.

One day in class we were examining a verse in the Hebrew Scriptures—most of us jumping in with our various interpretations. In the midst of this fairly heated discussion, one student pounded the table with the “truth.” His voice shouted above the sound of his fist: “This is what it means.”

Dr. Anderson quietly said, “Let’s see what the Hebrew says.”

He read the verse in his Hebrew bible, looked up with his half-rimmed glasses on his nose, and calmly said, “The meaning is obscure.”

“The meaning is obscure”—what a great find in the search for truth!

On another occasion, over lunch, I asked him, “Why did you do a revision of your text, *Understanding the Old Testament*, while it is still in stock and still a bestseller?”

(Continued on page 10)

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He replied, "Because of new discoveries in biblical archaeology, the Dead Sea scrolls and because of feminist theology."

He went on to [explain that feminist theology has turned biblical theology topsy-turvy]. He paused, looked at me, and [said], "And that's a good thing!"

A good thing, indeed. It is transforming hope.

The good news of "shrub" theology is that we don't have all the answers and we don't need all the answers. The complexity of the issues in our world today suggests that we need to be cautious with answers. It may be more important to struggle to find the right questions and, having found them, to patiently and passionately push the horizons.

"It is more difficult to ask the right questions than to answer them," [wrote] philosopher Gadamer of the 20th century (326). Any insights we glean are "glimpses of truth"—glimpses that that we place, for critique, beside other glimpses coming to us from other countries, cultures, from native spirituality and from other faith communities. Hear the good news in "glimpses of truth!" It is wonderful and marvelous, even mysterious, that we can dare to claim "glimpses of truth" in our diverse, complex world.¹

What our situation calls for frequently has us stymied. What does it call for? We don't know. We groan under the weight of our uncertainties. We planted seeds but no shoots have sprouted—we can't see a shrub, let alone a tree. The good news, as found

in Romans, is that as we groan, the Spirit helps us.

Caught in the struggle between futility and hope and with "sighs too deep for words," the Spirit identifies with us and lifts us to God—our God whose heart is broken by the brokenness of our world. We lift our eyes to glorify God; we participate in the mystery of the bread and wine.

God's glory is in humanity fully alive and, thus, with the symbols of towel and basin, we immerse ourselves in the disgrace of the world, where too many people still live under oppression and poverty. We seek "shrub-like" ways to empower ourselves and others to be mindful of the grace and attend to the disgrace.

The mustard seed shrub/plant. A Manitoba farmer friend says that here the plant grows to about two feet only. There is a bountiful harvest. Canada is one of the world's largest exporters of mustard.

The Centre for Christian Studies, with its vision of a new heaven and a new earth. Planting tiny seeds that produce shrubs might be our methodology and, together with justice-seeking and peace-loving partners around us and throughout the world we have made and can make a difference. May it be so!

Source:

1. *Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Truth and Method, translation of Wahrheit und Methode by J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982.*

Milestones

DEATHS

Eleanor Ferguson

U1963 died September 30, 2012

Florence Poole

U1952 died August 9, 2012

Jean Shilton

U1942 died January 15, 2012

(but wasn't listed in the last Tapestry)

Frances Steele

U1952 died May 21, 2012

The Reverend M. Jean Macdonald

(U1948) died on July 4, 2012 in Vancouver at the age of 95. She served as a missionary to Japan for 30 years (1951-1981). Born in Bredenbury, SK, Jean worked for the Canadian Government in Ottawa during the war. She then earned a BA from the University of Toronto, a diploma from UCTS, an MA in Christian Education from Union Theological Seminary, attended the Graduate School of Far Eastern Studies at Yale to prepare for her work in Japan, and also studied at New College, University of Edinburgh while on furlough.

Missed mentioning your milestone?

Send a note to Scott at CCS
sdouglas@ccsonline.ca

Upcoming Events from the Centre for Christian Studies

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the Centre for Christian Studies will be held on March 7, 2013 at 6:00 PM Central Standard Time at the Centre for Christian Studies, Winnipeg. Provisions will be made for participation by Conference Call. All Friends of CCS are invited.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODULE

An introductory or stand-alone course that develops and improves ministry skills, offers a learning opportunity to become effective and transformative leaders in the church and workplace, explores how adults learn and how that impacts effective leadership and introduces non-violent and collaborative approaches to conflict resolution.

In 2013 we are running two Leadership Development Modules:

June 10-22, 2013 at the Centre for Christian Studies, Winnipeg and

August 12-24, 2013 at St. Paul's University, Ottawa.

For information about application, deadlines, and tuition fees, call **1-866-780-8887** or contact **info@ccsonline.ca**.

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Yes, I will pray for—and financially support—the Centre for Christian Studies and its ministries of pastoral care, education, and social ministry.

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