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NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020

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A partner in the Montreal School of Theology and affiliated with the McGill University School of Religious Studies. Also in partnership with the Institut de Théologie pour la Francophonie and the Université Laval.

Board of Governors announces New Principal

The Board of Governors of The Presbyterian College is pleased to announce that the Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries has been appointed as Principal of the College.

Dr. De Vries has served most recently as Director of Pastoral Studies at The Presbyterian College, a role to which he was appointed by the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, in 2015. Having graduated from The Presbyterian College with the Master of Divinity degree in 2001, Dr. De Vries went on to serve in pastoral ministry at Westminster and Kensington churches in the Presbytery of Montreal. He subsequently completed a PhD in Theological Ethics in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University, and is presently an Affiliate Member of the School. His doctoral research was published as *Becoming Two in Love: Kierkegaard, Irigaray, and the Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Wipf and Stock, 2013).

Over the past years, Dr. De Vries has continued to publish in the areas of mission and hospitality, through the lens of Christology. He also writes a monthly column in the *Christian Courier*, particularly exploring themes of culture and context from a Christian point of view. In the context of theological education, his teaching has been across the diverse areas of Ethics, Systematic Theology, Global Christianity, and Congregational Mission.

In making this appointment, the Board of Governors expresses its conviction that the Rev. Dr. De Vries brings the gifts, creativity, and calling that will equip him for this role. He will particularly provide leadership for the College in relation to new and exciting collaborations with the Institut de Théologie pour la Francophonie and the Université Laval. These new partnerships reflect a unique moment in the life of the College, as we partner for theological education and for the formation

of missional leaders in the Francophone context.

The Chair of the Board, Mr. Jay Hewlin, offers these thoughts on the appointment: “Dr. De Vries’s commitment to theological education has been consistent and meaningful. This commitment is inextricably tied to his personal devotion to Christ and the work of the kingdom of God. We are blessed to have him accept this call to lead PC toward its certain future during these very uncertain times.”

The Board of Governors acknowledges the role of the General Assembly in appointing heads of Colleges within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Permission to undertake the search for a Principal was granted by the General Assembly Executive in February 2020. Dr. De Vries presently serves on an Interim basis as Principal, and the Board of Governors will bring a report and recommendation for his appointment as Principal to the General Assembly at its meeting in 2021. ■



Student Thoughts on Online Learning

KIRSTY DICKSON-MARET (MDIV STUDENT)

Welcome to yet another week of online classes! Life is certainly different this Autumn. No sitting in class with friends, no meeting afterwards for coffee and conversation. No singing and worshipping together on campus. But we’ve managed to adapt! As the winter weather approaches, we can remain snug in pajama bottoms and cozy sweaters, while the icy wind howls outside. And there are other benefits. Students can converse about the lecture topic and post supplementary materials in real time in class using “chat,” which enriches the learning process. Very often lectures are recorded, so if you’ve missed a class, you’re in luck. Your pets can come to class, and you can shut off the camera for privacy whenever you’d like. Maybe even get a few jumping jacks in while the camera is off. And the “no food or drink” rule never applies in your own home sweet home. We’re learning how to form virtual choirs, and much like in church, we sometimes get to hear children’s voices in the background, which reminds us that we are as a family together, getting through this one day at a time.

KERSAINT FILS SAINT-JUSTE (BTh STUDENT)

This semester has been challenging and different in many ways. One of the difficulties has been, what I call, Zoom fatigue. The 15+ hours of weekly class time, which would usually be in person, has been replaced by endless staring at a computer screen. The strain that this number of hours in front of a screen gives, in addition to the countless other hours spent sifting through online material, is one that has been quite tiring. Nevertheless, an advantage of Zoom that cannot be overlooked is the increased accessibility of school. To be able to wake up at 8:25, for a class at 8:30 a.m. has been nothing short of a blessing in its own right! ■



A College Responding to the Pandemic

The College has been making adjustments for the pandemic context in the same way that congregations, families and other organizations have been making adjustments. Our building is operational on a limited basis, with faculty and staff present in a staggered fashion during the week. It is fair to say that 3495 University Street is a much quieter place these days, and we miss the busyness of the College, especially on Wednesdays when we would normally gather for worship and community life. The library remains operational in a very limited way, and a few students have found it as a place of reprieve; a refreshing change of scenery during the week.

Students of the college are spread across the country, and even the world, this year through online classes. From Edmonton to Prince Edward Island, over to Ireland,

and all the way to Taiwan. Adjusting for time zones has become a regular feature of college life! This reflects the fact that all courses of the College through partner organizations such as McGill University and the Montreal School of Theology are online for the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 semesters. As many others, we are hopeful that the Fall 2021 semester might see a return to in-person classes. While online education offers flexibility and unique pedagogical possibilities, we also believe that nothing can make up for the gifts and dynamics of in-person discussion and learning.

Chapel and community life continue to happen online. One of the gifts of such online sharing is that we have been able to bring in guest preachers with greater ease. We were grateful to welcome the Rev. Denise Allen-Macartney (Class

of '09 and previous Board member) on October 7th and will be hosting guest preachers from further afield during the year. A Zoom break-out group doesn't quite make up for conversation in the upstairs lounge, but we have been grateful for the opportunity to connect and build community in this way. Weekly prayer times remain available in the same format, and we continue to pray for one another, that God will bless and provide and lead us all in these days. ■



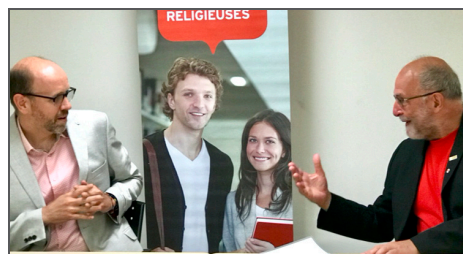
New Agreement with Laval University

The Presbyterian College is pleased to announce the signing of a new agreement with the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences of Laval University, for the collaborative offer of a new theology program (Masters level) in Practical Theology. This new agreement represents an expansion of our existing collaboration with the Institut de

Théologie pour la Francophonie (ITF). The relationship with Laval extends the opportunities for graduate, theological study in French for students within the Province of Quebec, and represents an opportunity to contribute to the formation of missional pastors in our context.

It is exciting for us to indicate that as of this autumn there are a total of 17 students enrolled in these two collaborative programs—9 students in the collaborative Master of Theology program with Université Laval and 8 students in the Master of Theological Studies program offered by The Presbyterian College with ITF.

Theological education in a changing world requires ever greater collaboration. Why? Because the questions and complexities are large and because more can be accomplished by sharing ideas, understandings, and visions than by going it alone. Such collaboration is also an expression of our unity in Christ. What we have in common, through the grace of God, is greater than our differences. Embracing this commonality and this shared life through theological education is a sign to the world of our sharing in God's love in Christ. We trust that this new theology program will concretely express just this sharing. ■



Faculty Spotlight—Gerbern Oegema

LUCILLE MARR



Professor Gerbern Oegema

Professor Gerbern Oegema is a long-time Associate Member of The Presbyterian College. His presence at the college dates from 2002 when he came from the University of Tübingen to the Faculty of Religious Studies (now School of Religious Studies) at McGill University as Professor of Biblical Studies. Soon after he came to Montreal he joined The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul.

Ger was born in the Netherlands and grew up in a Dutch Reformed church, where it was expected that people would conform to community norms. Attending the Christian Reformed Free University of Amsterdam dramatically changed his dreams of becoming a minister and pastoring in a hospital setting. He discovered a deep love for studies and would go on to become a Biblical scholar and linguist with proficiency in Coptic, Syriac, Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Further studies at the Free University of Berlin and the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem brought him into deeper relationship with the Bible and the tradition of Judaism out of which the Christian scriptures emerged.

Ger is a much appreciated professor of Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism; he is known for his warm welcoming of students into his already bulging classrooms. He's been known to take his classes into the chapel to provide room for more students. During his years of teaching at McGill, he has seen immense change in the size and make-up of his classrooms. Classes have grown, and the majority are no longer from the Bachelor of Theology program. Students in many disciplines, as he put it, are "interested in everything religious."

Ger noted that he likes to be busy and in addition to his teaching, continues an active program of scholarly work. This includes classical Biblical scholarship where he is working on a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew and a book on Paul. He also keeps up in non-canonical literature and is currently editing a handbook of the Apocrypha.

In 2006, Ger was invited to start a Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR) in what was then known as the Faculty of Religious Studies; the centre ran for about a decade before the Faculty of Arts closed it down. He continues to plan conferences through the Montreal Council for Research in Religion and in recent years has organized fruitful gatherings focusing on 500

Years of the Reformation, and other areas including Religion and Violence, and Religion and Climate Change. Conference papers have been published in CREOR E-Journal, avoiding the delays of the print medium.

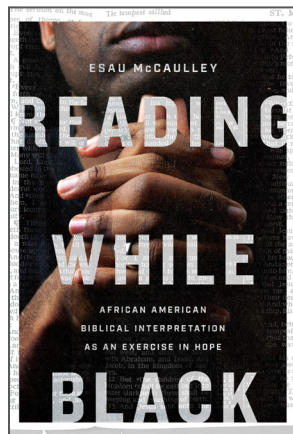
Ger shared that although he has never been ordained, he has had opportunities to preach both in the Faculty of Religious Studies, when it still had a chapel program, and also at The Presbyterian College. His pastoral presence is felt in the classroom and in the important work that he does through conferences.

Ger aims to live his life fully, embracing change, something he learned from his grandmother who taught him as a young boy: "If you don't embrace change you don't learn everything you can." During Ger's time as Associate at The Presbyterian College he has witnessed many changes, including becoming a father later in life. Ger and his wife Diana Dimitrova, who is a Professor of Hinduism at the University of Montreal, are the proud parents of two young children, Katie and Alex.

As we continue to embrace change at The Presbyterian College, we are grateful that one thing that has remained constant over these last nearly twenty years is Gerbern Oegema's collaboration and optimistic support of our students and our work. ■

Library—New Book Notes

It goes without saying: Books are at the heart of theological education. Here are a few new titles in the Joseph C. McLelland Library of The Presbyterian College, and which we think worth sharing with our wider community.



Esau McCaulley is an Anglican Priest and professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, and explores what he refers to as an “unapologetically Black and orthodox reading of the Bible”. As he begins his book, he names the often-conflicting voices of the theological traditions around him—and the way that white progressives or white evangelicals often weaponize the voices of certain Black voices against others.

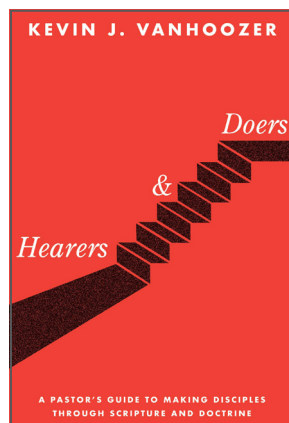
He goes on to explore, among other things, the theology of policing, the nature of political witness, and Black identity. As Tish Warren writes of the book: “*Reading While Black makes clear how the Scriptures...are the source of Black justice and liberation, and how an orthodox belief in the authority of the Bible bolsters the dignity and flourishing of people of color in America.*”—Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).



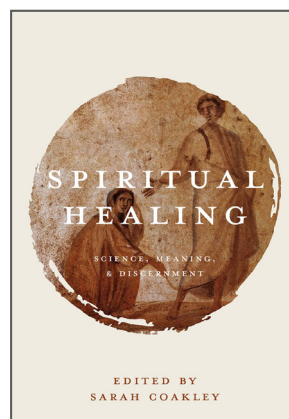
The timing for the publication of Jay Y. Kim's book, *Analog Church*, is interesting. It advocates for tremendous care in our use of digital modes of learning and being together, and insists that presence and transcendence are key to the life of the church. In our present moment, as we wrestle with absence and presence in a pandemic context, Kim's insight will help us explore digital options faithfully and with care. And when

we return to greater levels of in-person gathering, we will need his thoughts on how to preserve newly learned digital tools in helpful and faithful ways. A book for our moment!—Jay Y.

Kim, *Analog Church: Why we need real people, places, and things in the digital age*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020).



Kevin Vanhoozer is well known and widely-published professor of theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. In this particular book, Vanhoozer turns also toward the life of the church and the practical work of shaping disciples. He reminds us that while the culture around us is preoccupied with physical fitness, the church has neglected its members' spiritual fitness. And the discipline of theology is important for refocusing our attention on spiritual fitness and discipleship. He summarizes: “Theology is about learning how to live out Christ's life in us (Gal 2:20), a life that includes cruciform wisdom (1 Cor 2:2) and resurrection power (Phil 3:10).... Theology sets out the new reality in Christ and urges disciples to step into it.”—Kevin Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's guide to making disciples through scripture and doctrine*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).



Sarah Coakley is one of the most interesting theologians writing today, and has been particularly interested in the overlap between scientific and theological discourses. This collection of essays looks at questions of spiritual healing (and the meaning of spiritual healing) from historical, theological, and scientific points of view. Sarah Coakley herself opens with an introductory chapter in which she

reminds us that in many respects the medical and scientific disciplines have become open to questions of meaning and interpretation that we bring to our experiences of healing—that is, that meaning-making (including theological meaning-making) shapes our bodies and our experiences of illness or wellbeing. The more challenging question of exploring how God might bring direct healing to us and our bodies is also explored.—Sarah Coakley, *Spiritual Healing: Science, Meaning, and Discernment*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020). ■

Work: What am I doing?!

We have been grateful, this Fall, to partner with Christian Direction Montreal in order to offer another installment of our Faith and Work program. As we think about the mission of God, so much of our focus in the church is on what congregations can do to participate in what Christ is doing in the world. And we often forget that, for most people, their participation in the mission of God is mostly through their everyday work, rather than through congregational programs. We need, it seems, a much-expanded view of what it means to share in what God is up to in our neighbourhoods and society.

This year's Faith and Work series was a combination of workshops and webinars, with the workshops led by the Rev. Tim Keener, who was previously Director of our Leadership Centre and now is the Director of Christian Direction. The webinars involved conversations with guests who brought their own unique experiences with work into our dialogue, to enrich our understanding of our own work.

Sometimes it isn't obvious how exactly we can think of our work as a participation in what God is doing—we haven't been trained to think in these ways. However, Tim Keener provided us with a helpful tool for thinking about our own work. Perhaps it will be a helpful tool for you, also. As you think about your work and what it involves, perhaps consider whether it might be part of what God is doing in the following areas:

Providential Work? Is your work a participation in what God is doing to provide for and sustain human life?

CREATIVE CALLING: INTEGRATING FAITH AND WORK

Thursday evenings
7:00-8:15 p.m. (EST)
October 29-December 3

Sign up for this six week online program, exploring the integration of our work with God's work.



CHRISTIAN DIRECTION



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TIM KEENER
Executive Director
Christian Direction



PATRICIA HEWLIN
Professor
Desautels School of Management
McGill University



FIONA CROSSLING
Directrice générale
Accueil Bonneau



STEVEN GARBBER
Senior Fellow for Vocation
M.J. Murdock Trust

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Creative Work? Is your work a sharing with God in the fashioning of the physical and human world so that it is liveable and accessible?

Redemptive Work? Is your work a participation in God's saving and reconciling work—God's work of renewing people and relationships?

Justice Work? Is your work an expression of what God is doing through Christ in order to establish justice in our world?

Compassionate Work? Is your work a participation in the work of God who, by the Spirit, is guiding and healing and comforting women and men and families?

Revelatory Work? Is your work a sharing in God's work of illuminating the truth; of reminding us of what is the truth in our lives and society?

The Presbyterian College will continue to bring energy and attention to the relationship between faith and work, because we know that this is where most of us live our daily lives. Doing our best to understand what our work means, how it brings meaning, and how it gives expression to the love and grace of God in Christ. We hope you will continue to join us and support us in this vital work. ■

Support the Mission of The Presbyterian College

If you wish to make a one-time donation in support of the College, its students and its mission, you may do so by any of the payment options below. If you wish to make a multi-year pledge, or if you wish to discuss a possible Planned Gift, we would be grateful for a conversation and encourage you to be in touch with either of the following:

Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries, Principal: rdevries@pcmtl.ca | Ms. Tahra De Lallo, Development Officer: tdelallo@pcmtl.ca

Funding Areas at The Presbyterian College.*

- Area of Greatest Need
- Student Support and Bursaries
- Digital/Online Resources
- Facilities Renewal
- Faith and Work, Leadership Centre

**Please note that with changing circumstances at The Presbyterian College over time, your contribution may be directed to an alternative area of real need.*

Donation by e-Transfer

You may send a donation by e-Transfer from your financial institution or, in many cases, directly from your smartphone. Please send any e-Transfer to accounting@pcmtl.ca. In the notes that accompany your e-Transfer, please indicate the area of need (see list above) where your contribution should be directed.

Donation by Cheque

For a one-time donation by cheque, please make your cheque payable to The Presbyterian College. Please indicate in the “memo” the funding area you choose (see list above). Please mail your cheque to:

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To set up regular pre-authorized payments, please be in touch with the College office by e-mail at reception@pcmtl.ca.

Donation by Credit Card

Please fill out the information below and mail it to the college. Or e-mail us at reception@pcmtl.ca to arrange credit card payment over the phone.

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Thank you for your generosity!

Acknowledging gifts In Honour and In Memory

The Presbyterian College has received many gifts which have been given *In Honour* of those who have celebrated anniversaries, birthdays, degrees or another significant milestones. Other gifts are *In Memory* of someone who passed away, and as a way of recognizing the importance of their life. Gifts were given in honor or in memory of the following:

Mrs. Grace Mackay Bragg
 Mrs. Bessie James Budwin
 Rev. John Carson
 Dr. Robert Culley
 Mr. James Douglas Dimock
 Rev. Dr. Allan M. Duncan, Grad 1957, Hon. D.D. 1990
 Rev. Dr. Lloyd W. Fourney, Grad 1969, Hon. D.D. 1999
 Rev. Thomas Gemmell, Grad 1963
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 Mr. William (Bill) Walker
 Rev. Dr. Dale S. Woods
 Rev. William Campbell Smyth, Grad 1970
 Rev. David C Robertson, Grad 1970
 Rev. Earle Roberts, Grad 1955, Hon. D.D. 1982
 David T. Craig, Grad 1966

* If you would like to give a gift in honor or in memory please contact Tahra De Lallo for more information: tdelallo@pcmtl.ca
 No matter how big or how small, *In Honour* and *In Memory* gifts recognize the gift of others and will be recognized not only here, but also in our newsletter annually. Please contact the Presbyterian College for more information.

This is a new program at The Presbyterian College. If we have omitted someone's name, our sincere apologies. Please contact our Development and Stewardship Officer, Tahra De Lallo at tdelallo@pcmtl.ca so we can make the necessary corrections.



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