

anthem

SPRING 2017 THE MAGAZINE OF AMBROSE UNIVERSITY

Making Connections

Forging links to opportunity,
careers, vision and faith
at Ambrose

It takes a village | The art of Christianity | Something fishy | Rethinking holiness

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“When we learn what someone else thinks... it doesn't diminish us or our situation. It strengthens us individually and collectively.

Dr. Monetta Bailey

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Making connections

University studies are fundamentally about education and formation, including cultivating the capacities for critical thinking, innovation and creativity. This is also a time to explore calling — vocation, work and career.

We do not reduce study at university to training for a job; a fulsome university education includes job training, but it is so much more than that. This is a tremendous opportunity to explore possibilities: to get to know oneself, recognize the call of God and make the connections that will foster greater capacity for engaging in the good work to which one is being called.

Business students forge connections throughout their studies. Education and Behavioural Science students recognize that their practicums are an indispensable part of their development. But there is more. All our students are on a trajectory of discovering vocation.

An English major, minoring in philosophy, makes the connections that lead to the study of law at the University of Calgary. A Biology major concludes through time in her studies that she is called into the work of occupational therapy. Throughout the Ambrose journey, connections are made — with professors, fellow students, practitioners in the field and, as often as not, a pastor.

Each of these points of connection is a God moment: a providential encounter that opens doors, clarifies vision and sustains hope for each person's capacity to make a difference in the world.

Playing even a small role in making connections and sparking those moments is among our greatest joys as a university. We share that joy in this issue of *Anthem*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon T. Smith".

Gordon T. Smith, PhD

*President
Professor of Systematic and Spiritual Theology*



Throughout the Ambrose journey, connections are made — with professors, fellow students, practitioners in the field and, as often as not, a pastor.

Breaking News

Lions Athletics is thrilled to announce that the ACAC has accepted their bid to enter into outdoor soccer for the 2018/19 season of competition. Our futsal teams will use this coming year to prepare for the transition to outdoor play, welcoming Reaghan Zilkie and Adam Monkman as head coaches in the 2018/19 season.

For the latest news and information, visit ambrose.edu/news

Collaborating with Tyndale on missions

Ambrose University and Tyndale University College and Seminary have worked together successfully many times in the past. Now, the two are aligning strategically to break down organizational and geographic silos. A new two-year Memorandum of Understanding, starting July 1, 2017, will see Ambrose's Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives and Tyndale's Intercultural Ministries Centre collaborate intentionally — bringing people together to reflect on new ways of doing intercultural studies and missions, and unleashing the value in joint development of ministry connections to seek greater Kingdom impact related to global missions, locally and overseas. The partners strive to create a model for organizations wishing to accentuate their impact, and the initial focus will be on expanding and developing research, the UReach ministry, online courses and regional forums. "We're asking how we can be more and do more," explains Charles Cook, director of the Jaffray Centre. "We hope this is the beginning of what other organizations can do together. Our aim is to strengthen Christian unity and to work jointly as we seek grants for special projects."



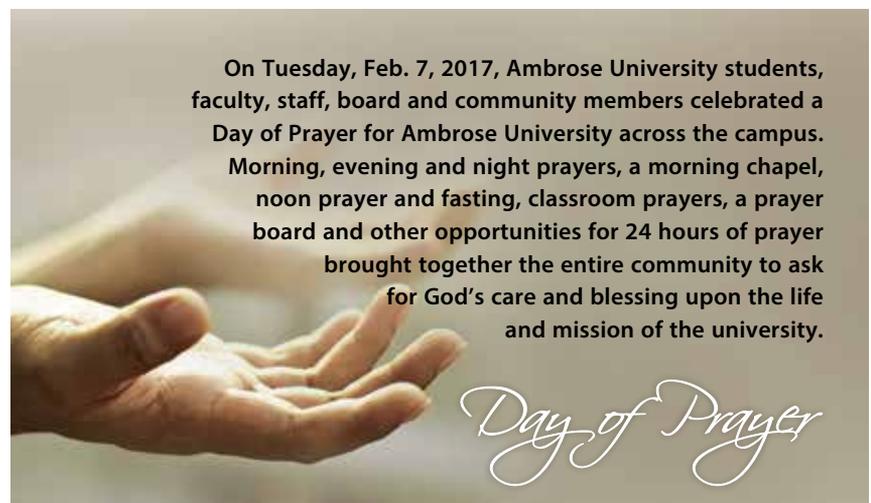
Left to right: Ambrose President Gordon T. Smith, Dr. Charles Cook and Tyndale President Gary V. Nelson

Rising to the poverty challenge

The Canadian Poverty Institute's Poverty Studies Summer Institute, June 5–23, 2017, was highlighted in early May by Faith in Canada 150, an initiative powered by Cardus to celebrate the role of faith in Canadians' lives throughout sesquicentennial celebrations in 2017. "Right now systems are siloed and fragmented," Derek Cook, director of the CPI, is quoted as saying, adding he hopes the students, practitioners and ministry workers who take part in the Summer Institute will learn new skills to "work horizontally in a vertically organized system."



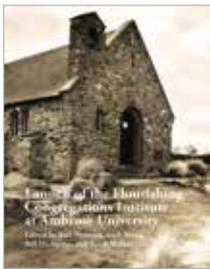
Read more about the Summer Institute in this issue of *Anthem* and visit povertyinstitute.ca/poverty-studies-summer-institute for details.



On Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017, Ambrose University students, faculty, staff, board and community members celebrated a Day of Prayer for Ambrose University across the campus. Morning, evening and night prayers, a morning chapel, noon prayer and fasting, classroom prayers, a prayer board and other opportunities for 24 hours of prayer brought together the entire community to ask for God's care and blessing upon the life and mission of the university.

Partnerships strengthen flourishing congregations

Through its research and community-building, Ambrose University's Flourishing Congregations Institute plays a vital role in deepening understanding about why congregations thrive, sharing insights that can help to revitalize and invigorate vibrant congregational life. Religious and many other organizations alike, across Canada and beyond, benefit from the FCI's many research activities and the knowledge shared widely as a result. The FCI is set to embark on only its second year, has a national survey in the works — and is already making a difference. It continues to grow partnerships, encourage conversations and inspire co-operation. Joining Ambrose in supporting the FCI's essential research undertakings is Cardus, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (Canadian Midwestern and Western Canadian Districts), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Turning Point Consulting, University of Saskatchewan, Willow Creek Canada and World Vision. Visit flourishingcongregations.org for more information about the Institute.



Writing a new chapter

A Preliminary Look at Flourishing Congregations in Canada: What Church Leaders are Saying captures the highlights gleaned from Phase I interviews and focus groups in the ongoing research project led by Dr. Joel Thiessen, professor of Sociology and director of the Flourishing Congregations Institute. The book documents the central findings and presentations from the FCI's launch in November 2016, and

includes a series of blogs written for the website over the past year. A free PDF is available at flourishingcongregations.org (hard copies also can be ordered).



Building community, one program at a time

On January 26, 2017, students had the opportunity to spend the day getting to know their professors and classmates beyond the classroom. Program Day is an annual tradition at Ambrose University. An intentional opening in the school year, it provides space for professors to design activities that help students see what's going on in the wider world of their discipline, hear from experts in their field or simply get to know each other and their subject better.

Several programs left campus to explore what Calgary and area had to offer them. The History program visited the Sports Hall of Fame and engaged in conversation with its curator. The Music and Theatre programs learned how the city promotes the arts through a tour of the National Music Centre. The Christian Studies program enjoyed a retreat at Mount St. Francis on the outskirts of Cochrane.

Other programs offered tailored learning activities and time for reflection. The Education cohorts held a day focused on Learning Through the Arts, giving students ideas and tools to take back to their practicum classrooms. Meanwhile, School of Ministry students had the opportunity to interact with a panel of inner-city pastors, and the Seminary took a retreat day focused on soul care and community. Across Ambrose it was a special day of learning, growth and community building.



Walking the road to reconciliation



When the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was released in 2015, Ambrose University President Gordon T. Smith established a university commission to determine how Ambrose, which rests on Treaty 7 land, should respond. The commission, comprising professors, students and staff, has met regularly over the past three semesters, and the university also held a Truth and Reconciliation Chapel Series that invited the wider community into the process. On April 4, 2017, the commission's report was formally released at the final gathering in the TRC Chapel Series. Among the commission's recommendations is that Ambrose engage in activities that confront colonial attitudes and also create space for mutually beneficial relationships to flourish.

Next steps will involve consulting with Indigenous Elders and educators, developing curriculum that builds reconciliation, seeking ways to decolonize the campus culture and honouring an Indigenous understanding of land in the way Ambrose stewards campus space. Read more and access the commission's full report at ambrose.edu/road-reconciliation.

An Ambrose builder retires

Dr. Bernie Potvin retired in December 2016, trading his on-campus days for opportunities to embark on new personal and professional



pursuits beyond Ambrose. The associate professor of Education's long career at the University includes leading development of the Bachelor of Education (After Degree) program, serving as interim associate dean, developing online learning in the Ambrose Seminary, teaching courses in Educational Psychology and a short term as dean of Arts and Science.

For the past five years, Potvin has also invested deeply beyond Ambrose, leading a team of international educators building a teaching and learning infrastructure from the ground up in Afghanistan. "You are a change agent and a passionate advocate for those you are called to serve," says Dr. Linda Schwartz, dean of Arts and Science, at a special event celebrating Potvin's tenure at Ambrose.

"The many teachers here in Alberta, across Canada, and around the globe, for whom you have been and continue to be a colleague and mentor, are grateful for your diligence and care for their welfare as pre-service and new teachers."

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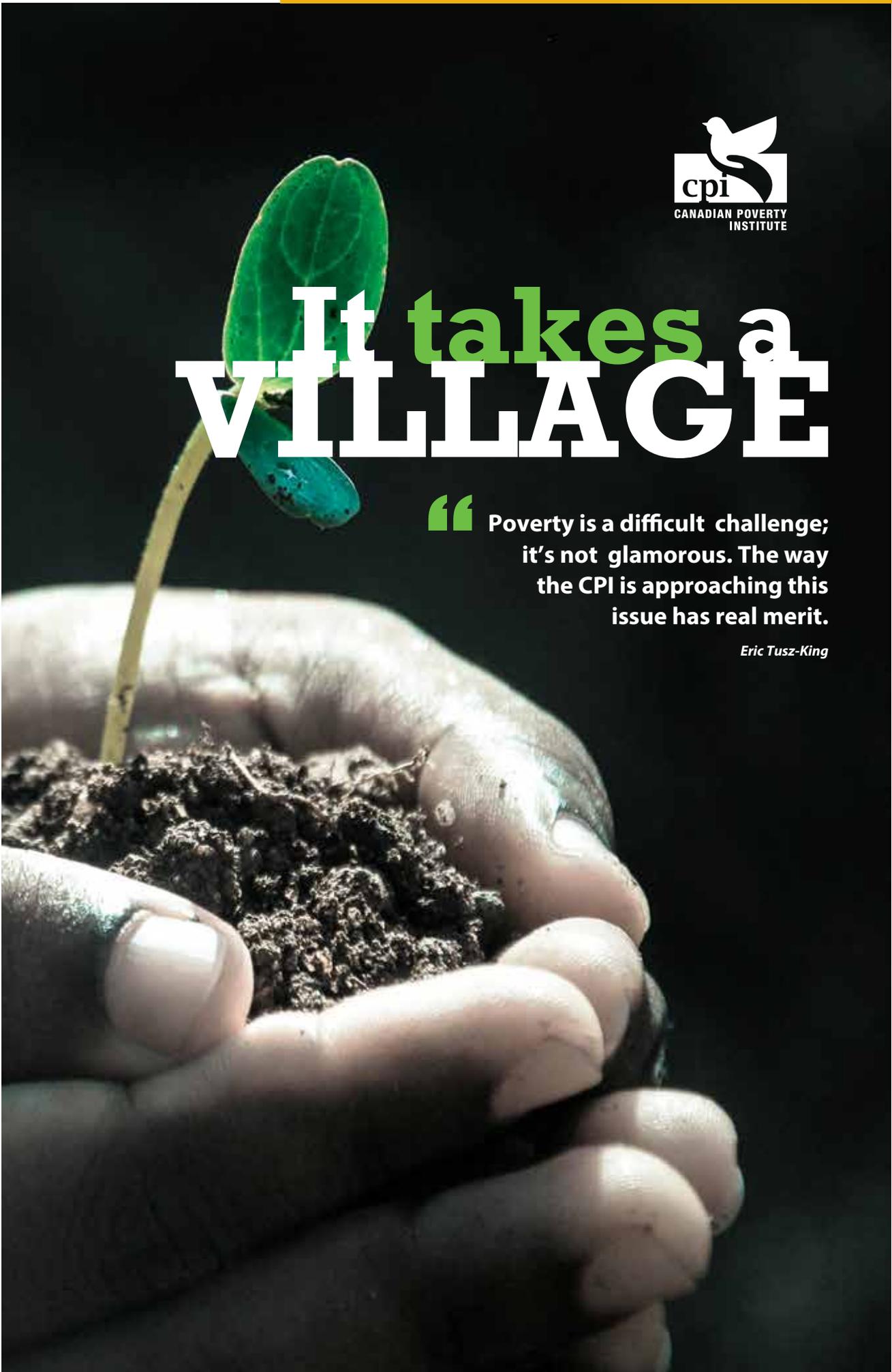
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A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a mound of dark, rich soil. A small, vibrant green seedling with two leaves is growing out of the soil. The background is dark, making the hand and the plant stand out.

It takes a VILLAGE

“Poverty is a difficult challenge; it’s not glamorous. The way the CPI is approaching this issue has real merit.

Eric Tusz-King

Answering the question of poverty in Canada requires ideas and inspiration from across the nation. The new and innovative Poverty Studies Summer Institute brings passion and minds together

Students, practitioners and ministry workers from across Canada and beyond will gather at Ambrose University this summer to share thoughts and ideas to respond to one of society's most vexing challenges: reducing and ending poverty.

Participants who attend any or all of the inaugural Poverty Studies Summer Institute's intensive courses and workshops — presented by Ambrose's Canadian Poverty Institute from June 5–23, 2017 — for a day, a week or the full three weeks will be immersed in active learning and discussion about the causes and impacts of poverty, and explore leading practices to alleviate and end it.

"The CPI looks at the material, social and spiritual dimensions of poverty, and we hope to connect people who are working on poverty in different ways," explains Dr. Beth Stovell, associate professor of Old Testament and one of the CPI's faculty associates who will teach a course on a biblical theology of justice in the Summer Institute. "Because poverty has so many dimensions, we need multiple approaches. We need to break down the silos that inevitably form when people work independently.

"The people who attend will be here for more than 'academic learning' about poverty," she says. "These are people who want to implement and make change, and are looking for practical actions they can take, in addition to being part of discussions."

The topics to be covered will be as multifaceted as poverty itself, ranging from community organizing, to human rights, to the psychological impacts of poverty, to how collaboration can work.

Eric Tusz-King, a United Church minister from Sackville, N.B., is excited to be taking part in the Summer Institute, and to lead a course he has developed as a course director for CoopZone, which helps support the formation of co-operatives.

"The Institute is bringing together poverty reduction, co-ops and faith," he notes. "There are few opportunities for two of those to come together, let alone all three. This is a wonderful model. Having people come to the campus is an exceptional opportunity to work with others and have hands-on experiences.

"I hope that young people who take part will be motivated to make a career in the area of poverty reduction. I hope they will be inspired to work with others to change perspectives and ideas about working in this area, and that we can grow capacity. And because I believe the co-op model is very good for getting people out of poverty, I hope to help participants become leaders and facilitators."

Beth Stovell is looking forward to sharing the work she participated in on child poverty with the CPI, and also sees the Summer Institute as a way to expand Ambrose's role in improving the lives of Calgarians. As the University's representative on the Metro Alliance for the Common Good, she sees the importance of and value in people from different backgrounds, communities and circumstances coming together in shared purpose — and to take action.

"In our city and across Canada, I see the real need for poverty-reduction and other social programs on a practical level," she says. "I want to take the education side, like what we do with the CPI and the Summer Institute, and the biblical side and mesh that with what we can do practically.

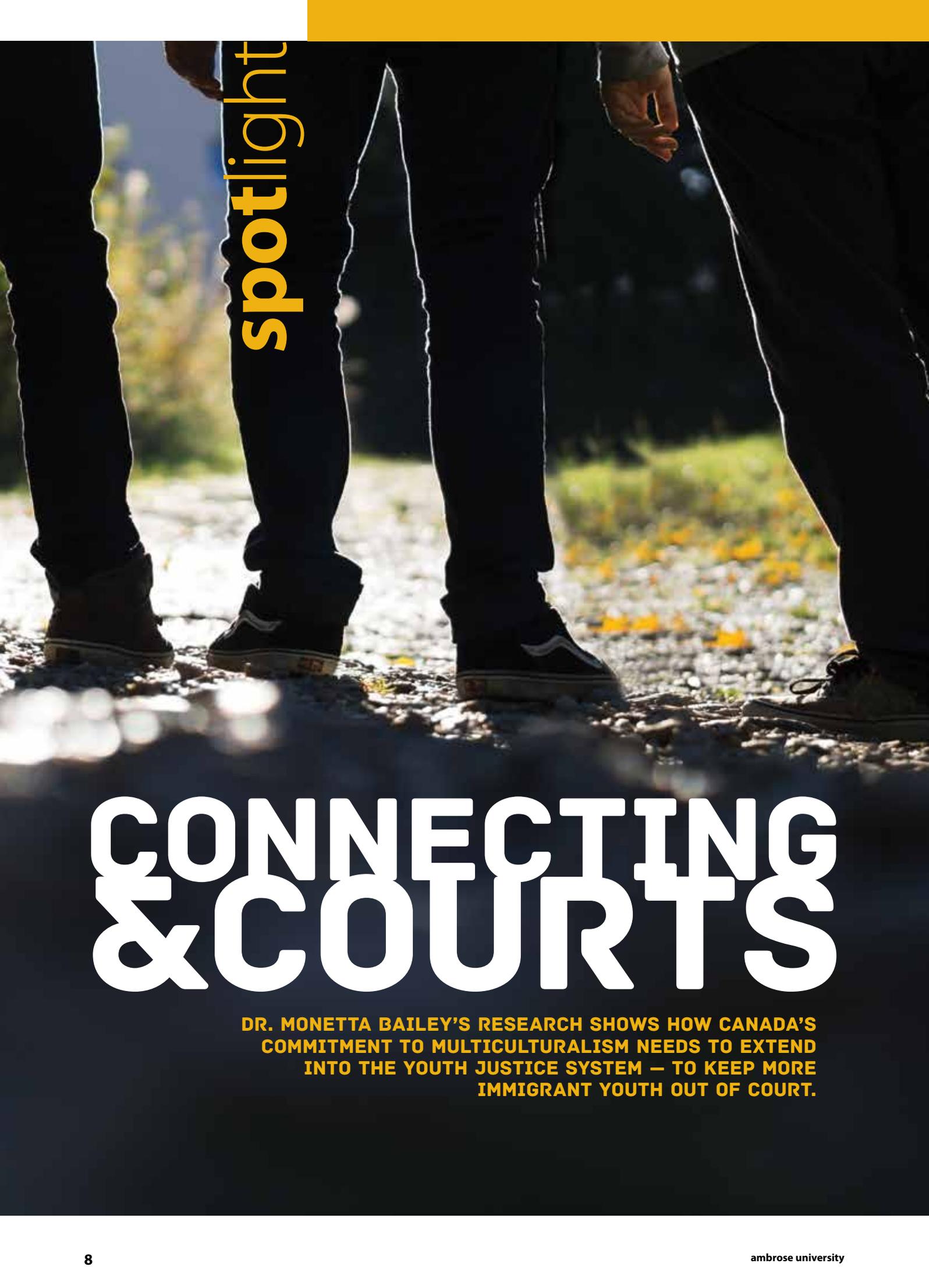
"I hope that by bringing people together, they can see and understand each other, and they can tap into resources in the future to help them move forward in the difficult work they do. Ultimately, I hope this percolates throughout communities, and that it changes practice."

Eric Tusz-King shares that optimism. "Poverty is a difficult challenge; it's not glamorous. The way society and governments tend to respond is by soothing guilt and moving on to other issues. Because the issue is so complex, people don't gravitate towards it, and the success rate is not the best. But the way the CPI is approaching this issue has real merit." □

Full details about the Poverty Studies Summer Institute are available on the CPI website, povertyinstitute.ca/poverty-studies-summer-institute.

I hope that by bringing people together, they can see and understand each other, and they can tap into resources in the future to help them move forward in the difficult work they do.

Beth Stovell



spotlight

CONNECTING & COURTS

**DR. MONETTA BAILEY'S RESEARCH SHOWS HOW CANADA'S
COMMITMENT TO MULTICULTURALISM NEEDS TO EXTEND
INTO THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM — TO KEEP MORE
IMMIGRANT YOUTH OUT OF COURT.**



While working with the Calgary Youth Justice Society, Monetta Bailey became acutely aware of the high number of youth born outside of Canada whose actions brought them into conflict with the law and the justice system. The assistant professor of Sociology in Ambrose University's Bachelor of Arts – Behavioural Science program wondered specifically what these youth were experiencing in the Extrajudicial Sanctions Program. The federal program diverts young people aged 12–18 from the court system by enabling those who commit less-serious offences to appear before a Youth Justice Committee.

The research project Bailey launched in 2012 to complete her PhD sought to answer some fundamental questions. Is any attention being paid to the differences between immigrant youth and Canadian-born youth who are involved with the criminal justice system? Does one approach really fit all youth? If justice is blind and treats everyone equally, must the approach be the same for everyone, even when people's backgrounds are so different? Should our approach to youth justice take into account ethnicity, mental health, immigration status, physical or developmental disabilities or other potentially relevant situations?

Bailey's research put those questions in the spotlight, and what she saw is helping to transform approaches to youth justice in Alberta, and possibly beyond. Here are just some of her insights into a complex, evolving issue.

Understanding Alberta's approach

The federal Youth Justice Act leaves implementation of the Extrajudicial Sanctions Program up to each province. In Alberta, the approach is multi-layered. While the program is overseen by the Solicitor General, it falls to each municipality to establish processes that work for the city.

Calgary, for example, has more than 20 Youth Justice Committees. Each is based on geographic location and administered by volunteers trained in how to hear cases by the Canadian Youth Justice Society and the Calgary Youth Attendance Centre. When youth are being diverted from the court system, they meet with a Committee, and afterwards their parents or guardians, and are then given sanctions to complete in the community.

Direct observation of a number of hearings and interviews with youth, families, volunteers and others working in the justice system provided Bailey with the raw data for analysis. She focused on the laws, policies and guidelines relating specifically to the sanctions program in Alberta.

"In all of those layers, from federal on down, I saw no mention of the needs of immigrant youth," she says. "I found that highly problematic."

The multicultural conundrum

Canadians pride themselves on being multicultural, and the majority likes to think of the country as "colour blind." That may not be as good as it sounds.

"My key finding was that in not recognizing the differences between groups of people, we're actually doing

CONNECTING & COURTS

them and society a disservice,” Bailey says. “It sounds counterintuitive, but working through division is what fosters full inclusion.

“We keep people segregated when we do not acknowledge differences and do not intentionally foster inter-connection.” Ignoring immigrant status, race or ethnicity, then, can prevent the inclusion necessary to build a progressive society that is truly multicultural.

“We need ‘cross-contamination’ of cultures to happen.”

Fostering inclusiveness by challenging our own views

Full inclusion, Bailey explains, means “everyone has the opportunity to participate in society; people have an understanding of the law and what it means to be part of a civic community.”

This isn’t intuitive or second nature for people who are not born in Canada, who may behave in ways that result in them being excluded from a society that strives to be multicultural.

“Not only do our laws have to be outright inclusive,” Bailey says, “but in our laws and policies, we have to be okay with saying we are ‘pro immigration’ and ‘pro immigrant,’ and this means we have to pay attention to full inclusion.”

Interaction among diverse communities and people is a good first step, but it falls short of understanding. “We need to facilitate groups coming together to understand different world views,” she says. “We need a level of trust to understand what someone else feels and believes. When we learn what someone else thinks, when we listen to someone else, it doesn’t diminish us or our situation. It strengthens us individually and collectively.”

It is through these conversations that Canadian society evolves and adjusts to diversity. “It can scare

people to think that we are moving away from tradition, but while we may move away from traditional practices, that doesn’t mean we move away from traditional values.”

Pride in belonging — in being Canadian

One observation that sticks in Bailey’s mind centres on the idea of belonging, and how it resonates with immigrant families.

Almost all immigrant families who were interviewed for Bailey’s research, and especially the parents of children involved in the Extrajudicial Sanctions Program, were proud to be in Canada and conversations often circled back to

IN NOT RECOGNIZING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS OF PEOPLE, WE’RE ACTUALLY DOING THEM AND SOCIETY A DISSERVICE.

Monetta Bailey

“I am Canadian.” Though many spoke of experiencing racism, they accepted it as part and parcel of being Canadian.

“They spoke about pride in being Canadian in the same way they spoke about the challenges,” she says, “as if the two were intrinsically linked.”

But while immigrants seeing themselves as Canadian is a good thing, it can pose problems when justice system volunteers fail to see these families as more than “Canadian.” Bailey has high praise for the individuals who are passionate about helping others, but is concerned that they don’t always think about the dynamics of working with families who don’t necessarily speak English very well, or understand the power differential inherent in the fact that the volunteer represents the justice system.

“There is a tendency to see everyone as ‘just another Canadian,’ but families could be presenting themselves in a certain positive light because of the power inequality they perceive.”

How these insights are making a difference

What is youth justice intended to do? Who are we protecting? Youth? Or society? The system currently leans toward rehabilitating youth, with the belief that society is protected as a result. Paying more attention to the special needs of young people — and putting them on a trajectory for good life outcomes — will ripple positively throughout society.

Because of these and the focus on rehabilitation, Bailey’s research couldn’t come at a better time.

She is currently sharing her findings with the Alberta Solicitor General’s Office and the Calgary Youth Justice



Society, which are using them to inform new ways to address the particular needs of immigrant youth taking part in the Extrajudicial Sanctions Program.

Bailey’s research is also pointing to new avenues of inquiry that can build on and accentuate the impact of this initial work.

“Coming out of this is a real push to look at feelings of belonging, and how they relate to acts of deviance,” she says, “and exploring the relationship between belonging, marginalization, exclusion and deviance.”

“Our learning has only started.” □



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SOMETHING FISHY

When it comes to seafood, consumers may be swallowing fraud, hook, line and sinker

“ When researchers in the academic community investigate, we help hold the industry accountable.

Erin Wiberg

The salmon looks good. The cuttlefish is fresh. The red snapper is perfect.

Except it isn't salmon, cuttlefish or red snapper, but rather rainbow trout, iridescent shark and tilapia. As Ambrose University students discovered in a Genetics 211 research project conducted last fall, what consumers think they are buying — and eating — often isn't exactly as advertised.

“Fish mislabelling is a critical issue that threatens consumer confidence and calls into question

the integrity of the food industry,” explains student Erin Wiberg, who took part in the Ambrose class project alongside molecular ecology students from the University of Calgary. “When researchers in the academic community investigate, we help hold the industry accountable.”

Matthew Morris, assistant professor of Biology at Ambrose and a fish aficionado who specializes in genetics, initiated the real-world project to help make learning about DNA more tangible. Students gathered 60 fish samples from sushi vendors,



restaurants and grocery stores — triple the sample size of a 2014 U of C project — and DNA sequencing was completed at the University of Guelph.

Compared to similar research projects in other parts of Canada, the Calgary-area findings weren't unexpected: fully 23 per cent of the fish were labelled incorrectly (slightly lower than the national average of 25 to 30 per cent). And whether the mislabelling is accidental or simply imprecise, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency says it's illegal — and potentially dangerous.

What people don't know can hurt both people and fish. Morris points out that not knowing exactly what they're buying and eating could pose a serious health risk to people with allergies, and consumers pay more than they should when cheaper fish masquerade for more-expensive species. Imprecise labelling also means consumers can't consciously avoid buying at-risk species, and could inadvertently contribute to pushing certain species to the point of local extinction.

"As a consumer, you can buy something called 'cod,' and legally, the vendor doesn't have to tell you if it's Atlantic cod or Pacific cod," Morris explains. "Pacific cod are doing just fine, but Atlantic cod collapsed in the '90s — it's the single greatest loss of a vertebrate in Canadian history! But you can still buy Atlantic cod as 'cod,' not knowing that you will be eating a fish at the point of local extinction."

Knowledge can help inform consumers and contribute to a more-responsible industry. Students' data is being added to the online Barcode of Life database accessible to researchers worldwide. "Our hope is to build up a multi-year database specific to Calgary," Morris says. "As legislation is put into place to combat fish fraud over the next decade, we can see if it is having any consequences on the ground, because we can compare the datasets we are developing now with the dataset after the legislation has been put into place."

For students, the project was an opportunity to learn about DNA while making a meaningful contribution to science and society. As Kristen Limacher sums up the experience: "Having the opportunity to investigate the issue of fish mislabelling ... provoked my thinking of how being informed in all areas of society is crucial in order to maintain the standard of stewardship that I believe we are called to as Christians." □

Want fries with your mammal burger?

Matthew Morris makes a good point: "You can order 'fish and chips' at a restaurant, but you'd never see a 'mammal sandwich' or 'bird salad' on the menu. You want to know exactly what species is going into your meal — whether it's a sheep or a cow, a duck or a chicken."

He believes the tendency to lump all fish into a generic category stems partly from the fact that we don't have as much in common with them as we do with land-dwelling creatures. But Morris is filled with wonder and respect for the way fish make their way in the world.

"If we understood fish more, we'd care more. They have amazing parental systems and life history strategies.

"There are actually more species of fish on the planet than there are any other types of vertebrates (mammals and birds included). We're in the tens of thousands with species of fish, so what in the world is a 'fish and chips'?"





Sydney Ratzlaff (Bachelor of Arts – Behavioural Science 2017) and employment facilitator at the Mustard Seed.

Hire education

**When career opportunity
knocks, an Ambrose degree
is the key to opening
the door**

“ In addition to theoretical knowledge, our graduates have a degree of flexibility and adaptability that serves them and employers well.

Joy Ulrich

It's a whole new world of work.

Out is a guaranteed job for life. In is leveraging the relevant knowledge and practical skills employers crave — positioning yourself as a prime asset ready and able to make a difference. And with its liberal arts focus on personal, mental and spiritual formation, Ambrose University gives graduates a step up on the competition.

“The reality is you have to be assertive, build your network, talk to people and be more active in creating your own career path,” says Joy Ulrich, director of Career Development. “You're like your own mini small business, and your product is yourself.

“We are all ‘choice makers,’ and the first steps in choosing well are knowing yourself, knowing what the world of work is all about and finding out what you need to open career doors. Then you can make choices that are far more alive and full than if you take a passive approach.”

Doing so requires a keen understanding of abilities, passions, interests and goals, and Ambrose excels at providing the holistic learning experience that grows every aspect of a student's life. “Everything here — the classroom time, co-curricular opportunities, experiential learning, services and more — is done purposefully to enable students to develop as better, fuller people.

“In addition to theoretical knowledge, our graduates have a degree of flexibility and adaptability that serves them and employers well. We talk

about God's calling, about how vocation is deeper than ‘What should I be when I grow up?’ It's a richer conversation than might be possible at other universities, and very individualized.”

Sydney Ratzlaff (Bachelor of Arts – Behavioural Science 2017) knows firsthand the impact of insights gleaned at Ambrose. The employment facilitator at the Mustard Seed credits Ulrich for guiding her through a career assessment process, creating a brand new practicum opportunity and opening the doors to an internship at the Seed. Through this process, Ratzlaff's desire to help people discover their strengths and find meaningful employment evolved into a passion for working with people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

“University forces you to be open to more ideas, and to form your own opinions, rather than just agreeing with your professors or classmates,” Ratzlaff says. “I always knew I wanted to help people, and in my second year thought I wanted to teach. Now I help adults search for jobs, write resumes and prepare for interviews. I combine teaching and career development, which is very much in line with what I'm called to do.”

Living in residence at Ambrose for two years enabled her to learn from others, develop leadership skills and use her faith in a practical way. Group work prepared her to collaborate with others to solve problems. The experience overall gave her a strong foundation to stand on and the skills and confidence to be independent.

“My boss sees me as a leader and as someone who seeks out opportunities to share knowledge and contribute to a team,” Ratzlaff notes. “Ambrose definitely pushed me toward that. I totally appreciate being able to apply what I learned at Ambrose in my job every day.” □

A life-changing race

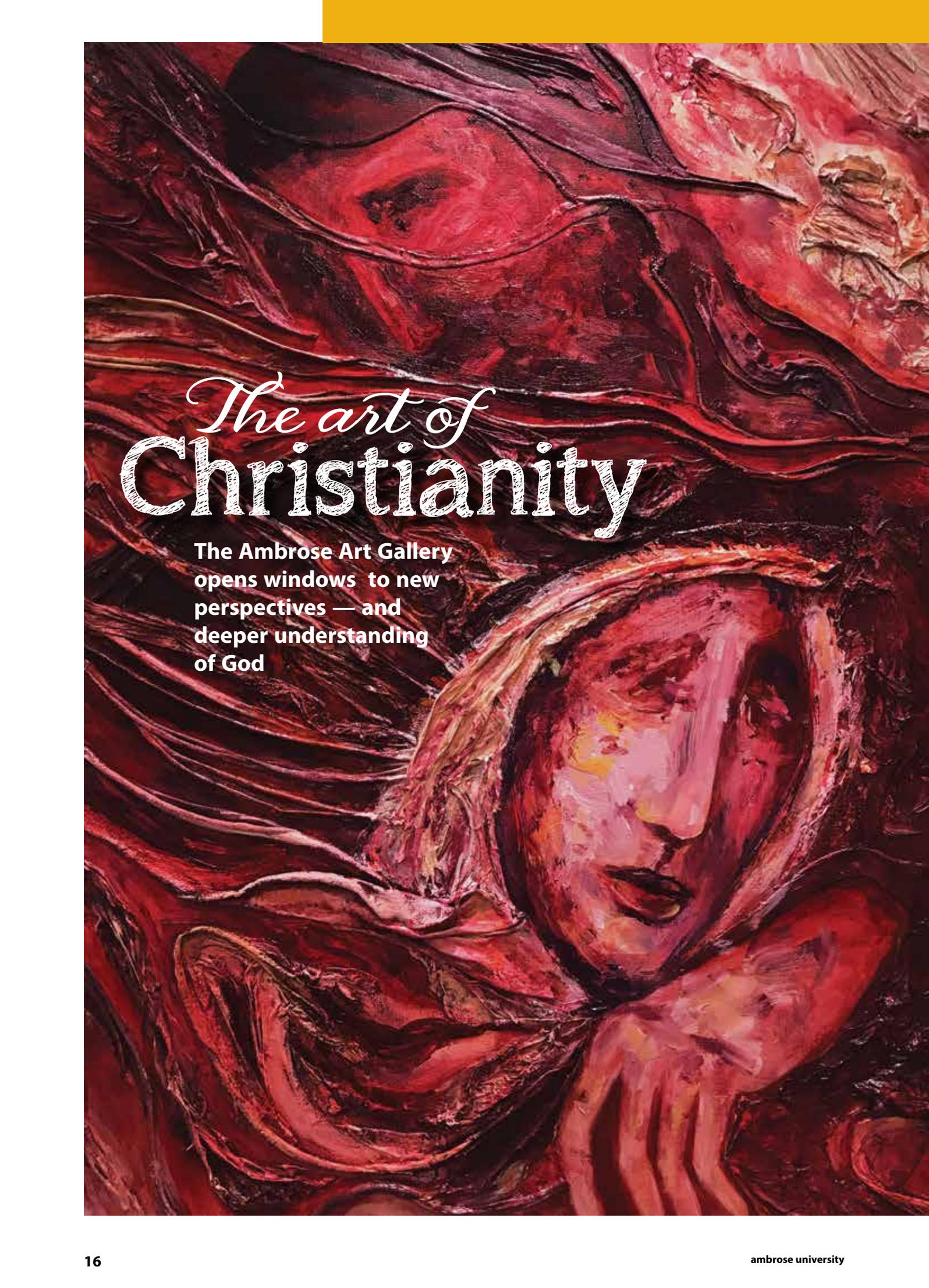
Bryanne Friesen (Bachelor of Music 2016) shared the story of her career journey at Chapel on Feb. 28, 2017. A fundraising adventure race called Race to 2025 with Wycliffe Bible Translators and her Ambrose University experience figured prominently in the narrative. Following are excerpts from her concluding comments.

“I graduated from Ambrose in April and the summer semester at CanIL [the Canadian Institute of Linguistics] started in June. I prayed before going ... I asked ‘God, either may I be really bad at linguistics and really dislike it or let me be really good at it and really love it. I don't want to be confused as to whether it is a good fit or not.’

“For nine weeks, I studied introductory linguistics with students from around the world. I met professors and missionaries who have worked in Bible translation for years. And I loved it. I found the courses so interesting. Homework was exciting. One of my textbooks commented that ‘linguistics is a scientific art’ and I thought about how I have always been strong in science but I chose to do a music degree. Could it be that a variety of my strengths could be combined in this new field that I felt God swung open out of the blue? Or, as I'm beginning to realize, maybe it wasn't out of the blue. I'm just still learning to see.

“God is using this experience to teach me to trust him just for the next step. I ask him to give me a love for his Word and for his people. To make me a blessing wherever I go and in whatever I do... As I have reflected on the summer and my future plans, I have decided to return to CanIL for a master's degree in Exegesis and Applied Linguistics in September.

“I didn't expect this path towards Bible Translation. I really didn't think I was preparing for it. But as I continue to follow God's direction, so many things seem to make more and more sense in His timing.”



The art of **Christianity**

**The Ambrose Art Gallery
opens windows to new
perspectives — and
deeper understanding
of God**

Through the arts, we gain deeper insight into the nature of God, our relationship with God and with each other ... with our world. ”

Campus Chaplain Terry Fach

“To be a human is to be much more than a cognitive, thinking ‘brain-on-a-stick.’ It is also to be a feeling, desiring, perceiving being. We experience and understand the mystery of our encounter with God in and through our humanness—through our guts, through our feelings, through our senses and perceptions. We apprehend truth in these non-cognitive ways as well.”

With those words, Terry Fach reveals how artists can provoke, challenge and deepen reflection on faith. For the Ambrose University Chaplain and co-curator of the Ambrose Art Gallery, it’s part and parcel of making a case for the necessity of the arts in life — and the Christian life in particular.

“The arts are necessary because they help us to more fully come to know and experience the one true God,” Fach explains. “It’s a very modern notion that the primary way we capture our understanding of God is through words and ideas. As the early Christian theologians crafted formulas to help us think about God they were also aware that their formulas were approximations. The 3rd century church Father Gregory of Nyssa warns: ‘Concepts create idols. Only wonder understands.’”

“But even the Bible doesn’t attempt to provide a definitive concept of God. It provides a variety of images—God is like a rock, a wind, a female bear, a mother hen, a king, a seamstress, a father, a mother in labour. These are word pictures that help us talk meaningfully about our experiences of God.”

Throughout Christian history, images and music have been powerful avenues of worship. Their value lies in a profound ability to express truths and emotions when propositions fall short.

“Art brings so much into our lives, so why not into our religious lives as well?” Fach asks. “Through the arts, we gain

deeper insight into the nature of God, our relationship with God and with each other ... with our world.”

Paintings, sculptures, poems, music and dramatic interpretations of biblical texts have long helped foster deeper understanding, he notes. “Sermoncraft at its best uses poetic imaging and story-telling. When St. Augustine noted that singing a text was to ‘pray it twice’ he was observing music’s power to dignify our written texts.”

So why, then, given their deep roots in Christianity, are the arts often seen as an afterthought, a “nice to have” instead of a “need to have,” or even something to be afraid of? Fach believes that we simply may be unsure about how to let our experiences of art inform our faith.

“As Christians, we can be nervous about modern or expressionistic art, or maybe about theatre and film,” he explains. “The arts challenge our habits of thinking or seeing and can make us uncomfortable. They can shock, confuse and anger, and also can capture goodness, beauty and love in a way that moves the soul. But the arts also contribute to God’s vision of shalom. They can provide rays of delight in a world often filled with misery, worry, pain and heaviness. They speak a universal language that transcends linguistic, cultural and economic barriers.”

Overcoming the reticence to consider art as a valid way to express and learn about God, Fach believes, is a key step in building and forming faith.

“I think we ought to embrace the mystery and beauty of God in as many creative media as possible,” he says. “We are able to gain deeper insight into our lives and into God’s life when we have the opportunity to enjoy and interact with good art.”

Through the Ambrose Art Gallery, he and the curating team aim to open the visual doors to that understanding. □

Art@Ambrose

The Ambrose Art Gallery opened in October 2016, making its home in a brightly lit space in the second-floor main hallway. Its displays are intentionally curated to encourage visitors — students, faculty and members of the public — on their spiritual journeys.

Currently, six works by Kate Lemke, a mixed-media artist from Edmonton, are on display. Using repurposed materials such as fabric scraps, acrylic, string and plastic, Lemke creates large, visually interesting pieces that capture the imagination and prompt reflection.

“As an artist, Kate is expressing her own faith, and her art comes from a profound religious vision,” says gallery co-curator Terry Fach. “We hope her works connect people with faith in a different way; that people can relate to their faith in Christ in visual and nonlinear ways.”



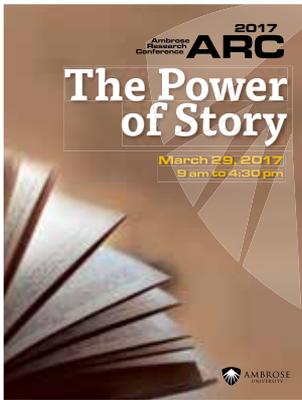
Photos courtesy Kate Lemke

THE GALLERY@ AMBROSE

The Gallery is open during Ambrose University operating hours. A new exhibit will be installed in the fall.

Refuge

Kate Lemke
Mixed media
on canvas
40x30"



Papers, presentations span diverse issues and interests at annual event

The learning ARC

“ ARC gave me a glimpse of what it would look like to do my own independent study, as well as giving me a chance to celebrate my fellow students’ accomplishments.

I felt amazed about the variety — many topics, many speakers, from faculty to students — and the openness, not only from the speakers, but also the free talk in each session. It opened up my mind. ”

This year’s Ambrose Research Conference, held March 29, 2017, was titled The Power of Story — and what a story it told.

Reflecting the rich tapestry of topics explored at the University, ARC offered new perspectives to all who took part. More than 60 workshops, posters and keynote addresses were presented during the jam-packed day, including two plenary sessions (Stories of Suffering and Stories of Hope) which explored the conference’s broad themes.

For students, ARC was a prime opportunity to showcase their research alongside that of alumni, faculty and staff. “This is a key part of the academic journey,” explains Mark Buchanan, associate professor of Pastoral Theology and member of the ARC organizing committee, along with Dr. Joel Thiessen (chair and associate professor of Sociology), Dr. Beth Stovell (assistant professor of Old Testament) and Dr. Monetta Bailey (assistant professor of Sociology).

“We understand students may not go on to academic careers, but students light up in scholarly debate. Good scholarship matters, hopefully for the rest of students’ lives.

“Regardless of career, knowing how to ask the right questions, where to go to find answers, how to separate the good from the bad and how to see biases is valuable. Scholarly inquiry helps develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are key attributes for employment and future success.”

The variety of topics presented, Buchanan notes, was “impressive,” offering a quintet of titles by way of example: The Jews Don’t Stand a Chance: Anti-Semitism in the United Nations. Unfolding Theology Through Child’s Play. The Role of Nanotechnology in Water Purification. Women’s Perspective of Tattoos on Men: A Quantitative Analysis. Personal Spiritual Experience and the Influence of the Church.

Taking part in research and presenting results to others is, in itself, an important learning opportunity. “The growing value Ambrose adds to learning is in creating multiple ways to learn, and in particular, helping learning to be collaborative,” Buchanan explains. “The way of scholarship is collaboration — and more and more employers want to know if you’re a team player.” □



Behavioural Science student Thando Mkhabela was among many taking part in the 2017 Ambrose Research Conference.

Photo by Kim McLachlan

Reaching out to a new generation open to the idea that reality is more than the material world

“There’s something right in the world right now, and people are receptive to exploring holiness.”

This sentence may be contrary to today’s gloom-and-doom media headlines, but Bernie Van De Walle, professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Ambrose University, is convinced people are ready to learn and talk about holiness in a different way — and the world will be a better place because of it.

Rethinking Holiness: A Theological Introduction, published in spring 2017, presents Van De Walle’s view that holiness is fundamentally a divine property speaking primarily about God’s way of being. For humanity, holiness describes a way of existing.

“Holiness is not primarily about behaviour,” he explains, “but of believing. We have long demanded a way of acting, but it wasn’t necessarily grounded in, nor did it flow from, a way of being. My suggestion is that behaviour must be predicated on being, in union with Christ and with the power of the Spirit.”

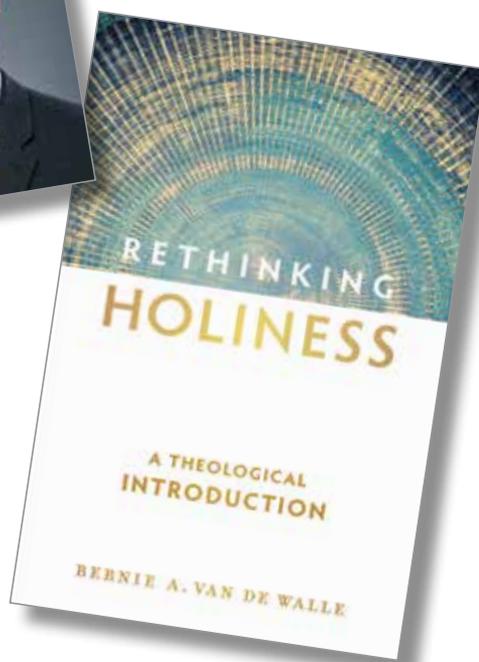
Written primarily for a lay audience or those in early post-secondary or seminary studies (and also relevant to scholars), the book looks at what it means to understand holiness as being, and not merely behaving. “I try to ground holiness in the person of God,” Van De Walle notes, “by not divorcing holiness, and certainly human holiness, from God.

“My aim is to create an understanding of holiness as a divine attribute, and show that we participate in it only in a derivative or consequential form. The source of holiness is our communion with God, and with God alone.”

In broadening the understanding of holiness, Van De Walle hopes to spur a deeper understanding of discipleship, and how the relationship with God compels people to engage with the wider world. “Christ is the means of our holiness and also the measure,” he says. “I hope this book will inspire people to be like Christ and to think about cultural engagement as an expression of holiness, not just as ‘a good thing to do.’”

“Let’s explore what it means to be holy in the world. Let’s knock down the fortress mentality that can limit our thinking, and use our deeper understanding to guide theology and the practice of community engagement.” □

Check out the Ambrose bookstore for other great reads, gifts and handicrafts. Want to represent your school in style? Shop our Ambrose gear and choose from more than just sweatshirts — although we have those! Add a touch of class with this classic insignia lapel pin.



RETHINKING HOLINESS

***Rethinking Holiness* draws on content Bernie Van De Walle developed for his popular Theology of Holiness course, offered as an elective at Ambrose University. The book is available at the University bookstore and through online retailers.**



The Stalder family
(L-R) Ryan and Natalie
Ehrenholz, Paul and
Briana Stalder, Lawrence
and Joy Stalder.



Photo courtesy Lawrence Stalder

Paths taken

A father's perspective... how Ambrose helps chart life's journeys

“Work is only part of life — a big part, but only part — and to be happy, you need everything else.”

Every parent is familiar with the mix of hope and anxiety that grows as a child takes the steps into independence and adulthood. Lawrence and Joy Stalder are no exception — and are grateful their children's journeys led to Ambrose University.

“It can be stressful on families when kids are trying to figure things out,” says Lawrence, a Calgary businessman who serves on the Ambrose Board of Governors. “We've learned to hold it lightly, because these are things for the Lord to handle.

“You can only direct kids so much; you point them in the direction you'd like them to go. They have to figure things out for themselves.”

Providing the environment in which to figure it out is where Ambrose shines, blending strong academic courses with professors who care about each student's success and opportunities to embrace and grow Christian faith. The experience broadens students' perspectives and world view and Stalder believes it was transformative for his daughter, Natalie, and especially for his son, Paul.

Enrolling in Ambrose's Bachelor of Arts – Behavioural Science program (with a minor in music) right after high school opened Natalie's eyes to the community. Through an internship at a local pregnancy care centre, for example, her parents saw how much she matured and grew personally. Natalie graduated in 2014 and is currently a music teacher.

Paul took a more circuitous route, struggling to find the right life path. Prior to enrolling in a music production degree elsewhere, he travelled overseas.

He changed his focus and enrolled at Ambrose to become a pastor, a decision that opened unexpected doors. Through internships, he was exposed to all facets of pastoral work — and learned it wasn't for him.

Paul discovered, to his surprise, that law ignited his passion. He graduated from Ambrose in 2015 and is currently in his second year of law school.

Stalder believes the “God moments” that happened at Ambrose enabled his son to find his calling. “Sometimes it just takes time, and giving kids options, providing them with a variety of ways forward, that's the key.

“Work is only part of life — a big part, but only part — and to be happy, you need everything else. As parents, we want our kids to be successful. We hope they will follow the Lord. The blend of academics and Christian education at Ambrose will help them succeed in the future.” □



awakening wonder

Paul Harvey (Business Administration '14) is quickly discovering what he learned in class and as a member of the Ambrose Lions volleyball squad was ideal training for a business that's on a roll.

Harvey and brother-in-law Eric Reynolds recently launched Canada's first mobile escape room business, riding the crest of a global trend in which people solve clues, riddles and puzzles in order to "escape" from a locked room. Mobile Escape was born as a unique social enterprise when the duo recognized escape rooms could be more than a fun phenomenon — they could be creative learning environments for students.

"I graduated from Ambrose very interested in social enterprise — using business for economic and social benefit," Harvey explains.

"From my own experience in elementary school, I know some kids don't thrive in a traditional learning environment. They believe they're not smart because they aren't good at reading, writing or sitting and being still. I felt that way as a kid because my learning style didn't fit the traditional classroom."

Mobile Escape gives kids with all kinds of different learning styles opportunities to thrive. The customized 30-ft. trailer features two escape rooms and can be located at a school for days or weeks, letting students get outside the classroom and into an exciting new learning environment.

But Harvey is most excited about what happens after they're in the room.

"Once students are done participating in our escape rooms, they get to become makers and create their own clues to challenge classmates, parents and even the community."

Tailoring the escape room challenges to curriculum enables teachers to deliver core content. Not only do students learn the intended lessons, they grow their teamwork, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills — the same skills Harvey honed on the volleyball court and which he now relies on every day.



"In volleyball, I learned to set and work toward goals. They are very clearly defined in athletics and critical in business," Harvey says. "You keep the target in mind, and know you have to achieve milestones along the way.

"I learned resilience because any time our team lost a big game or I had a setback, I had to get over it. And I learned how to perform in front of others, which is important now as I make business pitches."

"I'm so thankful for Ambrose," Harvey continues. "I still have support from my professors. They're able, willing and genuinely excited about my success — and that's amazing." □

Mobile Escape brings the escape room experience to school field trips, festivals, weddings, corporate team building and other group events, with challenges customized to all audiences. Learn more at mobileescape.ca.

Skills learned on the volleyball court help power a new business



Called to be a BRIDGE

**Amit Nade follows his passion
for connecting cultures and
communities**

AMIT NADE

Amit Nade's journey to Ambrose Seminary began with a clear opportunity. As he recalls the smoothness of his application to move from India to Canada, he says without hesitation: "God opened this door for me."

At the time Nade was already serving as an administrator and youth pastor at his home church in Mumbai, but he decided that he wanted to gain more training and a deeper understanding of his calling. A denominational connection with Ambrose through the Church of the Nazarene led him to consider moving to Calgary.

Ambrose Seminary, with its emphasis on discerning vocation, turned out to be an ideal fit. Through the Seminary's focus on helping students open their hearts to the ways God is calling them to serve, Nade grew to understand and embrace God's call on his life: "to be a bridge wherever I go."

"God has called me to be a bridge between different cultures, churches and even different countries," he explains. "I dream of one day connecting ministries in Canada to ministries in India."

Studying at Ambrose helped Nade understand his calling more deeply and dream bigger about the ways that he can join God's work in the world. "What Ambrose has done is give me a broader perspective," he says. "After studying here, I can serve confidently in any group of people, and I also see the importance of partnering with organizations outside of my own congregation to help the church be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world."

That broader understanding has directly influenced Nade's current bi-vocational career. He graduated from Ambrose in the spring of 2016, and since then he's been working in the social services sector and pastoring at a local church. "As a housing case worker at The Mustard Seed, I help people from the street find homes," Nade says. "I work with them for two years after they move in, supporting them, connecting them with different resources in the community and helping them grow holistically."

"And the church where I pastor, Yeshu Mandali (Hindi for Jesus's People), is a multicultural congregation," he adds. "Because part of our service is translated in Hindi, we get to serve many newcomers to Canada. I'm very at home in this setting and it's great to be involved in ministry that inspires me and aligns with my gifts."

As he looks back on his time at Ambrose, Nade reflects on what made his experience life-changing, singling out personal relationships as the most deeply influential factors in his education. "I thank God for giving me an opportunity to be a part of this amazing Christian community," he says. "Being a student here is great. There is unity in diversity."

In the classroom Nade felt strengthened "academically and practically," but he adds that it's the way that fellowship continues beyond the classroom through "chapel services, seminary luncheons, retreats and ongoing student-teacher interactions" that truly makes Ambrose a place of belonging. □

After studying at Ambrose, I can serve confidently in any group of people, and I also see the importance of partnering with organizations outside of my own congregation to help the church be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

Make the connection

Amit Nade wouldn't be where he is today without the myriad points of connection and God moments that happened during his time at Ambrose. "Coming to Ambrose was a completely God-led decision," he says. "The incredible support I received from the Ambrose community has taught me that God is with me and that I should engage in the lives of others in the same way."

Donors play a critical role in partnering with students on this journey. When you give, you make life-changing connections possible. Visit ambrose.edu/make-their-ministry-possible to donate today.

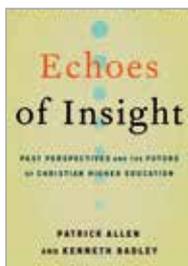
family&friends

Ambrose University is blessed to be part of a large, growing and vibrant community. Meet some of the many people within it — and share your own news with others by visiting ambrose.edu or emailing anthem@ambrose.edu.



Stay in TOUCH!

Stephen Atkinson (NUC Bachelor of Arts – Christian Studies '05) completed his Master of Theology at Tyndale and courses for ministry preparation through NBC. He and his wife, Cynthia, live in Toronto, where Stephen is the assistant director of a Nazarene compassionate ministries food bank called The Sharing Place (thetorontosharingplace.org). He is also the associate pastor of Grace Church of the Nazarene in Toronto. Of his time at Ambrose, Stephen says: “The Ambrose experience helped me challenge my views on Christianity and prioritize where to focus my attention. Truthfully I loved my time at Ambrose, but the thing I learned the most is that we are never done learning. So embrace it.” He travelled to Constantinople with Dr. Neinkirchen (downancientpaths.com) “to experience what we learned in class come to life. Charles says you need to see the world to understand different perspectives. As the world shrinks and we become more and more multicultural, this advice is wiser than ever.”



Ken Badley (CBC Open Studies '73) is the co-author of *Echoes of Insight: Past Perspectives and the Future of Christian Higher*

Education, which encourages a new, vigorous conversation about Christian higher education.

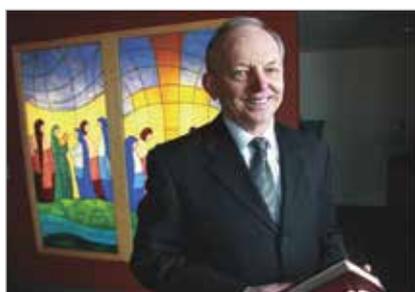
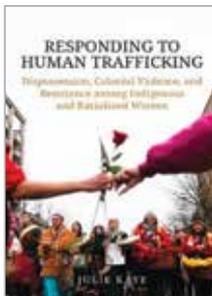
Shawn Coupland (CBC Bachelor of Theology '91) continues to be involved in sports following his on-court basketball days as a student. He is currently part of the Aboriginal Apprentice Coach Program and is an assistant coach for the B.C. Provincial U17 Boys team, which will compete in the 2017 Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg. The long-term impact of athletic participation resonates in his own life, and Shawn helps his players reap their own benefits by “teaching values like respect, persistence, empathy, goal setting, accountability and humility. These core values foster continuous improvement and problem-solving learned from winning and losing in competition, and have a built-in ‘pay it forward’ aspect which athletes apply to their jobs or as future coaches.”



▲ **Alicia Harris** (Bachelor of Arts – Music '02) teaches Grade 6 at Columbus Collegiate Academy in Columbus, Ohio. She recently shared some Ambrose swag with students.

-  facebook.com/AmbroseAlumni
-  youtube.com/ambroseuniversity
-  [@ambrose_uni](https://twitter.com/ambrose_uni)
-  [@ambrose_uni](https://instagram.com/ambrose_uni)

Julie Kaye (Bachelor of Arts – Behavioural Science '05) is assistant professor of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan, and recently published *Responding to Human Trafficking: Dispossession, Colonial Violence, and Resistance among Indigenous and Racialized Women*, the first book to critically examine responses to the growing issue of human trafficking in Canada.



▲ **Rev. Ray Matheson** (former dean of students at Ambrose) was profiled by *The Calgary Herald* in January 2017 in its annual “Top 20 Calgarians to Watch” feature. The 73-year-old pastor of congregational care at Calgary’s First Alliance Church for more than 28 years is cited for helping those within and outside his church. The self-described “ambassador for God” sees people during the highs and lows of life. “I always say, when you get to the Gates of Heaven, they don’t ask what church you go to,” he says in the article.



▲ **Christopher Primeau** (Bachelor of Behavioural Science '16) was named vice president of Advancement at Ambrose University in November 2016. His wide-ranging background includes student ministries, multi-year missions projects in Egypt and China, and, prior to coming to Ambrose, serving as director of development at the Calgary Dream Centre. Adding to the recent good news, Chris and his wife, Rachel, welcomed their first child, Selah Elizabeth Lyn Primeau, on January 2, 2017. Selah and her parents are thankful for all the support received from family, friends and Ambrose faculty and staff.

Alison Springer (CNC Bachelor of Religious Studies – Youth Ministry '97) launched Young Women of Power (ywop.ca) in 2008. Each year, this high-energy and innovative undertaking provides conferences, workshops and mentorship enabling thousands of teen girls to grow their confidence and thrive in life. The success of the annual conference, the group’s flagship event, inspired the creation of PivotFWD, a program offered in partnership with the justice system to help keep girls in trouble out of the system. “I’m always focused on what we need to do to let girls be their best,” Alison says.

Passing into the presence of Jesus

Prayers and condolences are extended to friends and family who have passed away. Please submit your memorial announcements at ambrose.edu/anthem.

Carolyn Elaine Burge (CBC '78) passed away on Nov. 25, 2016, in Racine, Wisc. She was appointed by the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1980 and served in Djibasso, Burkina Faso, West Africa, for 11 years, leading many people to Christ. In 2010, she wrote: “I first of all want to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for transforming my life when I was 21. He has given me the true meaning and purpose of my life. He has fulfilled me to the depths of my being and made me whole.”

Dr. David “George” Dunbar (CNC High School '53; Bachelor of Sacred Music '56), who helped thousands of Olivet Nazarene University students lift their



voices in song, passed away on Dec. 24, 2016, in Kankakee, Ill. Born in Lethbridge, Alta., in 1934, he was the conductor of the university’s prestigious Orpheus Choir from 1972–99. Olivet’s Dr. Harlow Hopkin said: “Hiring George Dunbar ... is one of the best things Olivet ever did. His dedication to Christian music is total, 100 per cent.”

Dr. G. Lloyd Matheson (CNC)

entered into the presence of his Saviour on Dec. 27, 2016, at the age of 98. Lloyd worked in the co-operative



movement for many years, receiving an honorary Doctor of Laws for his work from St. Francis Xavier University, and joined the staff of Canadian Bible College and Seminary in 1974. He also served with the national office of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. Lloyd’s life was filled with a strong faith in Jesus Christ, a humble spirit and sense of humour.



2017 COMMENCEMENT

It's the highlight of the year!

Bright sunlight was outshone by the wide smiles of Ambrose University graduates, and their family members and friends, attending the 2017 Commencement on April 29, 2017.

The annual ceremony, held on campus, is the highlight of the University calendar, a point of pride and well-earned accomplishment for students, families and faculty alike.

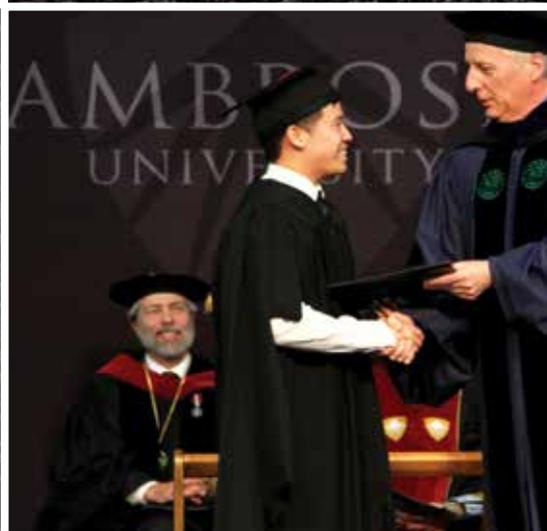
The Class of 2017 comprises 192 students from undergraduate, Education after degree and Seminary programs across the University.

As always, the day's pomp and circumstance wouldn't be complete without the sheer joy of celebration — and congratulations!

Missed it? Want to rekindle memories?

Visit ambrose.edu/grad2017 for a ceremony video.





Here are just some of the many events that are happening at Ambrose University in coming months.

Visit ambrose.edu/events for a complete listing and all the details.

All events take place at Ambrose University, unless otherwise noted.



coming events

Poverty Studies Summer Institute

*Presented by the Canadian Poverty Institute
June 5–23, 2017*

Students, practitioners and ministry workers from across Canada will immerse themselves in intensive courses and workshops to learn about and discuss the causes and impacts of poverty, and explore leading practices to alleviate and end it.

> See the story in this issue of *Anthem*, visit povertyinstitute.ca/poverty-studies-summer-institute or contact PovertyInstitute@ambrose.edu for more info.

Mission, Migration and Multiplication

*Presented by the Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives
June 19, 2017*

Join Dr. Narry Santos, Dr. Robert Cousins, and Rev. Thich Truong for an evening of coffee and conversations, reflecting on how God's Kingdom can be advanced in Canada through collaborative partnerships.

> Visit eventbrite.ca (search for "a conversation on mission") to register, or contact the Jaffray Centre for more info.

Jazz Camp

With special guest Greg Bush, trumpet, joining Ambrose instructors



*August 21–25, 2017
Earlybird registration \$300 until July 24*

Daily master classes, combo sessions, workshops and jam sessions for students 14 years and older.

> Visit ambrose.edu/jazzcamp or email music@ambrose.edu for more info.

Ambrose Lions Golf Classic

*Wednesday, September 13, 2017
Registration starts at 11 am
The Links of GlenEagles (Cochrane)*



Support the 80+ student athletes on Ambrose's competitive ACAC futsal, basketball and volleyball teams in their drive toward "excellence, building family and becoming disciples."

> Visit ambrose.edu/Golf2017 for more info.

Downey Fall Lectureship

October 18–19, 2017

The Downey Endowment and Scholarship Fund and Lectureship Series assists future M.Div. students and honours Murray W. Downey's service, passion and commitment as a founding member of the faculty of Canadian Bible College.

Our speaker for this coming October is Ruth Padilla Deborst, the Director of Christian Formation and Leadership at World Vision International. Join us to consider the state of the church and missions for North America and to learn about integral and holistic mission — caring for people's physical and spiritual needs.

> Watch ambrose.edu for details as they are confirmed.

Fall 2017 Semester begins

Residence opens
September 3, 2017

New-student orientation
September 3–5, 2017

Classes begin
September 6, 2017

Convocation Chapel
September 7, 2017

The power of facing each other

by Milton Friesen

In her book *The Village Effect*, Susan Pinker very rightly points out the power of proximity when it comes to human relationships. The difficulty with building authentic and close relationships is the gap between knowing something and practicing it. For most of us, the contemporary cultural river reflects an infatuation with substitutes for the power of facing each other.

There is a lot of blame to go around and I won't rehearse the common refrains that decry how technology is eroding our human connectivity. Rather, I want to reflect on how the work I have been engaged in through the Social Cities program at Cardus has deepened my appreciation for the way in which Christian communities have underwritten long-term social essentials such as belonging, meaning and purpose. Whatever value we may derive from social technologies, their promises fall far short of what the last 2,000 years of Christian community has delivered across cultures, geographies and eras.

The common good we hold among ourselves, and in particular those that are social in nature — including trust in each other and the institutions of our communities, respect for neighbours and care for those in need — are sometimes referred to as social capital. There are more than 10,000 academic papers on social capital, reflecting considerable interest in the subject. I have noted that, at a practical level, consideration of social capital quickly bumps into the existence and prevalence of religious communities. I would like to make a few observations about that and why it matters for our long-term well-being, and for our sustainability as people.

Local congregations may yet prove to be the most potent, productive and persistent generators of social good in our communities, providing common-good resources for people well beyond the congregation. The Halo Project study (launched in 2015–16 with Phase I research assessing the economic impact of 10 congregations in Toronto) reveals that a local congregation with a \$200,000 annual budget likely provides 4-5 times that value in common good resources to the community every year. That is certainly interesting — but what is more interesting is that the congregations themselves are almost totally unaware of the extent of their impact. They are simply living out their mission in the world.

Christian universities are a rarer and perhaps peculiar kind of institution in our communities, and they also play a critical role in generating common good. They also deal in the power of proximity — at least when they aren't being carried along by the currents of the contemporary cultural river. Universities today can mistake content for proximity. They can believe that as long as content is delivered to paying students, the core mission is being fulfilled. But that simply isn't true. The sharing and generation of knowledge is profoundly social: education is about humans in proximity learning, exploring and failing together.

At their best, universities fight to provide ample time and space for that proximity to have an effect on us.

Organizations and institutions are profoundly necessary for building and sustaining the personal connections we have. They underwrite our social capital. When they know their work well, when using the term "community" isn't a pathological patch for what's missing, but an actual practice, they are moving against the stream, transforming crowded to connected.

Remembering our Christian roots, recalling what we have learned about life together, and courageously acting on that knowledge through practice in community offers our culture, our time, a most significant gift. Having faced the One from whom our life has come, we may turn to face each other — and then, together, invite the growing throng of lonely, isolated and anxious neighbours to join us. There is, indeed, power in proximity. □

Milton Friesen is the program director, Social Cities, and a senior fellow, at Cardus. He has written extensively on social infrastructure, complexity science, network science, social capital and urban planning. Learn more about Cardus and read previous articles by Friesen at cardus.ca/fellows/21.

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