

# **CRC Campus Ministry to the University of Toronto Strategic Planning in Transition**

**November 10, 2019**

## **Background Information**

In April 2019 the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) campus ministry to the University of Toronto (CM) began engaging a discernment process in preparation for the time of transition occasioned by Brian Walsh's summer 2020 retirement. The process was initiated by the CM staff team with the support of Mark Wallace, Missional Leadership Leader/Campus Ministry, Resonate Global Mission. The team engaged the facilitation services of Bernadette Arthur, Independent Consultant and Facilitator to assist with the discernment and strategic planning process. Ms Arthur designed and facilitated a series of activities and processes for the CM staff, committee and community.

## **Current Ministry Vision Statement**

The Christian Reformed Campus Ministry at University of Toronto seeks to challenge, mentor, and enable students to think, work, and live as Christian disciples in the academy and in their professions. Rooted in the confession that all truth is in Christ, we seek a radical Christian discipleship in all of life.

## **Outline of Community Listening Activities**

Since April 2019 the following activities have occurred to support and inform the discernment process and eventual development of the strategic plan:

- 30 CM community members<sup>1</sup> were convened to engage in a time of remembering and visioning (April 29 2019);
- 500 CM community members were invited to provide input about the ministry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis); 30 persons completed the online survey (May - August 2019);
- Ms Arthur conducted one-one-one interviews with 9 CM community members (short-list of names provided by staff) using the questions from the online survey (June - July 2019); and
- 12 CM community members convened in person to engage in a 1 day participatory strategic planning session process (September 14, 2019)

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<sup>1</sup> These are stakeholders who may currently have or had any of the following roles in the community (staff, students, alumni, Classis community members, community partners, faculty, etc)

## Focus Question for Strategic Planning

Arising out of the information gleaned in these listening activities, the following focus question emerged: “**How can we STRENGTHEN our connections with partners and neighbours, BUILD a healthy and visionary staff team, PURSUE a sustainable funding model, and DEVELOP robust policies and procedures in order to CULTIVATE a welcoming, diverse and safe Christian community on the campus of the University of Toronto?**” This is the question that guides the strategic planning process.

## Key Priorities

Out of the Strategic Planning Session and discussion amongst the staff team it is clear addressing this focus question requires that our present priorities are:

### 1. Strengthening connections with partners and neighbours:

- a) work to strengthen and expand capacity in the campus ministry committee by inviting participation from strategic people with the gifts and wisdom that we need during this time of transition. **We are happy to say that this has been accomplished.**
- b) maintain open and transparent communication with Classis Toronto by engaging classis colleagues through the campus ministry committee, and sharing the strategic plan and a full proposal at the February 20, 2020 meeting of classis. **We offer this interim report in anticipation of the full proposal.**
- c) initiate discussions with possible ecumenical partners in the CRC mission to the University of Toronto. **Discussions have been initiated.**
- d) keep open communication with Wycliffe College about our transition process.
- e) strongly encourage partners and neighbours to attend the 50th anniversary celebration of the ministry on March 28, 2020.

### 2. Build a healthy and visionary staff team:

- a) continue to prayerfully work together in open communication, attending to the ongoing needs of the campus ministry communities, while doing the extra work required during this transition process. **The recent resignation of one contract member of the staff team is taxing our resources, but with the support of the Campus Ministry Committee we are proceeding.**
- b) have open and grace-filled conversations about present staff expectations and needs in this time of transition. **Ongoing.**
- c) ask the campus ministry committee to be mindful of the pastoral needs of the staff team. **Done.**
- d) begin the work of imagining a staffing model for the future and developing job description(s), while also determining transitional leadership for the staff team as new staff are hired and begin their work. **In discussion with the committee this work is proceeding.**

### **3. Pursue a sustainable funding model:**

- a) develop a number of budget models for the immediate future (2-3 years) taking into account the funding situation with Classis Toronto going forward over the next number of years (5% annual decrease in grant), present donation levels, reserve funds, a 50th anniversary Jubilee campaign, and possible ecumenical partnerships.  
**The committee began the work on funding models at its Nov. 10 meeting.**
- b) launch a 50th anniversary Jubilee Campaign during the winter of 2019/20.
- c) hand off of fundraising responsibilities and data from Brian by May, 2020.

### **4. Develop robust policies and procedures:**

- a) with the assistance of the campus ministry committee develop Safe Campus and Human Resources policies and procedures.
- b) develop practices for the support, mentorship and professional development of the staff team.
- c) develop transparent and accountable practices for staff team in the provision of pastoral care to community members.

**The development of such policies and procedures are not on the immediate agenda, but would be the work of the staff and committee in the next year.**

### **5. Cultivate a welcoming and safe Christian community:**

- a) recognize that welcoming and safe Christian community is at the heart of our calling and practices at the University of Toronto.
- b) continue to provide robust Biblical teaching, creative and innovative programming, and strong pastoral support and spiritual mentorship to community members.
- c) continue to welcome and encourage leadership from diverse community members.
- d) diversity was identified by our community as both a strength, and an area we should continue to grow, to ensure a welcoming and safe community.
- e) communicate transparently the realities of the transition process to all stakeholders, and where possible, provide continuity in the midst of transition.
- f) invite community participation in fundraising, campus ministry committee membership, policy development and search committees.

## **Conclusion**

These are exciting and anxious times for the CRC campus ministry to the University of Toronto. Over the next twelve months we expect to see a very large change in the staff team of this ministry. Accomplishing such transition with transparency, accountability, creativity and faithfulness will require the hard work and grace of the present staff team, the campus ministry committee and the campus ministry communities. While all of this will involve organizational change and renewal, the issue at hand is fundamentally one of discernment. Where has the Spirit led us in this campus ministry? What kind of a community has arisen? Where are the moments of grace and creativity, and where are the weaknesses and threats to the community? The Strategic Planning process that has been conducted over the last six months has given us a good sense of who we are and where we are, and a vision of what the communities should look like moving forward. Building upon that work we now need to seek the leading of the Spirit to creatively imagine the direction and develop the needed structure to support the future of this ministry in the next season of our life together.