

May 2022

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CAMPUS MINISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

GRADUATE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (GCF)

It has been another term of transitions at GCF. After meeting in-person all fall, it was discouraging to return to zoom in January. To fill our longing to continue to gather, we had a number of outdoor events in the winter, including a beautiful, chilly walk along the lake, skating and exploring a light show at Harbourfront and a Lenten walk of the Stations of the Cross set up around campus (www.crossingstoronto.com).

We were able to gather in person after Reading week at Brenda's home. Despite the challenges of how and where we met, we had meaningful discussions throughout the term, including continuing our fall theme of studying strange stories from the Old Testament. Participants led a number of evenings including sharing their own stories, a dramatic reading of a student's original play, leading a study on faith and doubt, and offering their expertise in responding as people of faith to current events and issues in our world. Students expressed gratitude for being seen and welcomed by the ministry and having a regular community they could connect with in the midst of all the changes and challenges of the term.



WINE BEFORE BREAKFAST (WBB)



Similarly to GCF, WBB began second semester online. At 7:30am, a zoom service has its benefits, but most of us gladly transitioned to meeting in-person once it felt safer to do so. This pandemic and its periodic lock-downs and precautions has really brought home what it means to sing with other people. Church is one of the few places where singing together is commonplace, and the community at WBB hopes that never changes.

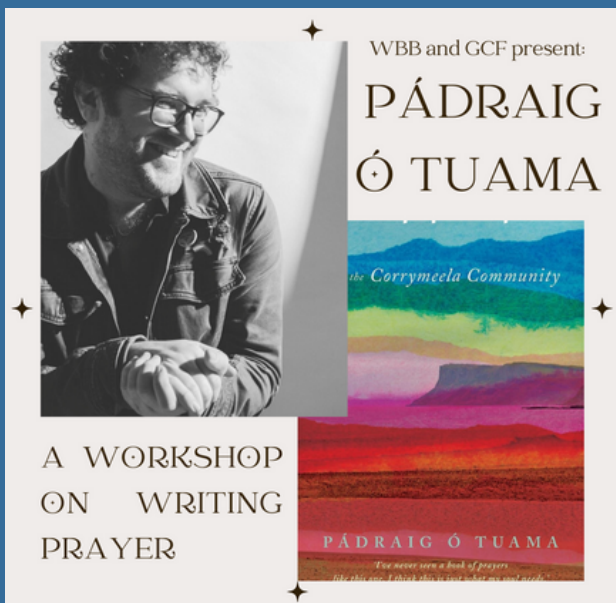
We pondered and explored texts in the Gospels of Mark and Luke using the First Nations Translation, culminating in a focus on the crucifixion and resurrection at Easter. As usual, the Word was preached by a wide diversity of people, including current community members, and a number of former students involved at WBB. It is always a wonderful experience to welcome back those who have been nurtured by our ministry and be blessed by their gifts.

We are now moving into the summer season, which means we will meet on Tuesday evenings, once a month from June to August. All the while, the staff team will be praying, planning and preparing for the fall semester. We are excited to meet and minister to everyone God has sent us to bless.



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In February, we had the opportunity to host a prayer-writing workshop led by author, theologian and poet Pádraig Ó Tuama. Many of us at GCF and WBB have been deeply blessed by his writing as well as his podcast "Poetry Unbound." The workshop was held on Zoom, which allowed Pádraig to connect with us from New York, as well as a number of people from all over Canada and the US, such as ministry alumni, other campus ministers, former WBB worship leaders and some new friends as well.

Over the course of the 2-hour workshop, Pádraig talked about the Anglican tradition of the Collect and guided the group in writing a few of these. We heard some beautiful, creative and vulnerable prayers from people who were willing to share. Pádraig also spoke about creativity and freedom while writing prayers in general, as well as boundaries and considerations to keep in mind while writing words for our worshipping communities to pray together. This workshop was especially applicable to WBB, where the opening, closing and intercessional prayers are original every week, written by members of the community.

It was a real gift to be able to discuss this foundational element of our faith together - and to pray throughout the evening. Here is a collect written by one of the workshop participants:

Ancient One,
 Who is, whether or not I believe.
 Give me ease in my unknowing,
 That I may trust and wonder without fear
 And be thankful for all you have given.
 Amen

Thanks to Pádraig and to all who joined us!



**HANA SUCKSTORFF
 EMERGING LEADER**

As Emerging Leader this past academic year, Hana Suckstorff helped WBB and GCF put together meaningful weekly gatherings and worship services. She learned to enjoy writing prayers and liturgies, coordinated volunteer responsibilities, and led GCF evenings on "why church?," sexual ethics, and the war in Ukraine. With the help of an Innovation Grant from Resonate, she also began exploring the ministry's history of engaging movements for racial justice, in order to identify resources for doing so in the future. To cap it all off, she shared her story again at GCF - five years after doing so for the first time. A lot can change in five years!

Hana completes her doctorate this month and is grateful beyond words for the relationships and community she has found here. We are also grateful for her time, dedication and gifts. Hana has been a true blessing to our ministry.

SUPPORT US IN PRAYER:

- Give thanks for how we have seen God work in people's lives.
- For the well-being of all those connected to the University.
- For wisdom about what changes we can make at WBB to connect better to the UofT university community.
- For meaningful relationships to be built between the ministry staff and those on campus, especially with grad students, staff, and faculty.
- That staff would be able to rest and be restored during the summer break - and that Brenda would be able to submit a good draft of her dissertation.
- For our new Emerging Leader.