

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY

a bridging Christian community



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CAMPUS NOTES

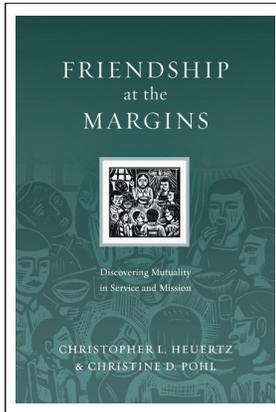


FRIENDSHIP AT THE MARGINS

Ideas come to life when translated into meaningful action. And when that action is rooted in a desire to participate in the coming of God's kingdom and His work to bring restoration to our world, it brings life to our faith!

Conversations about our desire to respond to God's call to love through service led to the formation of a small group this semester called *Friendship at the Margins*. In this small group, we sought to

explore what it means to walk in friendship with people at the outskirts of society and to see how this both changes us and brings us closer to Jesus' heart.



The book whose title we stole!

Through intentional conversations and time spent volunteering together at Agape Café, an adult drop-in center in a downtown Guelph church, we challenged our assumption that working with the poor and vulnerable means that love and service flows in one direction only. We discovered that when reciprocity and mutuality

underlie relationships, the distinction between "us" and "them" begins to dissolve. At the heart of this experience has been a deep call to humility, to recognize that we stand side-by-side with those we serve, all of us broken, wounded, and beloved by our Father.

While it may take more time for relationships to truly grow, we are grateful for the seeds that have been planted and are beginning to grow in our hearts, and we are excited to see how this group flourishes in the coming semester. Thank you for your ongoing support of GCM, as it makes it possible for us to have groups like this in which we can grow by wrestling through and challenging aspects of our faith!

—Krista Bowman
Student

HEADING OFF ON SABBATICAL

After 10 exciting years in campus ministry, GCM's Board of Directors has given me the opportunity to take a six-month sabbatical. Starting in mid-January (after our annual Winter Retreat, which I wouldn't miss for the world), I will be stepping away from campus.

People have asked me what I will be doing while I'm away. Catching my breath is part of it, but so too is taking the opportunity to reflect back on the past 10 years of ministry. Before I began at Guelph, I wrote a very academic thesis about forgiveness. Unless you're a student of philosophy, it's almost incomprehensible!

Over the last 10 years, I have led several small groups that have dealt with forgiveness on a far more practical level. And I've walked alongside students who have struggled with it...deeply. Over the years, I've learned so much from these friends. During my sabbatical, I hope to reflect on all that we have learned together and embark on a little writing project, in the hope that I can share our collective learning with others.

While I'm on sabbatical, GCM will continue as it always has! Becca MacDougall has been on staff, supporting our student-led community with me for almost two years now.



Becca & LJ: GCM's Vibrant Staff

In September, Laura Jane (LJ) Weber joined our little staff team. While I'm away, the two of them will continue to encourage student leadership and bear witness to God's grace.

—Jamie VanderBerg
Campus Minister

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY



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WELCOMED AND ENRICHED

GCM is a very welcoming community. From the moment that I walked through the door at the start of the fall retreat — not knowing anyone — friendly faces welcomed me. The fall



Ultimate Frisbee Huddle

retreat was a jam-packed day full of fun and excitement at the Elora Gorge. It was a great way to be introduced to the GCM community and get to know so many new people.

Along with attending the fall retreat, I also had the opportunity to participate in the small group, *Who Do You Say That I Am?* Joining this group was a big step for me, because I did not know what I was walking into, but I was quickly welcomed by four amazing people. It really did fit the description of a small

group! The meetings were very informal with regards to how they were run, which was great for me with my packed schedule. We had a few 'choose your own adventure' evenings, which lead to very interesting conversation and thought.

To sum up my experience at Guelph Campus Ministry so far, I feel I've found a community that enriches my spiritual growth in the fast paced setting of university.

—Rachael Carrick
Student

PETER ROLLINS: TRANSGRESSION TOUR

On Thursday, October 30, Peter Rollins' *Transgression Tour* came to Guelph. The evening was billed as a time of "incendiary reflection" that would help us "cultivate life-giving, transformative zones that challenge social, political and religious institutions." By employing the figures of *the trickster* and *the fool*, Peter Rollins explored ways in which our institutions might be challenged by its dissenting members (the tricksters) in the hopes of creating places of liberation and life-giving change, rather than places where abuse is perpetuated.

The trickster is the one whose voice goes against the grain of the institution; who challenges institutionally held beliefs. The trickster's playfulness, their comedic nudging at the boundaries of accepted norms within the church provide a means to look at uncomfortable truths and non life-giving patterns of behaviour. These "tricksters" enable the Church to see their own hypocrisies and address

their inconsistencies in ways that are both challenging and redemptive to the institution.

Rollins spent much less time exploring the image of the fool. The fool, by his definition, is the one that goes along with the system; whose voice isn't counter-cultural or counter-institutional. The fool blindly accepts all the institution's demands and all its creeds so as not to transgress or upset the system. They don't push back when they see hypocrisy.

The idea that our social, political and religious institutions can be places of oppression isn't new. In our own Canadian context, which Peter didn't really touch on in his speech, we can think of how political and religious institutions collaborated in a residential school program that became profoundly destructive to our aboriginal population. As a result of our history of residential schools, the entire Canadian culture has suffered; though the suffering of the aboriginal communities is still the most

obvious, as the fallout has resulted in dysfunctional communities, broken homes and fractured lives. Within my own denomination, we have struggled with how to respond to diversity within our midst; the place of women within its leadership structures, and more recently the question of how to think about and care for the LGBT community. As a member of the church and as one who looks to Christ for restoration both for our institutions and for ourselves, the voice of the trickster is one that we must hear.

Rollins argued that we can see Jesus as one who challenged an abusive Jewish religious system—a system that was repressive and abusive. Jesus, according to Rollins, was a jester-like figure who nudged and challenged in order to open the Jewish religious system to new possibilities that were life-giving and life-affirming.

—Pastor David Tigchelaar
GCM Board Member

RUN & READ

This past October, in my second year at the University of Guelph, I began volunteering with Brant Avenue Public School's Run and Read program. I fell in love with everything, from improving the children's strength and endurance in training for a 5km race, to reading alongside them and building supportive and healthy relationships. Sylvia Ruegger, a past Canadian Olympian and cofounder of Run and Read, visited Brant last week. She brought so much encouragement to both the children and myself, enabling us to see the bigger picture of what we are involved in, helping break the cycle of poverty.

Our Thursday afternoon program has children setting and surpassing previously unattainable goals, and forming such positive, life changing relationships. The environment of positivity is humbling. I think of my empowered teammates and am in awe of their progress these past few months in respect, cooperation, dedication, belief in themselves and their sense of purpose. I am honestly hoping I will be able to find a job in the future that allows me to leave every Thursday at 3pm, so I can continue to be a part of this movement of hope and journey of love!

—Katie Gerber
Student



Christmas (and November) Fun!

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