

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY

a bridging Christian community



Volume 10, Issue 1

December, 2015

CAMPUS NOTES



COMMUNITY DINNER: AN END OR HIATUS?

Community Dinner has been a staple event within Guelph Campus Ministry (GCM) for almost 9 years! What would possess us to bring it to an end? The short answer: A renewed sense of vision.

For years now, students have been invited to gather together every Wednesday for a church-cooked feast. The only agenda for the evening was to enjoy each other's friendship.

This September, we had some conversations with our entire student community, and there was a desire to be more intentional with our time. We wanted to meet every week, creating a space not only for fellowship, but also for faith formation and worship.

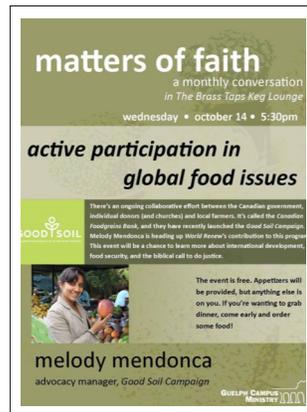
Part of our new weekly routine is *Matters of Faith*. Every third week, we gather together to talk about current issues in our culture and seek to intentionally bring our faith

into the conversation. This semester, we've talked about global food issues, forgiveness, faith and reason, as well as sexual identity. They've been rich and meaningful events.

In between the *Matters of Faith* events, we meet for one evening of worship and a second one of fellowship. In fact, we call our fellowship gathering "An Evening of Sabbath" because we recognize the importance of enjoying God's rest together.

Has Community Dinner come to a permanent end? We don't know. We may just be enjoying a brief hiatus. In the meantime, though, we are excited to grow in faith together!

—Jamie VanderBerg
Campus Minister



Matters of Faith:
A New Direction!

O-WEEK: A BOARD'S EYE VIEW

It's a privilege to be a GCM board member. I'm excited to see how students and staff at the University of Guelph are supported in their Christian faith journey through this intentional and caring group, led by campus minister, Jamie VanderBerg and staff worker Becca MacDougall. Over the past two years, I've been impressed with GCM's ability to provide good guidance, space and opportunities for participants to deepen their personal faith, as well as reach out to their community and beyond in matters of social justice. Small groups, worship, *Matters of Faith*, and many volunteer experiences

are a few of the platforms that GCM is built on. It's been rewarding to watch and take part in some of the events this year.

During this semester's Orientation Week, I attended the Church Connections Coffee House and a *Matters of Faith* evening.

As a bridging community, GCM encourages students to connect with a local church while attending university. During Orientation Week, GCM hosts a coffee house, so students can meet people from many of Guelph's churches. This year, members of twenty churches were invited to come and mingle



Run & Read: A Volunteer Opportunity

with students. There was a positive buzz in the room as people chatted over coffee and treats, discovering what makes each church unique. This wasn't a presentation evening; simply a casual get to know each other

—Article cont'd on Page 2

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY



James VanderBerg
Becca MacDougall

University of Guelph
gcm@uoguelph.ca
519-824-4120, ext.52392
519-362-9886 (cell)

GLIMPSSES OF THE KINGDOM

This semester, one small group was a significant blessing to many. The group met weekly, sometimes in a blanket fort, to talk about the in-breaking of God's Kingdom. Here's one participant's description of what unfolded every Thursday evening:

This past semester, I have enjoyed my opportunity to be a part of this small group. The group was led by two fourth-year students, Sara and Alanna. Each week a small group of students met and shared stories at Sara, Alanna

and Katie's home. The theme of the stories changed week to week, but our stories all centred on seeing God in our everyday lives.

Sharing stories has allowed all of us to remember and to notice the presence of God in our every day lives – even in the smallest of ways. The stories ranged from funny moments in our lives to times we've deeply struggled. This group has provided a time for me to share and develop more meaningful relationships. I have truly enjoyed spending

my Thursday evenings sharing and listening to everyone's glimpses of God's Kingdom.

—Patricia Dunn
Student



Ultimate Frisbee Huddle

O-WEEK

cont'd

type of event, which was appreciated by students and churches alike.

The second event that I attended was a *Matters of Faith* evening. *Matters of Faith* are events in which students look more deeply at their faith and wrestle with current issues. I went to the conversation on sexual identity in the church. GCM believes it's important to foster safe and supportive spaces within faith communities, even for those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. We heard four panelists speak about their experiences of coming out in the context of Christian communities. The event wasn't a debate or an attempt to spark a theological argument; it was a chance to listen and learn from the experience of others. About thirty-five people met to hear two women and two men sensitively share their experiences.

I was touched by each person's honesty and vulnerability in speaking about such a personal topic. To learn how each one struggled hugely with coming out, how this affected their own faith, as well as reactions of family and friends in their individual faith communities was very moving, and at times quite sad. It gave me a deeper understanding of the experiences of people who identify as LGBTQ+. As I seek to understand and love, I hope I will become more like Jesus in caring for others.

Just as it does for students, GCM provided an opportunity for me to consider others, and my own faith within the context of a significant current issue.

—Cathy Fairchild
GCM Board Member

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP INTERNS: EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

For the past five years, GCM has had a student intern serving in the Brant neighbourhood. The interns have helped with the local community garden, run afterschool programs and prepared food for the snack program, all in an attempt to partner with the Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group Leadership Team. Over the years, the interns have had the chance to be a part of a variety of community development initiatives, bearing witness in creative ways to God's grace.

This year, we've expanded the program significantly. Not

only do we now have two interns serving in Brant, we've made it possible for a third intern to serve in the Willow neighbourhood—a second high-needs community in Guelph. Krista 'tMannetje has been supporting the work of the Onward Willow Neighbourhood Group for almost three months now.

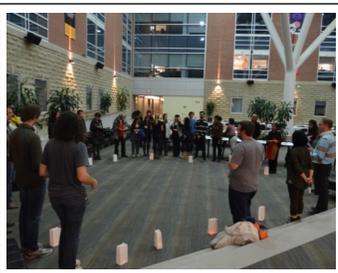
In Brant, the two interns have been working together, and one of the interns has these thoughts to share regarding her experience thus far:

My name is Sara Zilke, and I am one of the student interns for the Brant Avenue Neighbourhood Group. For the past couple of weeks as an intern, I have been able to experience the community spirit of Brant and help with some of the Neighbourhood Group's initiatives. This internship has allowed myself and my other fellow intern, Taylor Gerber, to help with the community pantry and the

morning meal program for school-aged children as well as with the preparation of Coffee Hour. We also are involved with the larger group's projects including the Brant Haunted House and annual Christmas Party.

Helping out twice a week at Brant's Friendship House has been one of the best parts of my week. I have been able to experience the hard work and dedication of community members in order to create a safe and inclusive space for every member of the neighbourhood. Whether it is chatting to Brant locals during coffee hour or helping a family with the food pantry, it is incredible to see how much a gesture of help or understanding can create a positive and compassionate community. I am looking forward to what the new semester will bring!

—Sara Zilke
Student



Peace Week Prayer Vigil

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