From Chapel to Classroom: Faith and Learning are Key for Luke Powery

The motto of Duke University’s chapel is, “Keeping the heart of the University listening to the heart of God.” These words ring true for Luke Powery Emm O’ty, the newly appointed dean of Duke Chapel. In some reflections Powery says he adds the phrase, which he says for love of the world, because God’s heart centres on service and love for one’s neighbour, the community and the world. The words of American Theologian Howard Thurman also resonate with Powery, who says that the motto at Duke Chapel, “helps us remember that God is also present and the heart of the world.”

Luke Powery, who hails from the United Kingdom, has a rich teaching and writing background which has taken him all across the U.S. and from Switzerland to the United Kingdom. After receiving a bachelor of arts in music and vocal performance from Stanford University, he went on to the master of divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary. What then, drew him to choose Canada and Emmanuel College to pursue his doctoral studies? “I wanted to work with and study under one of the top bulldozers in North America—Paul Scott Wilson V.C., 771, Emm 771”, says Powery, going on to add that Emmanuel also gave him the opportunity to study in an interdisciplinary context—due to the College’s unique placement in the broader university setting at the University of Toronto.

The ‘spiritual life has been in pursuit of me. I am a P.R.—a preacher’s kid—thus I was nurtured in a church environment. We sung and prayed as a family on a regular basis,” he says. His career began with a focus on music, youth programs and chaplainship—as was to continue to be reflected in his teaching and research. After being ordained by the Progressive National Baptist Convention in 2000, Powery went on to serve in an economical capacity in religious organizations around the world, all the while balancing academic appointments and his own educational path. He was the associate pastor at the International Protestant Church of Zurich between 2001 and 2003, and taught at Lee University in Cleveland, TN, and the
“I think the connection between our academic and spiritual lives is vital because as humans we are called upon to be holistic.”

These areas informed the subject of his dissertation “The Holy Spirit and African-American Preaching” and also his first book, Spirit Speak: Lament and Celebration in Preaching (Shiloh Press, 2009). As well as learning and working with mentor and friend Paul Wilson, Posey says he was “blessed” to engage with the work and lives of his peers at the Toronto School of Theology—in particular he notes working alongside T. D. Jakes, Steven Jacobsen and Carol R. Duncan.

It was at Emmanuel that he also strengthened his belief in the importance of bringing together faith and learning. “I think the connection between our academic and spiritual lives is vital because as humans we are called upon to be holistic. We are not just heads on stakes of books! We have hearts to love and hands to serve, and of course, heads and minds to think,” he says.

Posey graduated from Emmanuel with a ThD in homiletics in 2007 and was appointed that same year as the Percy and Georgia Eagle Assistant Professor of Homiletics at the Princeton Theological Seminary, a position he held until his most recent appointment in 2012 as the Dean of Duke Chapel and as associate professor of the practice of homiletics in Duke Divinity School. When talking about his new role, Posey mentions the words of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, who said, “the world is my parish.” It is clear that Posey embodies a similar sentiment through his commitment to faith and education. “The university is my parish,” he says.

As a key spiritual leader at Duke University, Posey plays an integral role in the academic and spiritual lives of the university’s students, staff, and wider community through worship services, religious life activities, student ministries and community outreach. In addition he oversees the operation of the chapel, which has one of the largest congregations on an American campus, though he says that all of this is not a lone enterprise. “I have a gifted chapel staff of over 20 individuals who work together to serve the university and community,” he recalls. “It’s important to note that the chapel does not exist as a place of spirituality unto itself within the campus—a fact he explains that he has, “pleasantly surprised by the openness of the chapel here and the desire to form networks of collaboration across the university.”

Alongside his work at Duke, Posey has continued his research around the ‘Spirit and the spiritual’ in relation to preaching, human suffering and social witness. His most recent book (Drs Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope (Fortress Press, 2012) is “about the African-American spiritual as a resource for preaching and death and hope.” He is also co-authoring, with former colleague Sally A. Brown, an introduction to a preaching textbook—tentatively titled Ways of the World: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place. He says it will “invite to take context and different seriously, especially since Sally and I represent different races, denominational traditions and genders.”

Posey’s interests in difference were nurtured at Emmanuel College. When looking back on his time at Emmanuel, he points out that one of the most important aspects of the program at Emmanuel is that it affords students an opportunity to engage with the other—“demonstrationally, racially, ethically, religiously and theologically.” It is evident that Posey’s consideration of peoples’ differences and commitment to a holistic and multifaceted approach to preaching and spiritual life—“listening to the heart of God”—continues to inform how he loves and teaches. “This is a gift itself,” Posey says, “especially if one desires to be a world citizen.”

Achievements

Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal Recipients

Betty Anderson Vic B72, Emu B77, Emmanuel College’s continuing education coordinator, was awarded a medal for her contributions to the life of the United Church of Canada.

Charles Gatto Vic STL, Emu 374, was awarded a medal for his work engaging Canadian and international youth in building and reconciliation projects, through his service with Frontier Foundations/Operation Breakout.

C. Douglas Jam Vic 416, Emu 310, principal enrolled of Emmanuel College, was awarded a medal for his continued devotion to promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation. He was the founding director of the Toronto School of Theology and served as Emmanuel’s principal from 1981 to 1990.

Richard Cheek Emu B75 received a 2012 Arbor Award for his outstanding personal service to Emmanuel College. Richard served as the president of the Emmanuel College Alumni Association and was a member of the Victoria University 175th Anniversary Worship Service Committee.

Congratulations to Hyrjan Kim-Cragg Emu 01, recipient of the $10,000 Kusimba Scholarship awarded by the Centre for Christian Studies. Kim-Cragg, the 1st Guchi Professor of Pastoral Theology at St. Andrew’s College, will use the award to assist her current research project exploring and developing a theology of resistance in the context of global capitalism where the life of indigenous peoples and their land are violated due to the mining.

Deaths


Eleanor E. Ferguson Emu 674, in Victoria, B.C., September 11, 2012.


Kuang-hsin Teng Emu 879, in Nanjing, China, November 21, 2012.


Are you a member of the Class of 1953 or 63? 

This year marks the 60th and 50th anniversaries of graduation for the Emmanuel College classes of 1953 and 1963. Come together with fellow alumn/i for a milestone celebration at Emmanuel College on Tuesday, April 16, 2013.

Please contact Stefanie Ruzer at stefanie.ruzer@utoronto.ca, 416-585-2601, for more information.

E-mail us your news! emm.alumni@utoronto.ca

MILESTONES

Milestones are intended to send congratulations to those who have reached a significant milestone in their careers or personal lives. Please get in touch if you plan to retire, if you are getting married or if you have a birth to announce. Milestones must accompany draft notices.

Milestones can be submitted in electronic format by sending an email to emm.alumni@utoronto.ca.
"... and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" – Matthew 1:23 (NRSV)

BY SWEE HONG LIM

The season of Easter is the culmination of God’s redemptive plan for creation through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In that brief time, he related to those around him modelling the way in which faith actualizes action and vice versa. The kingdom of God, as he taught his followers, is already breaking into our current reality and all who choose to follow him are to live their lives submitting to God’s way of love, mercy and justice. Through the work and life of Jesus, we are reminded to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Therefore, living acceptance of things would appear to be an important feature.

On the other hand as a trained musician, perfection is the goal of the artist. Aside from being committed to maintaining standards and integrity in performance practice, perfection is ubiquitous in the field. Ultimately the tension in the sacred music tradition: Christian, loving acceptance and the natural striving towards aesthetic perfection for those in the field of sacred music. How might this situation be negotiated?

The words of Martin Luther (1483-1546), who wrote in a preface to Bach’s Sinfonia in D minor, offer an insight: “I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the sweetest gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music.”

Commissioning this thought, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) handwritten note “die Low gists” at the end of his composition speaks volumes about his motivation in music making. Bach’s monumental music creating effort was not for the low of God, yet it does not compromise on artistic excellence. While his works were intended to engage the Church in the praise of God, as offerings in a worship service, they were no less credible works of great art demanding the most out of the musicians’ performative skills. For Bach, such musical effort is more than art, it is a means to a holy end.

It is this balance between musical perfection and engaging the Church in the praise of God that gives us a glimpse of the purpose and ethos of the sacred music program at Emmanuel College of Victoria University. We expect our students to, as Glee Club sings in Ross’s ..., “... much, higher, just for one moment touch the sky,” in their pursuit of excellence in performance practice, while exhibiting strong, loving pastoral leadership skills in their ministry. They are to undertake this journey of preparation mindful of the overarching sacred principle of loving God and neighbours that needs to complement their pursuit of aesthetic perfection. Indeed, our task in music making is to facilitate the holy encounter between God and the people of God.

In the task of nurturing congregational worship, this mandate requires us to negotiate and provide leadership on complex issues that church face in the 21st century. Our musical landscape today includes not only the hymns of Martin Luther and J.S. Bach, but also those of Shirley Murray. J. Ledlie, Pablo Sosa, Chris Tomlin, Matt Maher, Stuart Townend and others. Discerning pastoral wisdom is needed to musically voice the story of redemption through the many languages that reflect the beauty of God’s rich and diverse cultures, while ensuring that the presence is beautiful and meaningful to local congregations. This is a difficult and instrumental task. Nevertheless, the good news is that when we choose to undertake this task, we will find help. The God who has called us to love humanity and light the path of divine love will be present. We are not alone and the experience is most satisfying and fulfilling.

Swieh Hong Lim is the Dean-Park Professor of Sacred Music at Emmanuel College, and the director of the Masters of Sacred Music Program. He also serves as director of the Chapel for the worship life of Emmanuel College.

What Does it Mean to be Human?

BY MARK G. TOULOUSE

Man Wakes, in his 1946 book The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, theorized that Protestant Germany had a better economy than Catholic Germany because of the “inner loneliness” of Protestants, Catholics had rituals to help them internalize forgiveness for sins. Protestants did not. Therefore, Protestants lacked confidence that they were truly worthy of salvation. They worked harder to earn worthiness. Along the way, their work ethic created economic growth.

Today, across the world, Postmodernists still struggle with the notion that finds financial success with divine favour. I heard firsthand in Quito that the Galvez growing Protestant church in Brazil (Iglesia Universal de Reino de Deus or EUDE), which means The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is associated with the prosperity gospel, the idea that salvation and the accumulation of wealth belong together. Religious services combine casting out devils with modern marketing strategies focusing on maximizing profits for the church. While the church’s leadership is quite wealthy, the church’s membership is composed of the poorest people in Brazil. Protestantism, particularly in its prosperity and non-Protestant forms, takes strong root among the poor, partially because it provides hope for a better life. Twenty-one per cent of the Brazilian population has completed more than four years of any form of schooling. Around 50 per cent of those associated with this form of Postmodernism fall into this category. In most of the world, poverty is a brutal and devastating force. Today, unfortunately, too many religious leaders exploit vulnerabilities associated with poverty in order to increase their own wealth and power.

I was in Brazil for a global ecumenical conference engaging the theme of economic and social justice across the world. Sponsored by the World Commission of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches, and Council for World Mission, the conference attracted between 50 and 60 economists, church leaders, activists, politicians and theologians. The conference hoped to create a framework and develop a plan of action, to begin to move the global economy toward construction of just, caring and sustainable financial and economic structure. Part of the increasing concern among many at the conference, we had to confess, was due to the fact that the 2008 global economic crash increased poverty and unemployment in the global North. Poverty has become harder to ignore in the wealthier portions of the world. And, of course, the causes behind this sweat dramatic spread of poverty have only worsened and deepened poverty and malnutrition in the global South, which has a long and turgid history, too often easily ignored in the North, of crushing poverty.

Members attending the conference rejected “an economy of over-consumption and greed, recognizing how neoliberal capitalism conditions us psychologically to desire more and more.” In our time, religion has too often contributed to a distorted image of what it means to be human. Neoliberal forms of capitalism, emphasized by both churches and religious leaders, have defined people based upon their financial and economic value rather than by the intrinsic dignity they possess as persons created in the image of God. As the conference statement affirms, this approach to defining what it means to be human “leads to racism, sexism and other forms of categorization, exclusion and oppressive behavior” and is “a sin against God, humanity, and all creation.”

While the conference resulted in a statement that expresses itself in its first few pages, in my opinion, a form of theological discourse better suited to the 1990s than 2013, the practical recommendations contained in it are well worth considering. The document contains proposals for governments, banks, investment firms, and politicians designed to provide effective regulation of investment and banking sectors, better practices of taxation (in relation to investment practices, ecologically destructive industries, capital gains and estate taxes), and the elimination of tax evasion, greater access for the poor to basic financial services and active mechanisms to restructure sovereign debt. Another section of the document defines rather sweeping structural changes, including suggesting a new security council within the United Nations, replacing the International Monetary Fund, and creating a new alternative international reserve currency. The document concludes with strategies and actions churches can engage to help, and a discussion of signs of hope that serve “as signposts of change.” The statement is online at bilytv.org.

Theological education and churches, in today’s world, cannot afford to neglect these issues. When we do, we simply add religion’s influence to the forces that either ignore or exploit poverty to suit their own purposes.
Nette Hoffman: A Welcoming Ministry

Nette (Wilma) Hoffman Enn 5TB grew up in a family where helping others was valued and expected. She watched her parents feed transient men at their kitchen table in Quebec’s Eastern Township. She saw her father, a United Church minister, drive ill villagers to the Montreal hospital, over 60 miles away. “I have always liked the spirit of Matthew 25,” says Hoffman. “I was hungry and you fed me; thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you took me in.” This ethos has helped guide Hoffman throughout her life. Working as a minister, she found people really understood her (into their) lives. In 1980 she began her intense work with refugees to Canada, working first with Vietnamese “boat people” receiving them and helping them make a life in their new country. After 40 years of ministry, she retired in the 1990s to devote all her efforts to refugees and volunteered for the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. Currently, working with the Alpha Kappa United Church, she is actively involved in helping many of the 100 North Korean refugee families who have arrived in Toronto over the past year. Over the decades, Hoffman has helped numerous families and even saved one from deportation. One of her greatest joys was seeing the sons of refugees become ophthalmologist and his two sisters graduate with degrees in pharmacy. She has even had the joy of marrying all three of those siblings, whose parents had fled Vietnam so many years ago. “I have been touched by the people I have met.”

Becca Whilta Explores Community and Choral Music in Cuba

Becca Whilta Enn 1TI is a doctoral student at Emmanuel College, having completed the requirements of her Master of Sacred Music. As part of her MMus degree Whilta spent three months from January through April 2012 studying choral conducting and theology at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología (SET) in Matanzas, Cuba. She was awarded the Katherine and Murray Coletto Scholarship and the Garth and Joyce Legge Scholarship from Emmanuel College in support of her exchange program.

During her time in Cuba, Whilta worked closely with both the SET’s Rector, Ricardo M. Ace and Masters, José Antonio Miranda—one of the country’s leading choral conductors—a process she describes as “invaluable.”

Teaching for Ministry Symposia Series

Emmanuel College was the recent recipient of a $500,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. for its new Teaching for Ministry Fellowship Program (TFFP), unique in Canada and one of only a handful in North America. TFFP is in its first year, with four forums across the theological disciplines currently underway.

As part of the program, TFFP fellows facilitate and lead a panel discussion on current topics in theological, academic and ministry, and the way in which these topics connect with one another. This symposia series forms part of the second-year Contextual Education course taken by MDiv and MPS students. The discussions focus on topics of importance for ministry students and ministry in contemporary local context, and are open to the entire Emmanuel community, as well as the broader public.

These discussions have already been held: Survival and Observers: How to Prepare for and Manage Pastoral Burnout moderated by TFFP Fellow Jane Crow; The Role of Theological Education in the Vicarage of the Modern Minister moderated by TFFP Fellow Gaven Kway; and Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy for the Shifting Demographics of North American Institutions moderated by TFFP Fellow Erin Green Enn 07.

Green says the discussions offer students and the wider public the opportunity to “share in some incredible living wisdom from our faith communities.” Importantly they also provide an avenue for TFFP fellows to apply skills they have been nurturing in the program. “Facilitating these discussions has been helpful in the context of my role in the program because I envisioned the role of the teacher as one who animates and enlivens all kinds of material for theological reflection,” she says.

The final discussion in this series was Beyond Poverty: Aid and Development: The Problems and Possibilities of a Partnership Model moderated by TFFP Fellow Carmen Palmer Enn 07, presented on February 23.

More information, including video recordings of the discussions, can be found at www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca/ academics/TFFP.htm.