Angela James and Mike Gibbons: Fostering Resiliency

There is a common practice in the Canadian Armed Forces that when any injured soldier, sailor or airperson is brought to hospital, one of the first voices that breaks the silence is that of a chaplain. The injured are greeted by name, they are told of their whereabouts and, finally, they are reassured that they are safe. “Sometimes we think we do very little,” says Padre (Major) Angela James, Canadian Forces’ Decoration (CD), Emm 9T7, her voice wavering, “but there is a lot in saying a name. When we name people we give them power over their personhood and over their spirit. Being that voice for injured soldiers has resonated with me.”

Padre (Major) Mike Gibbons, Meritorious Service Medal (MSM), Emm 0T5 affirms James’ sentiment: “As military chaplains, when we interact and work with soldiers, we are often the only people who are able to use given names rather than rank. When we are dealing with difficult situations, using given names is incredibly powerful and helps to forge an immediate bond. I can’t do their work or do their job, but I can go with them and I can support them.”

Although James and Gibbons live and work in different provinces, they view their unique pastoral roles as “remarkable” gifts. “Ministry will never be a career,” insists James, “it’s a vocation.” But it’s not a path that either padre specifically planned after completing their theological education at Emmanuel. While they both “grew up” in the United Church, neither was born into military families, although they both had relatives who served. Both were inspired, however, by meeting other chaplains and the men and women who served during the course of their ministries.

James met her inspiration in North Bay, Ont., where she was completing an internship. She had been feeling somewhat isolated in the new community and reached out to the United Church minister who served on the base. He suggested that she meet some people her own age by joining the baseball team, which she did, but he also became a mentor to her as she went to serve as the minister at St. Andrew’s United Church in Sioux Lookout from 1997–2000. Meanwhile Gibbons, who was serving in Nova Scotia, met two military chaplains who were attending the 2007 Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference. Both James and Gibbons remark that they were impressed by the enthusiasm the chaplains demonstrated for their ministries in the military—that it was a privilege to get up and go to work every day.

As chaplains, their primary role is to provide the environment and tools for the development of strong spiritual, mental, physical and emotional resilience in order to equip military personnel for the unique challenges they face. James describes
“Sometimes there are needs which are so profound that they cannot be met even within the most supportive church community.”

This responsibility—to protect the most vulnerable in situations of international conflict—as “a soul-searing endeavour.”

Gibbons recalls a harrowing experience in February 2014 when a major fire broke out in the engine compartment of Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship (HMCS) Protecteur, a Royal Canadian Navy fuel and ammunition supply vessel, while en route from Hawaii to Victoria, B.C. For the next 11 hours, an already fatigued crew worked without power, in smoke and darkness on rough seas, to save the ship. Once the fire was extinguished, Protecteur was left seriously damaged and 630 kilometres from the nearest port, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. For the week that followed, as they were adrift at sea, and then under tow back to Pearl Harbor with the assistance of the U.S. Navy, the crew had to continue to sleep at night, as possible, without bedding and work through the day in their same uniforms, as flames had engulfed many personal belongings. Through his U.S. Air Force chaplaincy connections, Gibbons was able to help secure bedding and other necessities for the crew’s return to the ship’s home port of CFB Esquimalt, B.C., a reminder of how relationships between chaplains of allied nations benefit one another’s missions.

For his part, Gibbons was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the governor general, which recognizes individuals who have carried out meritorious acts bringing benefit and honour to the military. Gibbons’ citation reads: “On February 27, 2014, as pastoral support to HMCS Protecteur, then-Captain Gibbons displayed outstanding leadership and professionalism during a catastrophic fire while at sea. With an exceptionally calm demeanour, he was instrumental in maintaining order and motivating the crew to fight the fire. Fuelled entirely by his dedication to the crew’s well-being, he continued at an intense pace for weeks afterwards, effectively managing and prioritizing personnel issues and the quick transfer of personnel requiring movement back to Canada.”

“Military life can leave a permanent mark on soldiers, sailors and air personnel,” says James. As chaplain, she represents the spiritual component of the deep resiliency work required in this context, in concert with uniformed partners from other helping professions, to promote total wellness of all military members. That health promotion extends even to the ongoing health of military families. “All of God’s children of all faith traditions require someone to journey with them on the road,” she says. “In that space, it is my job to try and answer their tough questions effectively and meaningfully.”

She finds great meaning in the reflection, rebuilding and revelation that form these conversations, and she describes “the richness of those sacred moments” as what draws her to this ministry.

“At the end of the day,” says Gibbons, “the Canadian Armed Forces is made up of people—people who are faced with disaster and crises and, at times, their own mortality. It’s my job to meet people where they are and to be their hope, when they have difficulty finding it for themselves. It’s not an easy task, but it’s a task we, as chaplains, are called to do.”

Gibbons echoes her reflection on life as a Canadian Armed Forces chaplain: “I am honoured to minister in an exciting and dynamic environment. I have served alongside some of the finest Canadians I have ever known as they have carried out their duties as soldiers, sailors, and air personnel at home and on operations around the world. I have had the privilege of being with them in Afghanistan as well at sea in the Pacific. United Church chaplains play an important role in the spiritual and religious care offered to women and men in uniform and their families, and it is something of which we can all be proud.”
I count myself incredibly fortunate to have landed at Emmanuel College nearly nine years ago. I hadn’t planned it, and as my spouse Jeffica once put it, we had never imagined taking up residence in Canada. Now, of course, we are both so grateful that Canada and the College have forever taken up residence in our hearts as a treasured piece of “home” for us.

The College shapes all of us who inhabit these spaces that surround us. The history of saints who have studied and worked here somehow seeps into one’s pores. There is a significant educational tradition here, one that makes us proud and one we seek through our own efforts to honour and respect. One aspect of that tradition is represented in the openness to grow at Emmanuel, to explore, and often to occupy, new theological worlds that form our own religious expressions in ways that adjust to current realities, and keep us oriented toward constructing a more just world. At Emmanuel, classrooms and community seek creatively, and with intention, to overcome so many attempts all around us to build walls meant to protect personal, corporate or national forms of privilege and power.

Above the fireplace in the principal’s office at Emmanuel, near the ceiling, is carved the old Scottish motto, “He yt tholis overcummis” (he who perseveres overcomes). The motto also appears above the library entrance at Knox College. Principal Alfred Gandier, who served as principal at Knox, and as the first principal of Emmanuel, oversaw the construction of both buildings. I cannot be sure why he decided to place this motto in prominent places in both Colleges—certainly it has something to do with the influences of his own Scottish and Presbyterian tradition. I do know that the motto used to grace a sculptured stone on the architrave over the front doorway at Emmanuel are carved the words: “Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the Life was the Light of [all Humankind].” My own home denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has a campaign these days using the slogan “all means all.” The campaign challenges all congregations and members to recognize that “all means all,” to encourage us to recognize all human beings are related to one another in the family of God. Many of us are comfortable helping and accepting those who are like us. But there is a great tendency in North America these days to fear the other, to believe that the world will not be right until everyone else is like us, or learns at least how to behave like us. Many in North America today think we hold the resources because we deserve them, and because we know what is best for everybody else. The Trump phenomenon south of the border is evidence enough of the worst in our North American tendencies, but we know we should not fool ourselves into thinking that Canada is immune from such forces.

Another quotation, this one in Latin, is prominently carved into the stone of the fireplace in the beautiful lounge just outside the Emmanuel College library, on the third floor of our building: “Nil actum credens dum quid superesset agendum,” which roughly translates into “Believing nothing done whilst there remained anything else to be done.” Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (who, though born in Spain in 39 CE, lived in Rome until his death in 65 CE) used this phrase, partially to describe Caesar, in his Pharsalia, Book II. These words on our third floor fireplace are a constant reminder to all of us that “our work is not done.” Given the distinguished history of the College and the magnanimous character long associated with its faculty, staff and students, I retire this June with every confidence that the College’s good work here will persevere long into the future, a future defined by the hope that “all means all!”

On our front doorway at Emmanuel are carved the words: “Believing nothing done whilst there remained anything else to be done.”
Phyllis Airhart Interim Principal of Emmanuel College

Emmanuel College is pleased to announce that Phyllis Airhart will serve as interim principal. Her duties will start on July 1, 2017. Airhart is a professor of the history of Christianity at Emmanuel College and cross-appointed to U of T’s Department for the Study of Religion.

Her most recent publication is A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada, for which she won the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion’s book prize in 2016, and, in 2015, the book was shortlisted for the Canada Prize in the Humanities from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Her research interests include North American Christianity, religion and public life, and the history of spirituality. She is a past recipient of Victoria University’s Award for Excellence in Teaching and the United Church of Canada’s Davidson Trust Award for excellence in teaching and scholarship in theological education.

Mark Toulouse announced his retirement from Emmanuel in the fall of 2016. He became the 12th principal of Emmanuel College on January 1, 2009 and will retire from his post on June 30, 2017. Under his eight years of leadership, Emmanuel College has strengthened its longstanding tradition of academic excellence and has contributed notably to the transformation of theological education in Canada and North America. The College’s educational profile has been enhanced by new academic programs introduced during his tenure, and his innovative work with new constituencies including the creation of Muslim and Buddhist Studies programs. Toulouse’s vision has resulted in Emmanuel College’s becoming a prominent forum for dynamic interreligious engagement.

Nevin Reda Named Assistant Professor of Muslim Studies

Nevin Reda has been named assistant professor of Muslim Studies at Emmanuel College. “I am thrilled to be named to this tenure-stream position. The College stands out for its innovative programs, talented students and gifted faculty. It has been a privilege to teach and learn in this institution for the past five years,” Reda says. She holds a PhD from the University of Toronto with a major in the Qur’an and a minor in biblical Hebrew language and literature. She is a specialist in the Qur’an and Islamic law, has worked in the study of the poetics and hermeneutics of Qur’anic narrative structure, and has an impressive understanding of the Islamic exegetical tradition, the development of Islamic theology and law. While at Emmanuel, Reda’s interdisciplinary and interfaith research has explored interconnections between practical theology and sharia (religious law), offering reflection about how to conceptualize Islam in ways that make practical sense in the context of theological schools. Her passions for teaching, for support of diversity and inclusion, and for social justice are well known to the Emmanuel community. The College’s principal, Mark Toulouse, says, “Professor Reda has considerable experience teaching Islam in our theological context. We are excited to appoint her to this new tenure-stream appointment. She is a superb teacher and will continue to make important connections for Emmanuel across the broad spectrum of Muslim communities in Toronto.”
Emmanuel College hosted a conference in October that explored two current streams of applied Buddhism: one stream focuses on Buddhist countries in Asia; the other focuses on traditionally non-Buddhist, non-Asian countries. Both streams look at the application of Buddhist thought and practice to address issues of war and peace, ecology, justice, interreligious dialogue, and to empower work in education, healthcare, social work, psychology and psychotherapy, hospice care, chaplaincy, prison work and more. The inaugural conference was a forum for an inclusive exchange of ideas among academics, researchers, community leaders, and students from across the globe. John Makransky, associate professor of Buddhism and comparative theology at Boston College, gave the keynote address, “Applied Buddhism: Past and Present,” and spoke about how Buddhist principles were applied by Buddhists of the past and how similar principles are re-applied today in psychology and psychotherapy, prison chaplaincy, end-of-life care, Buddhist education, and community leadership in a globalized world. Chris Ng, president of the Buddhist Education Foundation of Canada, helped organize the conference and participated as a speaker. “We discussed the full meaning of the Buddha’s teachings, not just as a matter of textual studies, but also how the teachings preserved are applied by people who live these teachings,” says Ng. “It is gratifying to know that Emmanuel College is open to this kind of exploration and that it has established and helped to legitimize Buddhist Studies as a field of education and as a living tradition, rather than perpetuating it as something ‘frozen in time,’ or objectified as the ‘other.’”
Interreligious Learning as Theological Education

BY THOMAS E. REYNOLDS

In an uncertain global climate, where religious intolerance and divisive rhetoric exploiting fear and suspicion among people seem to be gaining traction, new opportunities present themselves for resistance and resilience among religious communities. One such opportunity, as I see it, is emerging at Emmanuel College. Future leaders and care practitioners from diverse religious traditions study and learn in the company of one another. This models something hopeful for society, offering prospects for moving past xenophobia and walls of separation, and instead toward mutual understanding and collaboration.

Rooted in the Protestant Christianity of the United Church of Canada, with its commitment to ecumenical partnerships, interreligious openness and a concern for justice, Emmanuel now enrolls students from many traditions: Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist, among others, and those with no expressed religious association. This diversity, to no small degree, has been nurtured by the development of a Muslim and Buddhist focus in the Master of Pastoral Studies program, with corresponding faculty offering classes to support students from these traditions. The result goes beyond older models of “religious literacy” built upon having faculty members from non-Christian traditions teach courses for predominately Christian students, common among seminaries. And it also involves more than creating separate programs that function as silos for students mainly to receive training in their own traditions, effectively establishing multiple seminaries within the College. While it is true that Christian, Muslim and Buddhist students take courses representative of their traditions, there are also distinct opportunities in classes—and in the wider community life at Emmanuel—for overlap in what scholars like Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook call “interreligious learning.”

In her book God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities, Kujawa-Holbrook, professor of practical theology and religious education at Claremont School of Theology, holds up interreligious learning not simply as a specialized program or optional exercise in education, but as integral to the vocation of faith communities. She primarily references Christian communities, though strongly implies resonance with others, to advocate a kind of faithful learning that nurtures literacy in one’s own and other religious perspectives, and to foster skills and attitudes conducive to creating a hospitable and just public life together.

From a Christian point of view, for Kujawa-Holbrook, interreligious learning requires neither watering down Christian identity nor making relative all religious traditions, the effect of which trivializes committed claims and practices. To the contrary, it can encourage students to find resources within their own tradition for productively engaging one another with compassion and respect. For example, overt faithfulness to the gospel—and its call to neighbourly love, hospitality and justice—can be one such resource for Christians.

That Emmanuel College is home to interreligious learning can, in this way, be seen as an expression of its identity as a Christian theological school—one dedicated to inclusive practice in the context of Canada’s complex religious pluralism. Of course, there are challenges and opportunities in the ongoing process of working this out. Interreligious learning at Emmanuel foregrounds three areas of promise, all of which intersect as ingredients of literacy required of religious leaders in our time.

The first, reflection, marks the opportunity for gaining understanding through critical inquiry and contextual analysis, by which knowledge of a student’s own tradition is deepened, while he or she also learns about religious differences. Such a process can provide a framework for challenging and dismantling harmful and divisive distortions, both past and present. Learners grow in self-awareness and humility, recognizing the limits of their own perspectives. In this way, interreligious learning also invites relationship. Knowledge and understanding occur here in the presence of one another, encounter and dialogue are key features. Conversations happen across boundaries, friendships are forged and collaborative ways of sharing and expressing spiritual commitments emerge. Such relationships are generative and can forge hospitable and respectful bonds that remain fast even in disagreement, providing basic skills and motivation for leadership in establishing and navigating future partnerships.

Finally, reflection and relationship join and become salient in responsibility. Growth in compassion and mutual respect are significant fruits of learning in the company of one another. These require deep listening skills open to the unique experience of others. They also mark a dedication to being together in accountable and just ways, being sensitive to power relations and sharing responsibility in fashioning a common public sphere. Interreligious learning therefore addresses intolerance, and challenges discrimination and injustice through fostering cultural competencies and working for social equity.

In today’s climate, there is much work to be done. And Emmanuel College can play a part. Interreligious learning can train future religious leaders and care practitioners to model compassion and respect for others, to be representatives of how religious commitments can become a fruitful means of collaborative responsibility in creating a more loving and just world.

Tom Reynolds is an associate professor of theology at Emmanuel College. He researches theologies of religious pluralism and has written on Muslim-Christian and Buddhist-Christian dialogue.
News and Moves

To read more alumni/ae updates or to submit your own, visit Ministry on the Move at www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca/alumni.

Maya Landell Emm 0T7 and Adam Hanley Emm 1T0 have moved back to Toronto. Landell has left Innerkip-Eastwood Pastoral Charge in London Conference to serve at Islington United Church in Toronto. She remains a member-at-large on the Emmanuel College Alumni/ae Association, having served since 2014. Hanley has moved from ministry with KTV United Church in Hamilton Conference to serve at the General Council Office as the new program coordinator for Ministry Personnel Vitality. Together, they call Etobicoke home with their four-year-old daughter, Norah Grace and their beagle-basset hound, Sophie.

HyRan Kim-Cragg Emm 0T6 has co-authored Hebrews (Liturgical Press), which tied for third place at the 2016 Catholic Press Award and Book Awards in the “Scripture: Academic Studies” category. Kim-Cragg has also co-authored 1–2 Thessalonians (Liturgical Press).

Robert Fennell Emm 9T4, 0T5 has edited a recently published collection of essays entitled Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship (Wipf and Stock).

Deaths

Edward (Ted) James Kersey Vic 4T9, Emm 5T2, in Oakville, Ont., February 1, 2017. Kersey was awarded France’s Legion of Honour in 2016 for his valiant efforts during the Second World War.

Charles A. Milton Emm 6T3, in Winnipeg, Man., October 14, 2016.


David W. Potter Emm 5T6, in Cobourg, Ont., December 8, 2016.

J. Newton Reed Vic 5T0, Emm 5T3, in Uxbridge, Ont., November 12, 2016.

L. Eveleigh Smith Vic 3T9, Emm 4T1, in Victoria, B.C., July 11, 2016.

Better Questions: A Film

MDiv student Stephen Milton has directed and filmed Better Questions: A Year at Emmanuel College. It follows five graduate students—three Master of Divinity students, one Master of Sacred Music student and one student in the Master of Pastoral Studies: Social Service—Muslim Studies program—as they navigate their way through their theological education. The film is the story of their year and highlights their goals and experiences with the various programs, and addresses their life before and outside the College. One student shows where he used to sleep when he was homeless in Toronto, a second student delivers a sermon at his mosque, while a third shows her additional work as an acupuncturist. The film premiered at Emmanuel in February and will also be shown at Alumni/ae Day on May 8. See details on page 8.

The Very Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee
Sang Chul Lee, Victoria University chancellor from 1992–1998, passed away on January 28, 2017. Lee served as moderator of the United Church of Canada from 1988–1990. Described as a pastor, prophet and pioneer, Lee’s life was a testament to his faith. “His contributions to the United Church of Canada and his lifetime of work on behalf of social justice have measurably improved the lives of many immigrant communities in Canada and the lives of others who, for too long, have been living on the fringes of our society,” says Mark Toulouse. Read more about Lee in the Winter 2017 issue of Vic Report or online at www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca.
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

The Cousland Lecture
“The Future of Pluralism: Civic and Theoretical Questions”
with Diana Eck, Harvard Divinity School
March 29, 4 pm
Emmanuel College, Room 119
Eck is a professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies. She also is the Fredric Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and is a member of the Faculty of Divinity.
RSVP to betsy.anderson@utoronto.ca or call 416-813-4096.

APRIL

Naming and Confronting Subtle Violence in Everyday Church Work
with Lee Ann McKenna
April 28, 10 am to 4 pm
Emmanuel College
Workshop fee $90 plus HST, includes lunch. Register by March 15 for early-bird fee of $75 plus HST, or by April 21 for regular fee.

MAY

After the Baptism by Fire
with Morar Murray Hayes
May 12, 10 am to 2 pm
Emmanuel College
Workshop fee $50 plus HST. Register by April 7 for early-bird fee of $40 plus HST, or by May 5 for regular fee.

EMMANUEL ALUMNI/AE DAY 2017: MAY 8

Your ECAA Executive is pleased to invite you back to campus for Emmanuel Alumni/ae Day on Monday, May 8, 2017. The spring event will refresh your spirit, offer time to reconnect with friends and faculty, and reflect on your time on campus as a student.

The event will feature community worship, small-group discussions, workshops and a screening of Stephen Milton’s film (see page 7). There will be a wine-and-cheese reception in the late afternoon followed by a Reunion Dinner, featuring the presentation of the Distinguished Alumni/ae Award to William (Bill) Lord Emm 6T3.

Queen’s Theology alumni are also invited to join with Emmanuel for this event. Please share the invitation with any of your friends from Queen’s Theology. Plan to join us on May 8!

Visit http://my.alumni.utoronto.ca/emmday2017 for details!

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME!
FRIDAY, MAY 26, 7:07 P.M.
100-level seats; $58.25 (value $71)
Make some noise for the Toronto Blue Jays! All are welcome to cheer on Josh and José as the Jays take on the Texas Rangers. Please call 416-585-4500 or 1-888-262-9775 to purchase tickets or buy online at my.alumni.utoronto.ca/jaysmay26. Ticket sales close May 12.

For event details and registration, visit www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca or contact Betsy Anderson at ec.events@utoronto.ca or 416-813-4096.
A congregational discount of 15% is available for groups of two or more participating members, and students pay half price. There is a 15% discount for an individual attending two or more events in the year. HST is added to all workshop fees.