The Power of ‘Yes’: Sandra Beardsall Reflects on 175 Years of Victoria University

Victoria University’s 175th anniversary celebrations were a resounding success! Highlights included a gala evening at the Royal Ontario Museum and an Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration. The annual Charter Day on October 12, which commemorates the granting of Victoria’s royal charter by King William IV in 1836, was marked with a special convocation at which the Honorable Henry N.R. Jackman Vic 5T3 was granted the degree of doctor of humane letters, honoris causa.

During the past year, Victoria University has been holding celebratory events to mark an exciting and historic year. The year closed with a service by Emmanuel College that focused on a reflection of Vic’s history. On October 16, an Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration was held in the Vic chapel. The concept of reflection was seen in William Kervin’s Emm 9T4 opening prayer, which was drawn from the prayers of Northrop Frye Vic 3T3, Emm 3T6. It was present again after the sermon in the silent reflection that began and ended with the dramatic ringing of the Tibetan prayer bowl.

Sandra Beardsall’s sermon, They said, ‘Yes’, reflected “on history, education, and faith: how they work together, and the challenges of holding them together.” She began with a reading from Matthew 13:34-35, 51-52, in which Jesus says: “I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world. ... Have you understood all this?” The disciples answered, “Yes.”

“Just like that?” exclaimed Beardsall. “Didn’t they mean ‘No’, or at best, ‘Sort of?’ Their confidence is unnerving. After all, what they have just claimed to understand is a clutch of parables that point to what Jesus calls the reign or ‘kingdom of heaven.’”

But how different, in their confidence, were “those who founded the Upper Canada Academy, soon to become Victoria College, at Cobourg in 1836? Egerton Ryerson and other Methodists were convinced that public education was a pearl of great price, a treasure hidden in the fertile fields of a nation-in-waiting, a righteous claim. They believed education should be available freely to all, without religious distinction or denominational ‘tests’; it should be liberal and inquiring.”

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yet firmly rooted, in the arts and in the sciences, in Christian faith and practice. ‘Religion, education, and freedom stand or fall together,’ Ryerson sang out.”

“They said, ‘Yes,’ and they and their descendants carried this confidence into the nineteenth century’s intellectual foment. They readily accommodated the rapid advances of science and the new questions these posed for faith. They resisted narrow dogmas and divisive theologies; they embraced ecumenical opportunities, and at the turn of the century they at least twice defended Victoria professors who dared to promote a critical reading of scripture. The Victoria mindset helped to shape the ethos of the Methodist Church, Canada’s largest Protestant denomination, and arguably, by extension, influenced the shape of the young nation.

They said, ‘Yes,’ and saying ‘Yes’ continued to lead them down paths of self-giving and institutional sacrifice and risk. They sold all they had in 1892 to leave their beloved and bucolic Cobourg for a federated future with the University of Toronto, and in 1927 the faculty of the newly minted United Church had to depart Knox College to create Emmanuel College. In the 1970s Emmanuel’s own Doug Jay Vic 4T6, Emm 5T0 became the founding director of the Toronto School of Theology (TST), and more recently Emmanuel and TST have taken the risk of seeking the treasures buried in the fields of interreligious theological training with Muslim and Jewish communities.

They said ‘Yes.’ But the founders’ spirit of free inquiry formed part of an intellectual procession that finds us now on challenging terrain. For all their boldness, the certainties of our forebears have fled. Despite its proud liberal tradition, some of the old things in Victoria’s cupboards now embarrass us. Why were women of the old things in Victoria’s cupboards still banished until 1880, and taught by almost exclusively male faculties for decades afterward? Where were the Mohawks and Mississaugas, the First Nations whom Ontario Methodists had so readily evangelized? Further, we have learned that modernity—the pearl for which the founders risked all—is actually unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, and many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic proclaims to the campus. But whose truth? As former Chancellor Norman Jewison Vic 4T9 wrote in his farewell column for the Vic Report in 2010, ‘We live in a time when … many quite cultivated people consider truth to be unreliable; history is really a cluster of competing stories, many of them ignored in favour of the grand narrative Victoria’s founders preached. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ Old Vic procl

“The Victoria mindset helped to shape the ethos of the Methodist Church, Canada’s largest Protestant denomination, and arguably, by extension, influenced the shape of the young nation.”
Good News and Growth: Emmanuel by the Numbers

BY MARK G. TOULOUSE

We don’t often talk numbers in church settings these days because discussions about numbers have been rather discouraging. I thought, however, that it might be worthwhile to devote this column to numbers. My decision to do so, of course, is due to the fact that the numbers discussion for Emmanuel College is much more encouraging this year!

1 LAST YEAR’S FINANCIAL-AID NUMBERS
In 2010–2011, Emmanuel College provided scholarship and bursary aid to 37 enrolled United Church candidates and five United Church inquirers enrolled in the MDiv program. Further, the College provided aid for 20 additional United Church students enrolled in non-ordination-stream master’s degree programs. In addition, in the advanced degree program, Emmanuel provided aid to one United Church candidate, five United Church ordained ministers, and six lay United Church members. Emmanuel provided these 74 different United Church students with a total scholarship and bursary support totaling $287,857. In addition, Emmanuel provided aid to 15 basic degree students from other denominations, totaling $43,951, and aid to 15 advanced degree students from other denominations, totaling $177,273. When all of these amounts are added, Emmanuel provided scholarships and bursaries to 104 students, totaling $509,081.

2 THIS YEAR’S ENTERING CLASS
The entering class this fall is the largest we have enjoyed in a decade. It is quite a diverse class, and is spread across our degree programs: 22 new students in MDiv classes, four in the Master of Pastoral Studies, four in the Master of Theological Studies, one in the Master of Sacred Music, one in the Master of Arts, one in the Master of Theology, two in the Doctor of Ministry, and seven in the Doctor of Theology. In addition, some 13 new students are investigating theological education by taking courses for academic credit as “special students.” These 56 new students, in courses for academic credit, are joined by nine others who are exploring classes by auditing them without enrolling as degree students. New students formally enrolled in the MDiv program this year and next are able to take up to 10 courses in their first 12 months without paying any tuition. For each new MDiv full-time student, Emmanuel will provide a cheque to Victoria University in the amount of $5,400.

3 UNITED CHURCH STUDENTS IN CANADIAN MDiv PROGRAMS
Last year, there were approximately 163 United Church of Canada students enrolled in MDiv programs within 12 different schools in Canada, of which 59 were at Emmanuel College. Last May, Emmanuel graduated nine of these UCC students in the MDiv program. This year’s entering class contains 18 new United Church students in the MDiv program. There are currently 65 United Church students in the program, counting those on internship this year, but not counting a number of students who are taking a year’s leave.

4 TOTAL ENROLLMENT AT EMMANUEL COLLEGE
Emmanuel’s enrollment has grown significantly compared to last year. This reverses a trend of at least 10 years of declining enrollments from year to year. The detailed chart on page 4 shows this trend back to the fall of 2007. Note that this year’s number of 119 students registered in basic degree courses is considerably better than last year’s number of 87 students. The advanced degree program grew slightly with 56 students this year. And the total number of students enrolled in academic work this fall is 175, compared to 141 students last fall. Most of this growth took place in the basic degree programs.

Taking a look at Emmanuel College “by the numbers” is an interesting exercise. And this year, the exercise brings good news!
A new award has been established in honour of Professor William Fennell Vic 3T9, Emm 4T2. Victoria University has generously established a fellowship in his name through creating an endowment of $25,000. A four-year scholarship (equal to 4% of annual earnings from the endowment), named the William Fennell Fellowship in Theology will be awarded to a doctoral student of theology. The Fennell Fellow will deliver a “William Fennell Lecture” about his or her research during the final year of the doctoral program.

Fennell passed away in May of 2010. As professor and principal emeritus of Emmanuel College, he was admired for being a faithful scholar and a wise administrator. Fennell joined the faculty of Victoria University in 1946, where he taught systematic theology at Emmanuel College for 35 years. He served as principal from 1972 until his retirement in 1981. He was devoted to Emmanuel and Vic throughout his lifetime.

If you would like to honour Bill Fennell’s memory and help Emmanuel build up the endowment associated with this fellowship, please call 416-586-4500 or 1-888-262-9775.

Reception Honours Fred Graham’s Davidson Award

The Emmanuel and United Church of Canada communities celebrated Fred Graham on September 22. The reception was in honour of Graham’s receiving the Davidson Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship. From left to right: Mark Toulouse, principal of Emmanuel College; Fred Graham, Deer Park Assistant Professor of Church Music, director of chapel; Michael Blair, executive minister of communities in ministry for the General Council Office of the UCC; and William Kervin Emm 9T4, associate professor of public worship.
Charting Emmanuel’s Current and Future Goals

Principal Mark Toulouse discusses Emmanuel College’s Association of Theological Schools (ATS) self-study report on September 9 with members of the ad-hoc committee established by the Board of Regents. Michael Bourgeois, vice-principal of Emmanuel, served as chair of the committee. The ATS self-study is a comprehensive evaluation of every aspect of life at Emmanuel College for the past 10 years, and, emerging from it, faculty and staff make recommendations to address hopes for current and future work.

Destination, Emmanuel

Emmanuel College co-hosted two large national events this past summer. In June, Worship Matters took place on campus. This event began in 2003 and endeavours to “identify ways to animate life-transforming worship in local congregations in the United Church of Canada.” Also, pictured here, Rendez-vous 2011 took place from August 11 to 14. This popular event, held in partnership with the University of Toronto Multi-faith Centre, attracted hundreds of people to campus. Rendez-vous is an annual event that seeks to connect the United Church with youth and young adults from across the country. In addition to worship, lectures, and a flash mob, a “green” component of the conference included participants teaming up with the Toronto Conservation Authority and local churches to do outdoor clean-ups.

A New Beginning

September 14 marked the annual opening term barbeque at Emmanuel College. Many students, staff and faculty members were in attendance, enjoying a beautifully sunny day on campus. Future student, Adelaide Emm 3T7, joins her mom Jeanette Unger Emm 0T6 for the celebration.
What is Contextual Theology?

BY NATALIE WIGG-STEVENSOn

It’s a Thursday and I’m jet-lagged. I realize I’m in a South Africa that is politically, but not socially, post-Apartheid. Even so, the white woman’s racist comments surprise me. I am piloting an ethnographic study outside of Cape Town, constructing a contextual theology of reconciliation. And I am struggling.

As her comments about the supposed incompetence of black grocery clerks wind down, the woman proudly notes that she nevertheless works on pronouncing the African names written on their name-tags, “because they like it when we do that.”

“They? We?” I think. The complexity of my racial identity breaks through the impartiality of my ethnographic identity: “Why does she think she can say these things to me?”

This is my second day in South Africa. Ever. But I grew up hearing stories from my mother’s childhood here. My grandfather, the principal of a “coloured” high school and an active member of the ANC, faced imminent imprisonment for his activism. So in 1966, my family fled their homeland. Re-location to England changed who my mum was. Sprung from Apartheid’s codes, reconfigured in the English system, her coloured body became black.

Meanwhile, my dad was growing up in a racially monochrome English village, the son of a war-veteran father and a tuberculosis-surviving mother. Much survival made my parents’ meeting possible, it seems.

I was 14 before I perceived anything about my bi-raciality as more than a simple fact of life. But like my mum, I felt racial ascriptions shift as I moved between the geographic borders of England, Canada and the U.S. “Is she Latina?” I’d hear whisper; “Surely you are Greek!” somewhere else. And every so often I would be privy to subtly racist comments, as conversation partners misperceived me as being one of their “us.”

So what comments, I wonder as the white woman leaves her interview, will the three black pastors waiting in the next room make based on their also inevitable misreading of my racial identity? And “oh my goodness,” I panic, “what if they had heard the white woman’s comments and interpreted my attempts at ethnographic impartiality as agreement?” Worse yet, what if, in some awful tacit way, that attempt actually had performed some implicit agreement? Things are moving too quickly for me to be able to take the types of pauses necessary for making the self-aware self-analysis that is a necessary component of doing contextual theology.

I don’t have to get too far into the interview for the awkwardness to arise. “All white people,” says one of the pastors, “when they meet you . . . you can tell they have hate for you . . . no offense to you.”

“Just for the record,” I smile, “I’m not white.” With a confused, questioning expression, he reaches his hand toward me and rubs his own skin. “I’m bi-racial,” I respond, and then continue, a little nervous because of the line I’m taking but too curious not to. “So, if you can feel white people’s hate immediately, did you think you felt that hate coming from me?”

They look at each other and back to me. “No, no, not from you . . .,” says the pastor, “you’re a sister.” “But you didn’t know I was a sister when you met me,” I push, “so did you feel it?” They pause, look around. Messing with racial categories in South Africa is dangerous. “Nah, you’re cool,” the first pastor says. And I know from his tone that this line of questioning is over.

We move on, but I am struck. My body, what my body hides and, more so, the revelation that happens in and through that tension, briefly opened a space within which some fragmented version of reconciliation could play out. If only for a moment, these pastors encountered white flesh they could name as sister.

Contextual theology becomes surprisingly powerful when we not only read or write it, as if the movement from practice to text and from text to practice is easily traversed, but also when we instead swim in its ever-flowing streams. Indeed, the fluidity of bi-racial identity, so dependent for its meaning and function on the particular stories that give rise to it, reminds us that all cultural identities are constantly in flux. They cannot be pinned down. Likewise, contextual theology is not just a good read of a situation. Contextual theology happens in fragmentary ways, all around us. And when it happens—or, when it happens well—it can evoke more than the abstractions of racial or other identity ascriptions. It evokes more than a history stretching out between nameless, faceless people. Contextual theology happens fully in the midst of genuine, perhaps chance, encounters.

Visitors to the newly decorated Contextual Education Office will find artifacts that represent my commitment to this personal and active vision of contextual theology: the couch that my grandmother lugged out of South Africa in ’66, and paint-by-numbers drawings that my grandfather created to calm his nerves after his heart attack in the late ’70s. These domestic artifacts remind me that no vision of “I,” “we,” “us,” and “them” is ever complete. They remind me that when contextual theology takes the risk of genuine encounter, contextual theology pauses in its talk about redemption and takes the powerful risk of actually becoming redemptive.

Achievements

Enloe Wilson Emm 1T0 was recently appointed faith and community relations coordinator for Habitat for Humanity Toronto. He is responsible for stewarding partner relationships with Toronto’s interfaith communities toward Habitat’s mission to promote ownership of safe, decent and affordable housing for low-income families.

The United Church of Canada’s 2011 McGeachy Senior Scholarship, to develop leaders who will provide the United Church with discernment and direction to inspire the church toward creative and faithful mission, has been awarded to co-recipients Sandra Beardsall Emm 8T5, Emm 9T6, HyeRan Kim-Cragg Emm 0T6, and Wycliffe College’s Meg Jordan.

Births

To Jeanette Unger Emm 0T6, Emmanuel’s associate chaplain, and Josh Grossman, a girl, Adelaide Unger Grossman, on August 6, 2011, in Toronto. See page 5.

Deaths

Douglas E. Bradford Vic 4T2, Emm 4T4, in Peterborough, Ont., on August 16, 2011.
Frederick A. Joblin Vic 6T8, Emm 7T1, in Orillia, Ont., on September 2, 2011.
David Peebles Vic 4T4, Emm 4T8, in Assiniboia, Sask., on July 20, 2010.
Audrey (Feasel) Scott Emm 5T6, in Hamilton, Ont., on July 26, 2011.
Douglas T. Sloan Vic 4T7, Emm 5T0, in Guelph, Ont., on July 4, 2011.

Emmanuel College would also like to extend condolences to Joyce Kelly and her husband Bruce McLeod Emm 5T3. Joyce’s brother Dennis Kelly was tragically killed in a work-related accident on October 11, 2011 in Watford, Ont.

SAVE THE DATE
Emmanuel Days
May 9-10, 2012
Preaching in a Windstorm:
Speaking Gospel in a Fragmented,
Spiritually Restless Age

The Emmanuel College Alumni Association (ECAA) is pleased to announce the leadership for this year’s event:

Plenary Speaker:
Rev. Dr. Thomas Long
Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Workshop Leaders:
Rev. Dr. Anthony Bailey
Senior Minister at Parkdale United Church in Ottawa
Rev. Dr. Emily (Rodgers) Bisset
Minister of Knox, Oshawa

We live in a time when the world bristles with communication, when we may be overwhelmed by messages—Tweets, Facebook exchanges, political rhetoric, rival claims to wisdom and truth. We also live in a time when the reliable contexts of preaching—church, biblically aware hearers, stable culture—have eroded. Thomas Long’s two presentations will explore how preachers can speak gospel with confidence and clarity in the midst of this windstorm.

Ned Wells, pictured here at the opening of term barbeque in September, is proud to uphold a family tradition as he pursues his MDiv. Wells’ grandfather, Edward Frazer Lacey Vic 5T3, Emm 5T6, has been a practising minister for the past 15 years. Lacey is currently interim minister at Oshawa’s St. Stephen’s United Church. Wells has a particular interest in the history of Christianity and is considering this area as a thesis possibility.

Congratulation to Susan E. Eagle Vic 7T3, Emm 7T7 for receiving an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Victoria University on May 12. Her convocation address is available on Emmanuel’s website at uoft.me/1ty.

Congratulations also to Jane Dammen McAuliffe who received an honorary Doctor of Sacred Letters in May from Victoria University.

A 17-song cd and songbook of the poetry of John Wesley Oldham Emm 6T9 has been released, set to music by the late Fred Joblin Vic 6T8 Emm 7T1. The cd is entitled Spirit Songs of Unity . . . Beyond the Dogmas that Divide.
JANUARY

Communicating Hope: Reflection and Photography at Emmanuel College with Richard Choe

This learning circle is an opportunity to learn about discovering beauty in and around us through biblical reflection and photography. Learn to appreciate, capture, and use photographic images in ministry contexts and learn to select digital images that reflect a faith perspective which is inclusive and compassionate.

January to May, 2012, monthly Monday afternoons from 1 pm to 5 pm, plus one Saturday meeting as decided by the participants, Emmanuel College.

Workshop fee $200.
Register by January 2.

End of Life Decisions: Medical Ethics and Hospital Chaplaincy with Abdulaziz Sachedina

The course will study end-of-life decisions from bioethical perspectives found within Islamic tradition. In the light of clear prohibition for the medical team to engage in any form of euthanasia, and discouragement of prolongation of life for the patients in palliative care, the Islamic ethical tradition raises serious questions about the right to make a decision regarding imminent death. The course addresses the critical role of the hospital chaplain: how to negotiate the space between medical care and family concerns at the height of the critical care of a suffering patient, and explores the intersection between religion and culture in religiously informed bioethics.

Wednesdays from January 11 to February 8, 2012 from 6 pm to 9 pm at Emmanuel College.

Workshop fee $300; $100 for a friend who registers with you; students and seniors $150.
Register by January 4.

Amman Message: Pluralism and Authority in Islam with Nevin Reda and Azeezah Kanji

Who is a Muslim? Who has the authority to speak for Islam? Issued in 2005 by 200 Islamic scholars from over 50 countries, these are the questions that the Amman Message sought to answer. This workshop will use the Message as the lens through which questions of pluralism and authority in Islam will be examined.

Saturday, January 14, 10 am to 12:30 pm, Emmanuel College.

Workshop fee $25.
Register by January 6.

Art as a Form of Spiritual Expression with Vivianne LaRiviere

This workshop is specifically designed to help with self-discovery, and in turn can offer the opportunity for a level of healing to occur, as we move to deeper places within ourselves. The participants are guided through focused meditation, dialogue, and a wide variety of art including poetry, writing, collage, painting, singing and drumming as a way to discover deeper meaning.

Friday, January 20, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm and Saturday, January 21, 10 am to 5 pm, Emmanuel College.

Workshop fee $175.
Register by January 12.

Call for Nominations

Do you know an Emmanuel College graduate whose vision and leadership have distinguished her or him through extraordinary and exemplary ministry to the church, academy or society-at-large? Nominate her or him today for the 2011 Distinguished Alumni/ae Award. The Distinguished Alumni/ae Award recognizes recent or lifetime achievement and the scope of one’s contributions can be at the local, national or international level.

Nominations for the award’s 2011 recipient are currently being accepted and must be received by Nov. 30, 2011.

Visit www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca/alumni to make your nomination.

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.

Save the Date

Social Justice and Human Rights Conference
April 27, 28

The Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics is planning a two-day interdisciplinary conference on social justice and human rights, co-sponsored by Emmanuel College, to take place on April 27 and 28, 2012 at Victoria University in the University of Toronto. For more information please visit http://news.icscanada.edu.