

Centre for Christian Studies Program Consultation Summary

- I've been listening for salient points ("best thoughts") and for the consultation's narrative; I didn't take minutes.
- This written record will help the Principal continue the conversation with CCS colleagues, the Planning and Program Committees, Central Council and other stakeholders, including those who provided financial support for this consultation and/or participated in one-on-one interviews.
- Our expectation is a final product will be shared with you after the Principal and Committees have digested their experience and fleshed out this summary.
- Overnight, I've distilled five themes. Taken together, you might think of them as a bohemian crystal ball – catching and refracting the light differently as you turn it. We wouldn't want to treat these themes as we would handle a rubber ball; they're still too fragile to bounce or throw around casually.

RENEWAL

You encouraged the Centre to remember and reclaim the parts of its story that are most relevant to today's realities, including key words like diakonia, ecumenism, mission. This process has started here.

TENSIONS

You named several tensions while acknowledging the Centre's dialectical philosophy of education:

- ✓ diaconal and ordained ministry
- ✓ denominational and ecumenical
- ✓ mission and market
- ✓ ecclesiological and missional
- ✓ affective (faithful) and effective
- ✓ mindset and skill set
- ✓ competencies and credentials
- ✓ integrated and "a la carte" or modular approaches
- ✓ action and reflection (fast and slow, learning and doing)
- ✓ abundance and scarcity (constraints)
- ✓ opportunities and risks

Some tensions are not easily resolved or may never be resolved. Others point to specific strategic choices facing the Centre today.

PERSPECTIVE

You raised issues from three different points of view:

Biblical Perspective. Three words seemed to connect the songs of Deborah, Hannah and Mary with the Centre's work in the world today:

Patriarchy (“standing over and against” all forms of oppression and violence)
Empowerment (“standing up”, taking action, resisting and sustaining)
Transformation (“resurrection”, personal and political)

Ecological Perspective. You spoke to three questions (“to isolate the Centre’s DNA”):

1. Where we are? (“where does the Centre come from, who is the Centre related to”)

e.g. “geography” (Toronto, Winnipeg, global, western, prairie – local, regional, national, continental, global), “geneology” (past, present, future relations – “the diaconal community” – and in relation to other theological colleges)

2. How are we?

e.g. diversity, hybridity, spiral/learning circles (method/model), distributed learning, technology (new and old)

3. Whose are we?

e.g. YHWH, global diakonia, women and men, UCC / ACC / denominational / ecumenical / inter-faith / civil society (“extra-church”) partnerships, sustainers (“owners, customers”)

Learners’ Perspective. You identified issues and concerns related to student access and readiness to enroll in CCS programs:

- ✓ Learning styles – accommodation of students with different needs
- ✓ Credentials – entry-level to advanced options for students
- ✓ Status – stipendiary/non-stipendiary
- ✓ Employment prospects – church/non-church
- ✓ Cost – constraints in time and money
- ✓ Curriculum – expectations, content
- ✓ Location – “the yellow house and beyond”
- ✓ Relationships – denominational identity/sensibility, affinity groups (e.g. issue-orientation), place-based networks

SYNERGIES

You recognized ways in which you can engage with the Centre to respond to shared challenges, and ways the Centre can engage with you:

- ✓ As an ally for diaconal ministry
- ✓ As a consumer of programs and services
- ✓ As a collaborator in working with specific communities (e.g. First Nations, lay leaders) and in innovation (e.g. use of technology in ministry and in education)

ADAPTATION

You raised several provocative questions about how the Centre must adapt to remain relevant and viable, including:

- ✓ What is the current and emerging theological basis for diaconal ministry?
- ✓ What are the non-negotiables? (“What are the untouchables?”)
- ✓ What is the relationship between the model, the method and the location?
- ✓ How is the Centre participating in national conversations about competencies and standards?
- ✓ What is the world that we’re in and how is calling us at this time?
- ✓ What is the Centre’s approach to partnership and understanding of its costs/benefits?
 - How does the CCS honour and celebrate the identity of each partner in any partnership? (“win/win, de-selfing”)
 - How does CCS engage the issues of greatest concern to its prospective partners?