



Don Evans chats with a Family Member at Our Place Society.

The Centre for Christian Studies Tapestry

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EDUCATING LEADERS FOR JUSTICE, COMPASSION, AND TRANSFORMATION

NEWS

A Place of Dignity

When I reach Don Evans he's in a hotel room in Portugal. He's just woken up from a nap after spending the day touring therapeutic communities for people addicted to drugs and meeting with politicians. Don is the executive director of Our Place and a CCS student. Our Place is a church-supported outreach ministry located within walking distance of the Legislature in Victoria, BC.

BC is in the midst of a devastating crisis of drug overdoses and BC's capital city has not been exempt. This past August, there were 42 overdoses on the Our Place property alone. Don is in Europe learning how countries like Portugal have cut their addiction rate in half and exploring therapeutic communities in Italy where they treat and support the whole person, not just the chemical addiction.

A shipping container in the courtyard is one of the newest ministries at Our Place Society. Fitted out with desks and cubicles it serves as an overdose

prevention tool. Staff of the new Overdose Prevention POD include paramedics. POD = place of dignity. This both catches my interest and speaks to how Don's faith has shaped his work.

"Studying at CCS has informed how I do this work as I look at it with a lens of church," Don reflected. "I have different motivation, different concepts. Now I look at it more through service. It's not a business. It's not about money. It's about people, about love, peace, compassion and healing. It has helped me to understand that it's not about me, not about the organization, but about the individual that's hurting.

"A good example is that donations dropped when we opened up the Overdose Prevention POD," he continued. "Some people didn't like it. However it's not about the organization but about being of service to people who are hurting and we just have to trust in God. People were dying in our building.

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Barbara Barnett, a Companion of the Centre, brings greetings from Maylanne's family.

Farewell Maylanne

The CCS Community celebrated Maylanne Maybee on September 6 as we bid her farewell. Maylanne served as principal of CCS since 2011. She retired in August.

PASSAGES

We remember grads (CCS, AWTC and UCTS) who have recently passed away.

Mae Gracey (UCTS 1958)

Audrey McKim (UCTS 1954)

Ora Rendell (AWTC 1959)

Genevieve Carder (UCTS 1940)

Betty Wing (UCTS 1951)

Nobuko Matsugu (UCTS 1962)

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We have to do what is right for the people we are serving."

Don noted that the world is changing rapidly. During the Great Depression churches responded to the needs of people hurt by that. Today's world is very different and it's a challenge to keep up with the changing needs of the people who come to Our Place. They hope to open their own therapeutic community in the spring to really help people who have many issues to contend with: homelessness, addiction, mental health breakdown and lack of current job skills.

"When I look at "What would Jesus do?" Don said, "He would be reaching out to these people." ~ *Kimiko Karpoff*

Planting seeds of social justice

The Oxford Coalition for Social Justice is a small volunteer run group dedicated to addressing multiple issues that negatively impact the life and health of residents in Oxford County, Ontario. It's not easy taking on large gravel companies who want to carve up the landscape, or challenging a plan to dump garbage in a new private landfill. Knowing that 'Strategic Litigation against Public Participation' aka SLAPP suits are a threat to them, and opposed at every step by those who have a financial investment, these activists bring to this work passion for sustainability and human rights, commitment and constant vigilance. Taking a stand can have personal consequences.

Progress is slow.

So when Christian Crawford approached the coalition about the possibility of doing her required CCS field placement with them, they were delighted. Here was someone willing to devote twelve hours a week to the work they believe in. Yay! But what could a ministry student offer them? Christina explained that CCS students do this field placement to engage directly in social justice work and get experience in building networks between the community and church. She particularly wanted to learn how to advocate for people and for the environment.

125 years of life in community: From white gloves to video conferencing



Michel Owens reflects

One of the community practices at the Centre for Christian Studies is to begin all our meetings with 'worship

and check in" a time intentionally set aside to turn our attention to our relationship with the Divine Other, and then turn our attention to each other. Particularly because so much of our work is done at a distance, through phone and video conferencing, this helps us build and maintain our relationships and common community. At our most recent Central Council meeting I found myself in tears during check in – not during my own time of sharing, but in hearing the news of the death of one of our alumni, who graduated from the United Church Training School in the 1950s, and whom I knew from my

home congregation in Toronto.

In the 125 years the Centre for Christian Studies and its predecessor schools have been educating leaders for ministry, community has been at the centre of our life. From our current governance practices to authentically checking in with one another to potluck meals to our new online student community – the traditions and pedagogy of formation for diaconal ministry include an emphasis on learning in community, community building, community organizing and community nurture.

In her history book "Weaving a Changing Tapestry", Gwyn Griffiths (a former principal of the Centre



Deaconesses in training, 1926.

Principal Jean MacDonald 2nd row left end

for Christian Studies) describes how deaconess training in Canada began. The Church of England Deaconess and Missionary Training House was established in 1892, followed by the National Methodist Training School in 1894 and the Presbyterian Ewart Missionary Training Home in 1897, all in Toronto. These schools were on land considered part of the 1787 "Toronto Purchase" and 1805 Treaty

Once she was familiar with the issues, Christina got busy. She talked to people about successful alternatives to dumps and intrigued them with information about waste-free communities. She changed her personal habits, "The more you learn, the more you can't let yourself get away with throwing away plastic."

While her task involved educating people one-on-one through displays at events, it wasn't enough. She needed to get more people involved. Christina approached the members of the youth group she led at St. David's church. They handed out milkweed pods at the farmer's

market and as each receiver puzzled over this bumpy dry thing in their hand, the youth talked about how planting the seed was one small step towards creating habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. They also invited signatures on a petition against the landfill and demonstrated at Queen's Park.

Not only were they learning about environmental care themselves, the youth got the whole congregation

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Christina with milkweed

13 agreements with the Mississauga of New Credit. As with many treaty agreements, these were used as land transfer agreements by the British and Canadian governments and understood as cooperation and shared land use agreements by indigenous law. By the time the New Credit land claim was settled in 2010, the deaconess schools had gone through many changes – including the establishment of the United Church of Canada in 1925; the merger of the Anglican Women's Training Centre and the United Church Training School/Covenant College into the Centre for Christian Studies in 1969 and the move to Winnipeg in 1998. In Winnipeg we are in Treaty 1 territory – a treaty signed in 1871, only 20 years before the first deaconess schools opened in Toronto.

The early leadership in the National Methodist Training School was sent from the Chicago Training

School, which had been founded by Lucy Rider Meyer in 1885. While thousands flocked to Chicago for the 1893 World's Fair, Lucy traveled to Toronto for a public meeting, and later sent women to serve as superintendents and matrons. Jean Scott served as superintendent for ten years between 1896 and 1906. Both the Church of England and Methodist schools moved buildings as their student numbers increased – needing not only educational space, but living quarters as students, staff and deaconesses lived together.



Jean Scott

Jean Scott, Superintendent of the Methodist National Training School from 1896-1906, wrote of community life:

There are only such [regulations] as have been found necessary

for the harmonious working of so large a family. Among them are: All are desired to be prompt and regular at meals and to take out-door exercise every day. Calls are received on Friday evening only, except in special cases. Only Sunday evening and one other evening a week are spent outside, except by special permission. Food

is served only at meals and all fare alike, except in the case of sickness.

The 'rules' governing community life have changed greatly over 125 years! As Canadian society has changed, so the diaconal training schools changed as they continually imagined church differently. And yet we can see threads of continuity – we still value eating together. We set

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Sowing Seeds: Continued from page 3

interested in the care of creation through creative worship activities and Trashapalooza, an exchange of cast off items.

By getting others involved, Christina multiplied the 12 hours she offered to the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice. She brought with her a new set of reasons for doing advocacy, based in a belief that we are intimately connected to the land and must care for it as a gift of God. She was able to inspire the youth to lead in fun and meaningful ways, while building a wider network of people passionate about sustaining our world.

Christina's Learning Facilitator, Bryan Smith, said he had no idea what to expect when she started but she modelled diaconal ministry in everything she did. One of her strengths was building community among diverse people. Bryan wrote to CCS asking how he could make this field placement opportunity known to more of our students. "The experience was very useful to us and the coalition is grateful that Christina found us."

~ Lori Stewart

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Staff team - Scott Douglas, Cheryl Thiessen, Michelle Owen, Janet Ross, Lori Stewart, Kimiko Karpoff, David Lappano, Marcie Gibson (inset)

CCS Staff Team

When CCS embarked on a program review and redesign in 2015, there was no specific intent to roll out a newly designed program immediately. With the program staff team down following Ann's medical leave and Maylanne's retirement as principal, there are enough changes going on, right?

But if change is in the wind, why wait? And so as Michelle Owens steps into the principal role, the new program is launched with the new school year. And there's more.

To facilitate the redesigned program, Scott Douglas, who has for many years held the communications portfolio among his other work, is redirecting some of his time to program. Kimiko Karpoff will be facilitating communications and Marcie Gibson will be looking after Integration Year Students and field placements. Janet Ross and David Lappano continue as core program staff and Lori Stewart as development coordinator. Cheryl Thiessen holds the whole thing together as office administrator. ~

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cellphones on silent to respect our time together. We seek signs of the Creator's presence outdoors, and encourage our students to identify and establish self care practices. We share our selves and our stories, and knit together connections that last long after graduation. And for 125

years our graduates have taken those connections and community building skills out into the world to share generously. They have been the visionary connectors who bring tears to our eyes and inspire us to imagine church differently all over again. ~ Michelle Owen