



CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Tapestry

Winter 2020

EDUCATING LEADERS FOR JUSTICE, COMPASSION, AND TRANSFORMATION



You made a path for Annika to try learning at CCS.

YOU GAVE ANNIKA CONFIDENCE TO TRY

Annika didn't know if she could finish school, but today she's a minister thanks to you and the Centre for Christian Studies!

Annika was worried. After graduating from High School among the top three in her class, she was struggling at university. She was reluctant to get tested for a learning disability or ask for extra help because she wondered, "What if it isn't a problem with learning? What if I am stupid?"

Annika felt diaconal ministry was the right path for her . . . but the academic subjects were still a struggle. She was studying all the time and only getting C or D on papers.

Thanks in part to your generosity, the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) introduced Annika to different learning styles. She says, "I like to relate what I am learning to real life or find the real-life experience

before I understand it. I love exploring with my body, be it with plasticine or bicycling."

Annika's preferred way of learning wasn't accommodated in previous learning situations. But CCS valued experience in learning, thanks to you.

Reading was the biggest challenge. Your support supplied a supervisor and mentor who pushed Annika to get tested. When she did, she learned she had ADHD and difficulty with reading comprehension.

She figured out she could read better on a screen. Your gift meant that staff who heard about this difficulty could arrange for articles to be scanned instead of printed.

Staff worked to understand what Annika needed and coached her in her writing with detailed comments and questions. Their feedback reinforced the message that she was capable and had gifts for ministry.

Annika urges anyone who feels a call to ministry to check CCS out. "I don't want people not to try. It's not about being smart, it's about having the right tools to open your mind." You've made that possible.

Annika Sangster is the Spiritual Growth & Outreach

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL, MICHELLE OWENS:

When I was a student at the Centre for Christian Studies, one of songs we often sang was “Draw the Circle Wide”. We have not sung together much this year! And instead of drawing wider, it often seems that our circles are drawing inward – maybe no larger than our living rooms.

In this year of withdrawing into smaller circles, we have made choices about what, and who, is important to us. I am so grateful that you and your generosity continue to affirm the importance of diaconal education and ministry. Learning in community with one another is a process of growth through challenge, support, and transformation.

In this issue of Tapestry, you are going to read stories that show people changed by their education at the Centre – by your generosity. Stories of uncertainty and struggle, but also stories of triumph.

Thank you...for your donations, wisdom, prayers, and advocacy. Thank you for continuing to include the Centre for Christian Studies in your circle.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Owens'.

YOU OPENED THE DOOR FOR PENNY

Despite failing at school, the Centre launched Penny Lewis into ministry. Here's Penny's story in her own words. You're going to love seeing how you helped her!

I first came to the Centre for Christian Studies to audit a course and the Spirit drew me into the fulltime program.

To learn how to write, I first had to do a pre-university program. I had struggled all the way through school as a failing student. Going back to school meant going back to a place I had experienced failure. I felt very inadequate. I was so frightened about not being able to pass, but my young children encouraged me. They said I would never know if I didn't try—I got through!

I found learning at CCS was very different from my previous experiences of school. It was good for me because it was experiential. I had energy to learn and passion.

CCS provided a safe space for me to learn. It also gave me the confidence to continue my studies in the MDiv program at Trinity College and be ordained as a priest. CCS opened the door for me to move into ministry. It was lifegiving.

You helped transform Penny from a failing student into a capable priest.

The Reverend Penny Lewis is Honorary Assistant of St. John Anglican Church, East Orangeville.



Your support opened the door to ministry for Penny Lewis

YOU HELPED BARBARA LEARN TO LEAD

You made it possible for Barbara McGill to change from feeling like not enough to a confident leader.

"I'd love to be able to do that." Barbara McGill was in awe of the facilitator's conflict resolution skills in a leadership course she was in at the Centre for Christian Studies. He demonstrated patience and respect, instead of saying 'you don't belong here'. Barb wanted to be that kind of leader.

In her previous profession as an early childhood music specialist, Barbara had felt like she was not enough. She had the skills but not the confidence. At the Centre for Christian Studies, you made it possible for her to understand herself as part of something greater; to trust that she is a leader and is everything God needs her to be.

Though she didn't grow up in the church, Barbara was drawn into it as a spiritual seeker. With her music background, she was soon recruited to lead the children's choir; however, Barb stumbled when it came to teaching the children what the songs meant. Her own understanding of Christianity was limited and she didn't really know how to speak about her faith.



Barbara and Karen, learning together at CCS.

It was a longing to know more that brought Barb to the Centre for Christian Studies. And there was a commitment to helping people change that Barbara wanted to learn more about. You made it possible for her to learn how to lead!

Now three months into a new ministry, and despite the uncertainties of a pandemic, Barbara is finding her stride as a leader. She's not afraid of conflict. She's assured in worship leadership. Tools you provided for her at CCS are helping her forge new relationships with members of the congregation and other staff. She is not alone in God's work!

Barbara McGill is in ministry with the people of First Grantham United Church in St. Catharines, ON.



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Barbara knows she is a leader, thanks to you.



You can help Meg overcome her fears and become a minister.

WILL YOU GIVE MEG A CHANCE?

Meg is interested in diaconal ministry. She feels God is calling her. People around her see that she has gifts for ministry.

They are encouraging her to study at the Centre for Christian Studies. But Meg is afraid. And she can't afford to go to CCS. Those concerns might keep her out.

Maybe she's afraid she won't be able to do the work. Maybe she doesn't think she's smart enough. Maybe she's uncertain about her own leadership qualities. Or perhaps she is wondering if God is really wants HER.

But you and I know that the Bible confirms that people who are flawed or uncertain or in need of second chances are exactly who God wants.

Your gift will help Meg attend CCS and will provide theological education that meets her right where she is. Please make sure Meg doesn't miss out on this chance to follow God's call!

Please help send Meg to the Centre for Christian Studies by making a gift today!

I will send a person to the Centre for Christian Studies

Yes! Please use my gift to send a person to CCS to become a capable minister and leader.

My donation is in the amount of ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ other _____

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