



EDUCATING LEADERS FOR JUSTICE, COMPASSION, AND TRANSFORMATION

## You have been part of Lisa's journey of opening up the church

**H**ow do you explain what diaconal ministry means to people working from a framework in which diaconal ministry has little or no place? Lisa Byer-de Wever is sharing a diaconal vision with a congregation by helping them live it out.

**“Diagonal?!” “What the heck is diaconal?” “So you’re not going to be a real Minister?”**

These are some of the responses Lisa Byer-de Wever has heard to her training and vocation as a Diaconal Minister in the United Church of Canada. Lisa was discerning for Ordained Ministry when someone had the insight to connect her with one of the only diaconal ministers in Quebec. After they talked for a bit about Lisa’s call, the DM said to Lisa, “everything you’ve told me is right here,” and showed her the Diaconate of the United Church of Canada’s Statement of Vision.

That was Lisa’s introduction to the second and complementary stream of ordered UCC ministry. When she heard about diaconal ministry, Lisa knew that’s where she was feeling called: into ministries of education, social justice, and pastoral care.

While working her way through the program (with the pauses life required), Lisa expressed her diaconal vocation in the margins of society, in ministries she found full of sacredness, challenge, and joy. So she was surprised to feel God nudging her recently into congregational leadership. But with her diaconal lens, she sees Sunday morning worship as part of, but not



*Lisa is entering her fourth year of the Diaconal Ministries Program, the Integrating Year; Lisa hosted and chaplained the 2024 Learning on Purpose Circle in Quebec (large or small)*

the centre of, that ministry. Together with the congregation she is asking how the life of the neighbourhood relates to the life of the church. Lisa says, “We live in a world of silos and binaries, and diaconal ministry is called to disrupt those othering narratives, to build bridges in the ‘And.’” So instead of holding workshops at outside times, Lisa’s congregation is including workshops as part of Sunday morning church. When they did the Kairos Blanket Exercise together, it was as worship. “As a church, we get to do the work together.”

*You have been walking with Lisa as part of the CCS community, helping make learning opportunities available for her; and thanks to your participation, we are celebrating her success!*

### INSIDE: READ MORE TO STAY CONNECTED AND INVOLVED

**YOU HAVE BEEN PART OF LISA'S JOURNEY OF OPENING UP THE CHURCH**  
page 1

**CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND CCS?**  
page 2

**HOW DO WE EXPLAIN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE DIACONAL?**  
page 3

**WE DO IT TOGETHER**  
page 4



Staff Marcie Gibson and Alcris Limongi

## Curious about what's happening around CCS?

*Are you curious about the changes happening around CCS of late? Well, since the last issue of Tapestry it has been a summer of transitions, and more taking us into the future.*

### Staff Changes

In June we said “Farewell, thank you, and happy retirement” to Lori Stewart, CCS Development Coordinator 2013-2024, and “Farewell, thank you, and safe passage home to Vancouver” to Alan Lai, CCS Principal 2022-2024. In July, Marcie Gibson began as 1-year Interim Principal, in addition to her .4 program staff role, and in August, Gwen McAllister began as half-time 1-year Interim Development Coordinator. So, our staff complement is back to 6, with Cheryl Thiessen - Office Administrator, Scott Douglas - Program Coordinator, and Alcris Limongi and Janet Ross as full-time Program Staff.

### Students and Program Opportunities

This year we have 24 students registered in diploma or certificate programs, 7 of whom are new to studying at CCS, and 6 in their Integration (final) Year. In June, we held the 2-week Learning on Purpose on the outskirts of Montréal, with 7

students (1 ACC, 6 UCC). In August, we held the 2-week United Church Admissions Orientation circle online, with 17 participants primarily in Africa and South Asia. In September, we held the Integration I circle in Drumheller Alberta, following the national Diakonia of the UCC Gathering, so that students could participate. October brings our Eco-Justice and Culture and Identity circles to Winnipeg.

If **YOU** are wondering about joining a circle, for interest or Continuing Education this '24-'25 year, Ministry as Community Building will be offered online in January - February, Worship and Grief and Loss circles will be in person in Winnipeg in March/April, and Ministry as Listening circle as an online intensive in May. It's not too early to think about Learning on Purpose next June in Winnipeg – either for yourself or someone you know who wants to strengthen different kinds of leadership or discern their ministry.

### A Strategic Time, a Listening Time, a Time for the Future

Central Council, volunteers, students, and staff have been engaged in strategic research and planning throughout the last year, initially assisted by research consultant, Julie Ng. This planning is spurred on by the rapidly changing landscape of theological education, our commitments to realistic financial sustainability, and our commitments to continued action-reflection as a vibrant organization. The nimble, dedicated, strategic planning working group is currently wrapping up and will be bringing options to Central Council this fall. We will endeavour to share more news with you as it becomes available, and we appreciate your prayers and ongoing support.



*Students practise understanding Scripture in life-giving ways*

# How do we explain what it means to be diaconal?

– *A Principal's Principled Response*  
by Marcie Gibson

*Sometimes when I hesitate to offer a concise answer, I find myself getting caught up in over-analyzing the question itself. Which word is emphasized? What is really being asked? In what context? Who is asking? Can I answer with a, "yes, this, and..."?*

In reality, as educators at CCS, I think our pat answers about 'being diaconal' are the least explanatory and least meaningful. Instead, we 'answer' the question in a variety of ways. We explain through experiencing; experiencing the diaconal skills of the learning community – student colleagues, staff, and guests, experiencing and embodying one's own developing diakonia in field placements, student leadership, external courses, and in the world.

## **We 'answer' the question through a variety of actions**

We explain through observing; observing the diaconal approaches of mentors, biblical characters, and historical figures who sought to practice and articulate diakonia in their contexts.

We explain through listening and reading; through the voices of practitioners, activists, academics, critics and enthusiasts of different models of diakonia such as special agents, servanthood, go-betweens, pastoring with justice, or social development.

We explain through dialogue; intentionally creating opportunities for students to learn with



*Diaconals wear many hats*

and from ecumenical diaconal partners, dialogue with inter-religious partners and those in secular roles in the community, dialogue with those in other forms and streams of ministry – such as priestly, lay, ordained, missional, episcopal – and many, many, opportunities to develop their own voice, own holistic critical analysis, and own elevator-pitch for what it means to be diaconal.

Last but not least, we explain through prayer and imagination; the sacred discernment that comes from praise, lament, prophetic call, holy wonder, and deep grace. What could it mean to be diaconal in the here and now, and into the unknown future?

My own answer is shaped by all of these in my own life. As a diaconal educator, what is of utmost importance is not my answer but the vessel and opportunities through which we can support students to explore, learn, discern, and proclaim this in their own lives – and then transform diakonia further by their own practice. For this, I give thanks for CCS!



Diaconal refers to "one's orientation to ministry -- at the threshold between the church and the world; from the margins; or with a particular passion for formation, spiritual care, and justice ministries."  
-- *Marcie Gibson*

## We Do It Together

When you donate time, wisdom, or money, and when you remember us in prayer, you are part of a communal effort carrying forward CCS' mission of equipping students for transformative ministries — students like Sarah Williams.

In her first year of the program, Sarah is already putting her artistic, administrative, marketing, and relational skills into her field placement as part of a “church plant” offering Courageous Community to religious and non-religious residents of Vancouver Island. She has a passion for reflective learning in community and is integrating her existing skills and experience with new insights and knowledge as she continues in the Diploma in Diaconal Ministries program.

You are invited to walk with Sarah as she is preparing for future ministries that open up the Church's understanding of “church” and the world's understanding of faith.



*Creative worship with Scuttle the hermit crab*



*We do it together: students in spring learning circle*

## Yes! I will support Sarah's diaconal learning

**Please use my gift to fund Praxis and Field Placements with CCS.**

- \$25 to fund a Staff support call with a student
- \$50 to connect a student to a Diaconal Mentor
- \$150 to orient/support Field Placement volunteers
- \$300 to nurture Spiral Reflection & Feedback skills
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help as I can

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address Line

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, Province Postal Code

Cheque (payable to Centre for Christian Studies)

VISA or  Mastercard

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Donate online at [ccsonline.ca](http://ccsonline.ca) click on DONATE

E-transfer to [office@ccsonline.ca](mailto:office@ccsonline.ca)