



CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Tapestry

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EDUCATING LEADERS FOR JUSTICE, COMPASSION AND TRANSFORMATION

Dance with Us: in and between Diakonia and CCS



CCS students, grads and friends visit a coffee plantation

Traditions and practices of Diakonia (including Anglican and United Church diaconates) deeply inform the Centre for Christian Studies; and one could say that the traditions and practices of CCS inform understandings of Diakonia. Neither alone is the whole picture. And so...

Given the opportunity to spend 12 days in Moshi, Tanzania, half of with the Diakonia World Federation quadrennial Assembly (Dancing the Faith, Drumming Up Hope) and the other half learning about local culture and creation with a group of diaconal UCC folks, it was an easy *Yes!*

This was an opportunity *offered* to us but also *created* by us: the conference was hosted by Diakonia Region - Africa and Europe; DUCC (UCC Tdiaconate) helped to pay

registration costs; I co-facilitated an assembly workshop for Diaconal Educators; and CCS made it possible for this to fulfil the Global Perspectives Experience requirement for students by adding staff support, preparation, debriefing, and theological reflection.

CCS has always encouraged students to participate in diaconal community and gatherings especially as part of their requirement, but this intentional organizing takes the custom one step further. In a spirit of co-facilitation, CCS asked Companion of the Centre Marlene Britton (soon to be Principal of CCS!) to accompany the GPE students along with me, especially because of her previous experience in DOTAC (Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean). Although many students were initially interested, two were able to come on the journey.

For me, the assembly and experiences were inspiring, diaconally reflective, and challenging to privilege, inequity, and health. It was a joy to accompany students' learning up close, to visit and hear about other diaconal formation programs, and to recognize both the continuity and distinctiveness in our approaches. I can see this being a model for other GPE options, and I look forward to the learning that we can do as an organization. Next time, we would like to open up this learning cohort to students from other ecumenical schools.

Thank you for your support in realizing these dreams, connecting, and preparing diakonia of the future!

- Marcie Gibson, Interim Principal

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Your support trains adaptable leaders for changing times: A community minister's journey

In 2017-2018, the joint United-Anglican Winnipeg community ministry for which CCS grad Josh Ward worked gave up its church-related status to become, along with two other local community ministries, part of 1 Just City. St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry became the West End site of 1 Just City, which after a while moved out of the church building entirely with the creation of Pimicikamak Wellness Centre, a larger space offering more resources to guests. Josh went from Community Minister and United Church employee to Site Lead for a secular not-for-profit. Over coffee, he shared some reflections on the experience, with considerations for ministries considering a similar move.

Growing up in church put this idea in my head that stuck: that there are people living in poverty in our city and it's not right, and we should be moved by our faith to do something about it. That motivation led me to the Centre for Christian Studies, a call to diaconal ministry, and then to what at the time was called St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry. The ministry's drop-in was this really beautiful community gathering space where people came because they were looking for relationship. There was coffee and sandwiches, and church volunteers would sit down with community guests and play crib or Scrabble, or just have a chat.



The impetus for the move to 1 Just City and to become a secular organization was because the United and Anglican churches had a declining ability to support the work that we were doing; the people who facilitated the transformation were motivated by their faith to see this ministry and community continue. In terms of finance, the



increased access to funding that comes with secularizing is enormous; there's no comparison. We still have our financial struggles, we still have to hustle for funding, but it definitely opened up huge doors. We wouldn't be doing what we're doing now if we were still funded by only the church and identified as a Christian organization.

"Our mission is to make sure that the people who are here are experiencing hospitality and relationship that they're not getting elsewhere."

Seven years later, when I look at our volunteers, there are people here from that original United and Anglican church base, and even if they're not still here on the ground, many of them remain supporters in terms of donations. But we've also got all kinds of people from the non-church world who found their home here in a way that they maybe couldn't have before, and are giving back to their community. In terms of background, we've got newcomers to Canada; we've got students; we've got Indigenous people. The age range is much greater. It's much more diverse.

There are times when (informed by my training with CCS and call and faith) my role as part of the staff is to pull people back and say yes, we could be serving 100 more meals every day, but that's not our mission. Our mission is to make sure that the people who are here are experiencing hospitality and relationship that they're not getting elsewhere. Something would be lost if tomorrow we opened up a second dining room and said we're going to do 300 meals a day now. There would be good in that; but it's not who we are as 1 Just City, born out of United and Anglican churches.

"Growing up in church put this idea in my head that stuck: that there are people living in poverty in our city and it's not right, and we should be moved by our faith to do something about that."

The move from small community ministry to 1 Just City site has been ultimately overwhelmingly positive, and when I look at the group of people that are in our much



larger dining rooms every day now, it's still a family. It's five times larger some days than it used to be, but it's just a bigger family. I look around every day and I still see "us": you know, feeding the least of these and clothing the naked like in the Gospel of Matthew. That's what I think of every day: this is still the work that we're doing, even though 75 percent of our volunteer base wouldn't have the leaning to use that language. We still have that foundation that still motivates what we do; I don't think we've lost anything.

This transcript was edited for clarity and length; read the whole conversation at ccsonline.ca/blog

Donors Dancing in Diakonia

Donors were drumming up even more hope than usual at the World Assembly:

This past July, among the deacons, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers from around the world gathered at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro for the 2025 DIAKONIA "Dancing the Faith, Drumming Up Hope" World Federation Assembly, were CCS monthly donors who support the mission of educating more diaconal leaders for our corner of the world.

"I was reminded of my privilege of choice, that I am paid for my service as a Diaconal Minister, that items that seemed very inexpensive to me in the local marketplace could be out of reach for many who lived there, ... that meat, a staple in my diet, was a luxury for many of theirs.

However, one of the lasting impressions was the friendliness of the people, their willingness to be hospitable as we tried to balance how to acknowledge and respect each other's differences and circumstances as we offer the best of this diverse community to God's world." - Helen Reed, grad

"There was certainly lots of dancing and drumming in our hearts and minds as we participated in the dancing and heard courageous speakers challenge us to drum up hope in our lives and communities." - Linda Ervin, grad (1973)



