

# CONNECTION

WINTER 2014



## LISTENING TO THE VOICES: *A summary of key findings*

**M**any of you have been inquiring about where things are at for Bethany College in light of the situation we informed you of in Spring. First, we must say “thank-you for being an answer to our prayers” by responding to our request for donations to help us go through this process to better discern God’s voice for Bethany’s future.

We have listed a condensed version of the [key themes, findings and priorities](#) that emerged from the input we received, both at the Discernment Summit on Oct 4 and through a number of other means over the last few months. This information has been collected together with the Board of Directors who will be responsible for decisions related to Bethany’s future.

### VISION OF BETHANY

One of the clearest themes that emerged was that Bethany appears to be suspended between two related, but different visions, each of which leads to different educational paradigms and strategies.

On the one hand, many see the purpose of Bethany as **training leaders (both pastors and lay leaders) and resourcing the church**. If this is the case, then our location may be an impediment. Leadership training and theological education can conceivably be offered in a wide variety of formats, many of which have significantly lower overhead costs than a

residential college campus.

On the other hand, many see Bethany as existing for the purpose of **young adult discipleship and spiritual formation**. If this is the case then a community experience – studying, worshipping, praying, eating, serving, and living together – in a residential context seems to be a crucial component.

These two visions are undoubtedly linked and were affirmed as fundamental needs for the church but we did not hear clarity as to which of these two “targets” Bethany should be aiming at. Bethany has traditionally tried to integrate both of these objectives in our educational model but this has potentially diffused our mission and limited our effectiveness.

### EDUCATIONAL MODEL

We also heard a strong call for change when it came to Bethany’s educational model, with a strong emphasis on the word “experience” as a contrast to words like “classroom” or “academic.” There was little disagreement that the experiential elements of Bethany programming needed to increase, ranging in scope from a *tactical* change (a “tweak” to the classroom model), to a more *strategic* change (a complete over-haul of the current model).

Significant questions also arose about the relationship between education and job credentials. If education is seen primarily in terms

of credentials, where is the place for deeper character formation? And who should pay for this? In many cases, education was seen as a worthy investment only if it leads to job credentials. However, some young adults pointed to their need for life-on-life mentoring and community living, which is better served in a residential context and a community experience.

Furthermore, the kind of educational model Bethany pursues will affect the kind of student we seek to attract. The residential model of Bethany is geared toward helping emerging adults mature and hurting/broken students move toward wholeness. The leadership development model would seek students who have already been identified as being on a leadership trajectory.

This is more evidence that we are suspended between two targets, and links back to the overall vision: if Bethany is going to be a college, it seems that credentials are a key priority. If Bethany is going to do discipleship, it seems that “experience” is the priority.

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### CHURCH CONNECTION

There was a clear call for Bethany College to have a better connection with churches. However, we also heard that the general focus in most churches is much more “local” which makes collaborative enterprises like a denominational college more difficult to sustain. Furthermore, the call for a better “church connection” seemed to be coming from a perspective of Bethany needing to demonstrate its relevance to the church’s mission, rather than a perspective of Bethany functioning as a strategic initiative of the churches to accomplish their mission.

It was also noted that if church connection is a key priority, then our location could be an impediment. Our perceived distance from most of our churches requires that we are much more intentional about our presence in these churches (both students and faculty), and their presence in the college. This could speak in favour of delivery models that are more portable than the traditional classroom model. In any case, there was a consistent affirmation that the solution required a broader level of participation from churches and partners.

### THEOLOGICAL VISION

Pastors and denominational leaders did not express significant concern about theological alignment between Bethany and the church. This was good news for us given that theology can be a flashpoint between denominations and their schools and we had heard some feedback to the effect that Bethany was not as “safe” as other schools in terms of theology.

This finding could have one of two explanations. It could be that there is a basic confidence among church leaders that Bethany is teaching in accordance with our Confession of Faith (i.e. Bethany is sufficiently “safe” in terms of entrusting young adults to their care). It could also be that theological formation is not seen as an urgent priority (i.e. people don’t look to Bethany for the reproduction of a particular theological identity).

### PRIORITIES

1. Bethany would need to **be more overt about our view of education**. There are already strong experiential components to our program, but they are harder for people to see since “college” tends to communicate

an academic approach.

2. We would need to **develop a plan to merge experience/classroom models** across the span of the Bethany program.

3. We would need to **locate our place on the discipleship/leadership trajectory** and develop clear pathways based on that location.

4. We would need to **identify key partners** and create a plan to strengthen and maintain these partnerships and to demonstrate the value they add for our students.

### CONCLUSION

The Summit (as well as the conversations leading up to it) named several important issues relevant to the viability of Bethany College. There was much warmth and good will toward Bethany and a desire for the ministry of Bethany to continue, but there was also a clear sense that the changes required for Bethany to survive and thrive would be significant.

We would be grateful for your ongoing prayer and support as the Bethany community continues to navigate its next steps. Our vulnerability is constantly before us, but we are confident that God’s strength is perfected in our weakness.

## FROM THE BOARD

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and with heart-felt thanks for all that he has done during his nearly five year tenure as the President of Bethany College, we wish to inform you of the resignation of Howie Wall.

Howie accepted the Presidential role in June 2010, leaving a senior management role at the University of Saskatchewan. The Board hired Howie without term constraints, but Howie informed the board at his interviews that he would commit 5 years to this role.

We are very grateful that Howie worked hard to move the college through the immediate challenges that arose last spring. He has continued these efforts despite moving to part-time employment this year to help address the college’s financial constraints.

The board has made some initial inquiries about a replacement for this role but we have no clear indication of a replacement to

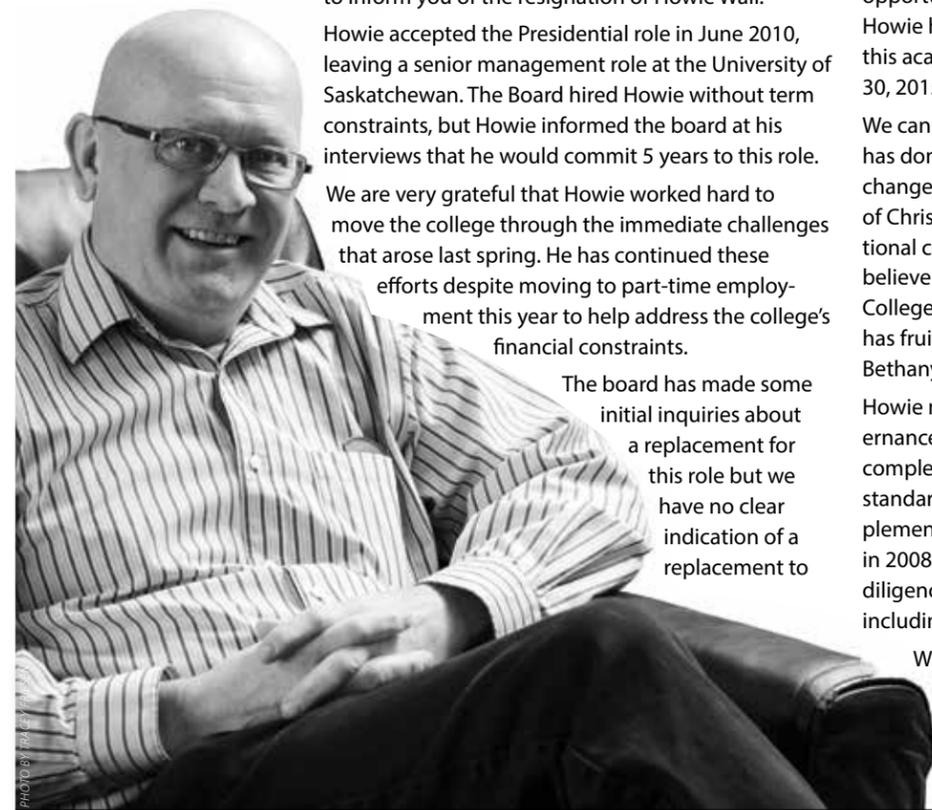
date. However, in conjunction with the circulation of the results of the recent Discernment Summit, we felt it was important to inform the college and constituency of Howie’s resignation in order to provide full opportunity for any changes that may be necessary. Howie has agreed to continue in his role to the end of this academic year; as such, his term will end on April 30, 2015.

We cannot overstate our gratefulness for what Howie has done. Howie helped the college to navigate the changes in demographics, uncertainty about the value of Christian higher education, and the rising operational costs that we have observed in recent years, and believe he has helped extend the mandate of Bethany College. His commitment and service to the college has fruitfully impacted all those who have attended Bethany during this time!

Howie made great contributions to improved governance at the college, led the college through a complete kitchen renewal (necessary to meet health standards), and facilitated the academic program implementation of strategic changes that were identified in 2008-2009. I personally have appreciated Howie’s diligence and sincerity over the past number of years, including his previous terms on the Board of Directors.

With the grace and peace of God, we thank Howie for many years of faithful and skillful service, and wish to bless Howie and his family as they move on to new directions.

Brian Heinrichs, Board Chair



### ANNUAL FALL THEATRE AT BETHANY COLLEGE



Last year, Susan J. Schmidt Goerz, Ministry Arts Director, and cast introduced us to Narnia through the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. This year, guests were brought back to Narnia in another C.S. Lewis story, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which ran from October 30th to November 1st. Nearly 1300 guests visited Bethany College in five shows.

Edmund (Matt Janzen), Lucy (Judith Schulz), and Aslan (George Hembery) were familiar to the returning members of the audience as this was their second year in these characters. Yet their characters had grown; they felt at home in Narnia and drew their audience in convincingly. Dynel Weber as Reepicheep demonstrated wonderful character and

depth: the valiant mouse whose desire was always to keep the ship headed east – the utter, utter east – to Aslan’s country. The ship’s crew of Drinian and Rynelf (Josh Kehler and Mitchell Klassen) managed the ship and the voyage with humour that was new to the readers of the books, but completely at home in this script.

King Caspian’s character developed the most as the performances proceeded. Always kingly in authority and with strength of presence on the ship and on the islands, Bryan Vellacott’s portrayal became more human – more nuanced with each presentation. His struggle to allow Reepicheep to go on to Aslan’s land without him became increasingly compelling. And the character that

we first meet in the *Dawn Treader*, the very disagreeable cousin-turned-dragon and then transformed Eustace Clarence Scrubb was played by Derek Giesbrecht, who was entirely disagreeable – dragonishly endearing – and convincingly transformed.

As with all of C.S. Lewis’ fantasy books from his *Chronicles of Narnia* series, the storms on the ship, the islands with slave trade, the allure of gold and treasure, and the moments of danger and rescue were a window into our own world of storm and rescue, where many of Aslan’s words ring true for us. Notably, to Aslan’s promise that he will return soon Lucy asks, “But what is soon?” Aslan replies, “I call all times soon.”

Darlene Klassen, Internship Director and Instructor in Church Ministries



# STEPPING STONES

OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**W**e stand in a unique moment of time where it appears that the currents seem poised to alter some of our carefully laid stepping stones of discipleship and leadership development. Bethany has worked hard to infuse these into every aspect of college life from the first day that they arrive on campus to the launching of our students into their internships or to other vocations and ventures. As we ponder together Bethany's mission of nurturing disciples and training leaders to serve, we give attention to the intersections that form these stepping stones.

**INTERSECTION WITH MISSION:** Students head out on service learning trips and assignments, and come back to ask questions, to study, to become better equipped to serve and proclaim Christ. We send them back into mission, and into service.

**INTERSECTION WITH CHURCHES:** We receive students who have learned to know and love Christ in their churches, who have been mentored and discipled through ministry, through intergenerational relationships that have nurtured them in their faith. We send students back into churches, to serve in children's ministries, in youth, in music, in drama, and pastoral ministries.

**INTERSECTION WITH CAMPS:** Camps nourish children, introduce many to Christ, train their campers to lead, and send their leaders to us to study the Word. We send students back into the camps to continue to invest in the lives of campers, to develop leaders.

**INTERSECTION WITH THE WORLD:** Students come to us from broken places. We walk with them for a time, creating a community of disciples following Christ, seeking restoration... daring to seek transformation. We send students back into a world that is broken, daring to seek transformation.

**WE STAND IN A PLACE OF INTERSECTION** to give people a chance to consider who they are, who God is, and



Last year Michelle Epp(left) served with the Cafe Committee, bringing a warm coffee shop atmosphere to students on campus. Darlene Klassen, Internship Director, pictured right.

what God may be calling them to. We invite them to study a God who revealed himself through his Word, through his Son and by his Spirit. We invite students to learn to know him, while giving them opportunities to serve him and to understand his world.

As a final stepping stone of their journey in this place, fourth-year students find themselves part of Bethany's internship program. Several of our students are presently pastoral interns, some as Resident Directors here at Bethany College, some serve in Inner City missions, and others in various Church Leadership roles. We have discovered there are more requests for internship roles than we can provide, indicating that the need for leadership development is great.

Spencer and Michelle Epp are two of our students who are interning at North Langley Community Church. Spencer says that Bethany's internship program "pushed my heart knowledge to catch up to my head knowledge" and "acts as a catalyst in helping me understand God's call in my life." His wife Michelle adds, "Bethany has been a stepping stone in my faith life, propelling me to serve and lead in places that I may not have ventured on my own accord. It has given me the desire to keep learning in every stage of life. My internship has pushed me to step out, unafraid of failure; for failure is where true wisdom and experience comes from. My internship is a safe environment that has allowed me to put all that I learned at Bethany into practice through ministry in the everyday world."

*Rick Guenther, Director of Advancement, with submissions by Darlene Klassen, Internship Director*

## A LOOK BACK

### Enrollment and its effect on the financial viability of Bethany College

In conjunction with the *Summary of Key Findings* found at the beginning of this newsletter, we believe that our current situation is best understood by getting a longer-term glimpse of student enrollment patterns and its effect on Bethany's financial well-being. For Bethany College, the primary factor affecting financial health is the level of student enrollment. The 70's and 80's were characterized by steady growth to a high of 199 students in 1981. Shortly after, significant declines were experienced until the 90's during which Bethany experienced relative stability at approximately 150 students. Then, beginning 10 years ago, there has been a consistent decline in enrollment culminating in an unprecedented drop this past spring. This year we have 64 on-campus students and 8 fourth year interns (who pay significantly reduced

fees). This represents a 32% decrease from the previous year of 107 total students and alarmingly, includes only 24 first-year students, which implies a very limited number of returning students in the next few years.

In March 2014, in anticipation of a modest decline, the college built its budget for the current academic year on an estimate of only 80 students. This projection was unprecedented but by May 1st, even that estimate was considered too optimistic. Given its size, Bethany is vulnerable to even slight variations in student numbers, so the college immediately informed the constituency of this disturbing situation.

### *Sadly, Bethany is not the only college to experience significant declines in recent years...nonetheless, Bethany finds itself at a crossroad.*

The budget was reduced from \$2.25 million to \$1.42 million in order to resume core operations. As a result, three full-time faculty and several administrative and support staff were laid off, and nearly all remaining faculty and staff were placed on part-time contracts until May 2015.

There is evidence that the financial health of the college began to suffer as early as 2000. The operating portion of campus activity was maintained, however the physical needs of the campus did not receive all the maintenance required for long-term sustainability. During this entire time, limited increases were provided to wages that were already below industry standards and failed to account for cost of living increases, particularly the spike in local real estate values. And, unlike colleges in some provinces, Bethany receives no direct government funding.

In response to these realities, the college invested heavily in student recruitment and donor relations initiatives. As well, a major program review was conducted in the years leading up to 2010. It did appear, for a year or two, to turn the trend around.

With that in mind, the kitchen was upgraded to address the health and safety concerns that had been raised earlier. Although sufficient funds were raised for that project, it took away some of the donations that would normally have been used for general operations. This required the college to borrow money to ensure ongoing operations. The Canadian MB Conference helped sustain Bethany by allowing this shortfall and other accumulated shortfalls to be covered by

### DID YOU KNOW:

# 199 students

ATTENDED BETHANY IN 1981

mortgaging Bethany's 17 acres of land and buildings. Having already absorbed the financial constraints of previous years in a variety of ways, it was impossible to absorb the full impact of the sudden decline in student enrollment this spring. Sadly, Bethany is not the only college to experience significant declines in recent years, and we did identify it as early as we could. Nonetheless, Bethany finds itself at a crossroad. Given the current situation, the following two scenarios appear to be the only options for us:

### SCENARIO ONE

To construct and describe the 2015-2016 year as a transitional year where the key priorities are to undergo a significant adjustment in Bethany's educational model. This adjustment would include tilting toward experience-based learning, rearticulating the values of life-on-life mentoring, and emphasizing the integration of service learning and local church interactions.

This option requires leadership that can offer a compelling vision of Bethany that is both faithful to our historic mission and responsive to the aspirations of our various constituencies. This would require a significant marketing initiative, and would require financial resources to support this transitional change. Questions remain about whether these changes would generate the enrollment necessary to provide a sustainable revenue stream going forward.

### SCENARIO TWO

That at the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, the ministry of Bethany College in its current iteration be brought to a close. In this option, the Board would still own the mission, hold the charter, and

would empower any interested parties to investigate future possibilities. The charter could be picked up or transferred to another entity should there be a new ministry initiative.

Under this scenario, Bethany would need to facilitate the future educational options for all its current students in conversation with sister schools and partners, and pay particular attention to the status of students entering their fourth year and pursuing degrees. This scenario would also require financial

resources beyond the end of this academic year, of up to two years.

As you can see, both scenarios carry unique challenges that will need to be considered. We appeal to the God of Isaiah who promises, *“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”* Isa. 46:4.

Please pray for the Board of Directors as they traverse this difficult terrain in the next few months, and consider extending your

financial support not only for the remaining year but also for the road ahead. We pray as we reflect on the 88-year heritage of Bethany College, that it would spur us all to consider how best to nurture disciples of Jesus and train leaders to serve.

*Rick Guenther, Director of Advancement with excerpts from Bethany College Discernment Summit (Oct 4, 2014): Findings, Priorities, Scenarios*

## PRAYING FOR ADDIE FRANCIS

*“God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when we need him. We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom, courageous in sea storm and earthquake, before the rush and roar of oceans, the tremors that shift mountains. Jacob-wrestling God fights for us, God – of– Angel– Armies protects us.” Psalm 46:1-3 MSG*

This verse began a recent Facebook post by Addie’s mom, Char Schroeder. It’s one of the many verses that give us strength and perspective when we think of the students who were involved in a single vehicle rollover on the evening of October 4th. Addie, a first year student at Bethany, was the most severely injured member of the six students who were involved. Jordan Laturnus, a second year student, was also kept in hospital with

significant injuries to his hip, back and head. The rest of the students were assessed with minor injuries and released from hospital the next day.

“Keep going and keep praying,” was the challenge given by Addie’s mom when she addressed us in a chapel session immediately following the Thanksgiving break, only ten days after the accident. The strength of Char and the challenge of her message seemed to give us the freedom to get back into routine. Her encouragement allowed students to enjoy the community and have fun together again, and her challenge to continue praying keeps Addie, Jordan, and the other students involved in the accident in our thoughts and prayers constantly.

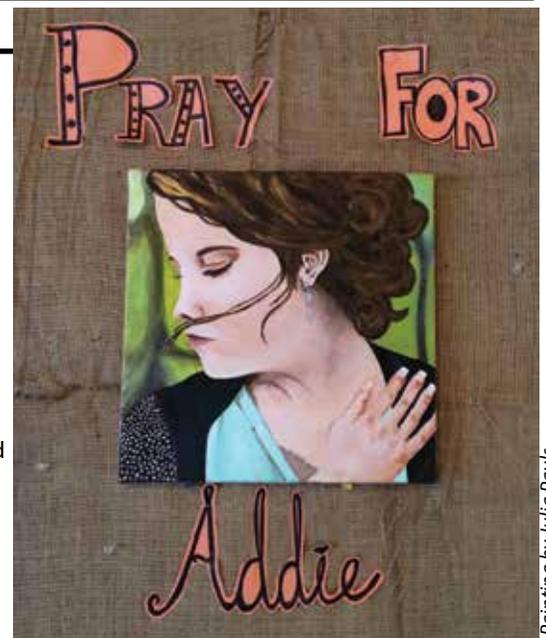
Despite facing delays in homework assignments and cancelled classes during this difficult time, our students prepared for and performed incredibly well at Bethany’s annual Fall Theatre. The event unified the entire campus, and staff and students saw their hard work and extra effort rewarded by the hearty applause of theatre attendees.

Six weeks after the accident, we have regained a sense of routine and focus on classes and assignments. Presently, Jordan

has begun physiotherapy as he rests and heals at his home in Lethbridge, and Addie is increasingly responsive to stimuli and is slowly regaining her health. Students and staff continue to visit Addie regularly in the Saskatoon hospital, and track her progress on the Facebook page created by her family called “Praying for Addie Francis.”

Our hope and solace continues to be rooted in our unshakeable trust in our God of safe haven, power, and healing. We are grateful for and comforted by the many prayers and words of encouragement we have received from colleges, churches, and friends. There is still a long road ahead, particularly for Addie and Jordan, and we urge you to continue praying for them and their families, and for all who were involved.

*Dave Carey, Dean of Student Development*



Painting by Julia Pauls

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**MODULAR COURSES**  
Jan 5-9, 2015

**ALUMNI SOCCER TOURNAMENT**  
January 16,17, 2015

**DISCIPLESHIP & CONTEXT CONFERENCE**  
Feb 6-7, 2015

**CAMPUS VISIT DAYS**  
March 19-21, 2015

**SPRING CONCERT**  
April 25, 2015

**COMMENCEMENT**  
April 26, 2015

For more details visit [bethany.sk.ca](http://bethany.sk.ca)



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Bethany news

