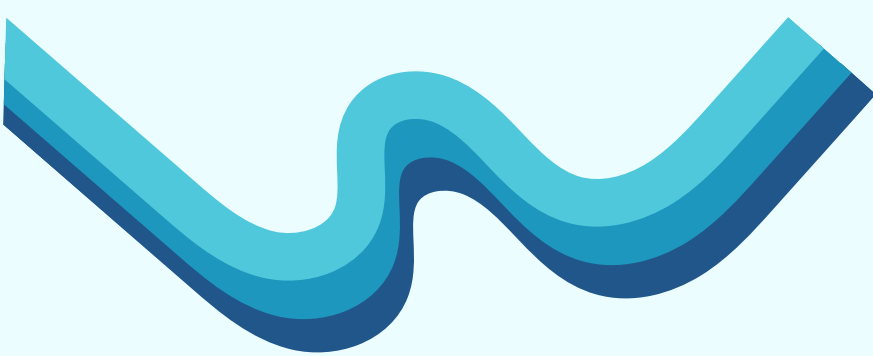


COMMUNITY, OUTREACH, & EDUCATION PARTNERS



2024
REPORTS

NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL



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Atlantic School of Theology (AST)

Annual Report to United Church of Canada Regions

- Highlights:**
- Summer Distance MDiv continues to be the degree with the highest enrollment
 - 2023 soft launch of Bachelor of Theology degree, which includes a “Ministry Specialization” stream

- Key Links:**
- [Learn more about AST on their website.](#)
- 

Atlantic School of Theology serves Christ’s mission by shaping effective and faithful ordained and lay leaders and understanding among communities of faith. We did this in a variety of ways in 2023. With students and alumni in every United Church of Canada Region, we bring together a community with an extensive understanding of the varied needs of the church. The Summer Distance MDiv continues to be the degree with the highest enrollment bringing students together for 6 weeks of intensive learning in the summer and online, synchronous, and asynchronous classes in the fall and winter. In addition to the MDiv degree, we have United Church of Canada Students enrolled in the MA as well as 3 diplomas and a wide range of continuing education options.

2023 saw the soft launch of our Bachelor of Theology degree which includes a “Ministry Specialization” stream. We were pleased to welcome 7 students in the fall and anticipate an increase in enrollment in 2024. This degree reduces the barrier for those without an undergraduate degree who feel called to serve the church and want academic excellence at a bachelor's level combined with opportunities for practical experience serving the church. We are excited about the ways this may meet the identified needs of our founding parties. We value our relationship with the Office of Vocation and Candidacy Boards across the country as we seek to respond to the educational needs of the church for shaping effective and faithful leaders.

The Rev. Dr. Rob Fennell concluded his tenure as Academic Dean on the 1st of July and I have taken over the role for the next 3 years. The Presidential search committee concluded their work, and the Rev. Dr. Heather McCance began serving as President on the 1st of August. Like all educational institutions, we face challenges and the road ahead is not always clear, however, there is a spirit of optimism and a sense of renewal within our school community as we chart a path for the future.

It is a joy to work with United Church of Canada students as well as those who support them within the administrative structure of the church and individual communities of faith. We welcome your input as we seek to serve the ever-changing needs of the church.

With the Deepest Respect and Gratitude,

Susan MacAlpine-Gillis

Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis
Academic Dean
Atlantic School of Theology





CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Annual Report on 2023

- Highlights:**
- Strengthening intercultural education and conversations
 - Strategic planning for the future

- Key Links:**
- [CCS' Yearbook, Financial Statements, and Annual Report](#)
 - [Learn more about CCS on their website](#)

A Year of Desire and Longing

The year 2023 was a year of desire and longing, and with some exciting events to help us feel energized. During the Black History Month, Alcris Limongi organized a lively panel discussion with black diaconal ministers; Principal Alan did something similar with Asian UCC friends during the Asian Heritage Month, with the panelists addressing the question: Who is Asian?

The two-day Con Ed event with Dr. Claudio Carvalhases on worship was refreshing. We rejoiced with The Rev. Dr. Wenh-In Ng during the Annual Service of Celebration when she received the Companion of the Centre Award. To add another layer of joy, the presence of the Moderator Carmen Lansdowne and her conversation with Dr. Ng on Indigenous relations was stimulating.

We began the year desiring to strengthen intercultural education. Conversation with the Executive Director of the Forum of Intercultural Leadership and Education elevated our imagination. As invited by the Office of Vocation, CCS conducted an Admission Orientation Circle in August.

As far as longing goes, we hired Julie Ng-Leung to lead a strategic planning activity. It was a longing for direction and financial stability. After the pandemic, we are faced with the changing landscape in theological education and church life in general. There was a need to sort our priority, strength, and future path.

The strategic activity was completed. Julie has presented the school's leaders several options. The school has set up a special small team to study those findings, taking financial situation seriously. They will also study the recommendations and background information of the strategic plan of 2019. The goal is to provide a decisive strategic goals for the next two years.

CCS is working hard to envision the future. We do not approach it with fear but with courage and understanding. We pray for and work towards transformation.

We are blessed with collaborative, generous partners, including:

Anglican and United Churches
Diakonia of the United Church of Canada
Anglican Deacons
Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean
Diaconal Mentors, Field Placements, Learning Facilitators, Local Committee members,
Council and Committee volunteers
St Andrew's College
St Stephen's College
Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
Strategic Charm (social media managers)

Our Yearbook, Financial Statements, and Annual Report may be found at:

<http://ccsonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-Year-Book.pdf>

Respectfully submit,

Alan

Alan Lai (Rev. Dr.)
Principal



**CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIAN STUDIES**
Imagine Church Differently



Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education & Action

United Church Report 2024

- Highlights:**
- Popular monthly “Lunch & Learn” sessions
 - “Celebrating our Faiths” display in City Hall
 - Annual Membership only \$25 a year!

- Key Links:**
- [EIC's website](#)
 - Learn more about membership:
<https://www.edminterfaithcentre.ca/about/membership/>



As we enter our 28th year we are proud of what we have been able to accomplish as a small not for profit society. Promoting the embrace of diversity, religious literacy and pluralism have never been more important. There is a place for everyone to be involved in our efforts make a more just and humane world. Here is a brief look at what we’ve done in the last year.

One of our most popular programs, a monthly “Lunch & Learn”, which pivoted to Zoom for almost 2 years, has continued in a “hybrid” format. As noted before many prefer the convenience of joining from home or work or far away. With all our events this has become a mixed blessing: greater and easier attendance vs. the energy created by actually being together, and a more natural conversation.

Speakers and topics in the last year were:

- Farah Jamil shared her findings on Neurodiversity & ADHD through a Muslim lens
- Ibrahim Cin on his work as a Muslim chaplain-in-training with the Armed Forces
- Lee Nicoll Kramer on the Oberammergau Passion Play
- Karen Farkas & Netta Phillet gave their presentation on prejudice and antisemitism from the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago
- Firdosh Mehta’s topic was “Non-Persian & Biblical Accounts of Two Great Persian Kings”.
- D. Min candidate Inas al Ashqar spoke about Scriptural Reasoning.

We are very fortunate to have a wide diversity of expert speakers willing to share their knowledge.

We celebrated UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (February 1 – 7) with a program almost every day.

Our annual commemoration of UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21st) was at the U of A. Keynote speaker Cynthia Jim told us about her Indigenous history and played the flute, Prof. Andy Knight introduced and showed a preview of a new Massive Open Online Course on “Black Canadians: History, Presence & Anti-Racist Futures” Stephanie Otieno gave an update on “Faith Spaces/Safe Spaces”. Our board member Prof. Michael Frishkopf led his Edmonton Transcultural Orchestra in music and song on the theme of the day.

Once again we celebrated UN International Day of Peace on Sept. 21st in person, outside Government House. Keynote speaker was Renee Vaugeios, Executive Director of the John Humphrey Centre, previewing their major observation of the 75th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The EIC was proud to contribute one of the many events held live and online from Dec. 1 to 10 and to be able to provide financial support as well.

Recognizing that domestic violence is a universal scourge found in all cultures and faiths we continue to support efforts to combat it. In November we again co-sponsored, with the Indo-Canadian Women’s Association, a presentation by a worker with the Today Centre explaining how family members can use control as part of the entire system of abuse.

Since 2006 we have partnered with the city in a program called “Celebrating Our Faiths”, a permanent display in city hall which changes every month to feature a different religious tradition. In the last year the faiths and observances showcased have been Quakers, World Interfaith Harmony Week, Islamic History Month, Passover, Eckankar, Jain, Unitarian Universalism and Zoroastrianism. Going through our archives we found enough articles to have one titled “Remember when the Edmonton Journal had a Religion Page?”

We are pleased to report that we have sold almost 800 Multifaith Calendars to individuals, schools, hospitals (and given away to politicians, etc.), a wonderful Canadian educational resource. **2024 still available, \$16.**

We are a membership organization, \$25 a year. Please join us!

Submitted by Netta Phillet, *Executive Director*

Edmonton
Interfaith Centre
for Education & Action

Emmanuel College

Report Spring 2024

Highlights:

- Indigenous Healing Garden Project completion anticipated by 2025, as part of the UCC Centennial celebration
- Major Celebrations Upcoming, in 2024 - 2028!
- New Hybrid Master of Divinity Program
- Emmanuel offers an increasing number of Continuing Education events online

Key Links:

- [Emmanuel College website](#)
- [Facebook](#): @EmmanuelCollegeofVic
- [Instagram](#): @emmanuelcollegetoronto
- [YouTube](#): @EmmanuelCollege1

Dear Friends:

On behalf of Emmanuel College, I want to bring greetings to your region as you meet this spring season. I pray that your meeting goes well and that you experience God's presence and blessing in this important work of the church. **My name is HyeRan Kim-Cragg and it is my privilege to bring you greetings as Emmanuel's Principal.** I hope to see you in person in the near future and share good news of Emmanuel College with you and hear good news of this region's wonderful ministry.

[Faculty Compliment, Trauma Informed Pedagogy & Faculty on the Road](#)

Last year, we completed three significant faculty searches, marking historical milestones for the Toronto School of Theology (TST) of which we are a part. Rev. Dr. Glenn McCullough joined as assistant professor through a partnership with Knox, a first in TST's history. Dr. Jenny Bright became Emmanuel's first assistant professor of Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counseling. **The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne will be appointed as the first assistant professor of United Church of Canada studies at Emmanuel** after completing her moderator's role in December 2025. Additionally, Néstor Medina was promoted to associate professor, and Pam McCarroll to full professor, holding the Jane and Geoffrey Martin Chair in Practical Theology.

This academic year, the faculty has engaged training in Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP), with monthly discussions involving faculty, staff, and Research Fellows. TIP emerged from student discussions in response to our EDIA stance, "DEAR" (Dignity, Equity Accountability, Responsibility) Declaration, and has been supported by grants from the Wabash Center and the Association of Theological Schools. We plan to host a TST-wide conference in May 2024 to share our insights and impact other theological schools.

The current faculty is keen to go out into different communities of faith to promote Emmanuel and share their scholarship and wisdom. Andrew Aitchison as Admissions Counsellor and Recruitment Coordinator will be a liaison connecting faculty with communities. Please let him know if your communities want to invite our Christian, Muslim or Buddhist faculty. That would be so wonderful.

The Indigenous Healing Garden Project

This project, which aligns beautifully with Victoria University's sustainability strategic framework and Emmanuel's commitment to right relations with Indigenous communities, is currently underway, thanks to an initial grant from the United Church Foundation's Seeds of Hope. Brook McKillop, the architectural firm, has been commissioned to redesign the courtyard which features the Crucified Woman Sculpture. The proposed designs have received approval from the project's advisory committee in collaboration with the Indigenous Elder circle. We aim to begin construction this summer and anticipate project completion by 2025, as part of the UCC Centennial celebration.

Major Celebrations at Emmanuel College

In the next few years, there are several significant anniversaries we're eagerly looking forward to celebrating! Firstly, in 2024-2025 we'll be commemorating three remarkable milestones: the 10th anniversary of the Buddhist Focus in our Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS) program, the 15th anniversary of the Muslim Focus in the MPS program, and the grand 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada. In 2025-26 we will celebrate 30 years of the Committee on Asian/North American Asian Theologies (CANAAT). Then fast forward to 2027-2028, which promises to be another monumental period, marking the 20th anniversary of the Master of Sacred Music Program and the 100th anniversary of Emmanuel College itself. Stay tuned for more information about these celebrations to come.

I envision our celebrations will incorporate multiple fundraising opportunities to establish scholarships, enriching our offerings and supporting marginalized students. Notable progress has already been made in securing scholarships. We proudly unveiled our first named scholarship for Buddhist students in February 2024. Efforts are underway to establish a Korean Scholarship, with an inaugural fundraising dinner held this past fall, and another planned as a music concert commemorating the 100th birth year of the Right Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee on October 26, 2024, at Willowdale Emmanuel United Church. Additionally, a special fundraising event is in the works to establish a scholarship for Queer students, scheduled for November 2 for Drag Show paid event, in collaboration with the Drag and Spirituality Summit, to be held at Emmanuel November 1 to 3, 2024.

Hybrid Master of Divinity Program

Our Hybrid Master of Divinity (MDiv) program began this past year which allows for 2 years of a 3-year MDiv can be done online. We hope this will reach more prospective students outside of the Greater Toronto Area. [Read this story](#) about two folks who began the Hybrid MDiv this year.

Multi-faith Spiritual Life

Spiritual and religious activities thrive, in person every week, Tuesday and Wednesday. These sessions are led by Buddhist faculty members, guest religious leaders and our dedicated student Spiritual Life Team (SLT), along with students from Christian worship/preaching and Buddhist ritual courses. This SLT is enrolled in a year-long course for credit called "Worship and Ritual Leadership Practicum." Our Wednesday Spiritual Life Gathering continues to be the heartbeat of our week and alternates between Christian Worship and a Multi-faith Gathering. These gatherings are streamed live on YouTube and are open to the public and all are welcome!

Faith Community Partnerships

Over the past year and a half, we've been fortunate to receive community lunch sponsorships from various Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist faith communities. They've joined us at Emmanuel to share food, stories, and teachings about their faith traditions while learning from our students about their interfaith experiences. Addressing food insecurity is crucial today, and providing meals to our students in this manner has been a great blessing. If your church is interested in partnering with Emmanuel, please be in touch!

Financial Support

Emmanuel College continues to provide significant financial support to students. Through the John W. Billes Fund, Emmanuel continues to provide 100% of tuition coverage to all domestic students who are registered full-time in the M.Div. program and who are engaged in The United Church of Canada's candidacy pathway process. All basic degree domestic full-time students are eligible for our **Entering Theological Education grant, which offers 50% tuition coverage to their first year courses.** We also offer all (domestic and international) students who are registered in the Ph. D. program, 100% tuition coverage for four years. For more information about studying at Emmanuel College and about the financial support available for all Emmanuel programs, whether one is studying full-time or part-time, please contact Andrew Aitchison, emmanuel.admissions@utoronto.ca.

Emmanuel is offering an increasing number of Continuing Education events online. These events are offered through the Centre for Religion and Its Contexts (CRIC). A list of upcoming offerings are found on the [Emmanuel College website](#). For further information about these events please contact Shawn Kazubowski-Houston: ec.events@utoronto.ca.

Please follow us on social media:

Facebook: @EmmanuelCollegeofVic
Instagram: @emmanuelcollegetoronto
YouTube: @EmmanuelCollege1

If you have questions or are seeking further information about Emmanuel College, please be in touch with us or explore Emmanuel: <http://bit.ly/exploremmanuel>.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. Dr. HyeRan Kim-Cragg,

Principal

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church Professor of Preaching
Emmanuel College



EMMANUEL COLLEGE
OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Kirk United Church Centre

Annual Report to Northern Spirit Regional Council



- Highlights:**
- First Annual Free Community Fall Dinner in September 2023, and First Annual Free Community Spring Dinner in April 2024!
 - Kirk Centre is one of only 2 places in the City of Edmonton currently hosting 24-hour Indigenous wakes
 - New “Little Free” projects: *Little Free Closet* opened in 2023, and *Little Free Pet Supplies* planned for 2024



- Key Links:**
- [Kirk Centre Website](#)
 - Subscribe to Kirk’s quarterly Newsletter: [here!](#)

Kirk United Church Centre, also known as Kirk Centre, is an Incorporated Ministry of the United Church of Canada, located in the neighbourhood of Dovercourt in Northwest Edmonton, Alberta.

In 2019 when Kirk United Church was in the process of disbanding, the congregation turned the building over to the United Church of Canada and it subsequently evolved into the community hub known as Kirk Centre.

Kirk Centre was incorporated under the Province of Alberta Societies Act in December of 2019. Kirk Centre reports to the Northern Spirit Regional Council in accordance with the Incorporated Ministries policy.

Vision: Kirk Centre is a vibrant, welcoming hub, and integral partner in building community in northwest Edmonton.

Mission: Kirk Centre provides an open, safe, diverse and inclusive facility, working collaboratively with other non-profit organizations to help meet the identified cultural, educational, spiritual and physical needs of the residents of Dovercourt and its neighbouring communities.

Kirk Centre is governed by a Board of Directors currently consisting of five United Church members and two community members:

Jacqueline Hunt – Chair (UCC Staff and Member)
Wilson MacLennan – Secretary (UCC Member)
Susan Waldie – Treasurer (UCC Member)
Darlene Bakker – Director (UCC Member)
Deanna Boyde – Director (Community Member)
Gail Greenwood – Director (Community Member)
Larry Wright – Director (UCC Member)

Kirk Centre has two employees, Sally-Anne Woolnough – Executive Director (full-time) and Shelly Arsenault – Facility Caretaker (part-time).

Kirk Centre’s Board of Directors and staff have continued their work on the Strategic Plan to fulfill our goals and mandates to offer a variety of educational, faith, arts, health and wellness services, and support small businesses, start-ups, faith communities, non-profits and community programming.

In September 2023 Kirk Centre held its first annual Free Community Fall Dinner. Through donations and volunteer work Kirk Centre was able to feed over 100 community members. We look forward to our first annual Spring Free Community dinner on April 25, 2024.

Throughout 2023 Kirk Centre was home to six faith assemblies and, hosted over fifteen community businesses (including Mr. Rooter, Sage Counselling, Talk Box Therapy, Greenrose Immigration, Connections Market & Events, Serenity Respite, Hummingbird Daycare, Food Grains Bank, Purple Martins Cakes, Graze YEG, Just like Home Care, the Nechi Institute and the Friends of Nechi), three levels of Girl Guides, three levels of Scout groups, and many community groups including a T.O.P.S. group, Gamblers Anonymous, Sex and Lovers Anonymous, a meditation group, Awesome Adult Dance Club, The Alberta Trail Riders Association. Sports Groups included Daniel's Dodgeball, River city Hornets and Fellowship of the Rings Volleyball. We also hosted many funerals, weddings, baptisms, birthdays and anniversaries. The ability of Kirk Centre to host 24-hour indigenous wakes has been a very important addition and is used almost monthly. Kirk Centre is one of only 2 places in the City of Edmonton hosting 24-hour wakes and sacred fire locations.

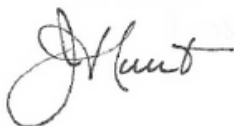
Kirk Centre has expanded its volunteer base in 2023 soaring to 28 volunteers the year. This is tangible proof that people in the community are beginning to understand the objectives of Kirk Centre and are willing to be involved in their community. Kirk Centre has a variety of volunteer positions available for all ages and abilities including: Cat Care, Donation Manager, Little Free Librarian, Events Volunteer, Board Member, Little Free Closet Custodian, Little Free Pantry Manager, and Seasonal Decorator. We also have had a number of youth volunteers who are looking to gain work experience and add value to their resume.

It is not unusual for Kirk Centre to have had five hundred people through the facility when reviewing the activities that have happened.

In 2023 Kirk Centre saw the launch of another Little Free Project. With the Little Free Library (LFL) and Little Free Pantry (LFP) in full swing, Kirk Centre opened the Little Free Closet (LFC) in June 2023. The LFC receives weather appropriate donations of clothing and footwear and volunteers organize the donated items and put them in our outdoor closet, available to anyone, no questions asked. Unlike other providers, Kirk Centre does not require intake information, or require someone to officially ask for help. People are free to access the Closet, Pantry and Library as they determine. Kirk Centre has one more Little Free Project planned for 2024. Little Free Pet Supplies (LFPS) will allow for donations of new and used pet supplies. This is a great way to use, reuse and recycle pet products that are no longer used in the home due to the loss of a beloved pet or pet food allergies making food unuseable to the family animal, but could be used by someone else.

Kirk Centre believes the Community Hub model is an asset to The Northern Spirit Region and to The United Church of Canada and plans to continue to strengthen our relationship with and our place within The United Church of Canada and The Northern Spirit Region

With hard work, tenacity and broad support Kirk Centre continues to move forward on its strategic plan, increasing community partnerships and engagement and seeing a busy and vibrant community hub come to life. We are excited to continue to share our successes with you.



Jacqueline Hunt

Chair - Kirk Centre Board of Directors





St. Andrew's College



Report to Regional Councils

Highlights:

- Collaboration & partnership with Saskatoon Theological Union partners
- Renewal of Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies degree programmes
- September 2023 launch of Lifelong Learning Pathway

Key Links:

- [St. Andrew's College website](#)
- Questions about learning pathways? Contact shawn.sanfordbeck@saskatoontheologicalunion.ca

Dear friends in Christ,

Warm greetings from St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon! As we embark upon the year 2024, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the enduring support and prayers of our beloved community. Reflecting on the challenges we have collectively faced over the past several years we are reminded of the profound truth that we are stronger together.

It is with great joy and gratitude that we share the news of the deepening partnership between St. Andrew's College and our partners within the Saskatoon Theological Union. Through our Covenant of commitment, we continue to chart a path of collaboration and mutual support, transcending individual identities to embrace a shared vision of unity and purpose. While each institution retains its unique character and traditions, our collective endeavours serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the wider community. We hope that our bold ecumenical strides will serve as a catalyst for similar partnerships within our denominational traditions, fostering greater unity and understanding among God's people.

At the heart of our mission lies a commitment to excellence in theological education, and I am thrilled to share the exciting developments in our academic programs. Building upon a foundation of shared values and mutual respect, the faculty of the Saskatoon Theological Union has finalised the renewal of our Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies degree programmes. These programmes, offered in an intensive format through a trimester model, provide students with the opportunity to pursue their studies without the need for relocation. We take great pride in being the first mainline seminary in Canada to offer such a pathway, emphasising ecumenism and interdisciplinary collaboration.

In addition to our degree programmes, we remain steadfast in our commitment to lifelong learning and professional development. Our Doctor of Ministry programme continues to thrive, attracting a diverse cohort of students eager to deepen their knowledge and enhance their ministry. Furthermore, even though General Council has decided to discontinue the Designated Lay Ministry programme, we are grateful for the opportunity to support the current DLM students as they complete their studies. The presence of our DMin and DLM directors and students enriches our community, fostering vibrant dialogue and mutual learning.

This past September saw the launch of our Lifelong Learning Pathway—a testament to our commitment to inclusive education and spiritual formation. Developed over the past two years, this innovative programme offers a flexible and personalised approach to theological and spiritual exploration. Whether one is a seasoned pastor seeking continuing education, a lay person committed to furthering their ability to support their own and their faith’s community’s journey, or a spiritually curious seeker embarking on a journey of discovery, our certificate programmes provide a space for growth, reflection, and transformation.

As we stand on the threshold of a new era, we are filled with a sense of excitement and anticipation. The challenges of recent years have not weakened our resolve but have instead ignited our imaginations and renewed our sense of purpose. We invite you to join us on this journey of compassion, hope, and justice—to support us, to pray for us, and to walk alongside us as we continue to navigate the ever-changing landscape of theological education in the twenty-first century.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or if you wish to explore our academic or lifelong learning pathways further. We are here to serve and support you in any way we can. As well, do reach out if you have any questions at all, at principal.sac@saskatoonthologicalunion.ca.

If you would like to know more about our academic or lifelong learning pathways, feel free to contact the College Recruitment Ambassador at shawn.sanfordbeck@saskatoonthologicalunion.ca.

And we would be more than happy to receive your financial support! Contact our College Secretary at collegesecretary.sac@saskatoonthologicalunion.ca for a list of development opportunities and ways to give.

May the Spirit continue to guide and bless us as we walk together in ministry.

Yours in Christ,

Dea. Dr. Richard Manley-Tannis
Principal, St. Andrew’s College





St. Stephen's College

Report and Update to the Northern Spirit Regional Council

- Highlights:**
- As of June 6, 2023, St. Stephen's College is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools
 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice work, and institutional audit of St. Stephen's College's history
 - Appointment of Director of Spiritual Wellness
 - Celebrating St. Stephen's 100th convocation in October 2024

- Key Links:**
- [St. Stephen's College website](#)
 - Join [Life Together online gatherings!](#)



It is a great pleasure for me to reflect on this past year at St. Stephen's College, and to provide the Council with an annual update of the many wonderful things happening at the College.

ATS Accreditation

As of June 6, 2023, St. Stephen's College is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. We received accreditation for a period of seven years (the maximum for initial accreditation), for all of our degree programming (DMin, MPS, and MTS), with permission to offer comprehensive distance education.

The ATS Board of Commissioners voted to accredit St. Stephen's on the recommendation of the ATS Site-Visit team, which came to St. Stephen's in March 2023 to conduct a comprehensive on-site visit. The visit was very a positive and affirming experience. The ATS team met with members from across the SSC community, including representatives from the Office of the Provost at the University of Alberta's. In their report, the Site-Visit team specifically commended St. Stephen's on the following:

- a. An institution-wide commitment to a renewed vision, mission, and values grounded by an integration of spirituality and a dedication to diversity.
- b. A remarkable ethos of collaboration and collegiality witnessed across the breadth and depth of the community.
- c. A winsome spirit of institutional humility, accompanied by a capacity for self-reflection, and an openness to learning and improvement.

Student Loan Access for all SSC Degree Programs

Immediately upon receiving news of our accreditation status, St. Stephen's applied to the Province of Alberta to have our Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality (MPS) program approved for student loan access. We received word in late-June 2023 that such access had been granted. This means that students in all SSC degree programs—MPS, MTS, and DMin—are now eligible to receive government loans. The College is also in the midst of applying for student loan access in BC, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia (which are the provinces where we currently have students residing). We expect this access will be implemented in the coming months.

Having secured access to government student loans, students now have greater capacity and opportunity to study at the College. Over the past year, we have seen significant growth in our online course enrollments: for example, in Fall 2023 we saw a total of 108 online course enrollments, up from 37 enrollments in Fall 2022.

MPS Program Revisioning

This past year we concluded an 18-month project of revisioning and updating the [Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality program](#). This work included consultation with students, faculty, alumni, and professional and academic partners. Program changes were implemented for the 2023 intake, program approval with the Canadian Art Therapy Association was achieved in Summer 2023, and outstanding work of curriculum alignment with provincial regulatory colleges is expected to conclude in Summer 2024. Changes to the MPS program are of three broad types: (1) changes to delivery structure (accommodating both in-person and online program elements); (2) updating of required courses and alignment of program streams; and (3) changes to the tuition model.

2023 Intake

Enrollment for the 2023–2024 year was very healthy. In total we had 31 students begin degree programs at the College, including our largest MPS cohort (21 students), a strong DMin cohort (4 students), and the rest enrolled in graduate certificate programs. About one-third (11) of the student body is from the Greater Edmonton Area; the rest are from elsewhere in Alberta (5), Ontario (6), Manitoba (2), New Brunswick (1), BC (1), and some international (5). Across the College, our 2023 student body reflects a diversity of religious and spiritual traditions, including United Church of Canada (11% of student body), Roman Catholic (11%), and Muslim (6%); approx. 18% of our community identifies as “other Christian,” and 47% identifies as “religiously other” (including a large contingent that would be Spiritual but Not Religious).

EDI-J Work:

The College’s Chancellor, Michael Phair, has undertaken a project of developing a set of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (EDI-J) statements. This work began in Fall 2022 and came to completion in December 2023. The process has engaged a variety of community stakeholders, including the University of Alberta’s Vice-Provost of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Vice-Provost of Indigenous Programming and Research. This work produced two statements: (1) a statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, and (2) an Indigenous Statement that considers SCC’s own history and relationships with Indigenous peoples/communities while also lifting up and centring Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, priorities, and concerns.

As part of this work, the College is seeking funding to conduct an institutional audit of SSC’s history, with the intention of uncovering whatever connections exist—either major or minor, explicit or implicit—between the College and the former Residential School System. As a component of the College’s active commitment to EDI-J, the intent of this work is to foster openness, transparency, and justice-driven engagement between the College and the many indigenous and Metis peoples who reside on Treaty Six lands.

Appointment of Director of Spiritual Wellness

In Fall 2023, [Dr. Kehinde Olabimtan was appointed as the College's inaugural Community Chaplain and Director of Spiritual Wellness](#). In this role, Dr. Olabimtan works to promote and foster spiritual wellness within the St. Stephen's learning community. His chief responsibilities include the design and implementation of a new monthly online spiritual gathering for reflection and personal formation (titled *Life Together*, details in the next paragraph), the provision of spiritual and moral guidance on an as requested basis to members of the College community, and the provision of spiritual care supports for St. Stephen's students who find themselves in moments of need. Dr. Olabimtan will also work to collaborate with the Interfaith Chaplains Association of the University of Alberta, and to nurture ongoing connections between the College and Edmonton's wider multi-faith and spiritual communities.

In his role as Director of Spiritual Wellness, Dr. Olabimtan has launched [Life Together](#), which is an online, monthly gathering for spiritual reflection and personal formation. *Life Together* gatherings provide opportunities for spiritual sharing, reflection, and engagement across the various traditions and worldviews represented in the St. Stephen's community. The aim of *Life Together* is to promote spiritual wellness by celebrating, valuing, and learning from the diverse spiritual paths represented within the College. Participants are invited to engage in openness to one's self and to one's neighbour. *Life Together* gatherings are held monthly, co-hosted by Dr. Olabimtan and a variety of guests, and each gathering is theme in accordance with the natural and/or spiritual seasons unfolding around us. *Life Together* gatherings are open to members of the college, university, and wider community (including members of the Northern Spirit Regional Council!). All are welcome!

Grant to Re-Imagine Spiritual Care Education in Alberta

In July 2023, the College was awarded a competitive grant from ATS (valued at \$25,000 USD), which was immediately matched by the Alberta Consortium for Supervised Psychospiritual Education (also \$25,000 USD). The funds are enabling the College to [develop an educational model that fully migrates Clinical Psychospiritual Education \(CPE\) into one or more of Alberta's graduate theological colleges](#). This project is currently nearing completion (it will be concluded in June 2024). The outcomes of this project will certainly shape spiritual care education in Alberta, and there are early indications that this work will also help shape similar programs across Canada.

Revised Agreement with University of Alberta

In October 2023, the College signed a new Consolidated Agreement with the University of Alberta. This new agreement marks the first time since 1912 that the affiliation of St. Stephen's with the University has been looked at in a comprehensive way. The new Consolidated Agreement is an exciting step forward, one that affirms our historic and ongoing partnership with the University while also refreshing that relationship for the 21st century. Particularly noteworthy, this new agreement provides expanded services to our students in the areas of library access/services, academic support services, and health and wellness services.

SSC in the Community

This past year, the College engaged in many community events, including the UAlberta Pride Parade, participation with the Providence Renewal Centre in the training of Spiritual Directors, participation at the Eighth Gathering of Canadian Council of Churches, partnering with the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning for the delivery of the College's annual doctoral seminar, service to various faith communities, ongoing partnership with the Art Gallery of Alberta to host a weekly Art Hive, participation in the Strathearn Art Walk (one of Edmonton's largest outdoor art festivals), co-sponsoring a Queer Horizons public lecture (with the MacEwan Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity) on Faith and Sexual Orientation, and increased presence at various post-secondary events (such as the UAlberta International Student Fair, the UAlberta Open House, and the MacEwan University Open House).

On September 15, 2023, the College held its [tenth fundraising Gala](#). This year's event was held at the JW Marriott in Edmonton's Ice District. The theme of the Gala was "play," and it included guest speakers Janis Irwin (MLA) and Rhiannon Hoyle (MLA and Advanced Education Critic), a live painting by Giselle Denis, live Jazz, an interactive art-making project led by our students, and many other "playful" events.

Convocation

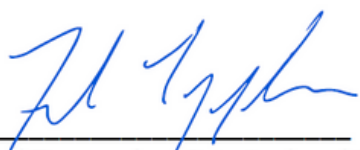
In October 2023, St. Stephen's held its 99th annual convocation. This past year we had 12 grads, spanning all of our degree programs. The [honorary Doctor of Divinity was awarded to Rev. Dr. Nancy Steeves](#) (who recently had served the faith community of Southminster-Steinhauer United Church).

We look forward to October 2024 with much anticipation, as this year we will be celebrate our 100th annual convocation.

Faculty Scholarship

Over the past year, several St. Stephen's faculty have attended and/or presenting papers at academic and ecclesial conferences in Denver (USA), Sarajevo (Bosnia), Bangkok (Thailand), Ottawa (Ontario), and San Antonio (USA). Notably, in May 2023, the College hosted [a book launch event for Dr. Margaret Clark and Dr. Joyce Bellous](#), who recently published *Think Listening at Thin Moments: Theoretical Groundwork for Spiritual Care Practice* (Tall Pine Press, 2022). A few months before that, In February 2023, the College participated in a [book launch event for Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson's](#) *Serving Money, Serving God: Aligning Radical Justice, Christian Practice, and Church Life* (Fortress Press, 2023).

Respectfully submitted on April 15, 2024.



*Fred Tappenden, Principal and Dean
St. Stephen's College*

2024 COMMUNITY, OUTREACH, & EDUCATION PARTNERS REPORTS

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