



Wycliffe
College

Insight

FALL/WINTER 2020

Community in the time of COVID-19

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S PEN

Dear Friends,

Since the middle of August we have been making our way through the Book of Job in our appointed readings for morning chapel. The surreal circumstances produced by the pandemic make Job a strangely comforting companion, and I can't help but regard his appearance as providential.

There is first of all the matter of his complaints. Mine would have to be supremely melodramatic to compare with his. Nevertheless, there is something about the hypersensitivity of these days that has made us more irritable than usual. Irascible, even. "I cannot hold my peace; I shall speak out in my anguish of spirit and complain in my bitterness of soul" (Job 7: 11). "I'm sick and tired of wearing this suffocating mask! Wait, why aren't those people wearing masks?!" (Stephen Andrews 11:15 Monday morning).

I admit that the aggravation is pretty insignificant in the grander scheme of things. But it is the relationship of such annoyance to the grander scheme that evokes a certain disquietude. So many of the features of life that gave us comfort and stability seem to be in a state of dissolution. The digital reconstruction of once-physical bonds of family and Christian fellowship leaves us unfulfilled, longing for a friendly hug or a crumb of bread in the palm of our hands. There has been a measurable increase of human misery. Will an effective vaccine restore our sense of confidence, or will our future be one of ongoing adaptation and change? Where is God in the Days of COVID?

Of course, I am aware that, just as in the story of Job, it is a strategy of the Wily One to get us worked up about our afflictions in the hopes that we might



curse God and die. So the question of where is God in our doubts and in our suffering is a weighty one.

And yet there is evidence of God's work in the world, if we have the eyes to perceive it. It is obvious at Wycliffe College. In a year when we are facing considerable challenges to both our finances and stamina, we have witnessed a swelling of interest in theological education. The number of those coming in as full-time students has risen 70 percent over last year, while our part-time enrolment has nearly doubled. There are more people signed up for our autumn courses than anyone can remember (nearly 450). We have an international body of students representing twenty-one countries, and there are eager students in Asia who log in to class at 3:00 a.m. their time. Moreover, our appeal for students in need was met with the care and generosity of many of you, our alumni and friends, to the sum of nearly \$50,000. I confess that I don't

understand it. We're worried about the survival of the Church and God is raising up a growing generation of gifted and dedicated future leaders?

In this issue of *Insight* you will find inspiring examples of God at work in the lives of many from our Wycliffe community. But I want to get back to Job. The purpose of the book of Job is not to resolve the problem of suffering, but to define the proper relationship between mortals and God. The experience of Job reveals that hardship ought not to separate humans from God. Indeed, adversity can be a means of drawing us close to God, who, despite his proximity to the source of our suffering, is our only refuge in the hour of our need.

So perhaps one of the lessons Job teaches us is that there is merit in our complaining. We are within the bounds of faith to shake our fists at God, and to pour out our grievances. Says Job: "Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: / I cry aloud, but there is no judgment" (19:7). It is instructive that there are more psalms of lament in the Psalter than of joy and thanksgiving, and I sometimes wonder whether our liturgy is too happy. How genuine is our faith if we are afraid to complain? And how effective is our witness if we are unwilling to stand alongside those who cry out in pain and protest against God? There is no shame in sharing their indignation, for complaint is simply the voice of faith struggling to live with unanswered questions and unexplained suffering.

In sure and certain hope,

The Rt Rev. Dr Stephen Andrews
Principal and Helliwell Professor of
Biblical Interpretation

Digging Deeper to Cultivate Community

By Amber Tremblett

When I accepted the nomination for the role of Senior Student for 2020-2021 I certainly did not see myself in the position I am in now. I made plans for the community I had come to know and love that were specific to the way I had come to know and love it. I planned on doing most things in ways that were familiar to me and to Wycliffe. I also had some new ideas that I thought might work for our tight-knit community. Throughout all the brainstorming and vision-casting, I had this vague notion that it would be pretty easy to be Senior Student. Then the pandemic changed our lives. Most significantly for me, it changed *everything* about my role as Senior Student. I knew—in not so uncertain terms—that God was telling me to gain some humility.



Which brings us to today. The semester has started. How Wycliffe is going to foster a community that is life-giving, supportive, and genuine has been an ongoing discussion throughout the summer amongst faculty, staff, and students. This has become my singular goal and almost my only task. Our tight-knit community might unravel this semester unless we figure out a way to make what was once quite a natural process (of building community face to

face), happen online. Everything needs to be more intentional this year, and I've tried to keep that in mind while forming a *new* plan for this *new* community.

The easiest thing for us to do was to take some of the events we would have done in person and hold them online instead. We've all become familiar with Zoom over the past six months. We envision Zoom working great for Wednesday events, Women in Ministry dinners, other academic or educational events, as well as some social events like games nights and trivia nights.

We are aware, however, of the amount



Amber Tremblett

of time students will spend on Zoom for classes, other meetings, and for work, so we also want to engage with students in some other ways. This is where social media becomes more important than it has been in the past. We want to use social media in a way that encourages people to participate, make their own posts, and talk to each other. The challenge here is that managing multiple social media accounts is a full-time job in other contexts. Which is why we also want to explore options that avoid technology altogether.

We plan to make use of mail services and encourage students to write to each other while at the same time reaching out to them to let them know their Student Council is thinking about them.

I'm not sure if any of it will work. And I can definitely say that being Senior Student has not been as easy as I naively, and perhaps conceitedly, thought it would be. Even still, I am excited by the possibilities. I truly believe that our community can be as tightly knit as ever. We just have to dig a little deeper to find the *something* that replaces whatever was most central for us about how community used to be. I pray that we recognize that something when God reveals it to us (maybe He already has). And hopefully, we will be surprised and amazed by the beauty of it all.

~

Amber Tremblett is a third-year Master of Divinity Student. She is from Lewisporte, Newfoundland and Labrador and is a postulant in the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

She is excited by opportunities for mission in the future church. Some of her favourite things include the ocean, crocheting, and a good book.



Wycliffe Graduate Society:

Providing spaces for collaboration and fellowship

By Ian Kissell

Learning is best done in community—advanced graduate work requires extended periods of self-driven research and concentrated self-reflection. This paradox drives the challenge which is graduate studies, especially in theology. Graduate students have always felt this tension acutely—overwork, mental exhaustion, and isolation are rampant among advanced degree students—but the tension is stronger than ever. The Wycliffe Graduate Society (WGS) exists not just to assist in professional development for our advanced degree students (MA, ThM, and PhD), but perhaps more importantly to support them during a uniquely difficult phase of their lives by providing spaces for collaboration and fellowship with colleagues.

Accomplishing this has perhaps never been harder: as theological education is forced to adapt rapidly to new circumstances, so must WGS. Due to rising costs of living in Toronto and highly restricted access to facilities, a large number of Wycliffe's PhD students have moved away from the Greater Toronto

Area, and the majority of incoming advanced degree (AD) students are joining remotely for the Fall as well (from across North America and Asia). Working together with my fellow WGS coordinator, Patrick Mentzer (2nd year PhD in Old Testament), we have sought to reimagine the society's role in a time of remote access when it will be easier than ever for a student to experience isolation.

The largest void that will need to be filled is not for official events, but the casual conversations that take place on the way to seminars, over lunch, or while pretending to work in the AD room (which is closed indefinitely for non-residents). Any alum is sure to know that these conversations are one of the most valuable aspects of theological education, both for working out your own ideas and for being reminded you are not alone in your struggles. With this in mind, WGS is facilitating the creation of small groups that will meet digitally for the foreseeable future. These groups will exist for a host of reasons: reading Hebrew, support for students who are working on their exams, or collaboration on coursework.

While participation is voluntary, all of the first year AD students have been placed into groups automatically, with other students being encouraged to join as well. WGS is also hosting a bi-weekly coffee hour on Zoom, the first of which had about 25 attendees, and has developed a Microsoft Teams server through which AD students can form groups to easily collaborate, talk to each other, share files, and start video calls.

While none of these initiatives are perfect replacements for in-person meetings, we are hopeful that they will provide the needed support to get through a difficult time, as well as help provide a better framework for allowing remote students to stay connected to Wycliffe while finishing their programs in the future.

~

Ian Kissell is coordinator of the Wycliffe Graduate Society. Originally from Texas, he is in his third year of PhD studies in Theology. His research focuses on the work of Russian Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakov and his view on Divine Revelation.

STUDENT FOCUS: A JOURNEY TO MEET MY “STEPFATHER”

By Yoontack Han

I thought I was “born to trouble” as the Bible says in Job 5:7. When I was nine years old my father passed away from liver cancer. The faith of my family was challenged by his sudden death. Being greatly shocked by his death, my grandmother passed away. Two days later my brother had a car accident and hurt his leg.

I was too young to overcome such troubles and hardships. It seemed that there was no hope and no future. Then a question arose in my heart: “Is it true that God works for us?” When I turned sixteen, I found an answer to this question in the Bible. “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (Ps. 68:5). From that day on, a “Stepfather” came to my house. I quickly learned that my Stepfather was even kinder and more loving than my father had

been. Whenever people ask me, “Who is your Stepfather?” I answer, “my Father’s name is God.”

At first, I thought God was leading our family down an unpredictable road, but everything turned out to be wonderful! The death of my father was a turning point in my life which has affected my view of God and self. Today, I see the purpose of my life as being to introduce my Stepfather to the orphans, the poor, and the hopeless.

I am tremendously blessed to be a part of Wycliffe’s community—even from a distance. After my PhD program at Wycliffe College, I aspire to serve churches and seminaries in poverty-stricken regions. I am eager to devote myself to empowering churches and the next generation in South Korea by sharing what I learned from the community and faculty at Wycliffe College.



Rev. Yoontack Han is a pastor with The Assemblies of God of Korea. In his first year of the PhD program at Wycliffe, he is studying remotely from South Korea. He holds a ThM from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a BTh and an MDiv from Hansei University in South Korea.

STUDENT FOCUS: CAROL SHIH “RIGHT PLACE, TIME, AND PEOPLE”

I was grateful to be able to experience some Wycliffe classes as a visitor when I came to Toronto last September. I was impressed by the faculty members’ enthusiasm to teach, their friendliness to students, the hospitality and support of staff, the level of community interaction, the worship, and the library. As an Anglican, it is special to be able to study in this evangelical seminary within the Anglican tradition. I trust it is the right place for me.

I understand the MDIV program is for someone looking to train for ministry. It is the reason I am here. It is not easy for me to make it without the support of my family. My family members are indifferent to my participation in church and

often question both my involvement there and my relationships with other Christians. I did not expect my mother to agree to my plan to pursue the ministry, especially in Canada. But upon getting her green light, I know it is also the right time.

I have a simple thought: be a faithful servant to God whatever I do and wherever I am. “...The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37, NRSV). This verse came to me during my visit to Wycliffe and stirred me even after returning to Hong Kong. Is it another sign? I am not ignoring the challenges that surely lie ahead. But I know that I am not alone. He is with me. Many people are backing me in prayer, and with companionship.



Carol Shih is a new MDiv student currently studying from Hong Kong. She has grown up in an Anglican church and volunteered in fellowships, Sunday School, and nurture groups. She has been a youth worker and served on the executive of various local Anglican organizations.

“I always kept Wycliffe in my thoughts and prayers”

By “David”

My name is “David.” I was born and raised in Israel in a secular, non-practicing Jewish family. When I was six years old, I got to know believers in Christ who became close childhood friends. Through the years growing up, I loved experiencing the love and warmth in their families and homes. They had light and joy in their eyes, which was different from my own experience growing up.

I became a believer in my late teen years and have been serving God in ministry ever since. Almost a decade ago, my family and I were in Toronto,

visiting friends. During our week-long visit, our friends showed us around the University of Toronto and told us about Wycliffe College. Through the years that followed this visit, I always kept Wycliffe in my thoughts and prayers as I considered further graduate studies.

Even though current circumstances do not allow us to come to Toronto in person, I’m happy to begin my Master of Arts in Theological Studies program online. My impression is that much like the Middle East and Israel/Palestine, Toronto and the University of Toronto are very diverse, and many nations and opinions are represented there. This is also my impression from the first week

of online classes and class discussions. Through these diverse interactions, I hope that I will learn of the different perspectives represented, and of the people who hold them, in a way that will later enable me to engage in conflict resolution within the communities in the Middle East. In the meantime, in an era of social distancing, I look forward to the weekly Zoom interactions with classmates from around the globe.

~

“David” asked that we not publish his real name. He is studying for his Master of Arts in Theological Studies from his home in Israel.

Calling all former residents!



Wycliffe
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We know that community is a hallmark of the Wycliffe experience, and not just for students. Are you a former resident of Wycliffe College who would like to reconnect with your fellow residents? We are building a community of former residents and would love to include you. Please email your

current contact information to mdisselkoen@wycliffe.utoronto.ca and we will be in touch. Please also help us get the word out by sharing the digital copy of Insight (<https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/insight>) with any former residents you know, and encouraging them to connect with us. Thank you!

The impact of technology on the practice and experience of Christian community at Wycliffe

Students feel they have a bit more privacy. If they want, they can switch off their cameras. It is also easier to moderate, keep order, and bring in quieter students with skilful use of the mute function. That doesn't sound very communal, but it introduces a certain interdependency. It's as if there is less time and the fact the seminar is happening at all seems very much appreciated. There seems to be less going off on a tangent, less missing of classes too. Of course, there is also the opportunity for those from far away to join in. It can feel quite international! And we can say "Next year in Toronto!", "Back to the Duke of York!", "See you again in the Law café!" Meeting again will be sweet.

— Mark Elliott, *Professorial Fellow*

Imagine it is a very cold winter, and the furnace in your house has broken down. You and your family turn off the water to keep pipes from freezing, and huddle in one room of the house with a space heater, waiting for the furnace to be fixed. All the online and remote classes we are now doing — the "technology" — is like this space heater. It is neither a friend nor foe. Rather, it is a necessary, but very limited, tool to get us through a hard time. Both aspects need to be borne in mind: we need this technology for our intellectual and academic economy to survive, so we should not only be patient with it, but committed to it for the time being; but reliance on this technology is at best temporary, and (like a space heater) can become dangerous if it is viewed as an alternative to the furnace, flattening out the life of the mind, which is personal, to a set of images and information bits. We are grateful that Wycliffe can go on; but we pray for the speedy return of our common house of learning.

— Ephraim Radner, *Professor of Historical Theology*

Technology has been both a blessing and a curse in terms of its impact on the practice and experience of community at Wycliffe College. The software platforms Zoom and Teams have enabled us to survive and thrive as a theological college during this pandemic. We all miss meeting and greeting people in Wycliffe's real classrooms, the chapel, the refectory, and the halls.

I find teaching on Zoom both stressful and invigorating. It challenges me to present material in new ways using new technology. I love the fact that the virtual classroom on my

computer screen enables me to see students' faces inches and not feet away from my face. I can observe their reactions to what I say in ways that were not possible in a large classroom. I like the fact that the small breakout rooms enable more introverted students to speak more often and more confidently than they did in large classes. I love the discussion board that invited students to introduce themselves to one another even before the class began. It fostered community as students shared hopes and dreams, reconnected with people they had met in other classes, and connected with people who shared their interests. (Knitters and crocheters in the class decided to organize a Wycliffe stitch night over Zoom!) So in spite of the challenges technology brings, it has been a blessing in that it has allowed us to continue to fulfil our commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship.

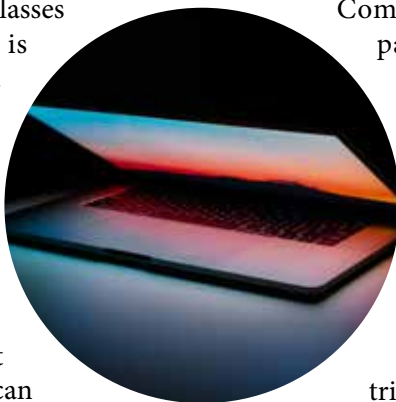
— Marion Taylor, *Professor of Old Testament*

Compared to so many terrible effects of the pandemic, the problems of moving from in-class teaching to on-line teaching are small. Sure, I've had to learn a number of new technologies. I can't complain.

I'm sorry that my students are missing the most important thing in a theological education: *being there*, running into each other, hanging out, praying together in an actual space. To compensate a little, I've tried to make their online break-out groups more personal, opened up course chat rooms, and added an alternative assignment where students can work together in small groups.

There are positives. I learn the names of students better now that Zoom keeps reminding me! And where my in-person classroom, behind ivy-covered walls on a privileged campus, could sometimes feel remote from the world, my online classroom feels like a global crossroads. Students show up from different towns, provinces, countries, even different continents. (And not all of them could have come to Toronto in person.) Moreover, their surroundings, and the occasional unscripted appearance of their small children and pets on screen, remind me visibly, every moment of class, that what I teach needs to connect with people who are leading real lives, busy lives, complicated lives, consecrated lives.

— Alan Hayes, *Bishops Frederick and Heber Wilkinson Professor of Church History*



*“One of the
hardest working
people in
theological
education”
bids Wycliffe
“farewell”*

**Professor
Glen Taylor**
to retire
December 31



to his students, committed to the Lord, and actively serving in a local church.... I already see his influence on me in the way I approach my own students!”

While it might be every academic’s dream to leave a legacy of influence that will stretch out into the future for generations to come, it is not every one who will actually achieve it. That Glen has, in spite of what he regards as relatively modest academic achievements over the course of his career—“I’m retiring without ever having become a full professor,” he says—testifies to where he has placed his priorities and directed his abundant energies. “One of the things I’ve been really proud of is the career of mentoring graduate students; the reputation as a mentor and a guide. I still get more graduate students wanting to study under me than my academic reputation deserves. People will say, ‘Go and study with Glen; he’s a caring and careful scholar who will guide you. You will have an advocate in this person.’ A mentoring pastoral aspect to my scholarship is something that I’ve been grateful for.”

Scholars around the globe whom Glen has mentored (he has taught in the Arctic, West Africa and mainland China) no doubt share that gratitude. “Glen is a scholar with a pastor’s heart,” says former student Brian Irwin, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Knox College. “He and Marion [also a Professor at Wycliffe College] have approached their work as also a ministry of welcome, opening their home and cottage to students far away from their own.”

Calling him “one of the hardest working people in theological education,” Irwin adds that watching Glen teach “has made me a better teacher.”

After a lifetime of pouring himself into supporting others in their scholarly pursuits, Glen looks forward to having the time in retirement to focus on some longer academic projects of his own.

By Patricia Paddey

It may come as no surprise to learn it was the pandemic that tipped the scales for Professor Glen Taylor towards retiring ahead of schedule. He is by nature, “pretty friendly and fairly sociable,” he says with characteristic humility. But somehow, the teaching, mentoring, and pastoring that he most loves to do in his role as Professor of Scripture and Global Christianity at Wycliffe College just aren’t the same when done from a COVID-19-enforced physical distance.

“I had told the College I planned to retire at 65,” he reflects. “My dad taught me to ‘Take your turn, then get out of the way and let someone else have theirs.’ Doing it a year early *is* COVID-related,” he concedes, pausing before adding, “I enjoy face-to-face interaction with students.”

His students have benefitted enormously, not only from such interactions with a man they describe as “doggedly committed,” and “always encouraging,” but from his obvious devotion to them and love for his subject area.

Shawn Flynn describes Glen as a “key

mentor.” Flynn spent five years under Glen’s tutelage (from 2008-2012) while a PhD student. Today, he is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Interim President at St. Joseph’s College at the University of Alberta. “I celebrate that the vast majority of Dr. Taylor’s students succeeded in postings of their choice,” he writes in an email. “Glen focused on high expectations, a love for the texts and history, but primarily [fostered] in others their potential for service; being his student was never about him or his work and scholarship, it was about much more. I would not be professionally where I am without Glen’s mentorship.”

Mentorship is a word that comes up again and again when former students tell of the impact Glen has had on their lives. Ian Vaillancourt describes himself as “extremely thankful” for “the blessing” of having Glen as his PhD supervisor (2012-2017), and for his “enduring impact.”

Today, Vaillancourt is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Heritage Theological Seminary. He writes that Glen “modeled for me what it looks like to be a scholar who is committed

For a fuller Q&A with Professor Glen Taylor, visit the Wycliffe College website at:
<https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/blog/professor-glen-taylor-reflects>

This is the Way

By Chris Friesen

Having recently moved from Saskatoon to Toronto, our family has been using Google Maps a lot over the past few weeks. Its real-time navigational function approximates in a technological mode a promise once given through Isaiah: “Whether you turn to the right or the left, you will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way, [drive] in it.’” There’s a profound difference, though, between being guided algorithmically by a phone-sized computer to locations you’ve selected in advance and being led by a living God, relationally, to destinations you don’t even know yet.

I’m not implying that we came to Ontario blind. We listened to life and found our reasons: three adult kids already out east and one more heading that way, choral opportunities for my wife, doctoral studies for me, music school for our youngest daughter, vocation, adventure, fellowship of inquiry. What better place than Wycliffe College for a cranky, curious evangelical to bring into dialogue the eschatology of his intellectual heroes Jacques Ellul and Lesslie Newbigin? Pandemic notwithstanding, it wasn’t some foggy leap off a cliff to sell our home, leave behind a fully-functioning community, and come here. But neither was it a dialed-in flight path to this or that predetermined career objective. It was rather a launched prayer to find out what the next destination really is.

I began many days of the past summer walking in circles in our newly-listed home repeating to myself another sentence from Isaiah: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.” With an online intensive in Greek underway and tough decisions pressing about things like grand piano, family dog, and co-housing, those

words of promise were about all I had room to reflect on, as well as all I needed to know, for much of July and August. I found them true as we packed up and headed east, even when it came to pitching our tent on the shores of Lake Superior or patching a split turbo hose outside Sudbury. In spite of some wrong turns along the way and enough quarrels to last us till Christmas, the Lord did in fact teach and direct.

Now that things are settling into a semblance of routine here in East York, we could be tempted to stop seeking the same quality of guidance for our journey, assuming that God will leave it to Google and our own devices to help navigate life in a new community. But we must not assume that. We have heard His voice here too, quietly affirming “This is the way”: in helping hands at the move-in, in timely encounters

with our new neighbours, in the deep ravine of oak trees breathing like giant lungs behind the rented house where we’ve set up shop as a family of seven. (Number eight continued on to Montreal.) One afternoon last week, the boy next door knocked and asked if our youngest son, who has one more chromosome than he does, would come over and shoot baskets. Wherever it is that we’re going, this really is the way.

~

Chris Friesen was interim pastor at Warman Mennonite Church, Saskatchewan, till last August. Over the years he has served as a school teacher, family band manager, retreat centre host and curriculum writer, among other roles. This fall he began a PhD in Theology at Wycliffe College.



WYCLIFFE'S RED OAK: “An image of something stable and lasting”

By Alex Newman

For over 100 years, Wycliffe's magnificent red oak has stood sentinel over the campus tennis court. It's about as old as the school building itself and has provided shade and beauty to thousands of students and faculty who walk by.

Recently, the tree has garnered attention—not for its shade, longevity or historical significance, but because it's going to be a mamma to some little seedlings.

Two years ago, Eric Davies, a PhD student in UofT's forestry department, started collecting seeds from trees around the city in order to start a seedling nursery. The goal was to help increase Toronto's tree stock biodiversity. “We have to find the last remaining big old trees, which are from local gene stock.”

He's been mapping Toronto trees for years, and when he began his PhD studies ten years ago, native vs non wasn't a big issue. But as the city continued planting non-native trees to replace the dying native stock, biodiversity was negatively affected. The city's intentions had been good—choosing insect-free species—but recent forestry studies have shown that the insects are crucial parts of the food chain, feeding birds which pollinate things, Davies says.

Native species also last a long time—unlike the non-native species, 90 percent of which die within ten years, he says.

Last year he collected seeds from Wycliffe's red oak, a species native to the city and thus fairly rare. He then approached professor of Old Testament Marion Taylor, who happens to be his neighbour in the Annex.

He briefed her on his idea for a possible project for the College: “Looking around the grounds, I thought it would be a great place for a small tree nursery . . . do

you think they would be interested in that idea?”

Marion was intrigued. “Eric observed how wonderful our tree was in terms of its health, longevity. He'd gathered the acorns and said we should propagate these and then plant the trees on campus to restore what it used to be.”

She followed up by introducing Davies to Paul Patterson, Wycliffe's Director of Operations. Initially COVID put an end to any planting, but recently Davies met again with Patterson who said as long as it was outside, there was no problem. “In fact, he told me I could even plant trees in the garden, then took me to the side garden where the principal lives to look at that,” says Davies. “This year there are lots of acorns—I've collected hundreds so far.”

Restoring native trees to Toronto is a personal mission for Davies and the Wycliffe tree is important as a seed source. “If you go to the store and buy a native tree, like a red oak, good chance it's from Tennessee,” he says.

While they sound like the same tree, Davies says they aren't. “There's a biotic reason for wanting seeds from trees here. Toronto's biodiversity is adapted to the trees in the city, what they call phenology, or the timing of reproduction. The most important thing in reproductive biology is the timing. And the breeding of birds, who time their reproduction so eggs are



hatching right when food is peaking.”

The whole food web, he says, is timed. “Thousands of insects time reproduction to coincide with trees, so by getting rid of our native trees, and replacing them with trees from other continents, we’ve thrown that off. If we want to bring back healthy forest, we want trees to be adapted to environment, but also trees adapted to biodiversity.”

In its first year, an acorn can grow eight to ten inches. Davies is experimenting with planting inside and out—fertilized in pots inside a greenhouse and some hardening off outside. Within five years the tree could grow five feet.

Once acorns are collected they can be planted right away. “You’ll lose quite a lot, but that’s nature’s way,” Davies says. He puts them in the fridge for winter, which breaks their dormancy, and after 70 days in the fridge, he “induces” them in the greenhouse.

Marion believes the oak nursery is a great metaphor for Wycliffe, and would like to see it start as soon as possible. “The great red oak at Wycliffe also reminds me of the flourishing tree planted by streams

of water in Psalm 1—it’s apt because Taddle Creek flows underneath that



tree and our chapel. It is an image of something stable and lasting. Oaks are strong, they grow slowly, and it’s an apt vision to move into the future, deep roots, into the water, deep roots in faith in Christ, through all the things that have happened.”

Davies agrees. “We need more high-quality local trees. It’s important for conservation but also kind of metaphorically fitting.”

One characteristic of the Wycliffe “nursery,” he’s hoping, is planting seedlings directly under the red oak. Research shows that trees talk to each other, he says, and even that “parent trees can recognize their offspring and provision resources to them.”

Marion is especially taken by the notion that baby trees do very well when they’re planted by the mother tree. “This is a good image for Wycliffe in terms of discipleship, passing on tradition, with the church being the tree, and baby trees nurtured within its root system allowing them to grow and flourish.”

~

Alex Newman is a Toronto-based writer.

Harry St. Clair Hilchey Award Nominations Open

- Nominations are now open for the Archdeacon Harry St. Clair Hilchey award. This award is presented to one alumnus of Wycliffe College each year who has distinguished themselves in service to the Alumni Association, Wycliffe College, and/or the Church. All nominations are to be submitted by January 13. Nominations will be considered by the Wycliffe College Alumni Association Executive Committee and the award presented to the successful nominee at Convocation.
- Criteria:
 - 1) Affiliation: Nominee must be an alumnus or Honorary Alumnus of Wycliffe College.
 - 2) Evangelical Ethos: Nominee is an outstanding example of Wycliffe College’s evangelical ethos, reflecting this in their social, professional and/or academic circles.
 - 3) Gospel Advocacy: Nominee has demonstrated outstanding service in the name of Jesus in social, professional, and/or academic circles.
 - 4) Engagement with Wycliffe College and the Church: Nominee has shown strong and regular engagement in supporting Wycliffe College. Support can be defined here as spiritual, academic, and/or professional.

Please submit your nomination by filling out the form on the Wycliffe College website at:

www.wycliffecollege.ca/alumni/awards

Exegesis under Lockdown:

Conversations in the Time of Coronavirus

By Amy Gabriel

In the midst of these months of pandemic-wreaked upheaval, God has woven unique moments of beauty, friendship, and grace. For me, chief among these was a moment that took place at the end of March. The pandemic and the accompanying lockdown had only just descended upon us, and I for one was struggling to make sense of this brave new world. Like many of us, I'd read Psalm 91 with its triumphant declaration of God's deliverance from pestilence—but I found myself confused and wishing for fellow exegetes to approach the passage with me. And so, one Friday morning over Zoom, we gathered to exegete the psalm: Professors Ephraim Radner and Joe Mangina, together with a small group of Wycliffe / TST students from the Theological Interpretation of Scripture class that they had taught in the fall. We represented a diversity of theological traditions—Anglican, United Church, Presbyterian, Baptist—and included both MDiv and graduate students.

What would it mean, we asked, to read this Psalm not individualistically but ecclesialogically or as speaking of Israel? When verse 10 states, “no plague [shall] come near your tent” (ESV), can we read “tent” as signalling the incarnation? Why was Satan's quotation of Psalm 91, when tempting Christ, a misquotation? Pestilence was God's judgment on Israel, according to the Torah; but—as Dr. Radner, commented—

the person who is identified with Christ at the end of Psalm 91 is the one whose judgment finds its term in Jesus' flesh.

Questions and discussion such as this filled the first hour of our time together, dubbed by one classmate “Contagion in the Canon.” But in our second hour we simply talked about the pandemic situation into which we had been catapulted—what so-and-so had written about lockdown, or what to do about the Eucharist during quarantine. As our time wound to a close, we were all eager to meet again—like maybe “every week for the rest of our lives.”

And so began ten weeks of discussion as we took up the lectionary reading for Palm Sunday, discussed Isaiah 53 on Good Friday, dug through the book of Colossians, and finished—as summer came upon us—with Song of Solomon. Often we tied in the week's passage with coronavirus, but our topics ranged widely: apocalypse, the sacraments, dying with Christ, the “plaguing” of the Isaianic Servant. We had the opportunity once again to grapple with the ideas and practices we'd discussed in the fall. I, for one, found my theological framework broadened.

But it was not simply the theological growth that made these conversations so valuable. In a world where fellowship and communal worship, prayer, and reading of Scripture had been strangely withdrawn, these Zoom meetings became a place for friendship and faith to flourish, albeit under less-than-ideal

circumstances. Somehow classmates became more like cousins and—to paraphrase Dr. Mangina—there was no marking, no grades, just a shared love of each other, the Word, and the Lord. I know I'm not the only one who counted our conversations as one of the greatest highlights of those solitary weeks.



As we wrapped up that first Zoom conversation back in March—still confused, maybe, but also comforted—someone suggested we pray. We did, a couple of us, and then one of the professors suddenly added, “And now as our Lord has taught us...” The words of the Lord's Prayer seemed filled with a new freshness and ardency as they spilled out of us—separated by many miles and hailing from a diversity of theological traditions, but expressing one common need for the Lord. That instance of faith and fellowship in the midst of isolation and uncertainty was, for me, one of the most beautiful moments with which the Lord has graced this pandemic time.

~

Amy Gabriel completed an MA in Theological Studies at Wycliffe College in 2019-2020, where her research focused on post-Holocaust theology.

Alumni news



Friends in Christ,

Welcome to the winter edition of *Insight!* Our world has changed a good deal these last few months and we're all finding ways to adapt. In the parish I serve we're continuing our online presence this fall and winter with faith formation classes on Tuesday evenings on Zoom and live-streamed Sunday services for those who are unable to gather in person. Wycliffe is adapting with online classes but did you know that the College is also live-streaming chapel? That's one way to tune in and stay connected! At any rate, please be assured of my prayers for you all this winter that we might be a bright light for the gospel during these trying times.

Grace and peace,
The Rev'd Jonathan Turtle (MDiv, 2012)

FROM THE 1970s

The Rev. Canon Brian McVitty (W79) recently retired from Celebration Church (ANiC) in Barrie, ON. Brian and Diane led the team that planted this congregation almost 10 years ago. Brian's retirement brought to a conclusion the weekly radio show *Wake Up Sunday Morning*, which he co-hosted and which was broadcast across central Ontario. Episodes are still available as a podcast. This fall he and Diane will publish *Facing Cancer: Forty Days of Healing* based on Diane's recent cancer treatments.

The Rev. Michael McCarthy (W78) leads the personnel firm, Hire Quality, based in Barrie, ON. He guides companies in the hiring of key staff and then the coaching of these individuals to success. Three years ago Mike and his wife Margie formed the team that launched Young Life in Barrie. Mike and Margie attend Emmanuel Baptist Church and recently joined the team that will be planting a new congregation in north Barrie.

The Rev. Jim Wilcox (W78) and his wife Astrid recently retired for the second time from the parish of Lyle, located near Camp Borden Army Base. In the summer they love to be at their cabin on 100 acres located outside of Brandon, Manitoba. They live in Barrie, ON.

The Rev. Frank Squires (W79) founded and leads Squire Resources. They specialize in recruiting key personnel for firms in Bermuda. Every year he and his wife Gail make several trips to Bermuda to meet with their corporate clients. Frank is also the lead Pastor of The Free Church in Thornton, ON.

FROM THE 1980s

The Rev. Michael Blair (W85) was appointed incoming General Secretary of the General Council for The United Church of Canada beginning November 1, 2020. The role is a permanent position, providing leadership in the direction, management, and coordination of the affairs of the Church and working in close collaboration with the Moderator.



The Rev. Dr Chris Barrigar (W88) & (W89), is Incumbent of the year-old Church of St Mark & St Peter, Diocese of Montreal. The church is a merger of two local congregations, and as part of the merger they have just completed \$2.5 million in renovations to the former St Mark's building, as a ministry and mission centre in the strategic Côte-Vertu area of Montreal. Chris is writing a book on the rise of hyper-individualism and social libertarianism in Western culture as a malignant offspring of Christianity's valuation of the individual.

FROM THE 1990s

The Rev. Ian Wetmore (W96) moved November 2019 from St Michael's Episcopal Church, O'Fallon, IL, in the Diocese of Springfield, to become rector of St James Episcopal Church, St James, NY, in the Diocese of Long Island. However, with the pandemic, all installations of



rectors have been put on hold until further notice. Although living a short drive from NYC is rather different from suburban St Louis or rural New Brunswick, he says it's wonderful being back on the East Coast!

FROM THE 2000s

The Rev. Chris Hayes (W03) and his wife Christine continue to love rural life in New Brunswick, serving in the parish of Salisbury & Havelock. They and their four children, along with Christine's mom, live in the village of Petitcodiac, where Chris has served as rector for eight years, and also serves as the current Regional Dean. Since they have arrived, the parish has nearly doubled in size, and the parish has grown deep connections with their communities, particularly in the schools.



Michael Peterson (W04) retired from the chaplaincy service of the Canadian Armed Forces in June, after fourteen years' service. His last assignment was leading the multifaith chaplain team at CFB Borden, near Barrie. He happily accepted an appointment as Interim Priest-in-Charge of All Saints, King City, in the Diocese of Toronto, and is enjoying his return to parish ministry.

The Rev. Alison Hari-Singh (W04) was appointed as Honourary Assistant at St. Martin in-the-Fields beginning September 1, 2020.

The Rev. Andrew Kaye (W05) was appointed as the Incumbent at St. Margaret in-the-Pines effective June 1, 2020. He previously served as Assistant Curate at St. Timothy's North Toronto.

Vanessa Rottner (W05) says, "My ministry during COVID-19 has been primarily pastoral work: listening, engaging prayerful meditation to enable me to listen to God. Engaging in support in daily, bi-weekly telephone calling, emailing, sending e-cards, writing personal cards of encouragement often with a little gift of some sachets of tea or relevant Scripture verses."



Andrew Stephens-Rennie (W07) with Marcia Boniferro and Amanda Jagt recently published *A Sort of Homecoming: Essays Honoring the Academic and Community Work of Brian Walsh*. The publication features essays on themes of home and homecoming from theologians and practitioners.



FROM THE 2010s

Dr. Barry Cheung (W12) returned to Hong Kong and has served at the Fellowship of Evangelical Students since 2012. In taking the role of General Secretary, he bears the responsibility for ministry development with the staff team, sharing together their vision of student work with local churches and schools. He has edited a series of Gospel Booklets for high school students, and seeks "prayer for the young generations in the current situation of Hong Kong."



The Rev. Leslie Gerlofs (W12) was appointed Diocesan Revive Coordinator with the Diocese of Niagara. She will support clergy in deepening the faith and engagement of people already present in the diocese's parishes. She has already begun this ministry, in addition to her continuing position as rector of St. John's, Burlington. Learn about Revive: <https://revive.forwardmovement.org/>

The Rev. Alicia Good (W13) and her husband Billy Good welcomed a son, Josiah Aiden, into their family in August 2019. Their daughter Natalia, now almost 13, has fond memories of running the halls at Wycliffe during community dinners and helping put out the candles after Wednesday Eucharist. Alicia is celebrating five years of ordination in the Mennonite Church of Canada and eight years of pastoral ministry at North Leamington United Mennonite Church in Leamington, ON.

The Rev. Dr. James Pedlar (W05, W13) and his wife Samantha thank God for the safe arrival of a daughter, Sadie Evangeline, on February 4. Moira (age 5) is happy to be a big sister. James continues to serve at Tyndale Seminary. He is on sabbatical this year, writing a book on revivalism and division in British Methodism. He was recently elected second vice-president of the Wesleyan Theological Society.



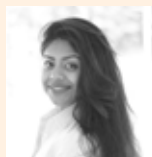
The Rev. Philip Stonhouse (W16) was appointed Priest-in-Charge of St. Matthew, Islington in July 2020. He was previously Associate Priest at St. Bride's Anglican Church in Clarkson, ON. He is excited to be the Priest-in-Charge at this welcoming and loving church.

The Rev. Jeff Potter (W16) was appointed as Diocesan Missioner & Communications Coordinator with the Diocese of Niagara in July 2020. Jeff's primary objective will be to increase the capacity and passion for missional opportunities and initiatives, to support and equip faith community planters and leaders, and to help reshape our culture and structures to reflect a spiritually-renewed missional orientation.

The Rev. Orvin Lao (W17) celebrated his marriage to his wife, Sally-Jane, on Saturday, August 22, 2020.



Chantal Sathi (W17) was recently appointed Oxford University's newest and youngest Alumni Board member. The Board consists of 20 global thought-leaders who advise Oxford University's Alumni Department. She is pursuing her Doctorate in International Development at Birmingham University, UK. Chantal lives in Scarborough, ON and attends Catch The Fire Church.



The Rev. Ken Johnstone (W18) was appointed Interim Priest-in-Charge of St. Nicholas, Birch Cliff as of August 24, 2020. Ken was previously the Assistant Curate at St. Margaret in-the-Pines Anglican Church, where he was ordained to the priesthood in February 2019. He lives in Ajax, with his wife, Lisa, and their son Joshua.



Axel Kazadi (W18) is a PhD student at Wycliffe College and was recently appointed as an Assistant Professor of Bible & Theology at Kingswood University in Sussex, NB. In addition to his PhD studies, Axel also served as a youth and young adult pastor at Milliken Wesleyan Methodist Church in Markham, Ontario from 2015-2020.

The Rev. Andrew Johnson (W19) was ordained as a transitional deacon at St. James Cathedral in Toronto on September 13, 2020.



The Rev. Dr. Leigh Silcox (W19) has concluded his ministry as Priest-in-Charge of St. Matthias, Etobicoke and was appointed as Priest-in-Charge at the Church of the Resurrection at Bayview and Shepherd.



Sydney Caron (W20) is celebrating her acceptance into the Community of St. Anselm for the 2021 calendar year. The Community of Saint Anselm is an Anglican religious order of young people, devoted to prayer, study, and service to those experiencing poverty. The Community is based at Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in London, UK.



Bridget Poole (W20) was hired as the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministry at Christ Church Deer Park in Toronto, ON in May 2020. In her spare time, Bridget is a practicing



artist and you can follow her work at www.bridgetpooleartist.ca, Instagram: @bridgetpooleartist, Facebook: Facebook.com/bridgetpooleartist and Etsy: etsy.com/ca/shop/BridgetPooleArts.

Ruth Bartlett (W20) was inducted as Associate Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Toronto on September 27, 2020. The service included a message from speaker Rev. Dr. Rob Patterson, Pastor of Scott Street Church in Niagara, and music was provided by Calvary Music Director, Han Na Kim and Susan Bennett of Grace Toronto Church (West).



The Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred (W20) has been appointed Interim Dean for the 2020-21 academic year at the Vancouver School of Theology. This appointment commenced on July 1, 2020 and will continue until June 30, 2021 when a permanent appointment will take effect. Dr Aldred is also the Director of the Indigenous Studies Program (ISP) at the Vancouver School of Theology, whose mission is to partner with the Indigenous Church around theological education.



Zachary Bartkus (W20) recently became the Parish Administrator of St. Nicholas Episcopal in Midland, Texas and continues to discern a call to ordained ministry with the Diocese of Northwest Texas. This last summer Zachary served as the head of technology for the Odessa Episcopal Community while his wife Traci began her first year of medical residency as an OB-GYN.



Calling all alumni

The Wycliffe College Alumni Association now has a group on Facebook!

To access it:

1. "Like" the Wycliffe College Facebook page
2. Click "Groups" in the left column
3. Request to join the "Wycliffe College Alumni Association" group
4. Wait to be approved by one of our admins.

Invite your fellow graduates, engage with one another, and post updates, articles, and news that you think would be of interest to your fellow alumni.

Wycliffe Alumni and students working on pandemic's front lines

By Sharon Dewey Hetke

"We all have wounded places that need healing," says Wycliffe alum Joanna Moon. For her, the heart of ministry on the frontlines of the pandemic is an awareness of shared brokenness, and the courage to follow Jesus into difficult places.



Moon is Lead Community Worker at "The Dale"—a "nomadic church" in Toronto's Parkdale, a once affluent neighbourhood that is now a vibrant mix of immigrant communities, gentrification, and encampments of homeless people.

"The Dale" was nomadic even in pre-COVID days, meeting in community centres and church basements. COVID has changed some things, but "We've been able to continue providing food and some level of connection through seeing people twice a week, doing phone calls, and lots of outreach," Moon says.

This "levelling" effect of the Gospel is also central to how Wycliffe student Ejay Tupe understands his work as an urban missionary



in the Leslieville/Riverdale area of Toronto. When regular gatherings were put on hold, Tupe says his community ministry "didn't have to pivot that hard—because we weren't centralized on Sunday morning. We function more like friends. So I'll send Facebook messages and videos—like you do with real friends."

Before the pandemic, Tupe was also running a prison ministry teaching life lessons through the lens of Scripture. He would go "right in the prison cells," but, he says, "COVID-19 kind of ended that real fast." Since spring he's been relying on phone calls, emails, and snail mail to communicate with his "brothers." But on this September day, he has just received an exciting phone call: "I can do one-on-one visits again!"

Eileen Harbottle sees another face of the pandemic. Working as a spiritual care provider with patients and staff at Peterborough Regional Health Centre this Wycliffe alum's work has been adaptive. She says that "human needs for connection seem heightened." New methods are needed: Harbottle was part of a team that used



tablets to facilitate "Virtual visiting between loved ones and patients." And in one unique situation she prayed "over the phone into the glassed-in room as the nurse held the room phone to the patient's ear."



Each day is different as Harbottle navigates the complex needs of patients, family, and staff—but she is never alone. "I ask Jesus to give me the words to say and not to say and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through me and equip and lead me." Harbottle is thankful to Wycliffe for providing her with "spiritual, theological, and biblical formation."

Moon also thanks Wycliffe "for lots of worldview-shaping," and for "emphasizing that you're not just there to gain information. You're there to be part of a vibrant Christian community."

For all who are struggling with the loss of the usual ways of connecting, Moon's comment rings true: "You need a sense that you belong somewhere, even if you aren't there at the moment."

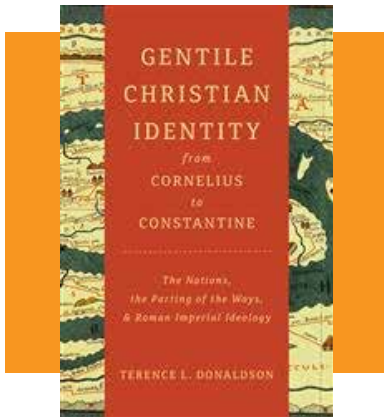
Wycliffe thanks you!

Thank you for your generosity in 2019/2020. Your support continues to keep Wycliffe's tuition among the most affordable in Canada, while equipping a new generation of leaders to carry God's Word around the world. We are grateful to report that this Fall semester has seen our largest enrolment in recent memory.

This year we have experienced unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19, but your support is an ongoing source of strength and a reminder of the devotion and dedication that Wycliffe College finds in its alumni and friends. You are appreciated!

We invite you to join us in furthering the critical mission of Wycliffe College in 2020/2021 through your prayers and financial giving.

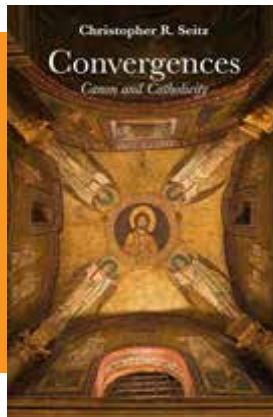
NEW FACULTY BOOKS



Terence L. Donaldson. *Gentile Christian Identity from Cornelius to Constantine: The Nations, the Parting of the Ways, and Roman Imperial Ideology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.

Originally an ascribed identity that cast non-Jewish Christ-believers as an ethnic other, “gentile” soon evolved into a much more complex aspect of early Christian identity. Terry Donaldson’s book provides a full historical account of this trajectory, showing how, in the context of “the parting of the ways,” the early church increasingly identified itself as a distinctly gentile and anti-Judaic entity, even as it also crafted itself as an alternative to the cosmopolitan project of the Roman Empire. This process of identity construction shaped Christianity’s legacy, paradoxically establishing it as both a counter-empire and a mimicker of Rome’s imperial ideology. Drawing on social identity theory and competitive ethnography, the book offers an analysis of gentile Christianity that is thorough and highly relevant to today’s discourses surrounding identity, ethnicity, and Christian-Jewish relations.

Terence Donaldson is Professor Emeritus, New Testament, Wycliffe College.

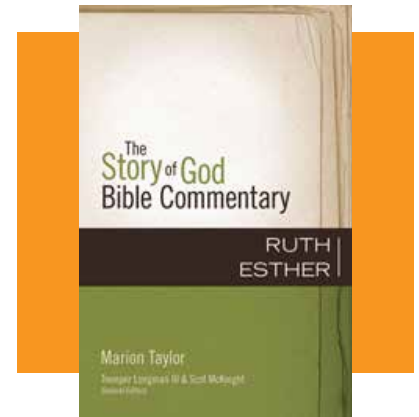


Christopher R. Seitz. *Convergences: Canon and Catholicity*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020.

In an essay on Biblical Theology published in 1982, Paul Beauchamp points out a “striking convergence” between a prominent Roman Catholic scholar of the period, Roland de Vaux, and the leading Protestant Old Testament theologian of the day, Gerhard von Rad. Both saw looming on the horizon the need for a Biblical Theology in which both Testaments were taken seriously as part of a single, comprehensive theological reflection. There was genuine excitement at the prospect of the methods of tradition-historical reading, already harnessed by von Rad toward a specifically theological goal, turning now to a Biblical Theology proper. With *Convergences*, Christopher Seitz returns to the period in question. In the later work of von Rad and Martin Noth, he identifies the clear foreshadowing of what would become “canonical interpretation,” reflected especially in the work of Brevard Childs. Seitz further reveals that the work of Beauchamp, largely unknown in the Anglophone world, would ultimately line up with Childs in a great many areas.

Convergences shows how these connections spill over from the academy into the interests of the church, including Roman Catholic understandings of the place of Scripture since the mid-twentieth century. Seitz studies the emergence of the lectionary conception, the *ressourcement* movement, and non-Catholic interest in the prior history of interpretation and figural reading. *Convergences* maintains that much of what was accomplished in a hopeful coalescence around the canonical form of Scripture remains relevant for biblical interpretation today. Here, we find a form of “catholicity” that offers hope and promise for our day in spite of cultural, ecclesial, and academic distinctives.

Christopher R. Seitz is Senior Research Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Wycliffe College.



Marion Ann Taylor. *Ruth, Esther (The Story of God Bible Commentary)*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Marion Taylor has devoted her scholarly research to the history of the interpretation of the Bible and has recently focused on women interpreters of the Bible in the nineteenth century. She is coeditor of *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*. In her contribution on Ruth and Esther to a new commentary for today’s world, *The Story of God Bible Commentary*, she explains and illuminates each passage of Scripture in light of the Bible’s grand story. Its story-centric approach is ideal for pastors, students, Sunday school teachers, and laypeople alike. Three easy-to-use sections are designed to help readers live out God’s story: LISTEN to the Story—Includes complete NIV text with references to other texts at work in each passage, encouraging the reader to hear it within the Bible’s grand story; EXPLAIN the Story—Explores and illuminates each text as embedded in its canonical and historical setting; LIVE the Story—Reflects on how each text can be lived today and includes contemporary stories and illustrations to aid preachers, teachers, and students.

Marion Taylor is Professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College.

The Reverend Robert Mitchell:

Supporting Wycliffe for the future of the church

By David Doherty

The Rev. Robert Mitchell, rector of St. Olave's in Swansea, Toronto, assigns high value to "teaching the faith as we have received it." This concern for historic doctrine was an important factor in his choice of Wycliffe College as the seminary from which he would earn his Master of Divinity degree, which he began in 1999 and finished in 2002.

While living at Wycliffe as a young single man, Rob gladly found himself immersed in a community where the majority of residents were theology students and he was "living and breathing and thinking about theology all the time with other Christians." Even mealtimes were occasions for discussion and debate about topics raised in class. Looking back, Rob sees that this constant grappling with ideas was powerfully formative for him. He reflects, "It's such an important process, when you go through that to work out where you land. I think it helps you come out the other end formed in a new way."

Rob was ordained a deacon and then a priest in 2002, following in his clerical father's footsteps, and carried his theological reflections from the Wycliffe



refectory to the pulpits of several parishes across Ontario. He and his wife, Caroline, became part of the St. Olave's community in 2016. Since March of this year, Rob and the parish's assistant curate, Wycliffe graduate Rev. Alexandra Pohlod, have been posting church services on YouTube so parishioners and visitors can participate in weekly worship from home.

The years since Rob's graduation have

not dulled his enthusiasm for his alma mater. He has been involved with the Alumni Association, serving as president for two years, and is a regular donor. Wycliffe, he observes, is still committed to the faith it has received and to training people to lead and think within this faith. "I see that the people who are formed by Wycliffe are thoughtful, strong, well-grounded believers," Rob says. "And that's something I really want to support for the future of the church."

Rob has found it helpful to make his contributions on a monthly basis. "It's not hard to give a little bit, and it really makes you feel good," he says. "That money that could have been wasted on a couple lattes . . . is instead going to something that's really important to you and to the broader church throughout Canada."

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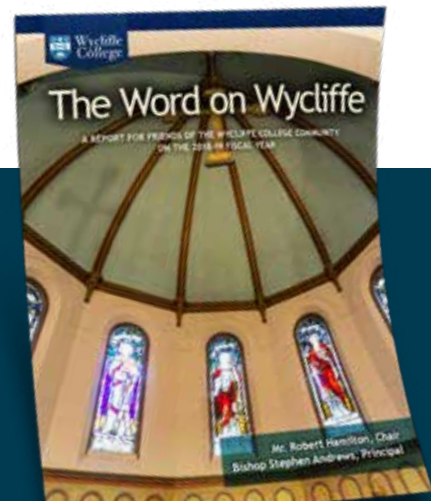
David Doherty is a freelance writer and copyeditor, and Messaging & Communications Officer for Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener, Ontario. He holds a Bachelor of Religious Education from Emmanuel and a Master of Theological Studies from McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario.

ANNUAL REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

Wycliffe's mini annual report, "The Word on Wycliffe," includes student statistics, information on operating revenue sources and expenditures, an overview of who gives to the College with a summary of where their gifts go, and more.

Once again this year, the report is available exclusively online. To read "The Word on Wycliffe" for the 2019/20 fiscal year, visit:

www.wycliffecollege.ca/mini-annual-report



Not the End of the World:

On Reading Revelation in a Time of Plague

By Joseph Mangina



Dr. Joseph Mangina wrote the following piece for his parish, St. Martin-in-the-Fields. It has been edited for length. For the complete version, see: www.wycliffecollege.ca/blog/not-end-world-reading-revelation-time-plague

Disease, death, social lockdown, global depression: for many people, the experience of the novel coronavirus feels like the end of something—maybe even the end of the world as we know it. It is not surprising that the thoughts of many Christians have turned to the book of Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse, for insight into our present moment.

Revelation does speak about the end of the world, but not in the sense in which we usually understand that phrase. It offers no time-tables, maps out no chronologies.

Revelation's vision is shaped not by our linear and chronological notions of time, but by God the Creator, who is the Lord of all time. Already in the fourth century, St. Augustine understood that Revelation's parade of mind-blowing images and fantastic beasts does not purport to describe a simple sequence of events. Rather, the visions are repetitive and cumulative. They tell of God's lordship over all of history; they vividly illustrate the aggressive, but also at times subtle and attractive, character of evil among us; and they encourage readers to stand firm in the midst of their present distress. To be a Christian is to display what John calls *hypomonē*. This Greek word is often translated as "patience" or "patient endurance." I like to think of it as "suffering courage."

But while Revelation provides no insight on *when* the end will come, it does tell us *Who* will make it happen. In one crucial episode, John is granted a vision of heaven, where he beholds saints and angels joined in worship around the divine throne. It is a powerful, beautiful picture—but there is a problem. John notices that the One seated on the throne holds a scroll in his hand, written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. An angel cries out in a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" But no one steps forward—no angel, no mortal, no earthly power. At this point, John begins to weep; it is an unexpectedly tragic and human moment in the story.

But this tragic moment does not last for long:

"And one of the elders said to me, 'Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev. 5:5-6, ESV).

I would be the first to admit that a monster lamb with seven horns and seven eyes is not my usual way of picturing Jesus. But in John's symbolic code, every feature of this grotesque image has meaning. The Lamb's seven horns are signs of his perfect power, while his seven eyes symbolize his all-seeing knowledge. He is the Lion because he is David's heir, the Messiah, and the Lamb because he wins his paradoxical victory by dying on the cross. If you try to picture this Lamb, it will just seem bizarre; but if you know how to read the signs you will understand that it is Jesus.

What has the book of Revelation to do with the coronavirus? Just about everything, it turns out. The connection is simple: the coronavirus (technically SARS-Cov-2) is an agent of death. It attacks our cells, makes it difficult for us to breathe, sends our immune systems into overdrive. While some infected people never show symptoms, others—especially the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions—become severely ill. In extreme cases, they die.

Yet the effects of Covid-19 cannot be measured simply in terms of body counts. We must also reckon

with damage done to survivors' lungs and other organs, strain placed on the health care system, and the economic and psychological effects of the lockdown. There is death as seen in body counts, and death viewed as a kind of system, a multi-pronged attack by death and corruption on life itself. Thus St. Gregory the Great spoke of the *prolixitas mortis*, the slow, inexorable "spreading out" of death in our corruptible human bodies. Gregory was writing about death in the Bible. He might just as well have been writing about the pandemic.

Why are things this way? The fact of the matter is, we don't know. Even the Bible offers us no all-encompassing theory of death. Scripture frequently describes death in quite unsentimental terms as God's punishment for sin.

And yet, not everything about mortality can be "explained" with reference to sin. To some extent, death—and its close cousin, disease—seems to be simply part of the fabric of created being. It was the Lord who made our frail human bodies, and set us in a world where we are vulnerable to a wide variety of ills. Creatures "do their own thing" and don't always get along with each other. Why did the Lord create a world in which His creatures are exposed to suffering? It is hard to discern an answer, other than "because it pleased the Lord to do so, for mysterious reasons of the Lord's own." This is basically the answer the Lord gives Job when He speaks to him out of the whirlwind: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). But note that the Lord loves Job, whose honesty

and integrity are worth a lot more than his friends' easy religious answers. Christian interpreters have often seen in Job a type or anticipation of Christ, another Beloved of God who was vindicated out of his sufferings.

"In the midst of life we are in death." This is a very true word. But it is not the *final* word. The book of Revelation, and indeed the whole Christian gospel, declares that God's gift of life is more fundamental than death. To be a Christian is to confess Christ the Lamb's triumph over death and to share in his victory. Indeed, one of the more intriguing names that Revelation gives to the Christian faithful is that of "conqueror." The person who conquers is said to receive a crown (Rev. 2:10, 3:11). For what it's worth, the word for crown in the Latin Bible is... *corona*.

Being stuck at home and engaging in social distancing may not feel very much like being a "conqueror."

And yet! The Christian calling is to be a conqueror—to affirm life, and do battle with death, trusting in the Lamb's victory. We do not need to do heroic things. We need only be faithful, in whatever circumstance in which the Lord has placed us.

We should trust, then, that in the midst of our human confusion and uncertainty, Christ is at work among us "bestowing life." Be not afraid. The Lamb has conquered. Alleluia!

~

Joseph Mangina is Professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College.



New Alumni e-newsletter

We are planning an e-newsletter especially for Wycliffe alumni. Please ensure that we have your current email address by sending a quick email to Peter Herriman at pherriman@wycliffe.utoronto.ca. Just tell him, "Hey, Peter! Please add me to the alumni list!"



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Monday to Friday, beginning at 8:30 a.m. (ET). Services are livestreamed at:
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FRONT COVER IMAGE:
 The photographs of the College's historic red oak tree were captured for Insight's front cover and interior by Paul Patterson, Director of Operations at Wycliffe College.