



WYCLIFFE  
COLLEGE

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Palm Sunday, 2014

Dear brothers and sisters,

Greetings in Christ from Wycliffe College!

### **Back to Basics**

I am at the conclusion of my third term. At the conclusion of my first, a decade ago, the board decided that this academic-pastor needed some business acumen, and sent me off to the mini-MBA series of classes at Rotman Business School. I remember my first session, when we all offered our names and companies: 'Loblaw's', 'TD,' 'Shaw,' 'Wycliffe,'...Wycliffe? I learned some things, and enjoyed the strategic thinking. The kind of thing they thought about was the relation of core business, expansion, diversification ... Perhaps in a secular way companies too can gain the world and lose their soul.

From our hundredth anniversary of the chapel in 2011, and of the Toronto Congress of 1963 this past fall, we have been reminded of Wycliffe in another era. The loss of some great alumni of Wycliffe of an earlier era, the likes of Bob Dann, calls to mind that earlier time as well. Wycliffe College prepared future Anglican clerics. It took great care in its course of study, and required its students to be in chapel morning and evening. To be admitted, prospective students needed to tell the principal about their conversion (and later to ask his permission if they wished to marry!). A field director travelled the country keeping track of alumni, and a loyal circle of supporters peopled the Governing Council. Students themselves were drawn from across the country, south and north, and from as far as India and Uganda. People knew what Wycliffe stood for.

We are different in so many ways. We are, for example, blessed by the gifts of women together with men in all areas of ministry. And evangelicals, with their sense of the freedom of the Gospel, at their best have been innovators. But the foundational things remain the same and whatever else we branch into, we need to maintain a clear sense of what makes us distinctive. And we need to be good at the 'core business' of Wycliffe College. So let us begin this year with our Master of Divinity program, and its core constituency in the Anglican Church of Canada.

It is easy to think of ways in which all of the essential features of our academic and formational life from 50 years ago are under some kind of threat. We hear talk from the industry about the decline of the M.Div., and many bishops do ordain with less (although one also reads of a coming wave of retirements which may outstrip the impending contraction of parishes - the rumours of the demise of the M.Div. may be greatly exaggerated). Some would argue that the needs of parish ministry have radically changed. While a majority of our M.Div.'s continue to be Anglican, our student body now includes many evangelical non-Anglicans from many denominations. A number do not come at the beginning of the first year and march through the program as designed - they may start online, continue part-time, and only come to the College in the latter innings. And of course the building, after 115 years, makes new demands - most recently (and convincingly), a new roof. Colleges, like people, must change, and change constantly, to remain the same person, as John Henry Newman would remind us.

Perhaps least changed would seem the Chapel, where, for the most part, we do the Anglican office, by the BCP and the BAS, and our community Eucharist on Wednesdays, though the praise band, mixed in with the organ, would surprise the founders. It is an important aspect of what draws a growing number of evangelicals on the Canterbury Road to Anglicanism at Wycliffe. The chapel is ably overseen by the now *Rev. Dr. Annette Brownlee*, who will go on sabbatical in the fall at which point our interim will be *the Rev. James Robinson* of St. Augustine's, Lethbridge, also on sabbatical. We have, however, added a Taize service, whose unlikely leader, for a half-hour dedicated to quiet, is I. As for the curriculum, we have implemented the changes we introduced in the faculty revision of several years ago. We ask a number of things of new students, such as fellowship group, spiritual mentoring, and chapel, which have now migrated into a course called 'Life Together,' a highlight of which has been a chance for students to tell their story and give their witness to one another - so talking about your conversion is still to be found here. 'The Word is Near You,' in the spring of first year, thinks about the authority and interpretation of the Bible as it pervades all our courses, and encourages the asking of big questions. **Glen Taylor and Joe Mangina** oversee a lively discussion. We have more coordination between pastoral courses. And the comprehensives have lower anxiety and a higher level of self-expression as to how students would present the Gospel. In this regard, **Judy Paulsen** brings experience, skill, and a new voice to the basic and required teaching of evangelism. As for alumni/ae, we need to work continually better to reach out and stay in touch. For some, this will take the form of a new Certificate of Missional **Leadership and Formation**, whose one year of credits can be rolled into a Master of Sacred Theology. This program borrows ideas on cohort and case-driven learning from Tyndale, where its leader, our own **Peter Robinson**, previously taught.

We also hope that our efforts in the area of technology will eventually pay dividends for alumni/ae. Our ability now in the West Lecture Room to record classes with a touch of a button should allow us to provide more material for continuing education. **New Communications staff** will oversee improvements to our website, allowing alumni/ae to connect better through social media. And we mean to continue to gather alumni/ae, in the old-fashioned way, for Morning Star conferences, for *REFRESH!*, and for special events connected to *Wycliffe Serves!* such as seminars of wellness of the kind led by Professor **Wanda Malcolm**. Technology has, for at least a decade, also involved a number of online courses. We continue to real-time students into classes via Skype. Now this is most decidedly not what we were doing fifty years ago: what is the same is the insistence that all divinity students eventually show up in person and live in community. And we believe there is a dimension of education which cannot be accomplished at a distance, and in the near future this is a case that will need to be made to the increasingly financially strapped church. This fall I watched as the famous evangelical liberation theologian **René Padilla** sat informally at lunch with students in the Refectory, and I hoped that the students involved understood how remarkable that simple event was. And finally there is the changed fact that 50 years ago all the ordinands were Anglican. While it may not be totally true now, we do observe a growing number of young students who become Anglican, who walk the Canterbury Road, to borrow the expression from the late Robert Webber, at the College. In the same vein, **Ephraim Radner** recent gave talks at Wheaton College and at St. Aidan's Moosejaw (near Briercrest College), where large numbers of young students are walking that road. Earlier in April. I drove to Hillsdale College in Michigan to seek out that same populace, and this coming fall **Joseph Mangina** will speak at Biola University in Los Angeles for the same reason. The Anglican segment of the M.Div. grows as the school year goes on!

Let me add one final note about M.Div. study which is continuous with our history, though in a new way. From our earliest days we have had a role in, and a commitment to, indigenous Anglican education. For this reason we are delighted that our **distance indigenous training program**, which began with encouragement from people like *Bishops Lydia Mamakwa and Mark MacDonald*, is ready to release its first batch of courses. Our own grad, *the Rev. Julie Golding-Page*, has ably overseen a process which has insisted that all materials be edited by people deeply knowledgeable about the locales where the courses will be used. To this end, in September, *Bishop Andrew Ataagatolak* will help us as he serves as Bishop-in-Residence at the College. We also are working to make sure that our divinity students come, as they always have, from across Canada, though the theological education scene is

changing. We are in fruitful discussions about collaborative relations with schools like Ambrose and Briercrest in the west, and Queen's in Newfoundland, and we are happy that our experimental co-sponsorship of the theological academy at **St. Margaret's, Winnipeg**, has promise.

### **Diversification**

Those teachers of mine at Rotman might have used this word, and it is an important one on the theological scene, for hardly anyone can survive these days teaching only that one original constituency. But I do believe that one must think of a school in terms of concentric circles of engagement out from the centre of activity tied to one's identity, which for us is Gospel-centred training for ordained Anglican ministry. If we now consider those rings, a number of them relate to the strategic goals of the College. Several of the newer streams in our program are, I believe, coming of age. The MTS in Urban and International Development, led by **Professor David Kupp**, is adding more skill-related courses for a **Certificate in Community Development**, with the help of World Vision. A recent colloquium called **'Peace in the City'** helped to increase our profile. The integrated nature of this stream with our work as a whole (not to mention with our theological vision, expressed in the faculty's **Ten Theses on the Theology of Mission** will, I hope, be on display in our summer program called **Wycliffe-in-Africa**. Our host is our own adjunct professor of African church history, **Bishop Mwita Akiri**, whose diocese is the western Serengeti in Tanzania. Students will read about African Church history, live ki-Afrika, work in parishes, listen to lay people, and learn about the nearby mine as we pursue a holistic vision of education for mission. Stephanie and I will be along on the trip, not least as translators. Likewise the pioneer track is developing, as we get better at placements giving real experience in church planting and start-up ministry. The desire to reach out in support to the Church at large, an important feature of our strategic plan, has given birth to **Wycliffe Serves!**, a clearing-house for ministries of support to the Church, such as advice on urban church planning with **the Rev. Steve Shaw**, on wellness with **Wanda Malcolm**, and on children's ministry with our own grad, **the Rev. Dr. Val Michaelson**. This will be the focus of this year's **REFRESH!**, which will also include a talk by the note historian of mission, **Philip Jenkins and Gordon Smith**.

### **Globalization**

It is said that the Gospel of Jesus Christ first spread along the trade routes of the Roman Empire. That professor at Rotman might use this word, but Christian mission has an equal claim. This is, as you know, an area of great interest to me, and of importance to the College. **Philip Jenkins** will surely remind us that Christianity is found predominantly in the global South. Let me just mention some of the things that are newer on this front in the life of the College. **Professor Glen Taylor** will be the visiting professor of Old Testament at **Koshin University in Busan, South Korea** this fall. This will be a chance to make new friends and also to let potential students know about our programs, not least our new **Master of Theology with an emphasis on English as a Second Language**. A number of fruits were borne by our conference on Back to the Anglican Future this past September. On their way to sabbatical **Ephraim Radner** and **Annette Brownlee** will be teaching at the **Alexandria School of Theology in Cairo**. We hope that two of our students are headed to teaching in the Province of the Indian Ocean. We look forward to the Anglican vicar of Hanoi, Vietnam, **Jacob Vu**, beginning preparatory studies toward a D.Min. And we continue to build up our relationship with **Trinity College, Singapore**, perhaps next through a faculty exchange. In a number of these our own grad, **Kim Beard**, has helped with the logistics.

Meanwhile we are grateful to the **Langham Trust** for its support for our doctoral student from Indonesia, also a Trinity School of Theology grad, **Chandra Wim**.

### **On a Personal Note**

I have particularly enjoyed having both our children under the Lodge roof this school year, Marta as a student in the MTSD program on her way to the Peace Corps in Kosovo in June (which will also be her placement for our program), and Sam in his last lap before heading to university. So the new chapter of empty-nest-ism looms for Stephanie and me.

My seminar in the fall on hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) had an enthusiastic group who helped me as I work toward a book on the subject, which I hope to begin writing on sabbatical next winter at Sewanee in Tennessee. I as a theologian of mission chose the topic because I believe it to be the part of the faith most opaque to our culture, and yet indispensable if people are to understand the Gospel. When the subject of sin comes up, people say 'talk to Sumner,' which is a touch disconcerting.

Convocation this year will not have any Cy Young winners like RA Dickey, but it will have a strong slate of honorands whom I look forward to welcoming: His Excellency the Right Honourable **David Johnston (Governor General of Canada)**, Christian businessman **V. Prem Watsa**, and the president of our sister school, Ambrose Seminary, **Gordon Smith**.

I continue to thank God for putting me in a remarkable place to minister, with strong staff, faculty, and board all about their Gospel business (*Psalm 133: 'how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity ...'*). A significant part of this Shalom has been through the work of our chair, **Dr. Doug Milloy**, whose wisdom, humour, and calm have been gifts to this place, as he retires from that position in November. To him I am grateful also!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Sumner' with a small cross-like mark at the end.

The Rev. Canon Dr. George Sumner  
Principal and Helliwell Professor of World Mission