

“What is in your hand?”

Probably my favourite story showing the grace and power of God is the story of Moses at the burning bush. God met him where he was, in the desert. God was willing to use the simple shepherd’s staff in Moses’ hand to perform mighty miracles. Moses only needed to lay the stick down, and then God gave it life. At that point it became the “staff of God.” Moses took it with him and it was used to change the course of nations and history.

It is obvious to us on this campus that God has put much in our hands. We are grateful to God for the gifts He has given us, the mission He has put us on, and the work He is doing among us. We offer all of this to Him, asking Him to bring it to life.

You are among those gifts that God has given to us. Thank you for the vital role you play in our work as a school.

The voice of the board has been consistently (and well-) represented this year as Nathan Rooke, a board member, gave us his time to us as a volunteer. We have thoroughly enjoyed having him in the office and around campus. What a delightful friend, partner and resource he has been to all of us on the management team.

On the personal side, Elaine and I have become proud grandparents, twice over, since our last board meeting. Caden Sterling Leenstra was born to Jocelyn and Brad on February 9. Eden Margaret Aurora Wood was born to Deborah and Andrew on March 17. All are well. We are overwhelmed with the goodness of God.

Another good term is now nearly history. The general feel about campus is good and the students seem to be thriving. We just had a phone call from a man in Calgary who wanted to thank us for the growth and maturity he senses in his nephew as a result of his time on our campus. We are regularly encouraged by similar comments from students and family members. It is our concerted prayer that every person grows in their love for the Almighty as a result of their connection with our community.

As I mentioned about a month ago, there are two large swings in numbers this year that continue in their trend:

- In Elaine’s report you will hear that donations are down by 34% when compared with this time last year. This is probably due to a couple factors: a.) the decline in the Alberta economy (church donations across the province are down by 20% and Alberta unemployment is at a 20 year high), and b.) the exceptional year we had in donations last year. We hope we will see a recovery in donations before the end of the fiscal year in June.
- In Janelle’s report you will hear that active applications are up by 31% for the fall intake of new students. Yesterday we had the largest pre-view day since Elaine and I joined the team 6 years ago. We think this is in response:
  - to our commitment to full coverage of the Scriptures,
  - to strong programs that are relevant to real needs around the world, and
  - to our programs that help students track toward careers.

On the general front, we are moving forward on several fronts:

- Last September, we launched our new curriculum which finally accomplishes the goal of having all four-year students (all our Bachelor degree programs) studying the entire Canon, all 66 books, in reasonable depth for credit. We do it in 7 courses (4 O.T. and 3 N.T.).
- International training – our goal is to offer an international learning component in every program. Plans are in place to achieve that within 2 years.
- E-Learning: We continue to launch fresh courses onto our e-Learning platform. Our goal is to have full degree programs by the summer of 2018. Our intention is to maintain our correspondence (paper-based courses) for those distance learners who do not have regular access to internet. The next phase of this product development will be marketing these courses and raising the profile of these courses.
- This fall, we are launching a new Global Social Justice Program, in consultation with Samaritan's Purse, World Vision, Compassion, DFN, and others. Our goal is to give young people the training to go to work with those organizations upon graduation.

Prison-Based College – We had set an optimistic goal of launching the first class at the beginning of January. With some understandable speed bumps on that road, that was postponed, so we are now expecting to launch the first class on May 4.

Prison Fellowship Canada first approached us with this idea almost exactly one year ago, helping open the door through their relationship with Bowden Institution.

This is a concert in four-part harmony:

- Bowden Institute has welcomed us onto their campus and is providing facilities.
- Bowden Chaplains are planning to complement our course work with their weekly chapel services.
- Prison Fellowship will be working with the inmate students individually and in small groups to help them successfully complete the course work.
- Prairie College will deliver the courses, in person, on location, with our own faculty or locally hired adjuncts. Each course will run for 10 weeks (approximately 3.5 hours of class-time per week), allowing us to deliver 5 courses per year.

PFC is a very strategic partner in this venture. In addition to the study groups they will be leading, they will be covering 1/3 of the tuition costs, we will be seeking scholarships for the remaining 2/3rds which will come to about \$3,000 per student for a year of courses. We hope to have 20 students enrolled, so our portion of the cost will be about \$60,000.

This is both an item of praise for the open doors and prayer as this is such a tremendous opportunity for transformation and impact, both in the individual lives as well as our national culture.

Prairie Tabernacle Congregation – PTC came to visit us about the possibility of building an auditorium together. It makes sense – it is not obvious that Three Hills needs two more auditoriums, but we expect to need something larger during the week while they expect to need something on week-ends, and doing it together would save a lot of money. However, our timelines and priorities diverge quite substantially:

- Funding: They have \$2 million and would like to begin building next spring to move in in the fall (2017), we don't have the funds to match theirs, which is their expectation.
- Location: They would prefer to have it located on a remote corner of our property; we would prefer it to be connected to the centre of campus, ideally sharing one roof with other buildings.
- Title: They need certainty on land ownership to avoid the risk of losing their “home” should we change our mind about sharing space with them.

The biggest hurdle is the first point, funding: even if we could work through the location and title issues, we don't have the funds to match theirs, and if we did we would probably not spend it first on an auditorium, we'd probably want to keep the residences and classrooms as our most urgent priority right now.

Multi-site classes – We are hoping to cooperate with three other like-minded colleges to offer simultaneous classes on multiple campuses.

The first course is set to go on four campuses the first week of May. We have made modest technology upgrades in one of our classrooms and are offering it free of charge on the other campuses for this trial course (they can charge and keep their standard tuition). Dr. James Enns, Cambridge University trained PhD, is the professor. We hope it will be a banner class that will be attractive to other schools. We hope they will reciprocate with similar class offerings. We will figure out the revenue-sharing formula for future courses if there is interest.

Prayer – We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your partnership with us, especially in prayer, as we walk through these and other strategic developments together. Please continue in prayer for all these items. Thank-you for your investment in our work – preparing young people to go into careers that address the greatest needs of the world in Jesus' name.

Many, many thanks.

*Mark*

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