

BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

Interim Report, May 2020

The 2016 General Assembly approved a strategic plan and asked committees, agencies and college boards to state in their reports to the Assembly how they are implementing the plan in their work. The Presbyterian College, Montreal, is part of the mission of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and therefore, we have chosen to report on our work by using the appropriate key objectives of the denomination's vision.

As part of the church, The Presbyterian College shares in the mission of God to bless the world with the good news of Jesus Christ and to give witness to the reality of the Kingdom of God. The Presbyterian College's purpose within this larger mission is to equip faithful and effective leaders for the church and the world in Quebec, across Canada and beyond. It does this work in partnership with the Montreal School of Theology, made up of Diocesan College (Anglican), Presbyterian College, United Theological College (United Church) and through its affiliation with McGill University's School of Religious Studies.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

Engagement in Biblical and Theological Reflection and Education that Deepens Understanding of and Commitment to God, the Church, and its Place in Christ's Ministry and Mission

The Presbyterian College seeks to carry out this objective within the unique context of the province of Quebec. Part of its uniqueness is that The Montreal School of Theology is the only Protestant, English-speaking seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in Quebec. This provides an opportunity for the college to welcome students from various denominations in Montreal and Quebec who do not have their own theological college. As indicated in our report, welcoming such students and maintaining a broad vision of theological education is an important part of our mission.

We have 13 students presently enrolled in the M.Div. program. Two students are registered in the Master of Sacred Theology, four students are enrolled in the B.Th. program as a first degree and two students are registered in the Ph.D. program at the McGill School of Religious Studies. In 2019, we entered a new partnership with the Theological Institute for Francophones to offer a Master of Theological Studies in Practical Theology. This program is primarily in French, with some English instruction. The first cohort has four students. In the fall of 2020, we expect to have an additional 18 students. In addition to the regular M. Div. curriculum, the college offers specialized workshops focused on practical areas of ministry. Workshops offered in 2019 were: Introduction to Constructive Communication, Pastoral Care with Children and Youth, and Congregational Leadership.

The mission of God is global and The Presbyterian College has sought to develop a dynamic and global place of learning. In 2019, nine of our students were from the global church including Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Taiwan, Cameroon and the United States. These students are a tremendous gift to the college and we thank God for them. They have unique perspectives and experiences that help our Canadian students think more broadly about the gospel. We have continued our Faith to Faith program aimed at bringing students from various parts of the world whose area of interest is in interfaith cooperation and dialogue. This program is completed through the Master of Sacred Theology at the School of Religious Studies, McGill University. We will have our second graduate in this program in 2020.

In 2019, we continued to participate in the Montreal School of Theology Certificate program. Two courses were offered: Christian Theories of Justice and Patterns and Practice in Christian Spirituality. The Montreal School of Theology has decided to no longer offer a certificate program but has continued to offer online courses open to students with an undergraduate degree who wish to explore theological studies.

Discern, Prepare and Support Leaders – Lay, Youth and Young Adults and Clergy – for Faithful and Vibrant Ministry

We carry out this part of our mission through four key activities. We continue to develop the mentoring program of the college which was originally designed to support ministers in their first five years of ministry. Over time, more experienced ministers asked to join a group. There are approximately forty people enrolled in this program. Participants meet monthly in small groups by video conference and participate in an optional yearly retreat at The Presbyterian College. The retreat this year will focus on Renewing Worship. It is open to both clergy and lay members. The feedback from the mentoring program has been positive, and we continue to explore ways to include more participants. We are reviewing this program and will establish new goals in our next strategic plan which will be completed by May 2020.

Through the Leadership Centre, we have run programs on congregational vitality and faith and work. These programs are for both clergy and lay leaders. There were approximately 15 people in each group. The feedback from these groups has been very positive and they are being reviewed in our new strategic plan. In addition to this work, we provide leadership in congregational retreats across Canada to help advance the goal to “discern through grassroots consultation and research the challenges ministers and congregations face and connect them to tools to overcome them”. In 2019, the faculty have worked with sessions and congregations in Toronto and Thunder Bay in areas of mission and congregational renewal.

Engage in Healing and Reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Peoples

The Presbyterian College recognizes the importance of this ministry and has sought to integrate it into its regular curriculum. A portion of the mission course is now allotted to Indigenous studies. The 2019–2020 mission course focused on Indigenous Peoples and the Land with three Indigenous presenters representing Indigenous populations in Canada, Taiwan and Borneo.

Articulate and Live out the Rich Traditions of Reformed Theology and Pursue Spiritual Renewal and Faith Formation as the Basis for Transformation within Our Congregations

The Presbyterian College remains committed to its roots in the Reformed tradition. In addition to general studies in theology, students receive instruction in Presbyterian worship, polity, history and the sacraments. Seeking to use our resources wisely, we partner with St. Andrew's Hall in the course on history and polity. Presbyterian students certified for ordination in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are also required to read through the entire scriptures in their first two years of study. Students are examined on their readings. Worship takes place each week, led by faculty and guest speakers. The community life of the college is a major focus and strength. A community meal is held each week and students participate in small groups to share concerns and pray for each other. In many academic institutions, the emphasis on academics tends to be greater than the emphasis on spiritual formation. We continue to reflect on ways to integrate academic excellence with spiritual formation within Christian community.

OTHER INITIATIVES

In 2010, the National Assembly of Quebec amended the degree granting charter of The Presbyterian College to include the Master of Sacred Theology degree. In 2018, The Presbyterian College began conversations with the Theological Institute for Francophones in Montreal. This institute is partnered with Laval University, through which they grant the B.Th. In 2019, The Presbyterian College agreed to partner with ITF in offering a Master of Theological Studies in Practical Theology. The program is a 45 credit degree granted through The Presbyterian College. The program is primarily in French, with approximately twenty percent of the courses taught in English. The Presbyterian College faculty teach in the program. A committee has been established between the two institutions to develop curriculum, appoint teaching faculty and oversee admissions. We believe this is a unique opportunity for The Presbyterian College to engage in the French context of Quebec. At present, Laval University has also indicated interest in partnering in this new degree program and we are in initial discussions to consider the possibility of an independent agreement with Laval University. The first cohort of four students began in the fall of 2019 and it is expected that 18 more students will join in the fall of 2020.

In 2019, the Montreal School of Theology went through a reaccreditation process with the Association of Theological Schools. This entailed a significant amount of work given the complexity of our system. The overall result was very positive with reaccreditation for ten years, which is the maximum reaccreditation period. This, however, is contingent on the Montreal School of Theology submitting a student complaint policy by October 1, 2020 and a report indicating reduction in its costly complexity by April 1, 2021.

Regarding the latter requirement of the Association of Theological Schools, the Montreal School of Theology has established a task group, with the agreement of the three colleges, to explore different models of governance. The task group employed a consultant to help with the work and several meetings have been held. At the time of writing this report, no decisions have been made but a proposal for discussion has been put forward in which the Diocesan College and the United Theological College would cease separate operations and would become part of The Presbyterian College Board. This would require a restructuring of The Presbyterian College Board to allow for non-Presbyterian members to sit on the board. The proposed restructuring would mean that instead of three separate boards, there would be one. The Montreal School of Theology Board would not be restructured at this point and would remain the body accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The task group will submit a final report to the boards of the three colleges by the end of March. The Presbyterian College Board will review the report and, if appropriate, detail further proposed actions in a supplementary report.

FACILITIES

Stewardship of our facilities is a priority for The Presbyterian College. Over \$200,000 of our revenues are related to rental of our residences and building. In order to establish a long-term plan for needed repairs, the college has secured a loan from The Presbyterian Church in Canada Lending Fund for \$100,000 and The Presbyterian Church in Canada Building Corporation for \$160,000. Upcoming plans for renovations include a new roof on the education wing, new entrance doors and refurbishing the courtyard. The Quebec government mandated that all educational institutions have their water tested for lead. The college completed these tests and has ensured it is compliant with the standards set by the province.

FACULTY, STAFF, STUDENTS AND STATISTICS

Faculty and Staff

The Presbyterian College operates with a small staff and faculty since students are also instructed by faculty at the McGill School of Religious Studies and the Montreal School of Theology. The year 2019 has proven to be a year of transition at the college. In 2019, the Rev. Dr. Dale Woods was on sabbatical from July 1 to December 31. The Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries was appointed Acting Principal. In January, the Rev. Dr. Woods informed the Board executive that he would be accepting a new position as Presbyter of Vision and Mission in the Presbytery of Westminster and would be resigning as principal effective June 30, 2020. A letter requesting permission to conduct a search for a new principal was sent to the Assembly Council Executive and permission was granted. Presbyteries have been circulated and it is hoped that a new candidate may be presented to this General Assembly in a supplementary report. Should that not be the case, the board will appoint an acting principal while it continues to conduct a search for a new principal.

The Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries continues his work as the Director of Pastoral Studies. The Rev. Dr. Dan Shute has continued as the half-time college librarian as well as overseeing the English Bible content requirement. The Rev. Dr. Shute will be retiring at the end of June 2020 after 40 years as a member of The Presbyterian College. The college is grateful for the contribution the Rev. Dr. Shute has made over these many years and a minute of appreciation is included in this report. The Rev. Dr. Lucille Marr is the college's part-time chaplain and academic advisor. The Rev. Tim Keener, who was half-time Director of the Leadership Centre, has resigned in order to take up a full-time position as Director of Christian Direction in Montreal. Ms. Annie Baldessari resigned from her work as Administrative Assistant in order to take a new position at McGill University. The college is happy to welcome Ms. Emily Simunic as its new Administrative Assistant. Ms. Tahra De Lallo continues her work as part-time Development Officer. Mr. Mario Elve remains facilities superintendent. No decision has been made at present regarding a new director of the Leadership Centre until the strategic plan for the college has been completed.

Students

The college has historically maintained a small student population. As the college seeks to develop a more robust recruitment strategy, it expects that there will be a fluctuation in numbers of graduates as the college rebuilds in this area. Counting the students in the Master of Theological Studies in Practical Theology, there are 41 students enrolled in the various college programs. Three students are expected to graduate with the Master of Divinity: Charles Lewis, Kathy Parks and Edyth Arnott. Oliver Kondah Ndula and Stephen Azundem will receive the Master of Sacred Theology from McGill University. The college will be conferring the degree Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) on the Rev. Dr. Clyde Ervine for his considerable contribution to the denomination and theological education.

Finances and Capital Campaign

There are three main areas of revenue for the college: the facilities, tuition and donations. The college continues to work toward a balanced budget. The 2019 year ended with a small deficit of \$30,000 that does not account for any transfer of funds from the Investment Fund of the college. Once the appropriate transfer is made, the college expects to have a balanced budget. The Capital Campaign, begun in 2015, was concluded as of December 31, 2019. The campaign raised approximately \$2.1 million. The college is grateful to all who supported us in this campaign. The board has appointed a new auditor, Mr. Peter Marini, and audited statements are available upon request.

OVERTURE NO. 8, 2020 (see Referred Overtures – 2020, p. 3–4)

Re: Develop an environmental theological program

This overture was directed to the three theological colleges. The colleges have had an initial discussion of the overture and will engage directly with the Presbytery of Huron-Perth regarding their own goals in such a program. Following that conversation, the colleges will be better prepared to respond to the overture.

OVERTURE NO. 10, 2019 (A&P 2019, p. 514)

Re: Network of student charges and/or placement

This overture was directed to both the Life and Mission Agency and the theological colleges and a response to this overture will be in the Life and Mission Agency report. (see p. XXX)

BOARD MATTERS

The board continues to oversee the work of the college and meets four times a year. Members from a distance usually join through video conference. The board has grown in its diversity over the years and we are grateful for the contribution that various members make. The Rev. Joel Coppieters and the Rev. Paul Wu will be completing their second term. Both have done excellent work on the board and the board is most grateful to them for their service. Their expertise, wisdom and commitment have been great gifts to the work of the board. In addition to overseeing the general operation of the college, the board continues to work on the matter of receiving a Designated Learning Institute Number. This number is required for international students. While our students use the McGill University number for the first two years of study, they cannot technically use it for the third year since they are only registered at the college. The college is a recognized learning institution with the Government of Canada, but given that education falls under provincial jurisdiction, we require approval by the Quebec government to secure a Designated Learning Institute Number. It is a complicated process and we are continuing discussions with the Ministry of Education regarding this matter.

In 2018, the board undertook a major review of its work using an excellent resource from the New Hampshire Center for Non-Profits. This resource has helped the board to identify its strengths and areas for improvement. In 2019, the board also established a small task group to draft a new strategic plan. The document will be used to provide goals and initiative for the next three years.

MINUTE OF APPRECIATION – THE REV. DR. DANIEL SHUTE

At the end of June 2020, the Rev. Dr. Dan Shute will retire from his role as librarian at The Presbyterian College. The Rev. Dr. Shute has held this position since 1979. Over these four decades he has not only provided the services of a librarian, but has given general support to students, taught courses on Presbyterian polity and preaching, assisted students in their study of Greek and Hebrew, overseen the English Bible program and has been the liaison between the college and McGill library services. Dan Shute held a strong conviction that the library was not only a place of study but a place of community. Over his time at the college, he worked with Dr. Joseph McLelland in research on the Reformed Italian theologian, Peter Martyr Vermigli and is the author and translator of Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Commentary on the Book of Lamentations*. The Rev. Dr. Shute's expertise in the Psalms is well-known in the college. The board is grateful for his many years of dedicated service.

Recommendation No. 1 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

Jay Hewlin
Convener

Dale Woods
Principal