

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Interim Report, May 2020

THOUGHTFUL, ENGAGED AND GENEROUS CHRISTIAN LEADERS

In January of 2020, VST was acknowledged by *In Trust* Magazine (for theological schools across North America) as one of six – and the only Canadian – schools that have undergone significant transformative change. “Recognizing they could no longer maintain the status quo in this radically changed environment, six theological schools took bold, drastic action.”

VST is called to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the church and the world. Our graduates are thoughtful people, reflective about how to interact with the large issues of our time out of the deep resources of faith. We don’t rush to thin relevance but linger with scripture, tradition, scholarship and conversation with Indigenous neighbours and people of other faith traditions. Our students are engaged, willing to get involved in the world, not just waiting for the next one. Our theological ethos is designed to nurture practitioners who are making a difference for God and the gospel. We are convinced that the Risen Christ is always already involved in the world (we’re missional); we discern that movement and respond to grace wherever we find it – and it is surprising where it is found. Our graduates are generous, inclusive people, able to find friends with whom to collaborate for the love of God and the good of the world. We go deep with God in Christ and so wide with the world God loves.

FACULTY/PRESBYTERIAN FACULTY

Our Presbyterian faculty consists of the Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, Principal and St Andrew’s Hall Professor of Studies in the Reformed Tradition, the Rev. Dr. Robert Paul, Dean of St Andrew’s Hall and the Rev. Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls, Academic Dean of VST. The latter two complete their terms of service at the end of June 2020. We are grateful to Bob for his work teaching in the area of mission at VST. Prof. Dutcher-Walls will have a one-year sabbatical and then officially retire June 30, 2021. We are so very grateful for Pat’s insightful, diligent and careful work on behalf of our school. The Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is Director of Denominational Formation at Vancouver School of Theology.

We have just completed the manuscript for a book entitled *Theological Ten Percent* in which all the members of the faculty have contributed an essay that prepares students for theological study in their discipline. It will be published in 2021 as part of the 50th anniversary of VST and is edited by Harry Maier and Richard Topping. Our faculty continues to be prolific in research and publication. *Spirit of Reconciliation*, coedited by the Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred and Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan, was a joint project with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and Vancouver School of Theology. Profs. Harry Maier and Laura Duhan-Kaplan are editors of a series around issues of common concern for various religious traditions. The first volume, *Encountering the Other: Christian and Multi-faith Perspectives* has just been released. Prof. Jason Byassee published *Surprised by Jesus Again: Reading the Bible with the Communion of Saints* in 2019 and coedits the series *Pastoring for Life* with Will Willimon beginning in 2020. His book on the *Trinity* is being translated into Indonesian by BPK Gunung Mulia, Jakarta in 2020. In the fall of 2020, at least five new books for publication are in the works by various members of the faculty. Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan-Kaplan will be on sabbatical. Currently, two finalists for the position of Academic Dean at VST are being interviewed. That appointment will be effective July 1, 2020.

VST BOARD/EMPLOYEES

Mr. Michael Francis is the insightful and cheerful chair of the board at VST. We are so blessed by his work. The board meets four times a year, and has representatives from the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches, as well as the community at large. We follow a policy governance model. The Rev. Victor Kim, a Presbyterian, sits on the Board as a member at large. Mr. Iain Black, President and CEO of Maximizer CRM, is our Chancellor. The Dean of St Andrew’s Hall (SAH), the Rev. Dr. Bob Paul, and a member of the SAH board, the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, also sit on the VST board. We launched our new brand and website this year and are working to integrate a Student Information System with our website in the next year.

PARTNERSHIPS

VST thrives because of its partnerships. We are a theological school preparing students for Christian leadership in the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches. In addition to these core partnerships, we work with the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia, Huron College at the University of Western Ontario, St Mark’s College at UBC, and Durham University, United Kingdom, to deliver our degree programs from the B.A. to Ph.D. levels.

GRANTS/FINANCES/FOUNDATION

Vancouver School of Theology has achieved a balanced budget for the fifth year in a row with growth in programs and while building a reserve for capital purchases and maintenance. This has been possible through the prudent financial management of our Vice-Principal and CFO, Ms. Shari Coltart, the excellent leadership of our Finance and Maintenance Committee and the Foundation Board, chaired by the Venerable Ronald Harrison. This year Mr. Jim Simpson finished his term of service on the VST board and his leadership of the Audit and Finance Committee. We are very grateful for his dedication to fiscal oversight and good management at the school.

VST has completed the expenditure of the \$400,000 Luce Grant for Indigenous Ministry through the Teaching House That Moves. In the last year of the program, eight communities with 151 participants were engaged in Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States. A grant from the United Church of Canada for \$225,000 will enable this work to continue in the Northwest communities within the Province of British Columbia. This ministry will take theological education to Indigenous communities in Northern British Columbia using indigenous methods and instructors and is one way that we are following up on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

In addition, significant gifts were received at VST to support ongoing and new programs. Our Sauder School of Business program, where students learn the essentials of administrative and managerial excellence, will be completely endowed through a major donation we will receive over the next four years. We received donations of almost \$40,000 to support the program in the meanwhile. We have also received significant gifts for student recruitment in Asia (\$30,000) and a recent gift of (\$250,000) toward promoting congregational flourishing. A very generous gift (\$4 m) to St Andrew's Hall was received through a bequest to be used at the Principal's discretion. This gift will support student bursaries and scholarships, the Centre for Missional Leadership, library resources and recruitment efforts. VST will engage in fund-raising around the 50th anniversary of our school to refurbish Epiphany chapel. We are pushing the capacity of our current building and so need larger classroom spaces. We are so very grateful to our generous donors. Not all the school's strategic initiatives are fully funded and we welcome support.

ACADEMIC ENROLLMENT

The fall headcount for 2019 was 165 and remained the same for the spring. The number of course registrations in the fall of 2019 was 370, an increase of 30% over 2018. The number of course registrations in the spring of 2020 was 396, an increase of 23% over spring 2019 (and an increase of 45% over spring 2018). The number of full-time students in the fall of 2019 was 88 and it stayed the same in the spring of 2020. Fifteen students is our average class size, 25% of our students are distance-online students, and \$234,000 was the amount the school awarded in bursaries and scholarships.

The United Church of Canada has the largest cohort at 45 students, Anglicans the second at 40 students and Presbyterians third at 36. We have a significant number of United Church of Christ students (nine) and a growing number of students from other Christian churches (27). For the fall of 2019, we had the largest number of applications, acceptances and incoming class members in 25 years. Forty-nine students began their programs, including our first doctoral student in the Durham Ph.D. program and several in the B.A. through St Mark's College. Our Explorers Weekend, under the direction of the Rev Julie Lees, continues to build our domestic applications. VST Sunday saw members of the VST community preaching, leading and speaking at almost 50 churches across the country. We are grateful to our partner churches who welcomed this effort.

SPECIAL LECTURES

Vancouver School of Theology has welcomed a series of world-class lecturers and church leaders to special lecture series at our school in the service of our mission. In the fall of 2019, we welcomed Prof. Norman Wirzba of Duke Divinity School, who lectured on *Eating: More than Just A Matter of Life and Death*. In February, Prof. Candida Moss, University of Birmingham, presented on *Resurrecting Perfection: Beauty, Bodies and the Afterlife*. Prof. Tony Campolo visited our campus in March in conjunction with Citizens for Public Justice to give a presentation on the subject, *Why Christians Should Be Involved in Social Justice*. Our Visiting Distinguished Scholar for the summer of 2020 will be Prof. Katherine Sonderegger, Virginia Theological Seminary, who will teach on *The Church's Christology and Difficult Biblical Texts*. Our summer school 2020 runs from July 6–17. It includes courses like: *How Doctrine Matters to Life* with Cynthia Rigby, *The Gospel according to Musical Theatre* with the Rev. Peter Elliott and The Rev. Nathan LeRud and *Church Planting in Post-Christendom* with the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart. The full program can be found at vst.edu/vst-summer-school.

CONVOCATION 2020

On May 12, we confer degrees and certificates on 30 graduates at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver. Nine students will receive the certificate in Leadership Excellence from the Sauder School of Business. We will also present the Principal's Thoughtful, Engaged and Generous Leader Award to Archdeacon Clara Plamondon, who exemplifies the leadership we aspire to encourage. This award is made to clergy in the first ten years of ministry. We will award three honorary doctorates – to Prof. Santa Ono, President of UBC; Rabbi Marcia Prager, Director and Dean of Aleph Ordination Programs and the Rev Doug Goodwin, former General Secretary of British Columbia Conference and Regional Executive Minister for the United Church. Our convocation speaker is Prof. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, author of *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel and Pastoral Care*, Academy of Parish Clergy Book of the Year, 2015. She conducted an all-day workshop on pastoral care on May 13. This ongoing project for revitalization is funded through the Hugh and Helen Mogensen Fund.

Vancouver School of Theology is grateful for our partnership with The Presbyterian Church in Canada through St Andrew's Hall. We pray that you will be led by God's good, cheerful and Holy Spirit at the 146th General Assembly.

Richard R. Topping
Principal