

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY

a bridging Christian community



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CAMPUS NOTES



FAITH EMBODIED: AN INTERVIEW WITH GCM'S NEWEST STAFF, SARA DEMOOR

In September, the University of Guelph invited me (Jamie) to step into a brand new position, coordinating the activities of the Multi-Faith Resource Team. On campus, there's a newfound desire to see faith-related programming more cohesively incorporated into what's already available for students. It's an exciting development, and it will make it easier for groups like Guelph Campus Ministry (GCM) to connect with students! It's only a half-time position, so I'll continue to work as a campus minister with GCM as well.

Because of this new position, GCM's Board of Directors initiated a search and soon hired Sara DeMoore. Sara will also be working half-time and, together, we will be

building community, encouraging students to grow in faith, and helping them discover ways to be engaged in God's redemptive work.

As a way to introduce Sara to our community both on and off campus, I asked her a few questions:

What excites you about campus ministry, especially on Guelph's campus?

It's exciting to be in ministry on university campuses, where the milieu of learning, questioning and growing permeates the classroom, faculty research and our ministry community! I am excited to be part of leading a Christian community like GCM that walks alongside students, staff and faculty, as we all seek to discover the

ways God has gifted and called us and encourage one another to wrestle with significant questions within the context of God's peace and presence.

You were in campus ministry at the University of Toronto for almost 9 years. What was one moment that stood out for you?

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Sara joins our year-end party!

CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS

At university, those of us connected to Guelph Campus Ministry are on a journey of self-discovery to find out who we are and what we want to become in Christ. I was raised Christian by my parents, but I never took ownership for my own faith. When I started at Guelph, I desired to develop my passion and relationship with Christ. At GCM, I've had the opportunity to grow in my faith, together with my peers, by tackling some difficult questions.

This past semester, we had a small group—*Controversial Questions*—that explored certain topics that were very

beneficial for my own development. Some of the questions we tackled were: What is a women's role in the church? And how does the Bible view homosexuality? These are important issues of our generation and created some very thought provoking insight into what God's Word says on those subjects. During the discussion, we heard each other's personal opinions in a safe and encouraging atmosphere, then delved into scripture to find God's wisdom on these questions. During the small group, it was important to remember how to disagree well with our fellow Christians.

The point of the small group was to openly converse in love with each other, not to be combative or judgmental. It was amazing how we came together with love and appreciation of each other's views.

I greatly value the time and journey with GCM and owe a lot of praise to Jamie and Sara Wyngaarden for organizing, leading, and caring for us. I believe *Controversial Questions* strengthened our bond as a community and encouraged us to never be afraid of asking the tough questions.

—Taylor Farrugia
First-Year Student

GUELPH CAMPUS MINISTRY



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FAITH EMBODIED: CONT'D

There are too many significant moments to count! An observation that stands out is the way I have seen so many students tentatively enter that campus ministry community with a longing for deep connection with others and with God. As they commit to contributing and learning, vulnerably sharing their insights, their questions and their hurt, those connections are strengthened and students flourish as they deepen relationships with Christ, with each other, with their studies and with all of creation.

Where do you think faith fits

in the life of an undergraduate student?

Students without a strong faith background are often interested in exploring basic questions about the meaning and purpose of life as their minds and hearts are challenged by new experiences, new information, and new friends. Students who come to university as Christians often ask questions and may face challenges to their faith as they are away from their home and church, often for the first time. What I have observed is that students are most drawn to faith

embodied; when we are Christ's hands and feet on and off-campus, "faith" becomes less a concept to accept or reject and more a Way of Life to follow.

Campus ministers bring all of who they are into ministry. Tell us about yourself, your interests and your family.

I consider it a gift to bring all of who I am into ministry with GCM. I am a grateful child of God, daily seeking to work out with fear and trembling all the implications of that truth. I am married to Justin, and together we raise our two children, Noah and Abigail. When not

chasing after them, I love tending the vegetable garden, digging into a good book and cultivating friendships with friends and neighbours.

—Jamie VanderBerg &
Sara DeMoor
Campus Ministers



Some Winter Retreat Fun!

TYING THE KNOT . . . FOR SYRIA

God has a great sense of timing! When I started my new role on campus, we needed someone to step into the gap until Sara DeMoor arrived in April. Another Sara—Sara Wyngaarden—had already been serving as our intern for the year. When she graduated in December, she stepped into the gap and served as our Ministry Associate for four months. There's much that she did within our community, but one event made the local news! Here's an excerpt from an article written by Jessica Lovell and published in the Guelph Mercury:

It may not be what comes to mind when people hear of someone tying the knot on Valentine's Day, but for some students at the University of Guelph and a group of quilters from Elmira, it was a pleasant way to spend a day dedicated to love.

The quilters, a group of ladies that meet monthly in a church in Elmira to make quilts and comforters, were persuaded by Guelph Campus Ministry Associate Sara Wyngaarden to move their meeting to the University Centre to help engage students in an activity that would show some love for the people of Syria.

"It was intentional that it fell on Valentine's Day," said Wyngaarden. A sort of drop-in style quilting bee, the event was held in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee, as part of the nonprofit organization's international relief and

development efforts. In some cases, it sends relief kits containing things like soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, bandages, and sanitary pads.

"Along with that, they send quilts and comforters," Wyngaarden said. That's where the ladies from Elmira come in. Having prepped their fabric and quilt batting in advance, the women meet once a month and spend the day tying knots to tack the layers together to create a simplified version of a quilt — they call it a comforter.

On Valentine's day, they invited the university students to join them in tying the knots. The resulting comforters will be sent overseas.

"They'll support those who are affected by the Syrian crisis," MCC material resources co-ordinator Carolyn Gray said. The blankets won't necessarily all go to Syria, she said. Rather, some will go to countries that have been

overwhelmed by the large numbers of people displaced by the crisis.

Wyngaarden saw the quilting activity as a good way to engage students on what can sometimes be a lonely day. "Seeing this as an act of love for the people of Syria," it goes with the theme of the day, she said.

Over the past two semesters, Sara has organized joint worship services for the various Christian groups, led small groups like *Controversial Questions* and met one-on-one with students in their first year on campus. She has been such a gift to our community! The knot-tying event in the University Centre was a great example of her desire to see students live out their faith and practice justice. Sara's passion has led her into the field of international development, and she will soon be working with MCC in India.

—Jamie VanderBerg
Campus Minister



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