

# anthem

SPRING 2021 THE MAGAZINE OF AMBROSE UNIVERSITY

## The joy of thinking Christianly

What it means in the classroom  
and beyond

New Worship Arts minor | Preventing the slide into poverty | Seeing certainty in every sunrise

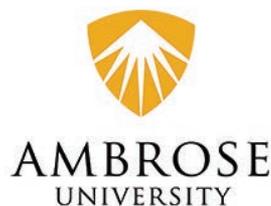


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## SPECIAL FEATURE: The Joy of Thinking Christianly

Academic leaders from eight of Ambrose's core disciplines share thoughts and perspectives on what it means to "think Christianly" in their roles at the University — and how this impacts the personal and professional lives of students and graduates

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Gordon T. Smith

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by Lacey Hilgen (BA – Christian Studies '21)

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# anthem

Spring 2021

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Burke Group (Calgary)

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**Anthem is published by**

Ambrose University Communications  
150 Ambrose Circle SW  
Calgary, AB T3H 0L5

**Publications Agreement Number**

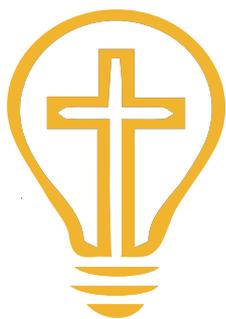
40063422

**ISSN 2368-2868**

Published twice per year, *Anthem* informs, educates, inspires and engages its audience and the wider community by sharing the accomplishments and contributions of alumni, students, faculty, staff and supporters of Ambrose University.



# The joy of thinking Christianly



CHRISTIANLY

## Ambrose cultivates the capacity of each student to learn how to think critically, confidently, creatively and compassionately

In this issue of *Anthem*, academic leaders from eight of Ambrose's core disciplines share thoughts and perspectives on what it means to "think Christianly" in their roles at the University — and how this impacts the personal and professional lives of students and graduates.

At the very heart of what it means to be a university — and especially a Christian university — is commitment to the life of the mind: we cultivate the capacity of students to engage their world through the lens of a thoughtful faith. This assumes, of course, the deep biblical conviction that we are transformed by the renewal of our minds, and that intellectual life is foundational to what it means to be Christian and, further, to what it means to grow in faith, hope and love. And it means that all our students fulfill their vocations with a deeply biblical vision of life and work — they are thoughtful, living their lives from the vantage point of a Christian mind.

This year, we have been saying that Ambrose cultivates the capacity of each student to learn how to think critically, confidently, creatively and compassionately. To think critically: the capacity for discernment and clear and insightful thinking. To think confidently: the capacity to think for themselves, including ownership of their faith. To think creatively: knowing what it means to adapt and innovate, and to see possibilities rather than just challenges. To think compassionately: knowing what it means to stand in the shoes of another and to see issues and problems from diverse perspectives, including and especially through the eyes of the world's most vulnerable and needy.

When we speak about the life of the mind, this does not for a moment mean that we discount practice or that we dismiss what is happening to us emotionally. To the contrary, we teach skills required for doing the work to which we are called. And yet, it is informed practice. Whether leading worship in a local church, launching a new business or teaching in a school, all practice, for the Christian, is shaped by the vision and purposes of God for and in the world. This assumes the conviction and awareness that while we speak of the Christian mind, we insist on the integration of heart and mind. We know that deep learning and wise insight arises out of a heart that is aligned with a deep love of God, joy in the knowledge of God and the capacity to live in faith and not fear. Thus the University speaks of a joyful engagement with our world.

All of this assumes a bottom line: that our students grow in wisdom and in the capacity for wisdom. We are often reminded of the powerful language of the opening verses of the book of Proverbs: the call to learning, wisdom and instruction, along with a commitment to righteousness, justice and equity (Prov 1:1-6). This assumes that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7) and that a Christian university plans for and recognizes that worship is foundational, with chapel as an integral part of the rhythms and routines of the academic cycle. But to this end: that we grow in wisdom and cultivate the capacity of students to love wisdom, pursue wisdom and grow in their capacity to be women and men of wisdom.

**Gordon T. Smith, PhD**

*President  
Professor of Systematic and Spiritual Theology*

# Forming Christian thinkers to engage in a complex world

**Colin Toffelmire** PhD

*Chair, School of Ministry,  
Associate Professor of Old Testament*



MINISTRY

***Dr. Toffelmire** earned his PhD in Old Testament from McMaster Divinity College. He works especially in the areas of prophetic literature, hermeneutics and biblical theology, and is licensed for ministry with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.*

Faculty photos by Pery Thompson Photography;  
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In the fall of 1996, I packed my old, banged-up two-door Toyota Tercel with all my worldly possessions, pulled out of my parents' driveway in Saskatoon and pointed myself south. Soon enough, I was pulling in to the Canadian Bible College (CBC) campus in Regina. I'd visited any number of times as a teenager, but it was my first time as a member of that learning community.

If you know the history of Ambrose University, you know that CBC is one of the institutions that merged to become Ambrose University. In fact, I was in Regina, working as a pastor, when CBC and its sister-school, Canadian Theological Seminary, pulled up stakes and headed to Calgary.

I often think about what's changed and what's remained the same since my days as an undergrad. I still remember Sunday dinner in the cafeteria, when we'd sing the Doxology together. I remember floor meetings, intramural sports, classes and, most of all, my friends. I remember my teachers, too. Incredibly talented scholars and teachers like Mark Boda, Paul Spilisbury, Bill McAlpine, Norma Holtlander and Bernie Van De Walle taught me to serve God and to think Christianly. Even though I'm a couple of decades down the road from my time at CBC, most of those teachers and mentors remain friends and colleagues today.

I understand why so many of those people moved to Calgary and why they worked so hard to build the institution Ambrose is today. There was more we could do to prepare students to serve God in all the various forms of Christian ministry and more we could do to help form students as wise, loving and faithful people. What's changed, more than anything, is that we now have resources we didn't have before. We have a full Humanities department, which means philosophers, English literature scholars, theologians and historians. We have Arts, Science, Business and Behavioural Science. Today, students in Ambrose's School of Ministry — the department that was once CBC — receive all the gifts that I did as a student, as well as the extraordinary opportunity to augment their ministry training with training in the Liberal Arts.

Every School of Ministry student is required to minor in two other areas of study, so they can explore even more of God's beautiful world. They train to appreciate art, science, society and the pursuit of wisdom with devoted Christian faculty who are specialists in their fields of study. Because here's the thing: being formed well as a Christian, and especially as a Christian thinker, isn't only about the specific field we study, it is about who we are. At Ambrose, we want to help in the process of forming students into wise Christians who are able to engage the extraordinary complexity of the world in which we live. Having the School of Ministry means that Arts and Sciences students receive first-rate instruction in theology and the Scriptures, and it also means that Ministry students receive all the benefits of accredited university training that is integrally connected to the Christian faith. This isn't even the best of both worlds — it is an entirely new world of its own, where formation into Christian thought and action stands at the centre of the entire endeavour.

At the Ambrose School of Ministry, we train the next generation of Church leaders to engage in God's redemptive work in the world as devoted disciples, faithful interpreters, Christian thinkers and servant leaders. Our deep connections to both the Bible College and the Liberal Arts traditions allow us to do this vital work — enabling students to set out on life journeys that begin with a beautiful and diverse opportunity to learn. □

**“ This isn't even the best of both worlds — it is an entirely new world of its own, where formation into Christian thought and action stands at the centre of the entire endeavour. ”**



# Readying business leaders who are thoughtful stewards

**Murray MacTavish** PhD

*Associate Dean, School of Business,  
Associate Professor of Leadership  
and International Development*



BUSINESS

**Dr. MacTavish** has been teaching in executive MBA and undergraduate programs for more than 30 years. He has travelled in 38 countries — including 55 times to China to teach, research and lead a joint-venture MBA program — and has led more than 15 travel courses to Europe to meet with executives of local global companies. His research and expertise focuses on cross-cultural leadership and transformational leader development.



The word “business” is rooted in the Middle English *bisy*, characterized by industriousness pre-occupied with anxiety or concern around practical matters. When asked how we are doing, how many of us boast how busy we are? To what end is all of this busy activity? Are we so driven by our own selfish pursuits that we don’t have time to attend to the needs of our neighbours and communities? How different is this than the complaints often levelled at businesses?

As Richard John Neuhaus commented in *Doing Well and Doing Good*, greed and selfishness in economic life leaves business under a shadow of moral suspicion. But, if we were to more accurately see the source of the problem, we would conclude that it is the same human nature that corrupts all human relationships and activities. Economic behaviour is no different. It is deeply distorted by sinfulness, and frequently refuses to acknowledge the lordship of Christ. That business is the significant engine of society; its effect is amplified.

Businesses are composed of individuals working toward organizations’ goals. This gives birth to the hope that Christian business people can influence their organization’s direction as they make decisions daily. So, how can our faith speak into our work-a-day world? In *Spiritual Enterprise*, Theodore Mallach offers that people who take their faith seriously regard themselves as stewards of the resources entrusted to them and also of their own potential. They exercise their God-given faculties to the best of their ability, and are guided by Biblical principles and virtues. Wilhelm Röpke would add that a humane economy is composed of business people characterized by self-discipline, a sense of justice, honesty, fairness, chivalry, moderation, public spirit, respect for human dignity and firm ethical norms.

There is support for this in 2 Timothy 1:9 where we learn that God calls His servants to redemptive purposes in a manner honouring to Him, and not ourselves. This is achieved through a developmental process of discernment in which we grow in our identity in Christ and our understanding of Biblical principles. By embracing His Calling for our lives, we are more likely to intentionally incorporate Biblical stewardship into our lives. We will have a peace and confidence which will positively change how we build relationships and focus on providing long-term value to our customers. It will influence all our decisions around hiring and developing our employees, how we treat our customers and suppliers, and how we consider our impact on Creation.

As a business school in a small Christian university, we provide a strong developmental curriculum which supports students’ discernment of their personal vocation and calling. Learning business within the liberal arts context pulls students out of the mundane, purely technical activity often ascribed to business, to develop a broader understanding of their holistic purpose. Small classes enable students to have close interactions with faculty and business leaders, and opportunities to engage in real-world projects. Within this dynamic learning environment, students encounter a plausibility structure which supports a viable vision filled with hope and meaning.

Our communities and organizations need Christian business leaders: leaders who are technically competent, thoughtful stewards of the relationships and resources for which they hold responsibility; whether in a global corporation, a small business or a community organization. In our fallen world, redemptive and creative Biblically-informed stewardship — with excellence — must be our way forward. Business leaders have the freedom to decide how much their faith informs their vocation. Discerning and embracing one’s personal Calling will guide us to purposeful busyness. □

“ Learning business within the liberal arts context pulls students out of the mundane, purely technical activity often ascribed to business, to develop a broader understanding of their holistic purpose.



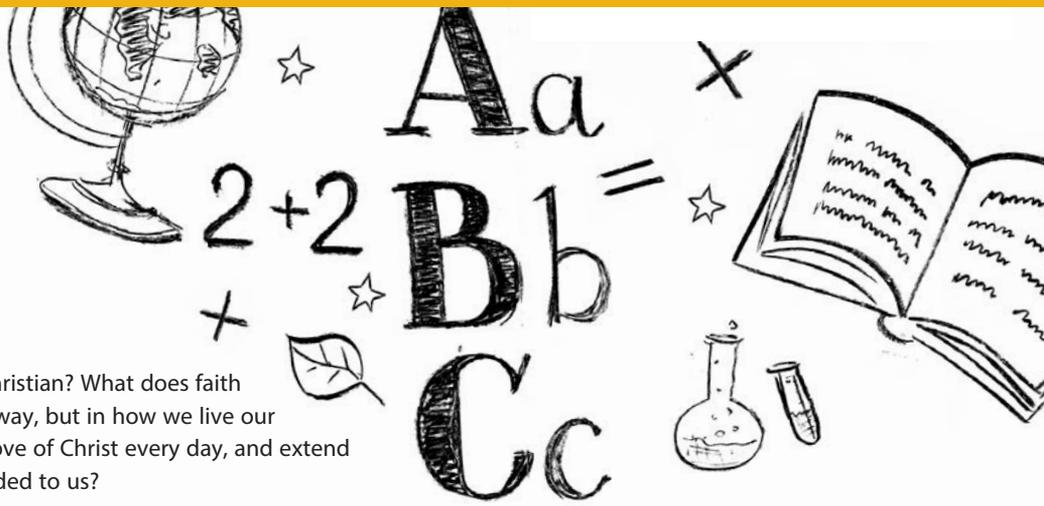
# Living our faith to see the best of what people can be

**Sherry Martens PhD**

*Associate Dean of Education,  
Assistant Professor of  
Education*



*Inspiring Alberta learners since 1987 as a classroom teacher, specialist, professor, K-12 and post-secondary administrator, **Dr. Martens'** eclectic research includes visual displays in schools, teacher identity and curriculum theory. Current research explores the formation of teacher identity, curriculum and decolonizing teacher education spaces.*



**W**hat does it mean to be a Christian? What does faith look like, not in a religious way, but in how we live our lives? How do we live the love of Christ every day, and extend to others the grace which He has extended to us?

In Ambrose University's School of Education, we live our mission — preparing outstanding educators to joyfully take up teaching and learning through a transformative mindset of hope and grace as a means of serving the common good in public education — by modelling what it means to be a Christian in this rapidly changing world. We extend to students, parents, colleagues and the wider community the grace that enables each and every one of us to make a profound difference in the lives of the people around us.

To do this is to unleash the real power of post-secondary education: the acquiring of knowledge, skills and attitudes that not only benefits individual students themselves, but equips them to give back to others, to be catalysts for change in every facet of their personal and professional lives.

In education, we see how people of all faiths, as well as those without, wish to be something bigger than themselves. They want to be people who create inclusive places of learning and respect, where everyone is welcome regardless of who they are, what they believe or how they are oriented. They want to be people whose actions speak as loudly as their words and who, increasingly these days, have the capacity to “lean in” to show the light to the ever-growing number of people who are in crisis.

This starts in the School of Education by intentionally building relationships with students. We want to know them as individuals, in all their complexity. We strive to foster much more than their intellectual development, encouraging them to embark on journeys of mental, personal, physical and spiritual growth. We want students to reach out to us person-to-person when things are good and, most importantly, when they are not. We do all this because we live our beliefs authentically, extending to students the grace that Christ extended to us — and we want them to extend grace in their own classrooms in the future.

This “going the extra mile” is a hallmark not only of the School of Education, but of Ambrose as whole. It is built into our DNA, forged in the University's very founding. We “think Christianly” and “act Christianly,” giving our students the guidance and tools to be able to do so as well, regardless of discipline or challenge.

Education graduates demonstrate this every day. As people who are well prepared to live what they believe, who can do more than talk about it and who are prepared to work in faith-based and public schools, they are tested in the real world of teaching. Over the years, they have passed those tests with flying colours, earning the School of Education an enviable reputation and giving our graduates the “something different” that makes them some of the most respected and sought-after teachers in Alberta.

This is no accident. How and who we are as instructors is how and who our students will be as teachers. We are supposed to live our faith, to rely on God to help us help those who need us, to create places of hope and grace — to see people for the best of who and what they can be. There is no better place to do this than in a classroom. ▣

**“ We live our beliefs authentically, extending to students the grace that Christ extended to us — and we want them to extend grace in their own classrooms in the future. ”**



# The world of literature enriches empathy, moral imagination

**Jonathan Goossen PhD**

*Chair, Humanities*

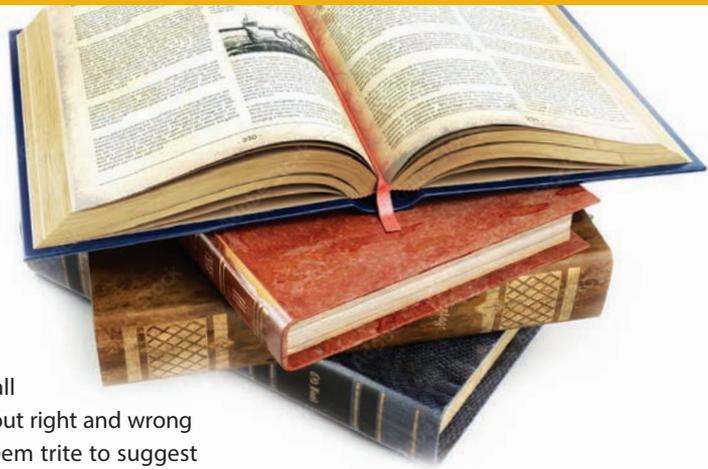
*Associate Professor of English*



HUMANITIES



***Dr. Goossen's research centres on classical and Renaissance literature and literary theory. He is particularly interested in the way authors of these time periods understood the connection between literature's emotional and moral effects. He has recently published *Jonson, Shakespeare, and Aristotle on Comedy* and is currently studying American novelist Janet Lewis' use of classical tragic theory.***



A quick review of the last year's news headlines is all it takes to realize that contemporary debates about right and wrong are crude, angry and maybe insoluble. It might seem trite to suggest that literature — imaginary stories — could teach us anything about how to face moral dilemmas in the real world. However, let me suggest that what we most lack in moral disputes is exactly what literature can teach us, and why Ambrose University students benefit greatly from its study.

Thinkers from Edmund Burke to Martha Nussbaum have identified two capacities crucial for moral understanding: empathy and moral imagination. Both involve the ability to imagine oneself in another's predicament. Literature has the unique ability to develop these abilities because it doesn't just *talk* about right and wrong in the abstract, but *dramatizes* it in character and plot. To read a novel is to be presented with people different from us in their beliefs, race, class or time period. It asks us to imagine how these differences would affect a person's actions and experiences, and to weigh whether those actions are justified or unfounded, sympathetic or unsympathetic, good or evil.

Literature does this in many ways. Sometimes it refines our existing sympathies and convictions; sometimes it juxtaposes our empathy against our convictions; and sometimes it directly challenges both.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen pits the arrogance of Mr. Darcy against the stereotyping judgments of Elizabeth Bennet. The novel dramatizes how both gradually come to see and repent their faults, and so become able to love each other. Austen confirms our conviction that pride and prejudice are wrong, while drawing us to love characters who realize those sins.

A very different work inspired by the Kosovo crisis, Colleen Wagner's recent play *The Monument* presents us with the character Stetko, a young soldier guilty of atrocious war crimes against women. Without excusing his horrific deeds, the play portrays how he is forced into the army, compelled at gunpoint to assault his first victim, and ultimately comes to accept such atrocities as just another part of war. The effect is striking: by being vividly described, Stetko's actions are shown to be all the more wicked and his victims all the more empathetic. Yet at the same time, Wagner shows behind those actions not simply a monster but an empathetic human being. The play asks us to understand a person even when we know his actions to be evil.

Helen Pinkerton's poem "Lemuel Shaw's Meditation" is spoken in the voice of Shaw, a pre-Civil War judge in Massachusetts. In an infamous 1851 case, he returned escaped slave George Latimer to his Southern owner because the law required it, even though Shaw was a committed abolitionist. Shaw's decision was condemned by black and white Northerners alike. Yet the poem does not judge Shaw on the appearance Shaw hoped that by temporarily respecting the union's unjust laws, the North could maintain the South's good will, and ultimately end slavery sooner. Pinkerton asks for empathy for Shaw's impossible position and reconsideration of our initial denunciation of his actions as we see the how he could think and act the way he did and still be a just man.

In every case, literature acts as a virtual world in which we can practice the skills of empathy and moral imagination, refining or challenging our habitual ways of feeling and our reflex moral judgments — and grow in our ability to think Christianly. This practice can then prepare us for the real-world game of life, making us not just better readers, but better citizens and Christians. □

**“ Literature sometimes refines existing sympathies and convictions; sometimes juxtaposes our empathy against our convictions; and sometimes directly challenges both.**



# Appreciating, stewarding the world that God created

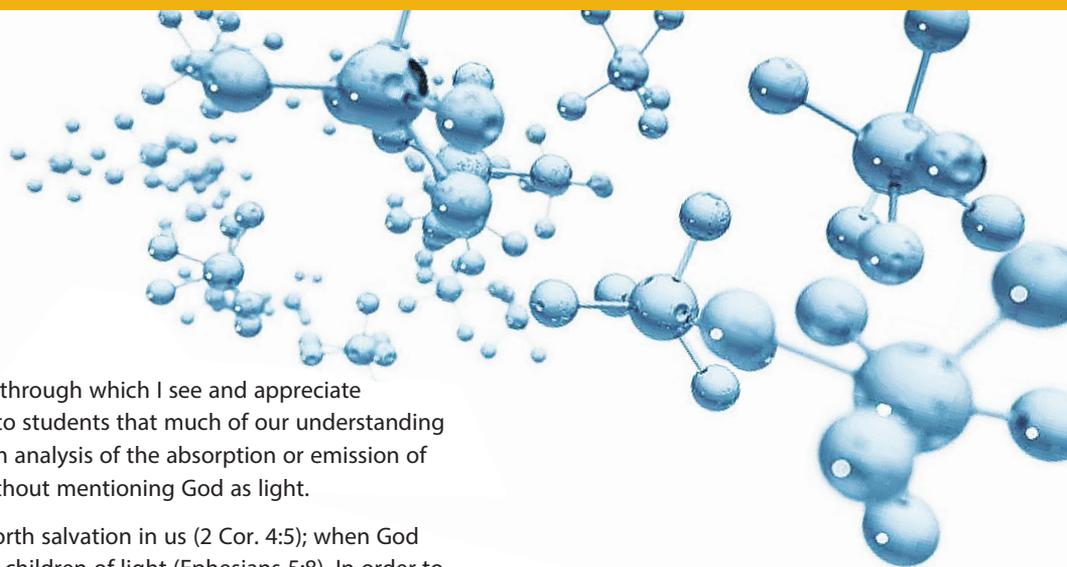
**Liza Abraham** PhD

*Associate Professor of Chemistry*



SCIENCE

→  
*Building on her PhD and post-doctoral research, **Dr. Abraham** worked as a medicinal chemist at Dalton Pharma Services in Toronto and as a scientist for the Industrial Technology Research Institute in Taiwan, before embarking on her teaching career. She joined Ambrose University in 2016, where her current research employs applications of green chemistry for a sustainable future.*



**T**he Bible has become the lens through which I see and appreciate my discipline. While I explain to students that much of our understanding electrons in atoms comes from analysis of the absorption or emission of light, I cannot leave the classroom without mentioning God as light.

God's shining in our hearts brought forth salvation in us (2 Cor. 4:5); when God shined into us (2 Cor. 4:6) we became children of light (Ephesians 5:8). In order to experience transformation, we need to be open to the Lord for His enlightening in us. Psalm 119:105 says that His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and verse 130 says that the opening of His words gives light. I emphasize the fact that in order to walk in the divine light, we must build up a habit of coming to Bible every day. Just as the ages without the Bible were the Dark Ages, a day without the Bible is a dark day. Even in a scientific discipline, I take every opportunity to turn students to the word of God.

We have the Bible, but we also have creation testifying of God. Saint Augustine said "Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it." I appreciate that nature is filled with all sorts of beautiful life; with life there is beauty, riches and power. Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived by the things made, so that they would be without excuse."

Everything in nature points to some aspect of Christ. When you encounter a sidewalk cracked by a little weed, I am reminded of Christ as the resurrection life that breaks through every barrier. Isaiah 55:12 says "For you will go out with rejoicing, / And you will be led forth in peace; / The mountains and the hills / Will break forth before you with a ringing shout, / And all the trees of the field will clap their hands." Throughout the Bible we see many aspects of creation pointing to the Creator; this should cause us as Christians to have an appreciation for creation and a sense of stewardship for it.

Every human being, not just scientists, needs to have an awareness of environmental stewardship. In the Ambrose Biology department, we encourage students to foster a sense of stewardship of the environment through a Christian approach by viewing it through the lens of the Bible.

One of the ways I encourage stewardship is by incorporating green chemistry into my courses. It is crucial to train our next generation on the environmental impacts of chemicals. As global awareness of issues such as climate change and fossil fuel depletion has increased, so has the prominence of green chemistry. As society focuses increasingly on sustainability, green chemistry practices have become more prevalent, and green chemistry in education has developed to match this movement.

I have developed laboratory experiments that reduce waste, reduce demand on diminishing resources, prevent pollution and design for degradation while achieving the same learning outcomes of a standard chemistry laboratory course. In chemistry labs, too, green chemistry principles are being incorporated to make experiments more environmentally benign. Such efforts are not merely for the sake of an environmental ideal, but to answer the calling of a Christian to be full of appreciation for the world God created — and to be faithful stewards thereof. □

**“ Every human being needs to have an awareness of environmental stewardship. There is the opportunity to encourage this by viewing it through the lens of the Bible.**



# A rich liberal arts tradition benefits Seminary students

**Beth Stovell** PhD

*Chair, General Theology Studies,  
Associate Professor of Old Testament*

*Working in preaching, teaching, worship ministry, prayer ministry, children's ministry and women's ministry for more than 20 years, **Dr. Stovell** specializes in biblical Hebrew poetry, biblical hermeneutics, the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament and the use of biblical metaphors. She cares about bridging the gap between the academy and the Church, writing for scholarly journals and books, commentaries and popular magazines.*





The location of Ambrose Seminary within a liberal arts university deepens and enriches the experiences of Seminary students. Historically, the liberal arts tradition was deeply rooted in Theology as the “queen of sciences” and this is very true at a Christian liberal arts university. It is not surprising, then, that Seminary students at Ambrose University have unique opportunities to grow in their knowledge and experience by being active, contributing members of a school that incorporates liberal arts disciplines alongside Theology.

The purpose of Seminary is to form present and future Christian leaders, and the Ambrose context enables our Seminary students to pray and worship as members of a larger university community. Seminary students can be found in prayer groups, community groups and in other campus activities with students and faculty from many different disciplines, and many Seminary students participate in mentoring opportunities with fellow university students that are mutually beneficial.

The unique context of Seminary education in a liberal arts university also provides opportunities for Seminary students to grow in their knowledge and appreciation of the humanities, the sciences, education, business and the arts. Seminary students have worked alongside Ambrose’s Psychology and Sociology students, for example, as they contributed to research for the Canadian Poverty Institute. They attend and at times participate in theatrical and choral performances of Ambrose’s Arts program. Seminary students have learned more about administrating in a Church context by taking business administration courses.

In my Seminary courses, the location of the Seminary within a Christian liberal arts university is felt in several specific ways. Recently, I was part of a Science for Seminaries grant funded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion, in collaboration with the Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting organization for Ambrose Seminary. This grant allowed me and several of my Seminary colleagues to build stronger relationships with our Science faculty at Ambrose and with neuroscience faculty at the University of Lethbridge. In my Pentateuch course, I brought in Dr. Matthew Morris, a Biology professor at Ambrose University, to share his experience and knowledge of science and faith. This helped prepare students for the complicated questions around these topics in their congregations.

My Biblical Theology of Justice course has benefited from its location in both the Seminary and the University, as it functions as both as a Poverty Studies course and as a course for the Seminary. Seminary students sit alongside students working in non-profit poverty-related organizations in Calgary, Edmonton and beyond. The dialogue among these individuals has helped students in the Seminary and other Ambrose programs to learn and grow. For Seminary students, this integrated classroom enables them to connect with and work for justice in local and national contexts.

To be a leader in the Church today involves not only training in the traditional areas of Theology, but a deep awareness of the diverse needs of our world. The rich tradition of liberal arts education at Ambrose University helps student think critically, explore important present issues and place themselves within a wider academic tradition. This is the gift that Ambrose Seminary receives by being situated within a Christian liberal arts university. □

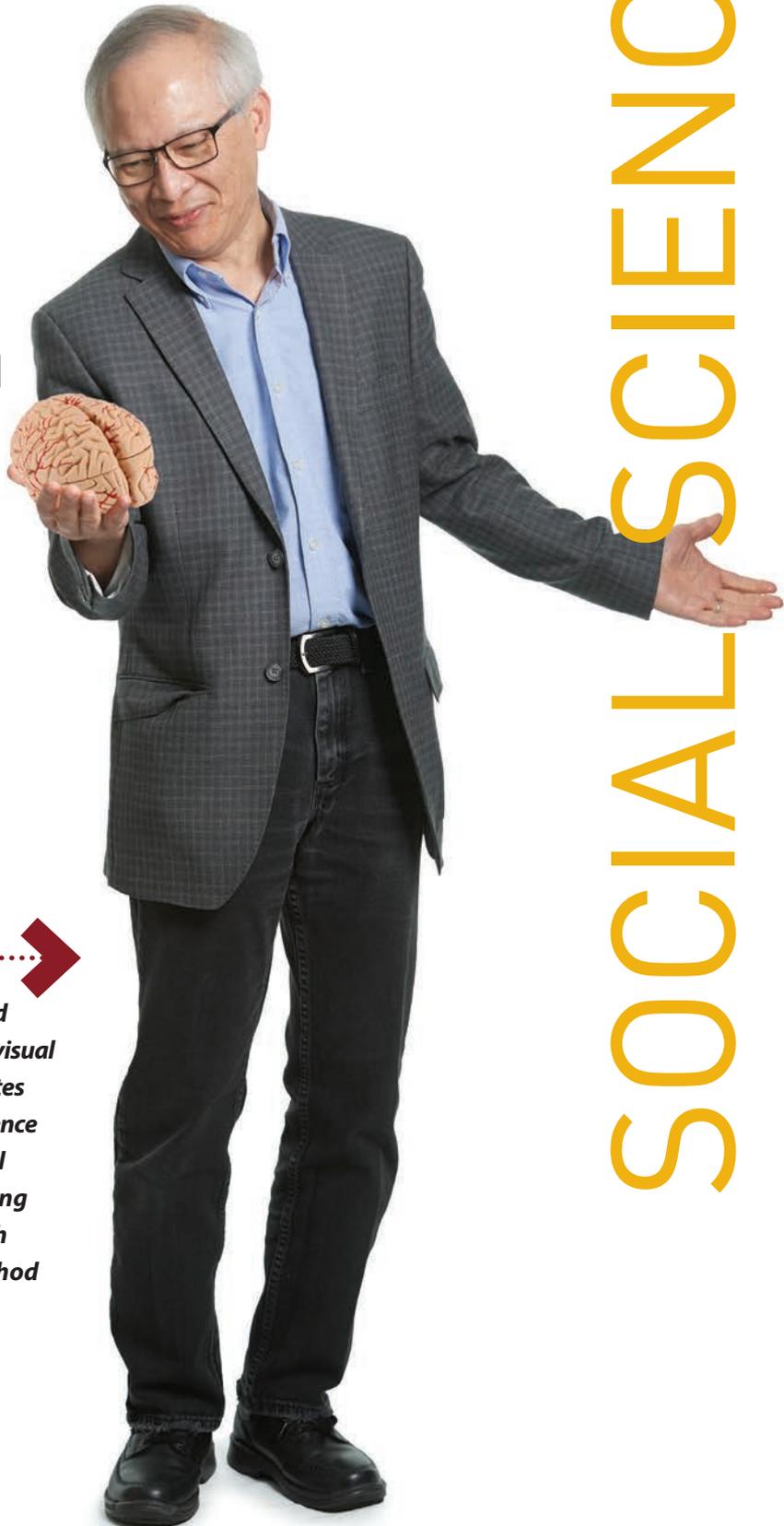
**“ To be a leader in the Church today involves not only training in the traditional areas of Theology, but a deep awareness of the diverse needs of our world.**



# Connecting Christian values with science in a harmonious whole

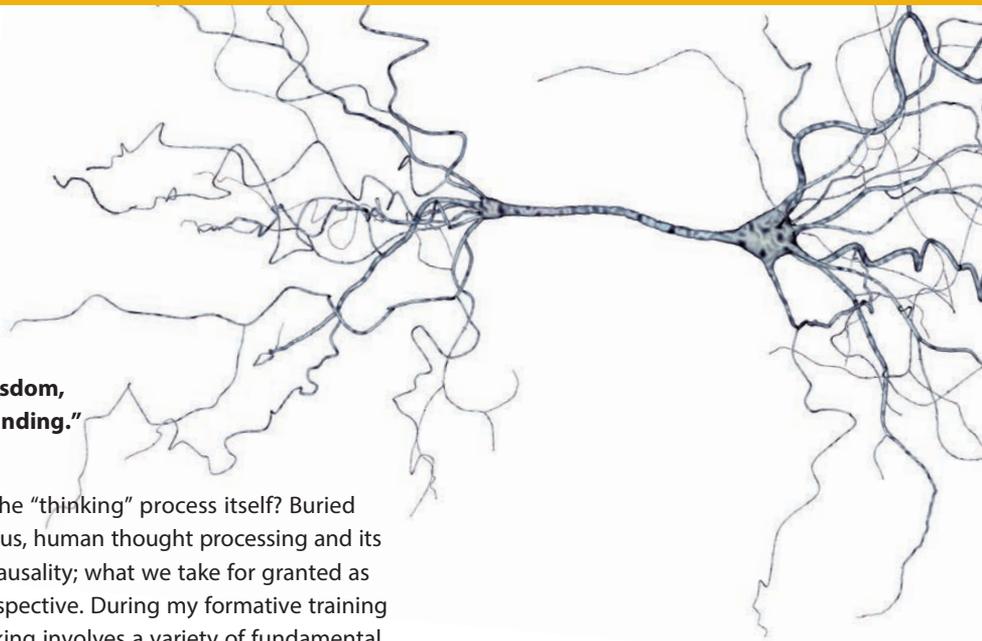
**Alan Ho** PhD

*Associate Professor of Psychology*



SOCIAL SCIENCES

*Trained in the fields of psychobiology and visual neuroscience, **Dr. Ho** studies human visual perception using psychophysics, which relates the subjective human psychological experience with the physical characteristics of visual stimuli. He also studies human vision using visually evoked cortical potentials, which is an objective, electrophysiological method that complements psychophysics.*



**“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”  
(Proverbs 9:10)**

**H**ow often do we stop and consider the “thinking” process itself? Buried within the realm of one’s subconscious, human thought processing and its external expression belie a deeper causality; what we take for granted as cognition is no small feat from a scientific perspective. During my formative training as a neuroscientist, I learned that human thinking involves a variety of fundamental neurophysiological processes. These dynamic events are extremely interactive and intricate in nature, encompassing both the basis for rudimentary sensory information processing and high-level cognitive functions. All things considered, thinking thus emerges as the apex of psychobiological activity.

Without guidance from the Holy Spirit, I believe it is extremely difficult to think Christianly in the field of neuroscience. Through the serendipity of God’s grace in affecting personal faith, we become cognizant of our Creator’s supreme wisdom and ingenuity. Through the natural order of this earthly plane, we can observe how our Lord binds those physiological processes together in a harmonious complex of human behaviour. Among such testaments to God’s omnipotence are the amazing microstructural details that make up a single neuron.

By examining individual neuronal functions within a local neural network, we can marvel at how various local neural networks join together to form a global neural network; interconnected systems that ultimately produce consciousness while deriving other high-level cognitive functions. Each neuron acts like a nano computer for assuring coherent thoughts, capable of processing information and making decisions on whether such details should be delivered to a higher stage for further actions. Some of these neural networks form the working memory to interpret incoming external sensory information. This perceptual process also involves retrieving past experiences or knowledge distributed over different areas of the brain that together encompasses varieties of long-term memory.

Once the meaning of the incoming sensory information has been determined, our thinking process then switches into a reactive *modus operandi* that decides upon an appropriate response to the external stimuli. Relevant tasks include the preparation and execution of situationally-purposeful acts through which we express personal desires or agency. My teaching philosophy is centred on fostering students so they become independent learners with critical- and creative-thinking capabilities. When students actively engage with learning in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, they soon come to recognize the source of all truth that flows from our Lord and Maker. I further cherish the many opportunities I’ve had over the years to explore God’s marvellous design with the students at Ambrose. I become excited when I see so many students uncovering the congruence between faith and science in the course materials.

By connecting their Christian values with science in one harmonious whole, students will find the means to learn purposefully with responsibility, grow spiritually in wisdom, and stand faithfully amidst the throes of a nihilistic world. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they will neither cower behind falsehoods nor be afraid to confront and handle information that goes against their Christian faith. □

**“** When students actively engage with learning in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, they soon come to recognize the source of all truth that flows from our Lord and Maker. **”**



# Conflict is essential to a good story

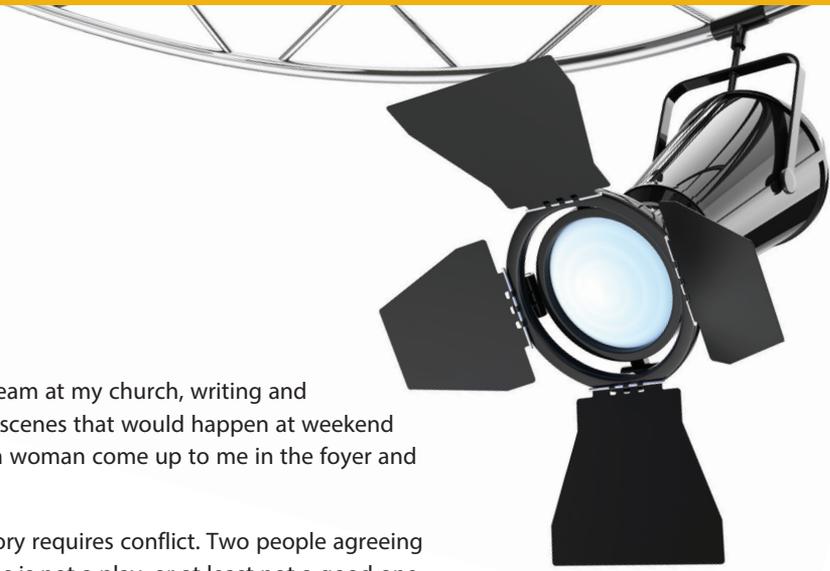
**Val Lieske**

*Associate Director of Theatre*



AMBROSE ARTS

Trading 13 years in banking for a life in the arts, **Val Lieske** founded Calgary's only faith-based theatre company, *Fire Exit Theatre*, directed theatre arts at one of Canada's largest churches and co-developed Ambrose University's Diploma in Acting program. Eight of her plays have been produced, and last summer she wrote and directed two short teaching films on suicide prevention for the Southern California School District.



I worked for years on the Creative Team at my church, writing and presenting plays, videos and short scenes that would happen at weekend services. I remember once having a woman come up to me in the foyer and ask why all of my stories had conflict.

The short answer is that every good story requires conflict. Two people agreeing with each other on stage for 90 minutes is not a play, or at least not a good one. One of the most basic elements of storytelling is determining what the conflict is. (It's assumed there is one.) Is it internal; an ethical dilemma that the protagonist must wrestle with? Or is it natural; a comet plummeting to earth to kill us all?

More often than not, it's other people. Put two people in a room and ask them to talk about politics, sex, money, theology or COVID-19 and you will have conflict. And that's okay. As a playwright, I know that in order for the character of my characters to be refined, we need conflict.

I think God knows this, too. Humans naturally seek comfort and stability. Without something disrupting them, they will never enter the story.

I'm not saying all conflict is inherently good. In fact, the conflict we see in wider society now — people yelling their positions on social media and “cancelling” anyone they don't agree with — rarely ends with minds being changed, relationships being deepened, or new truth being revealed. This is simply drive-by disagreement, lobbing your truth out and never stopping to see if it's caused any damage.

Great actors are great listeners. They are fully engaged with what their scene partner is saying, not worrying about their next line. Listening and being fully engaged in the moment are also good life skills. For conflict to result in any good, we must be prepared to listen, really listen, to the other point of view — and preferably before we speak our point of view. We must give people the benefit of the doubt and wonder if there is a reason why they believe so strongly for something that we believe so strongly against. And we must take the posture in every disagreement that we might just have something to learn.

We are pulled into stories with high stakes, with characters willing to risk. Win or lose, they are never the same. This is why we go on the journey of watching our hero go from being scared to being brave, from greedy to generous, arrogant to humble. It's about character transformation.

They, like us, don't experience radical change after reading a good book, listening to a TED talk or even hearing a sermon. We are changed through conflict and uncomfortable situations that force us to be brave or kind or altruistic.

This is to “think Christianly” and it is something we teach in the Arts at Ambrose University, as it is important for our students to develop this life skill early in their lives and careers.

Conflict for the sake of conflict is simply pride. Disagree, with purpose and with kindness. Allow conflict to change you — for the better. ▣

**“ For conflict to result in any good, we must be prepared to listen, really listen, to the other point of view.... And we must take the posture in every disagreement that we might just have something to learn.**

## Nazarene Celebration

Join us for a virtual celebration of 100 years of Nazarene Education in Canada this fall. For more information and to register please visit [ambrose.edu/nazarene100anniversary](http://ambrose.edu/nazarene100anniversary)

For the latest news and information, visit [ambrose.edu/news](http://ambrose.edu/news)

## Congratulations to the Class of '21

Commencement ceremonies in 2021 were held online for the second year in a row — but that didn't diminish the tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment shared by students, families, friends and faculty alike. Virtual moments made for memorable events. At the School of Education ceremony on April 30, Valedictorian **Kaitlin Cotter** spoke on behalf of students and Dr. Michael Capello, Associate Professor in Educational Core Studies, was the guest speaker. The May 8 ceremony for undergraduates featured Valedictorian **Brenna Bazinet** and guest speaker Mary Rozsa de Coquet, Board Chair of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Rozsa Foundation.

Rounding out the ceremonies on May 8 was the Seminary commencement, with Valedictorian **Amanda Ross** and guest speaker Rev. Dr. Justin-Robert Mabilia Kenzo, District Superintendent, St. Lawrence District of The Alliance Canada. Congratulations to the new Ambrose University alumni!

Top row Kaitlin Cotter; Second row (L-R) Dr. Michael Capello and Brenna Bazinet; Third row (L-R) Mary Rozsa de Coquet, Amanda Ross and Dr. Justin-Robert Mabilia Kenzo; Bottom row Dr. Gordon T. Smith.



## Familiar faces in new places

Two friends recently stepped into new roles at Ambrose.

**Dr. Kyle Jantzen, Dean of Arts and Science**, has a deep understanding of the faculty's role in academic governance, expertise in curriculum development, excellence in teaching and scholarship, and strong advocacy skills. Prior to becoming the Dean of Arts and science, Dr. Jantzen served as the Chair of Humanities and Professor of History. Dr. Jonathan Goossen has stepped into the role of Chair of Humanities. **Patty Neufeldt, University Librarian**, served most recently as Ambrose's Public Services Librarian, and as Acquisitions Specialist. She brings a wealth of expertise to her new position, and she is keen to engage with students and leverage the role of the Library to advance the University's mission.



(Top) Dr. Kyle Jantzen, (Below) Patty Neufeldt

## Ambrose Chemistry goes green

Ambrose is the first university in Alberta (and one of only three in Canada) to sign Beyond Benign's Green Chemistry Commitment. Beyond Benign provides educators with the tools, training and support to make green chemistry an integral part of chemistry education. The move reflects Ambrose's intent to provide safer alternatives for students and the environment, and builds on the extensive work in green chemistry education by Dr. Liza Abraham.



## Four faculty awarded tenure



Photos (L-R)

**Dr. Liza Abraham**, Associate Professor, Chemistry • Before embarking on her Chemistry teaching career, Dr. Abraham worked as medicinal chemist and scientist. Her research employs applications of green chemistry for a sustainable future.

**Dr. Matthew Morris**, Associate Professor, Biology • The Co-chair of Biology, Dr. Morris researches local adaptation, population genetics, phenotypic plasticity and genomic signatures of selection and DNA barcoding with an emphasis on fish.

**Dr. Beth Stovell**, Professor, Old Testament • Working in preaching, teaching, and worship, prayer, children's and women's ministry for more than 20 years, Dr. Stovell is helping bridge the gap between the academy and the Church.

**Dr. Ryan Wilkinson**, Associate Professor, History • Deep understanding of the fall of the Roman Empire informs Dr. Wilkinson's interest in "collapse" scholarship, exploring why complex societies sometimes fall apart.



## Running up the score

When the Ambrose Lions return to on-court action, there will be a whole new way to keep track of the game. A new scoreboard was installed this spring, thanks to a successful community fundraising campaign (including support from Goertzen Complete Services, Deeks Insurance, many alumni and friends, and Parks Foundation Calgary). Game on!

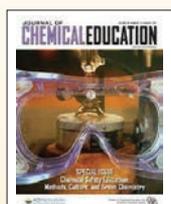


Through publications, presentations and myriad other scholarly activities, Ambrose faculty and staff contribute to the expansion of knowledge worldwide. Recent highlights include:

### Liza Abraham

"A Green Nucleophilic Aromatic Substitution Reaction"  
*Journal of Chemical Education*

September 2020



"Motivating and supporting undergraduate research through green chemistry: Experiences at a small liberal arts university"  
*Journal of Chemical Education*  
January 2021

### Jo-Ann Badley

"God is Coming"  
*The Other Journal*  
December 2020



The Other Journal  
AN INTERSECTION  
OF THEOLOGY  
& CULTURE

### Kathy Crawford and Sherry Martens

"Embracing Wonder and Curiosity: Transforming Teacher Practice Through Games"  
*Blue Dot*

February 2021



### Jim Cresswell

"A Divine Voice, or the Psychology of Faith"  
Cresswell, J., and Smythe, W.  
*The European Legacy*  
DOI:10.1080/10848770.2020.1764198

November 2020



### Ryan Wilkinson

"Identifying Ancient Coins Deposited with Modern Ships' Ballast: A Problem for Distribution Studies?"  
*American Journal of Numismatics, 2nd Series*, 32, pp. 169-178

2020

### Joel Thiessen

*Signs of Life: Catholic, Mainline, and Conservative Protestant Congregations in Canada* with Bill McAlpine, Keith Walker, Arch Wong  
February 2021



Visit the Lions' Store for books and other materials authored by Ambrose University faculty and staff:  
[ambrose-university.shoplightspeed.com](http://ambrose-university.shoplightspeed.com)

## New Worship Arts minor blends

# PASTORAL THEOLOGY & arts

Students have an exciting new opportunity to grow in theological understanding, artistic skill and practical experience

Ambrose University has launched a new Worship Arts minor, giving students a focused opportunity to complement their major by studying worship arts in an interdisciplinary setting.

Providing a dual focus on pastoral theology and the arts, it offers training for students who may be considering vocational roles as worship pastors, or who want to serve as volunteer worship leaders in their churches.

The Worship Arts minor is intended to meet the needs of students in music, theatre and dance programs, and also of those who wish to complement their Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree with knowledge specific to church worship and liturgy.

"With this minor, Ambrose has developed a truly unique opportunity in Canada," says Dr. Colin Toffelmire, Chair of the School of Ministry at Ambrose. "Because we have both a faculty of Theology and an Arts faculty, we are able to create an interdisciplinary minor that is both rigorous and practical.

"Students will study with theologians who have extensive pastoral experience in worship arts, and with artists who have a deep love for worship in the church, giving the students the best of both worlds."

"The Worship Arts minor will help students grow in theological understanding, artistic skill and practical experience, and to ask important questions such as 'How do my studies impact my own creative mission as an artist, and how do they equip me to lead others?'" adds Dr. Mark Bartel, Associate Professor of Music at Ambrose.

The minor consists of 21 credits, divided between pastoral theology, biblical studies and history and praxis courses in the arts, which range from applied lessons in music, dance and theatre, to ensembles and music composition. Students will have the opportunity to apply what they learn in Ambrose University chapels.

Students in the minor will have an opportunity to learn more in their chosen artistic field, be it theatre or music, and will gain a greater sense of the history of art and faith in the Christian church. They will explore biblical, pastoral and theological issues relevant to worship and liturgy in the church today.

Additionally, students will have an opportunity to learn with faculty who have extensive experience leading congregations in worship, in both lay and professional capacities. □

*More information about the Worship Arts minor is available on the Ambrose website, [ambrose.edu/worship-arts-minor](http://ambrose.edu/worship-arts-minor).*

STUDENTS WILL STUDY  
WITH THEOLOGIANs....  
AND WITH ARTISTs...  
GIVING STUDENTs  
THE BEST OF BOTH  
WORLDs.

Dr. Colin Toffelmire

## NATIONAL SSHRC RESEARCH GRANT AIMS TO PREVENT SLIDE INTO POVERTY

### Building better supports for many who are ‘newly vulnerable’ because of the pandemic

Understanding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Canadians is spurring research across the country. At Ambrose, Dr. Jim Cresswell, Professor of Psychology, has become the University’s first principal investigator to receive a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to look into a rapidly growing class of poverty: the “newly vulnerable.” The \$19,000 Partnership Engage Grant is part of a Council initiative to bring academics and community groups closer together to collaborate on projects that will have real impact on communities. Cresswell is partnering with the Tamarack Institute, an anti-poverty organization, to lead research into a class of poverty which, until the pandemic, was relatively small in Canada.

“Some people today are only a breath away from being in poverty,” Cresswell explains. “They need help and support, but they’re not in a place of dependence. They’re at the point where job or business loss, debt payments or an unexpected bill can quickly deplete savings and push them into real poverty.”

The pandemic has been a catalyst for showing cracks in existing support systems. And while Tamarack recognizes the need and the urgency, it needs more knowledge in order to respond most effectively.

“There’s been a massive rupture in society because of COVID-19,” Cresswell says. “Except for the pandemic, most of these newly vulnerable people would be considered lower middle class and would be progressing forward.

“Now, people are in real jeopardy; in real trouble. This is an opportunity to learn more about these people, and redesign systems — not just economic, but also social and spiritual — to support them before they slide into poverty.”

A national survey this spring, in collaboration with other organizations, aims to gather baseline data. Later this summer, qualitative interviews and focus groups will look deeper into what systems and responses would be most beneficial.

“The ultimate goal is to build more resilience and have fewer cracks in the system,” Cresswell explains. “It’s really a ‘future backward’ exercise. We want to imagine the best possible outcomes and then see what needs to change in order to get us there.” □



“Some people today are only a breath away from being in poverty. There’s been a massive rupture in society because of COVID-19.”

Ambrose University is blessed to be part of a large, growing and vibrant community.

Meet some of the many people within it — and share your own news with others by visiting [ambrose.edu](http://ambrose.edu) or emailing [anthem@ambrose.edu](mailto:anthem@ambrose.edu).

## Stay in TOUCH!



[facebook.com/AmbroseAlumni](https://facebook.com/AmbroseAlumni)



[youtube.com/ambroseuniversity](https://youtube.com/ambroseuniversity)



[@ambrose\\_uni](https://twitter.com/ambrose_uni)



[@ambrose\\_uni](https://www.instagram.com/ambrose_uni)

## Retiring to new adventures

*Three long-time members of the Ambrose University family retired recently, opening new chapters in their lives. Prayers and well wishes go with them on their next journeys!*

### Sandy Ayer, Library Director

Over his 37 years with CBC/CTS and Ambrose, Sandy helped build the University Library into the largest book collection of any private educational institution in the Prairie provinces. He oversaw the amalgamation of the CBC/CTS and Nazarene collections, and twice coordinated moves to new locations. Today the Library serves not only Ambrose students and faculty, but also researchers from universities and seminaries across North America. While he says he will miss working with varied, hard-working, capable and blessedly quirky co-workers, and the as-iron-sharpens-iron give and take of the workday, he looks forward to morning coffee conversations with his wife, Diane, and more sleep, reading and birding. They hope to travel overseas, tour North America in a 1999 VW camper van and take a birding trip to Ecuador. He also plans to continue library consulting for four francophone seminaries in Africa.



### Colleen Charter, Library Cataloguer

Colleen has seen the history of Ambrose University unfold over 25 years of service, which started at CTS in Regina and grew over time as she became a key member of the Library team. A busy cataloguer — she has catalogued more than 60,000 books — Colleen played an integral role in the formation of the nearly 5,000-book Chinese collection, as well as growing the Education resource collection, two projects of particular importance to her. She is looking forward to spending more time in the mountains with her husband, a former Ambrose professor, as well as on her hobby of making hand-made greeting cards.



### Edwin Gndt, Associate Professor of Music

Through 25 years at Ambrose, Edwin has been part of the growth and development of the University, and has shared expertise with students and colleagues, as well as communities worldwide. He has presented in Venice, Barcelona and Hawaii, and published two books based on research into Fryderyk Chopin completed on the island of Majorca, Spain. He regards speaking the word of the Lord and giving three solo piano performances to prisoners at the Soledad State Penitentiary in California as one of the most moving experiences of his life. While he will miss working in a Christian environment, which he calls the blessing of a lifetime, he expects retirement to be busy. He has already been contacted to be a keynote speaker, headliner and piano competition judge in various cities over the next two years.





**Nicole Berg** (Associate in Ministry Diploma '16) and **Andrew Berg** (Church Ministries '18) were husband-and-wife ministry leaders at a small island church in the Bahamas from 2013–15, before enrolling at Ambrose. Both have become accredited pastors within the C&MA, working in student and young adult ministries at Foothills Alliance Church in Calgary. They welcomed their COVID-19 baby (they call daughter Saskia Hope their “crisis nugget”) in May 2020. When the pandemic is over, expect to find them back at rock climbing, hiking with friends, making music, being goofs, expanding their social media impact and camping.

**Genghis and Natalie (Yan-Yu Lau) Chan** (both CTS '93) were married in their final semester



at CTS and recently celebrated their 28th wedding anniversary. Genghis is a member of the Ambrose University Board of Governors and recently accepted a new position to serve at the Canadian Pacific District of C&MA as Assistant District Superintendent for the Chinese and Vietnamese Churches in Surrey, B.C.

**Sarah Hunter**

(MALM '21) works in the Western District Christian Missionary Alliance Office. As her final project before graduating from her Ministry Coaching class, she created a discernment tool for elders/lead teams to begin where they are at with the discipleship process. Read more about her project on the Ambrose website, [ambrose.edu/news](http://ambrose.edu/news).



**Alyssa Michaud**

(BA – Music '11) was recently promoted to Assistant Professor with Ambrose Arts. A musicologist whose work explores the intersections of music, technology and culture, Alyssa holds an MA from the University of Ottawa and PhD from McGill University. She has presented on the cultural conceptions of technology at conferences in Canada, the U.S. and Japan, and her most recent work appears in *Keyboard Perspectives*. She keeps one foot in the performance world as a handbell and choral director, serving as a regular and guest conductor for church ensembles across Canada.



**Stan Reeder**

(CNUC BTS '83) has been USA/Canada Regional Director of the Church of the Nazarene. Stan has pastored in both countries for more than 20 years, most recently as superintendent of the Oregon Pacific District for 11 years. He is the founder of the USA/Canada Region's RAND Project, an 18-month vibrant church renewal program, and has served on several Nazarene boards.



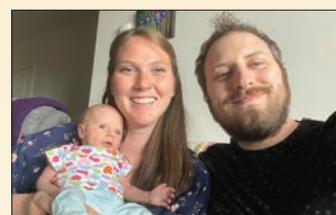
**MacKenzie**

**Schmidt** (BA – Behavioural Science '20) was awarded a Canada Graduate Scholarships –

Master's award from the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to support her research into evaluating preschoolers' use of phrasal prosody for syntactic analysis. MacKenzie is completing her master's in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Alberta, and was also granted a top-up award from the U of A for her current research.



(L-R) **Holly Tamlin** (BHS '20 and **Alexandra Hoppe** (BA Psychology student) and Dr. Jim Cresswell (Professor of Psychology) recently published an article entitled “Experiencing visions of Canadian church workers: Exploring the mentality fueling systems involved in poverty reduction.” This work, in collaboration with the Canadian Council of Churches, explores the shared vision and aspirations of Christian church workers who engage in poverty reduction work.



**Hannah Van De Walle** (BA '17, BEd'19) spent last year teaching K–6 at Airdrie Christian Academy and working reception at Foothills Alliance Church. Husband **David Van De Walle** (BSc '15) completed his Brewmaster program at Olds College and works at Compugen. The couple welcomed Aurora — who loves sleeping, snuggling and being adorable — to the family on March 29.

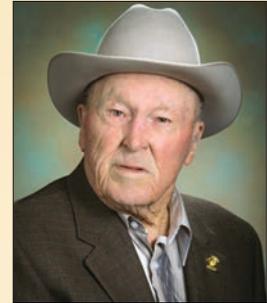
**Share your updates with Ambrose Friends and Family in Anthem! Send a note, a few bullet points or a thought or two (and a photo, if you have one) to [anthem@ambrose.edu](mailto:anthem@ambrose.edu) to be included in an upcoming issue. You'll help grow the Ambrose community and inspire others to do the same!**

## Passing into the presence of Jesus

Prayers and condolences are extended to friends and family of those who have passed away. Please submit your memorial announcements at [ambrose.edu/anthem](http://ambrose.edu/anthem).

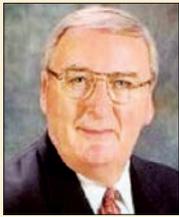
### Chester Mjolsness

A man whose name is well known at Ambrose University — Mjolsness Hall, named in recognition of his support, is home to the library and academic offices — passed away on March 5, 2021, at the age of 101. Raised on the family farm west of Sundre, Alta., Chester Mjolsness learned the value of hard work, honesty and integrity — lessons he carried throughout his long and prosperous life as a mentor, role model, business leader, philanthropist and, most importantly, a great husband, father, grandfather and friend. Guided by his values and keen business sense, Mjolsness grew a family logging company into Spray Lake Sawmills, a major employer and engaged corporation based in Cochrane, Alta.



Mjolsness' support for Ambrose was testament to his philosophy that "to whom much is given, much is expected," and giving back brought him great joy. "Little is much if God is in it," he often said. Ambrose's commitment to raise up Christian leaders to guide future generations resonated with him, and he was excited to support that mission. That future included his great-granddaughter, Samantha, an Ambrose alumna.

The plaque on Mjolsness Hall serves as both a fitting tribute to and words of wisdom from Chester Mjolsness for how to live life well: "Live with integrity, keep your word, build relationships, give back and trust God."



**Rev. Robert Gould** (CBC/CTS '60) passed away on April 13, 2021. Pastor Bob celebrated more than 50 years in ministry, serving the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada as pastor, district superintendent, administrator, consultant, international worker, conference speaker, interim pastor and minister-at-large. Bob was one of four Canadian members who oversaw the historic formation of the C&MA in Canada in 1981, and was instrumental in significantly growing the number of Alliance churches in Canada and abroad. He also oversaw construction of the now 125-resident Woodlands Nursing Home complex in Burlington, Ont., serving as its first director. Bob was a member of the CBC Board of Directors for more than 20 years.

### Carol (LaForge) Airhart

(CNC – Churchmanship '70) passed away in Winnipeg on Dec. 21, 2020. Carol built a 33-year career at the Manitoba School for the Deaf before retiring as Acting Co-Principal in 2006. She is survived by her husband, **Russell Airhart** (CNC '71) and extended family



### Bonnie (Smith) Barris

(CNC '79) passed away on Sept. 19, 2020, in Sherwood Park, Alta. Bonnie's favourite activities revolved around her incredible singing voice, as a soloist and in church and community choirs, as well as being a member of the Christian vocal group, Adoration. She retired from a 38-year career with Alberta Health Services in January 2019.



### Donald Allan Goings

was called home by God on Sept. 27, 2020, in Edmonton, survived by his wife of 57 years, Dorothy, two sons, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Don served on District Advisory Board for the Canada West District of the Church of the Nazarene.



### James Laurie McLean

(CBC '60, CTS '91) passed away on April 8, 2021, after a short but valiant battle against COVID-19. He served with his wife, **Nancy** (CBC '60), in Gabon, Africa, for 34 years and then in Quebec for another five years. He will be remembered for his deep faith and trust in God, infectious sense of



humour and a compassionate and tender heart which reflected his empathy for those around him. His survived by Nancy, daughter **Sharon** (CBC '86), son **Andy** (CBC '89), son Jim, and their families.

### Harvey Town

(WCBI '55) passed away on Dec. 8, 2020, in Kalispell, Mont. He is survived by his wife, **Joyce (Lewis) Town** (WCBI '55), five children, 26 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. Harvey enjoyed 43 years of ministry with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, retiring to western Montana in 1999 where he was involved in the local church and community. He wrote a book for his family, *Jesus the Talk of the Town*, in 2013. Harvey was also the CBC alumnus of the year in 1987.



# 2021 AMBROSE UNIVERSITY SPORTS & ARTS SUMMER CAMPS



## BASKETBALL • VOLLEYBALL SMASHBALL • MUSIC

All ages summer camps are back on the Ambrose University campus this July and August. Join us for a summer experience you will never forget. For registration and the latest information please visit [ambrose.edu/athletics/id-summer-camps](http://ambrose.edu/athletics/id-summer-camps) or [ambrose.edu/ambrose-arts-academy/camp-listing](http://ambrose.edu/ambrose-arts-academy/camp-listing)

IT'S  
TEE  
TIME!



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2  
LINKS OF GLENEAGLES  
COCHRANE, ALTA  
[ambrose.edu/golf](http://ambrose.edu/golf)

Golf tournament and online  
auction in support of Ambrose  
scholarships and financial aid.

...may the COURSE  
be with you!



Photo by Elise Fitzgerald

## Seeing certainty in every sunrise

by Lacey Hilgen

“Through all my questions and uncertainty about life and faith while at Ambrose, the safe space that was provided in classrooms, offices and within this community allowed me to discover the certainty of who He is.”

Uncertainty. Something we all deal with at one time or another. University is a time absolutely teeming with it and graduating leads to more of it. Where will I go? What will God do through my life? What is going to be next? Do I have everything I need to face the next chapter? Should I have studied harder? Met more people?

My time at Ambrose has been filled with joy and struggles, adventure and heartbreak, and a fair dose of uncertainty. Will I pass Introduction to Philosophy? Is there space in my brain for another Greek vocabulary word? Is my brain able to produce one more paper for the semester?

Aside from the academic demands, Ambrose was a place where I got a chance to be uncertain about my beliefs and convictions. I was able to ask questions to professors, to God, and even to myself. Through all my questions and uncertainty about life and faith while at Ambrose, the safe space that was provided in classrooms, offices and within this community allowed me to discover the certainty of who He is.

I learned that even when uncertainty is swirling around me, God is unwavering. In the most uncertain times I know that my God will paint the sky every morning with the glow of gold and pink; each day will end with an explosion of fuchsia and orange. Sometimes remembering that or seeing it is enough to put me at ease with what is to come.

The future is uncertain. My plans beyond graduation are vague at best and change a lot because of the uncertainty of this pandemic season. Reflecting recently, I found that all my considered careers had one thing in common: they all involve me advocating for people and helping them to have a better experience than my own. I have felt torn between joining the medical field, advancing my studies in Theology, pursuing a career in vocational ministry or becoming a teacher — among others.

The thing I have come to realize is that whatever I end up doing next, as long as I am able to do what God has gifted me to do — caring for people — the rest will work itself out.

Ministry for the longest time was the goal I was running towards, but I am seeing now that ministry is not necessarily vocational. It certainly can be, but for me it looks like me pursuing the gifts He has placed inside me; it's teaching people about the deeper meanings that can be found in scripture, listening intently to people in conversation so they feel heard, and giving attention to the people standing on the edges who need to be seen. Whether it is medical school, an education program, graduate studies, a church job or working as a barista, certainty comes when I accept that there is no wrong choice when I am pursuing all that He has for me.

And when I watch the sunrise. □

*Lacey Hilgen is from High River, Alta., and transferred to Ambrose from the University of Lethbridge. The 2021 graduate of the Bachelor of Arts – Christian Studies program loves reading and writing — and very much looks forward to reading more books for the sheer joy of it.*

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