Financial Campaign Update & Letter from the President of the Alumni Association:

Last November, a Campaign Steering Committee was formed to help plan the College’s financial campaign. This group, made up of Alumni, Board members, and community leaders from Montreal congregations, meets every month and helps to shape the messages and strategies that carry the campaign forward.

The College seeks to raise $1,750,000 to support the enhanced Master of Divinity program and the newly created Leadership Centre. These two initiatives offer new programs to alumni in early years of ministry, to ministers in mid-career, to young adults and lay leaders, and to international students seeking to be agents of reconciliation in areas of conflict around the world. The majority of these funds focus on programs for people, rather than buildings, though a small portion ($250,000) is intended to support a much-needed renovation of the College’s residence rooms and communal gathering places.

The campaign is off to a tremendously successful start with an investment of $500,000 from the College’s endowment funds, and lead pledges from the College’s Board members, exceeding $100,000. With the help of Dr. Bill Klempa, Principal Emeritus, Past Board members are being asked to join in, while alumni are helping to connect the campaign to congregations across the country. (See below.) Campaign requests to several large foundations are underway.

On a sad note, the College has recently lost two of its leaders: Dr. Shuling Chen and Dr. Ian Victor, both of whom were fully dedicated to supporting the strategic plan and the campaign. In their names, two memorial funds have been established that will support new program initiatives of the College. Here’s message from our Alumni Association President.

Letter: Alumni Helping to Spread the Word

At a recent gathering of alumni in Dundas, Ontario, we talked a lot about the new directions that the College is taking, and the campaign that seeks funds to fuel them. Alumni asked how they might get involved, and many ideas were discussed. One of the most important ways we can all help is to spread the word.

In our congregations and communities, there are not many people who know about the College and the role it plays, not only in preparing Ministers, but also in supporting students and helping to shape the life and education of its students.

As an alumnus, you can connect the College to people you know who care about church leadership. It starts by staying up to date with the latest news from the College, and with each other. To that end, we are asking you to share a photo that depicts your own ministry, and to join with us to help build a mosaic of the many ways we serve God. These will help us tell the story of how our education has made an impact, on us as individuals, and also in our world. (Photos can be emailed to vgavin@presbyteriancollege.ca where they will be shared on the new Leadership Centre website at www.pcleadership.ca).

You can also help the campaign by sharing messages that you will receive from the College, by posting them in Sunday bulletins or discussing them in church gatherings. Invite a College teacher or student into your community or church to tell the good news of our new programs. Reach out to the College with your own suggestions and ideas about the directions and campaign plans that you read about in this newsletter or on the website. The Faculty and board are listening, and want to hear from you.

With your involvement, the Presbyterian College becomes stronger and more vibrant, as it carries its mission forward with renewed energy and purpose. Please send a photo today!

With love and prayers,

Andrew Thompson
Alumni President

(514) 288-5256 www.presbyteriancollege.ca info@presbyteriancollege.ca

Tribute to Rev. Dr. Ian Victor

It was with deep shock and sadness that the College learned of the sudden death of the Rev. Dr. Ian Victor on December 26, 2014. Ian stepped into the role of Acting Director of Pastoral Studies in 2013, but his contribution to the work of the College, and to the life and education of its students, reached well beyond what one might expect of such a brief tenure. With customary energy, creativity and humour, Ian threw himself into his work and supported the College in every possible way. He took tremendous joy in supporting students and helping to shape the life of the College.

Ian was a graduate of The Presbyterian College and, in 2010, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the church and society, the College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, (honoris causa). His ministry began with his ordination in Montreal in 1979, followed by service in churches in Duvernay, QC; Eckville, AB; Petrolia, ON; West Vancouver, BC; Ottawa, ON; and Victoria, BC. During his 30-plus years of ministry, Ian served as moderator of three presbyteries and the Synod of British Columbia. He also served on several national boards and committees, including a stint as Convenor of the Committee on Church Doctrine. He was a prolific writer and an engaging speaker. He was a contributing editor to The Presbyterian Record, wrote many feature articles and book reviews, penned weekly newspaper columns, and hosted a radio show. He twice received national writing awards from the Canadian Church Press Association.

But that is merely a summary of Ian’s more formal accomplishments; it says little of Ian the person and pastor. It was in personal contact and relationship with Ian that one began to realize the awesome qualities of this man.

Perhaps the best way to testify to the personal gift that Ian was to friends, colleagues and congregational members is to quote from some of the messages sent to his family after his death: “Ian Victor was a generous, articulate and erudite man. He was unconditionally and immediately available” at the time of loss of a loved one. “He made me think, sometimes when I didn’t want to; he challenged me when I needed it, and he made me laugh... Laughing is what I remember even as I cry while typing this.” “Ian was theologically astute and comically brilliant. He was razor sharp and acerbic. I remember a large man who lived even larger.” And finally, from a member of his own family who wrote that Ian was “an intellectual who never made anyone feel inferior, a pastor with boundless compassion, a friend full of charm and laughter [who] could relate to the most broken-hearted people with disarmingly and sincere love and empathy.”

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These words from another colleague sum up our tribute to Dr. Ian Victor: “A great man of God will be greatly missed. ...I’m sure he’s entertaining the angels now!”

This is something of the measure of the man we have lost. To honour his memory and to carry forward his deeply held desire to assist the College in establishing a new support program for ministers in mid-career, we have set up the Ian Victor Pastors to Pastors Fund. Ian himself was a much appreciated encourager and pastor to other pastors. He believed that congregational renewal and clergy renewal were closely related.

The College has committed a founding grant of $15,000 to this fund as an expression of our deep appreciation for the impact that Ian’s life and work had on students, faculty and staff, curriculum and program development, and alumni relations. This fund will support practicing ministers who seek renewal and excellence in congregational ministry. Your gifts to this fund in Ian’s name are invited. If you wish to honour Ian’s work and memory, please make use of the enclosed pledge form.

Continuing Education Joint Event
In keeping with the mission of the Leadership Centre and the College to make a difference in the world by equipping ministers, church leaders and congregations, our Continuing Education event in May 2015 focused on articulating the Christian Faith in the variety of circumstances in which we find ourselves. Dr. John Stackhouse and Dr. Rob Fennell addressed the subject: “Christian Apologetics: Ready to Give an Answer for the Hope Within You.” Dr. Stackhouse is Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College in Vancouver. The Rev. Dr. Rob Fennell is Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax.

A unique feature was that it was a joint event between Presbyterian College in Montreal and St. Andrew’s Hall in Vancouver, a first for both theological colleges. Dr. Stackhouse gave his lectures onsite in Vancouver, fed live online to Montreal. Dr. Fennell delivered his lectures in Montreal and they were transmitted live to Vancouver. The entire series of lectures was available live via internet. With the increasing sophistication of live online communication and the growth of online learning offered by many major educational institutions in North America, we intend to further explore both traditional and innovative ways by which our theological schools may collaborate to deliver high quality instruction and training to our ministers and congregations.

Taking Shape
The Centre began with the vision of the current Principal, Dale Woods, and the full support of the Board of Governors. We continue to create/develop essential learning and training space for our ministers, church leaders and congregations, working together to bring the Gospel of Christ to our communities and to the world.
Leadership Centre: Nurturing Leaders for Today’s Church
The Rev. Dr. Victor C. Gavino is Coordinator of the Leadership Centre at Presbyterian College. An alumnus of the college, he was ordained in 2010 and called to Westminster Presbyterian Church in Pierrefonds, QC. He was a professor at the Université de Montréal for 28 years until his retirement.

Mentoring Program for Ministers
The mentoring program is now in its fourth year. There are 27 minister-participants from all over Canada who have been engaged in congregational work from less than a year to over five years. As has been the practice from when this program began, the whole group will gather in Montreal, June 22-26, to reconnect with friends and colleagues, attend plenary lectures on leadership, and talk face-to-face with their mentors. One participant wrote: “I have grown a better understanding of my gifts for ministry and some of my particular challenges.” Another wrote: “Thank you for offering this ministry. I feel supported...” And still another: “I am clearer about some of my strengths and weaknesses by thinking through issues with the group and noticing the particular talents and gifts people bring to the discussion.”

The newest mentor is Clyde Ervine (Knox St. Catharine’s) who took on four new participants in late autumn, 2014. Chuck Congram, Joan Ashley and Dale Woods continue to serve faithfully as much-appreciated mentors.

Pastors of Excellence
The College and Ashland Seminary in Ohio have been working on a Memorandum of Agreement that will bring the Pastors of Excellence (PoE) program to Canada. PoE perfectly complements our Mentoring Groups in that it is designed for ministers with years of congregational work, but who might have become disillusioned or hit a wall, and who seek renewal, encouragement and greater authenticity in Christ. Its guiding principle is that healthy pastors lead to healthy congregations. PoE alumni in the US and Canada have consistently given testimonials highlighting the positive life-changing effect of this experience on their ministries. We anticipate launching the first PoE group in Montreal in April 2016. This will be the third PoE site in North America. The other two are in Ashland and Detroit.

Young Adult Program
Adults in their twenties are at a stage when important decisions are made that can impact the rest of their lives. It is also a time when we form the skills, understanding and faith that shape our contribution to the world around us. This year, June 15-20, we will hold the second phase of our young adult program, “Discover your Dependable Strengths: You were made for this, a life that makes a difference.” This program, developed at Luther Seminary in Minnesota, helps participants understand their gifts through a narrative process. These are gifts that constantly rise to the top and form the basis for what we do best. In sum, we are best positioned to make a difference in the world when we know the things we are good at and find enjoyment in doing. Mavis Currie (Knox St. Thomas), Tom Vais (Thornhill Presbyterian) and Dale Woods (Presbyterian College) will once again team up as leaders of the program.

Facing Our Challenges: A Message from the Principal
Rev. Dr. Dale Woods

There are some who believe that if we only had enough faith, everything would be well. We would be blessed and would escape the difficulties of life. But even a cursory reading of the Bible tells us that is not so. Moses started with a profound encounter with God only to find that leading the people of Israel through the wilderness was fraught with all kinds of challenges. Jeremiah was not long into his ministry when he prayed that he had never been born. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews writes to a discouraged faith community ready to throw in the towel. Yet all of them stayed the course despite the obstacles they faced. What was it that kept them going?

The academic year 2014-2015 has been a challenging year for Presbyterian College. In June 2014, Dr. Ellen Atkien, Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill, died after a brief battle with cancer. In July, Dr. Shuling Chen, our chaplain and Director of Lay Education, passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. In December, the Rev. Dr. Ian Victor, our Director of Pastoral Studies, died of a sudden heart attack. These losses were keenly felt in our small community of faith and beyond. It seemed as if we were just starting to deal with one loss when we found ourselves having to cope with another.

In addition to the loss of loved colleagues, each of our three candidates for the In Ministry Year for 2014-2015 had to withdraw from the program for different personal reasons. This meant that there would be no grads for 2015. It’s not the first time in the history of the College that this has happened, nevertheless, it was disappointing.

In September of this year we were also notified that McGill’s administration was seeking to change the status of the Faculty of Religious Studies to a School of Religious Studies within the Faculty of Arts. While this may have advantages for McGill, it is less clear what the advantages might be for the Montreal School of Theology. It is complex work and decisions now will shape our program for the next few decades.

As my first year as Principal appointed by the General Assembly, I would have hoped for a better year. But as the apostle Paul reminded the church in Corinth, resilience is part of faith. It is not the kind of resilience that comes from our own resolve, which is much too weak for the task given to us. It is the resilience that comes from believing that God is at work in this world with an amazing vision of what it (and we) will one day become. God’s vision is expressed in different ways in scripture. The prophet Zechariah describes it as a public park “where the elderly can sit together and talk and bask in the sun, and little children can play in contentment with nothing to threaten them...” 1 In Revelation, John describes it as a time when there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain because the old order of things has passed away (Rev. 21:4). Jesus described it as a wedding feast with an incredible guest list (Matt.22). It is only this vision that can sustain our passion for ministry in the ups and downs of life. It is this vision that helps us to keep from getting stuck in the past or the present but keeps us moving forward believing that God has more to do, and graciously invites us into that task.


While this has been a challenging year, the truth remains that God has much more to do and Presbyterian College is to play our part in that vision. We are continuing to expand our program in congregational renewal and church planting. We are partnering with Ashland Seminary to bring the Pastors of Excellence program to Montreal for pastors of all denominations. We are seeking to build an international student body. We are continuing our mentoring program for graduates. We are celebrating our past 150 years of ministry with the publication of a new book highlighting graduates and partners of Presbyterian College. We are continuing to build the leadership center. We are continuing to be an effective partner in the ministry of our colleagues at United Theological College, Diocesan Theological College and the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill. We are engaging in a financial campaign of $1.75 million that will help support these new initiatives. Through awarding the Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) we continue to honour those who have demonstrated years of faithful ministry.

This has been a challenging year for the College. We have lost great colleagues and friends. We have ended up with unreasonable workloads. We have had to navigate our way through unexpected and complex events. But we are reminded that:

Organized Christianity came into existence, and exists, to preserve a treasure, a command to be executed, a promise to be repeated, a mission to be fulfilled. This treasure belongs to the past, present and future; it is potential, yet active; an object of contemplation, yet the inspiration of right conduct.

It is this upon which we base our hope.

D. Woods

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Nominating a Director of Pastoral Studies

We at the Presbyterian College are pleased to announce that the Board of Governors is recommending Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries for the position of Director of Pastoral Studies at this year’s General Assembly.

After approval from the 141st General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. De Vries will begin his new role at the College this summer.

We are all looking forward to welcoming him aboard!

At the May 7th Convocation, the Presbyterian College conferred the honourary degree of Doctor of Divinity upon two servants of Christ who couldn’t be more different, or more the same.

The Rev. Stewart Folster was raised on the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation in Manitoba. The Rev. Sydney McDonald was raised in Northern Ireland. Stewart’s people have been in Canada from time immemorial. Sydney is a relatively recent arrival (1969).

Stewart studied physical education at the University of Manitoba, and theology at the Dr. Jessie Salteaux Resource Centre in Manitoba, and then at the Vancouver School of Theology. Sydney studied English Literature, history and philosophy at the University of Dublin, and theology at Union College, Belfast.

Stewart was ordained by the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan (PCC), while Sydney was ordained by the Presbytery of Ballymena (PCI). Stewart has worked mainly among poor and marginalized inner-city First Nations People, both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Sydney has worked mainly with “white settler” traditional, middle-class Presbyterian congregations in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and Nova Scotia.

So their background and experience would dictate that, apart from their Christian faith, they are totally dissimilar. But if we probe a little more deeply we find that they have much in common.

They both long for peace and reconciliation between the church and First Nations people, and are committed to the long process of walking together in the love and grace of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the life-affirming spiritual practices of aboriginal sisters and brothers.

At convocation, it was a moving and powerful moment to see these two servants of Christ, so very different, but so very much the same, receive together the honour and appreciation of a grateful church.

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Two New Doctors!

Rev. Dr. Douglas John Hall, Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, Rev. Dr. Sydney McDonald and Rev. Dr. Stewart Folster at convocation.

Rev. Dr. De Vries receives his doctorate from Rev. Dr. Woods. Rev. Dr. Dan Shute on left.
It was both unique and historical. For the first time in a century of working together, the three colleges that make up the Montreal School of Theology (Montreal Diocesan College, United Theological College, Presbyterian College) decided to hold a joint convocation.

The academic procession that filled the long centre aisle of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul on May 7th included faculty, board members, students and honoured guests from all three colleges. It made for a colourful spectacle, despite the fact that extra gowns ordered for the occasion failed to arrive!

In addition to the usual awarding of degrees, diplomas and prizes, two Presbyterians were awarded the Degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa (see below), and the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Gary Patterson, was honoured with the special Craig Chaplin Memorial Award of the UCC.

The convocation address was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Douglas John Hall. Basing his address on Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:21, he challenged the three colleges to become part of the answer to that prayer by using this shared convocation as a springboard for implementing a vision for further expressions of their cooperation and unity in Christ. We hope to have Dr. Hall’s address on our website once it is available to us.

While this was a great celebration, we were very aware that it came at a time of sadness for the congregation of St. Andrew and St. Paul who are grieving the loss of their much loved minister, the Rev. Jeff Veenstra. The College continues to hold the congregation and Jeff’s family in prayer.

The First Joint Convocation in Our History
Rev. Dr. Glen Davis

The Presbyterian College, Montreal is 150 years old!

So far, we have marked this monumental event in several ways:

- Exhibit of historical artifacts and photos in the College foyer
- A grand banner on the college’s University Street wall
- Fun facts of our history, updated monthly on the College website
- Guided “Walk through History” at the Mount Royal Cemetery – introducing some of the great influencers related to the College (May 21)
- Anniversary Dinner and Worship at The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (May 21)

But there is more to come this fall:

Seminar on Sola Scriptura…………………………………………………………………October 30-31, 2015

The Presbyterian College, in cooperation with the PCC’s Committee on Church History, will co-sponsor the third in a five-event series on “the Five Solas” marking the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Dr. Elizabeth Humphrey, the William F. Orr Professor of New Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will be the guest speaker on Friday, October 30. This is an excellent opportunity for ministers to do some Continuing Education, as well as for students and laypeople to delve deeply into the PCC’s commitment to Scripture as the primary source for its faith and doctrine.

Book Launch for ‘Still Voices, Still Heard’………………………………………………October 31, 2015
(See page 6).
The Presbyterian College @ 150 Years

In celebration of our 150th Anniversary, the Presbyterian College will host a historic book launch on October 31st.

STILL VOICES – STILL HEARD is a book with an engaging difference. Each of its 13 chapters tells the story of one person - some graduates and some not - who played a major role in society, in the church and in the life of the College. Its unique format moves from a brief biography, to a sermon or address by that person, to a concluding comment by the author on the contribution made by the one who is the subject of the chapter. It is very accessible and it makes for fascinating reading.

This book uncovers some little known facts. E.g. Donald MacVicar, the first principal of the College, had a brother, Malcolm, a Baptist minister who became Chancellor of McMaster University.

In this book you will find fodder for discussion on one of today’s church debates over solutions to the decline of our churches. In the late 1800’s MacVicar wrote: “The Church may temporarily sink into a state of spiritual decline and vainly imagine that what is needed to right the wrongs of humanity is novelty, departure from old paths, improvement in externalities, more machinery, and not the quickening power of the truth and Spirit of God. This is lamentable and utter folly.”

Hmmmm! Anything here to ponder for our contemporary situation?

The Presbyterians highlighted in this book are not confined to famous movers and shakers like Sir William Dawson, “the man who made McGill”, and Principal Donald MacVicar, “the man who made Presbyterian College”. We are also introduced to women like Jane Drummond Redpath, about whom very little has been written but who, despite labouring in the shadow of her famous husband, John Redpath, made extraordinary contributions to Montreal’s Protestant culture, to French-speaking ministries, to women’s rights and education, and to the work of Presbyterian College. She was the founding President of the Presbyterian Ladies’ French Evangelization Society of Montreal, which later evolved into the W.M.S.

Jane Redpath also served as President of the Montreal Ladies’ Educational Association established in 1871 by McGill Principal William Dawson. Her leadership persuaded the McGill authorities to break their “Men Only” rule, and in 1885 women were admitted to McGill University for the first time.

With her husband John Redpath, she hosted that famous “little meeting” in January, 1864, which included William Dawson and Donald MacVicar, and which led to the founding of a Presbyterian Seminary in Montreal. Her home was therefore the birthplace of The Presbyterian College. The College always remained close to her heart, and she supported its work with scholarships and bursaries, throughout her life.

Those familiar with Montreal will be interested to know that Drummond Street was named for Jane Drummond Redpath, a testimony to the esteem in which she was held both by her husband and by city authorities.

It is well known that James Naismith was the founder of the game of basketball. It is less well known that he was a graduate of Presbyterian College. But this book tells us details of his life that are both fascinating and inspiring. For example, he was orphaned at a young age; he constructed a pair of skates from two files and a block of wood; he dropped out of high school to become a lumberjack; he returned to school after five years, qualified for admission to McGill, and excelled as a varsity athlete in four sports at McGill. After graduation, he did not take a pastorate because he believed that he might provide more service to young men through sports than by the traditional activities of ministry. His sermon on “Athletics and Religion” bears clear testimony to his contribution to sports, to the College, and to the cause of Christ.