

CONGREGATIONAL RENEWAL

An Enhancement of the M. Div. Program at The Presbyterian College, Montreal

The Need

Max De Pree once wrote, “We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are.” Just as renewal is necessary in our personal lives, so it is necessary in congregational life. While Biblical and theological study and spiritual formation remain essential for ministry, developing new skills in congregational renewal and change will be essential for new ministers.

The Program to Meet the Need

Presbyterian College is now developing an M. Div. that will allow students an additional eight months of practical experience and study in congregational renewal.

The program is designed for active involvement in a congregation that is engaged in a process of renewal. Students will participate in the congregation from May to August for two consecutive years. The same congregation may also be considered as a full-time field education placement in the final year of study, the In Ministry Year.

During those months, students will work alongside a minister and session who are engaged in the process of congregational renewal, where they are trying new programs of mission in their community, fresh expressions of worship, and other creative initiatives. Students will also be required to do additional reading on renewal, participate in available workshops, and write reflections that will be beneficial to the broader church.

The program will provide bursaries that will pay the equivalent of a summer ministry stipend. Congregations might also contribute to the student placement costs as they are able. The College believes that this specialized training and experience will be invaluable to new ministers as they go out to serve churches that are struggling with the challenge of initiating changes that will help them move effectively into the future, while maintaining what is good and useful from the past.

How You Can Help

The Presbyterian College seeks congregations who are already engaged in a process of renewal, and would welcome a student intern to work with them and learn from them. We are also looking for individuals who want to make a real difference in the renewal of congregations and are willing to contribute financial gifts that will help this program grow and succeed.

Your gift of \$6,000 will support one student for one summer placement. A gift of \$12,000 will cover the cost of a student for the full program (two summer periods). Your gift can be pledged over a period of up to five years.

Our goal is to provide seven summer bursaries each year for a period of five years by raising \$210,000 for Congregational Renewal in our campaign.





One Story - David Sturtevant

David Sturtevant is currently enrolled at The Presbyterian College and spent a summer work term with a congregation engaged in renewal in Beaconsfield, Quebec. This is his story.

Last year when Principal Woods asked if anyone wanted to work for the summer in a church engaged in renewal, I jumped at the chance. Arrangements were made for me to work with Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Beaconsfield, QC, under the direction of the Rev. Greg Davidson.

As I prepared by studying church renewal, my ideas of ministry were changing. I realized that what I would be doing in my future would not be “managing” a church, but leading one. My studies enriched my experience, both at Briarwood and at the College.

Briarwood recently started a second, more contemporary worship service. This change came from the request of a young person, not from the Minister or church leaders. The Session’s response was one of openness that reflected a willingness to trying something new. It required a rearrangement of worship time because younger families had to get small children home for nap time. Along the way, there were some ruffled feathers but, today, there are two services that complement, rather than compete with, each other. There are occasional joint services and monthly lunches together.

Briarwood uses the system of term eldership, and I noticed that, as some elders rotated off Session, some new elders were elected from the younger members in the second service. So it was not only a renewal of worship but also a renewal of Session that was happening. The Session was reading a book together on transforming mission and ministry. I was impressed by the deep faith commitment of the elders – a key to implementing congregational change.

With the help of a grant from a national church fund, Briarwood took the bold step of hiring a full-time person to head up its education and youth ministry. Recently, some Korean families have joined the congregation, an indication of the increasing need for our churches to respond to the opportunities for intercultural ministry.

I found it extremely valuable to spend a summer in a church that is positively responding to the challenges that are facing most churches today, and that I will have to face in my ministry. It taught me how important it is to be responsive to the ideas and vision of people in the congregation and helped me to relate my studies to the practical realities I will face in the future.

The Broader Impact

Graduates of the M. Div. Congregational Renewal program join more than 300 alumni of the Presbyterian College who, today, lead congregations in communities across Canada and around the world. Together, they have a profound impact on our society, providing spiritual growth, pastoral counselling, food and shelter, preschool and elder care, among many other services and supports for people in need.



THE
PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE
MONTREAL

LE
COLLÈGE
PRESBYTÉRIEN
MONTRÉAL