

SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

Positive stories. Valuable work.



Seminary fosters excellence in Christian leadership

Celebrating 50 years as McMaster Divinity College

Kelly Rempel
ChristianWeek Staff

HAMILTON, ON—When strangers find out Liz Bekker's program of study—theology—they're sometimes taken aback.

"Strangers that ask me what I'm taking at school, look at me like I'm crazy when I mention theology," says the 23-year-old. "My favourite response so far has been 'Are you serious? I mean, do they still offer that?'"

The short answer is yes. Bekker's seminary of choice, McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, focuses on offering top-notch theological training, from a one-year Christian Studies certificate to a PhD program in Christian theology.

Located on the campus of McMaster University, the divinity college is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

"We want to celebrate our history and heritage, because we have one that is good and strong," says Director of Advancement Patricia Webb. "We want to be grateful for what God has done for us in the last 50 years, but with a view to where we want to go in the future."

Known as MacDiv to students and faculty, the seminary's main goal is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the 21st century through university-level education, professional training and ongoing support.

"After attending a liberal university where my faith



was constantly challenged, I knew I wanted to be a 'smart' Christian who really understood the faith and had an academic and intellectual grasp on the Christian tradition," says Bekker, who is in her first year of studies. "It didn't matter whether I would pursue vocational ministry, or another field, theological training was always a priority.

"I love that MacDiv is in a . . . highly recognized university setting such as McMaster, and values academics. I was looking for a school that would equip me theologically for the bigger world."

Many MacDiv students are under 30 years old, and often come to the seminary directly from undergraduate studies. The challenge, says Webb, is to offer theological training that is relevant and contemporary.

"The Church and the world is always changing and how we do seminary education needs to keep pace with that," says Webb. "What does the leader of 2012 [when current first year students will graduate] need in order to be an effective leader?"

"The society our students live in and will have to work in, is getting more complex. Our challenge is to help students learn how to live and lead effectively in the midst of this complexity."

The Church has a key role to play when it comes to promoting the value and importance of seminary education, says Webb.

"People need to think of theological education as valuable no matter what their vocational goals may be. If they really want to be an informed Christian in their church or workplace, then seminary education, even if it's just a course or two, is extremely valuable.

"I've always believed in theological education because of its transformative impact in the life of a student. They come out changed people . . . deeper in their faith than when they came in."

For more information, visit www.macdiv.ca.

Spots

McMaster Divinity College is named in honour of William McMaster, a wealthy merchant, banker and Senator of the Dominion of Canada. A devout Baptist, McMaster urged the creation of a theological school in the late 1800s, and upon his death, left to it one of the largest bequests to an educational institution in Victorian Canada.

The seminary has its roots in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, but its scope is multi-denominational. It currently serves students from more than 35 denominations.

MacDiv is concentrating on developing strategic partnerships with groups outside the seminary. One initiative involves offering seminary courses in local churches. The seminary is also hoping to develop intensive study programs in other parts of Ontario.

To stay on the cutting edge of theological education, McMaster Divinity College continues to revise, expand and improve its curriculum, as well as add to its faculty. The school recently welcomed Phil Zylla, formerly of ACTS consortium in Langley, B.C., as the new Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology.



leadership equipment



Programs at MacDiv
Ph.D.
M.A.
M.Div.
M.T.S.
Diploma in Ministry
Certificate of Christian Studies

McMaster Divinity College
Canada's Evangelical University-Based Seminary

Equipping Leaders.

At MacDiv, our goal is to develop effective Evangelical Christian leaders who are equipped for ministry in the 21st century. Explore MacDiv at www.macdiv.ca and you'll see why graduate students from all academic disciplines, including arts, business, and science choose seminary training... and why MacDiv is their preferred choice.

 **macdiv**TM
LEADERSHIP through UNDERSTANDING

For more information, contact Jeff at:
McMaster Divinity College
1280 Main St. W. Hamilton, ON L8S 4K1
Phone: 905-525-9140, x24981
Fax: 905-577-4782
E-mail: jclark@mcmaster.ca
Web: www.macdiv.ca