



Greetings!

I pray that you are well during this COVID-19 pandemic.

It is hard to believe that the last public gathering at McMaster Divinity College occurred on March 16, when we joyously dedicated our new Cullen Hall as the culmination of our building project. We had over 100 in attendance at this major milestone in the life of MDC and celebrated together—just before we all locked down for our mutual health and safety. All of our courses moved online, and our staff transitioned to working from home. We instigated our COVID-19 Response Team, which has met at least weekly since the middle of March and continues to monitor our response to the crisis.

Despite the difficulties, the work of MDC has continued unabated over the last five months, so that we are now poised for the beginning of a new academic year—although one that is negotiating a new reality. We are being attentive to the needs of our faculty, staff, and students, so as to provide a safe working environment for when we reopen. We are following the best advice of our various governmental and health authorities, with the proper signage, cleaning, and sanitizer stations. And we will all be wearing masks in public spaces, maintaining appropriate social distances, and, of course, washing our hands—a lot!

In the meantime, we have been concerned about the needs of our students, many of whom are living far away from their homes. The pandemic has caused some students to delay their programs, and so we are helping them to complete their degrees. Many of our students have been hit financially by this pandemic—many of them lost jobs or had to put their studies on hold to homeschool their children, some international students found themselves out of work and unable to qualify for Canadian government benefits, while others couldn't find summer jobs to save for tuition. So, we have organized our COVID-19 Tuition Relief Fund to provide financial assistance. We were able to distribute the entire fund to students in need to help them meet their financial obligations and prepare to return to us in the Fall. However, we still have students who are in need. I would ask you to consider giving to our relief fund so that we can provide aid to more students.

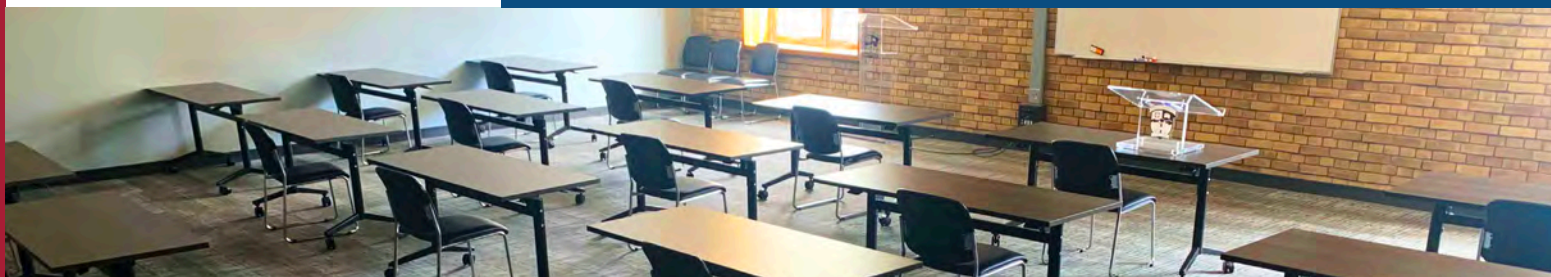
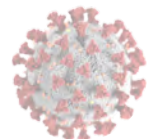
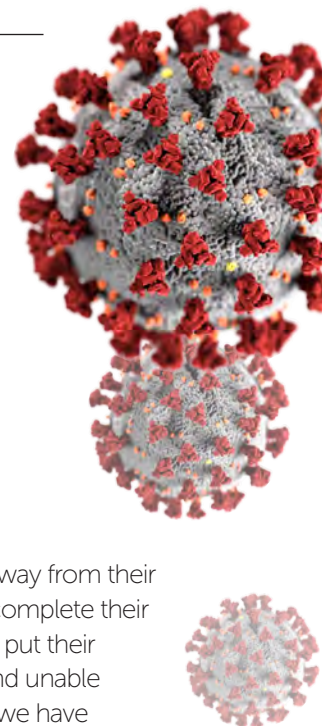
Even with the world in turmoil, we have been blessed by the response of our MDC community. As a result, we are anticipating a great new group of incoming students this Fall term, as well as looking forward to welcoming back our returning students. I am greatly encouraged to see that, despite the challenges of our everyday world, our students are answering their call by God for further theological education and joining us this Fall.

Please continue to pray for MDC in the weeks ahead. Pray for our administrators as we continuously negotiate our COVID-19 response. Please pray for our faculty as they prepare for delivering our hybrid courses (combining online and limited face-to-face contact). Most of all, pray for our students. They have endured the most during these last several months. Nevertheless, I continue to hear uplifting accounts of how God is working even in the midst of our uncertainty. Please join me in continuing to support the work of McMaster Divinity College.

With all God's blessings,

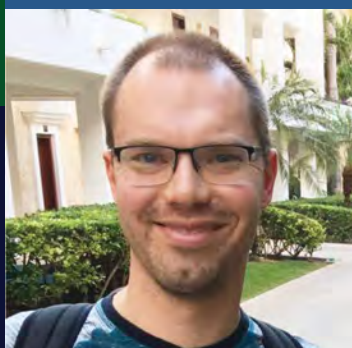
Stanley E. Porter, PhD

Support our students by giving to COVID-19
Tuition Relief at mcmasterdivinity.ca/donate.



Serving during COVID-19

As part of our President's Dinner Online, we asked some of our students—both past and present—to share with us the ministry they are involved in and how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected how they serve. Read their stories below and join us as we remember all of our students in prayer as they do the work of ministry.



Jon
Miedema
MTS 2016

Tell us about the ministry you are involved in.

For the last three and a half years I have worked as a Chaplain at the Salvation Army Hamilton Booth Centre where we endeavour to carry out the mission to share Jesus' love, meet human needs, and help transform lives by providing emergency housing and other supports for men experiencing homelessness.

How has the COVID-19 crisis affected your ministry and how can we support you?

Since our community gatherings were discontinued, we learned to shift to other means of contact—donning PPE at appropriate distances, handing out community meals to those in need with our soup van, and supporting residents with phone calls, Zoom meetings, and using our social media to stay connected! I've been inspired by the way our community has rallied together through this crisis. I'm thankful for a supportive team and for the people I encounter that find contentment and joy in some of the worst of circumstances.

MDC prepared me for ministry by teaching me to read the Bible with a critical lens and to understand it as divinely inspired words. In the practice of spiritual care, I've learned often inviting the right questions is more important than providing answers.

For us at the Salvation Army, pray for more people and faith communities ready to follow Jesus by getting to know our city's marginalized poor. Our men want to be loved. They want to be known and come to know us too.



Natalie
Armstrong-
Frisk

MTS 2018, current
DPT student

Tell us more about the ministry you are involved in.

I have worked as Curriculum Pastor for The Meeting House for the last six years where I developed curriculum for kids and youth so they can come to know, love, and follow Jesus. I recently accepted a position as Lead Pastor at the Brantford location!

How has the COVID-19 crisis affected your ministry and how can we support you?

The COVID crisis expedited my transition into my new role as Lead Pastor. I immediately jumped into phone calls to every congregant, coaching them in accessing our online gatherings and home church. I have learned to use the "live" feature on social media to connect with people. The crisis has certainly prompted a season of connecting with some immediacy to our community, which has been a blessing in a strange way.

MDC has been an immense support in equipping me for ministry. When I first started as a youth pastor, I began my MTS and grew in my capacity to think theologically in various spheres—this most certainly helped as I launched into a role of curriculum development. Jumping to present, MDC's broad course offerings have given me a solid foundation in pastoral ministry where I feel prepared to lead my community despite this current crisis.

I would appreciate prayer that I could maintain balance in this season, for wisdom, and for perseverance. For my community, pray for health and safety, and that we could find creative ways to truly love our neighbours during this season.

Read more stories from our students serving in counselling, pastoral, and frontline ministries on our website at mcmasterdivinity.ca/pdo.



John
Steadman
Director of External Relations
steadmanj@mcmaster.ca

A bequest is a gift directed to McMaster Divinity College, specified according to your wishes, through a provision in your will. Funds can be designated as a specific dollar amount or asset, or as a percentage of your estate. Talk to John about legacy giving by sending him an email.