



McMaster Divinity College

WINTER 2021

Dear MDC Community,

I want to wish all of you a blessed and peaceful Christmas. A year ago at this time, we were all expecting the COVID-19 pandemic to be over—and yet here we are, a year later, and we are just emerging from this global affliction. I pray that you and your family have remained safe and secure during this past year.

This year has not been easy for many people, as they have worried over and experienced hardships of various kinds. Some of these challenges have been financial and others personal, including physical and mental health. Part of the refrain of one of my favorite Christian songs says, "Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God."

As we approach Christmas, I am increasingly thankful for many of God's simple gifts that are easy to overlook amidst a global pandemic. I am thankful for God's love for us (for me!), for the tremendous gift of Jesus and his saving grace, for health despite the virus, for family and friends who love and care for each other, and, yes, for vaccinations and those who have tirelessly worked to keep everyone safe during the last year and a half.

The MDC community has had to make many adjustments during this last year, so that we can continue to fulfill the work that God has called us to do. We are also beginning to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. The

first Christmas was an event that changed the course of history. I pray that this Christmas may also be one that reminds us of all that we have to be thankful for and marks a renewed commitment in all of us to serve God and others in the year ahead.

Yours in faith and hope,

Stanley E. Porter
President and Dean

INSIDE:

- Benefits for Alumni
- Heather's Story: My Journey to MDC
- Teaching in a Pandemic by Cynthia Long Westfall

HEATHER'S STORY



My name is Heather Whitehead and I am a first year student in the MTS program. I started here in the spring of 2021, and this is my story of how I came to study here at McMaster Divinity College.

When 2020 started, and COVID was little more than a whisper, I was diagnosed

with cervical cancer. My faith at the time was about the size of a mustard seed. I believed in God, and I believed in Jesus, but that was about the extent of my faith. As you can imagine, dealing with cancer in a pandemic presented some unique challenges, but God didn't give up on me. He used my diagnosis as an opportunity to bring certain people into my life that would ultimately set me on a course to come back to my faith, and by the end of 2020, I could see the cancer as a blessing. Of course, I never

want to go through those experiences again, but I know God used it for transformation. 2020 wasn't the year I had cancer, but the year I came back to my faith.

Along the way I felt that God was saying to me, "I called you for so much more", but through prayer and some people speaking into my life, it became clear that he was calling me to ministry. I didn't think I was qualified to pursue a master's degree in theology, but God closed doors and opened others, leading me to MDC. I can see his hand in all the little details that have gotten me here, so I am confident this is exactly where I am supposed to be.

Now, as I complete my second semester, one of the things I have come to really appreciate about McMaster is the number of denominations represented. I love learning from others and hearing different viewpoints that challenge my thinking and allow me to grow. I thank God for his guidance in leading me here and look forward to one day being able to pastor, using my past experiences to help lost and broken people find God.



ALUMNI BENEFITS

Did you know as a valued member of our alumni you are entitled to special benefits? Scan the QR codes below with your camera app to get more information or contact us at divalum@mcmaster.ca with any questions you might have

Special Audit Rates



Members of our alumni receive 50% off our regular audit rates. Come back and take a course with us for just \$150! Register for a winter course starting in January or see which courses we are offering this Spring!

Discounted Event Rates



Alumni are entitled to discounted rates for conferences and events held on campus. Make sure you are on our email list to be the first to know about upcoming events.

Library Privileges



As an alumnus of McMaster Divinity College, you are able to have borrowing privileges at Mills Memorial Library, Innis Library (reopening 2023/24), Thode Science & Engineering Library and Health Sciences Library.

Discounted Rates with Deeks Insurance



Deeks Insurance is proud to offer excellent rates on home insurance, car insurance, and a range of other insurance products for the McMaster Divinity College alumni. With options like first accident forgiveness, friendly customer service, and 24-hour claims support, get a free quote from Deeks for your insurance needs.

TEACHING IN A PANDEMIC



By Cynthia Long Westfall
Associate Professor of New Testament

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society. The faculty has been strategizing for some time about how we do that well in the 21st century with the changes in culture, new challenges for the church, and differences in the needs and goals of our students.

I believe that the challenge of the pandemic has pushed us into new ground in that venture. Previous to any notion of a pandemic or lockdown, we had been developing some courses online, but last year we moved to teaching all our courses online. Now, this year, with the changes in Ontario guidelines, we are undergoing a period of transition. Each course has taken one of three forms: we had courses on campus for our research programs, courses online for our DPT students, and hybrid courses for professional students, where on campus sessions and online sessions alternated week by week. In addition to that, there were also students with unique circumstances who were able to “stream in” to attend their courses. If this seems complex to you, it was for all of us too! It has required major upgrades in classroom technology, and

previously unimaginable adjustments on the part of the faculty and particularly for the MDC technical support. Some things worked well, and some things have required unforeseen adjustments and always patience! One of the unforeseen ways that God has been working in this time has been to open more channels of communication with my students, and often richer interaction in class.

As a whole, MDC faculty, students, and staff have gained experience and developed diverse toolkits that will allow us much more flexibility so that we are able to approach our curriculum and delivery with increased intentionality—it gives us something to look forward to in the next semester and as we forge ahead with our mission in the 21st century.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



McMaster Divinity College could not do the work that it does, day in and day out, amidst a pandemic or without a pandemic, without the prayerful financial support of many donors like you.

As you have seen in this letter, MDC continues to move forward, confident that God is fulfilling his purposes in our work. We marvel at the many and diverse gifts God has given our students as they respond to his call. Our excellent, faithful faculty continue to invest themselves in our students, as well as in the work of bringing God's word and teachings to others. Our administrative team has been our institutional backbone during times of change, uncertainty, and adjustment.

We appreciate your support of McMaster Divinity College. I pray that at this Christmas time you would generously respond by making a donation to our mission of educating the next generation of Christian leaders.

LOOKING AHEAD

January 10, 2022

Winter Term Begins

Pray for our students as they begin a new term of classes and for the new students who are joining us for the first time!

April 2022

President's Dinner Fundraiser

Participate in our online auction, hear stories from our alumni, and engage with us online throughout this weeklong online event.

April 30, 2022

Spring Term Begins

All of our Spring term courses are online! Take a course for credit or audit that fits your schedule. More information at mcmasterdivinity.ca/springterm.

May 26, 2022

Convocation Ceremony

This year, our Convocation Ceremony will be in-person once again! Save-the-date now for this exciting event.