

# Guelph Campus Ministry

A ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at the University of Guelph



## *Our Mission:*

To be a community where all who are curious about life and God wrestle with scripture and are challenged to root their identity in Christ.

## *Winter Retreat, Sabbath, and the Pandemic*

**By Anna McMenemy, GCM Student Intern, 2019-2020**

At our Winter Retreat this January we reflected on “Rhythms of Life.” We talked about the different seasons and life events we typically go through, and how our faith can both change us and our faith itself can change during those times. One session led by Sara centered around the topic of Sabbath and rest, something a lot of us grew up hearing about in church, but don’t regularly observe as we are embedded in a mainstream culture of go-go-go. That session was really well-received by the students, and I heard people talking about it weeks after the retreat was over. I think we all needed to hear that nudging to implement Sabbath rest into our routines, knowing that to put a pause on productivity isn’t a selfish act, but is actually an act of trust in the God who provides.



That message felt powerful at the retreat, but it has stuck with me and taken on a whole new meaning in the last couple months with all of our rhythms being disrupted by the pandemic. Things started to be cancelled right around the time that university classes were really ramping up as students prepared for major assignments and exams--a time when students were so overwhelmed by their work and responsibilities that the message of Sabbath felt easily ignorable (“I’ll rest when this is over”). I was struck by how the pandemic closures felt like a forced Sabbath for me. At a time when the pressures and expectations were mounting on students, and the global culture of production was unsustainably increasing, the forced closures and urge to stay inside were actually somewhat necessary, for believers and non-believers alike. Without our normal routines, normal income, and the activities we do in attempts to prove our worth, we had to stay inside, spend some time reflecting, and trust that it is God alone who provides. No amount of emailing or studying will change that.

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## *Covid-19 Adaptations: Zooming Through the Semester – and Beyond*

**By Sara DeMoor, Campus Minister**

By the time you read this, the winter semester has wrapped up at the University of Guelph. But what a different semester it turned out to be! On campus and with students, it felt like everything changed in one day. On Thursday, March 9th the staff and student interns of Guelph Campus Ministry spent the day in the University Centre courtyard—the large foyer in the busiest building on campus—tabling and meeting students and staff as part of a resource fair for faith groups on campus. And by Friday, the university was starting to shut down in response to the rapid spread of Covid-19 across the world.

In response, GCM moved all of its programming online. We did not want to “give up meeting together” (Hebrews 10:25)! For the rest of the semester, we moved all of our small groups, Bible reading and prayer groups, and meetings to Zoom. We prayed through Psalm 46 and 91 in those early weeks, during our weekly Lectio Divina gatherings, now mediated by our computer screens. I met with our student interns and my colleague Alison virtually, and I continue to regularly meet with students for pastoral care by phone or video call. Our Podcast Discussion small group continued to meet on Zoom for conversation, questions, and discernment, and the group decided to continue to meet throughout the summer, led by students. GCM’s Christian Graduate student group continues to meet weekly to check in (with members now all over the world), pray together, and encourage one another—and we will continue through the summer too. Pastor David Tigchelaar faithfully leads GCM’s Faculty and Staff Bible study, now over Zoom.

This year we have quite a number of students who have graduated, so it was bittersweet that our annual farewell “Fancy Party” at the end of the semester had to be held via Zoom, with each of us dressing up and eating fancy snacks in our own homes (see picture). Yet it was important for us to celebrate this milestone with these graduates, and to pray for them as they face an increasingly uncertain future, with many facing more obstacles and anxieties about moving, finding jobs, and connecting with new church communities.



Through all of these changes, I have continually been grateful for the apt reminder of our newly-adopted GCM vision: Resilient graduates who know that Christ calls them to live faithfully, without fear and with hope, stepping into the challenges of their time. As we all navigate these uncertain and often scary times, my prayer for all of us is that we may allow the Holy Spirit to move us to faithful living, whatever that looks like in these new circumstances. We do not go alone; God goes before us. Thanks be to God!

# Wrestling with Scripture: GCM Hosts Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat

By Sara DeMoor, Campus Minister

**DR. SYLVIA KEESMAAT**

**JANUARY 22, 2020  
7-9PM**

**RESISTING THE DARKNESS:  
JESUS AND WOMEN**  
*workshop*

What can Jesus' counter-cultural interactions with women in the Bible teach us about resistance, leadership and hope today?

**LOCATION:  
JOHN ECCLES CENTRE (IN  
MARITIME HALL, SOUTH  
RESIDENCES)**

Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat is an author and Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity College, at the University of Toronto. She lives on an off-grid permaculture farm, and speaks frequently on issues relating to faith and justice.

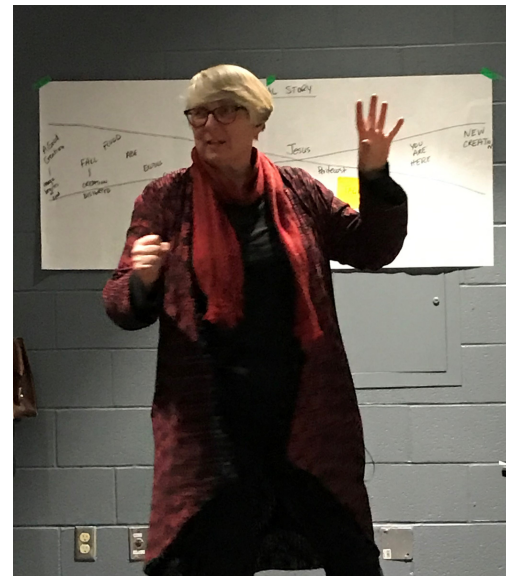
Sponsored by:  
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part of Jesus Week at the  
University of Guelph

Questions? Contact us at: [gcm@uoguelph.ca](mailto:gcm@uoguelph.ca)

On January 22, 2020 GCM hosted a workshop with Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat on campus as GCM's contribution to Jesus Week. Jesus Week is an annual week on campus offered through the cooperation of the variety of Christian groups on campus, such as Power to Change, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, Ecumenical Campus Ministry, and GCM. The goal of the week's events is to initiate conversations about who Jesus is, the impact of following Christ on everyday life, and to help promote the on-campus Alpha program.

GCM invited Dr. Keesmaat to speak about Jesus and women, in part because the treatment of women in the Bible is often cited as a barrier for university students in exploring Christianity. Dr.

Keesmaat is an Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity College (Toronto Schools of Theology), and the author of books including (with Brian Walsh) *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* and *Romans Disarmed*. In her workshop, attended by over 50 students, faculty, staff, and community members, Dr. Keesmaat led us through the four Gospels with an eye to how Jesus interacted with women. Not only did Jesus praise women, his interactions with them were counter-cultural and liberating! Dr. Keesmaat modeled well how we at GCM aim to wrestle with Scripture, and her presentation was compelling and encouraging. We are grateful that GCM can bring biblical scholars like Dr. Keesmaat to the University of Guelph.



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## Support Guelph Campus Ministry

Financial Contributions are what makes this ministry happen. GCM is grateful for those whose gifts make hospitality easy and our faithful presence at the University of Guelph possible. Donations can be made online at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org). You may also send a cheque to: Guelph Campus Ministry, University of Guelph, 203 Raithby House, Guelph, ON N1G 2W1.

