

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.

Reflecting on GCM's Impact

By GraceAnn Kroondijk, GCM Intern

Note: a longer version of this reflection was originally prepared for the CRC Classis Huron meeting in February.

Hi everyone! My name is GraceAnn Kroondijk, and I'm currently in my third year of study at Guelph in the Crop Science program. I've been a part of GCM since I began my degree in 2022, and it has truly been a blessing. The CRC emphasizes God's presence in every aspect of our lives, and GCM truly embodies this in our programming. Your commitment to this work is truly making a difference.



I'm a huge fan of campus ministry because it fills a vital need during a pivotal stage of life. For many, university is the first time they leave their family home; moving away from friends, family, and communities. That was certainly my experience. I'm a member of Maranatha CRC in Woodstock, and I grew up in the Christian education system. Coming to Guelph was a huge shift for me. I had been part of a church and school community that had nurtured my faith for my whole life—a community that encouraged me to grow in my faith and taught me how God is present in every aspect of our lives. It can be challenging to leave a God-focused community and enter a new environment. That's a major reason why I'm so grateful for Guelph Campus Ministry. It's a community where we support each other and wrestle with scripture together, coming at it from a place of respect and curiosity.

GCM meets students' physical and spiritual needs in a variety of ways. There are many conversations about the best profs, good study spaces, fun classes, and how to survive the first year "killer chemistry" class. We gather together for meals and over coffee, building deeper relationships and supporting one another. Through our "adulting" series, we've learned practical life skills such as car repair, finance management, and cooking. We dive into Scripture and theology through Bible studies and discussions. Personally, I've had the opportunity to focus on leadership development and faith formation through the internship program.

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Community Quilting

By Raylene Schartner, GCM Intern

Every year the Mennonite Central Committee also known as MCC runs the Great Winter Warm Up. This is a fundraiser with an interesting form of donations: handmade quilts. MCC puts out a call to churches, individuals, or any other group to put together tie quilts. These quilts are 60 inch by 80 inch made of colourful squares sewn together for a top and then tied with floss to the quilt backing and batting to make it warm. These quilts are then collected by MCC and distributed around the world to people in need. Last year, MCC shipped 39,616 comforters to communities in Canada, Malawi, Palestine (Gaza), Ukraine, the U.S. (including Puerto Rico) and Zambia.

Working together, GCM and ECM interns headed a quilt-making project for our community this past winter semester in the hopes of having a quilt to donate to this project. We started with picking out fabric from the MCC thrift store in Waterloo and then took over GCM's usual coffee and conversation hour to cut out 10-inch or 5-inch squares. Once the squares were sewn together to make the colourful quilt fronts, they were brought back to be tied to the batting and backing with floss. We didn't have enough material for one quilt, but for four! Two purple/pink, one brown/green and one mismatched.



These were stretched out across a quilting frame to be tied up together with members of our community during two weeks of coffee and conversation and after community dinner one night. Quilt-tying is an amazing task for a community to participate together in. There's nothing quite like sitting around a quilt, discussing our lives, faith and all the other manner of odd topics we could chat over, while working on something we know will be going to someone in need, and sharing God's love.

Theology of _____

By **James Aukema, GCM Intern**

GCM Context Note: Theology of _____ was a series run by GCM & ECM this semester following several community dinners. Conversations encouraged exploration of concepts that might be familiar or unfamiliar depending on the person (e.g., creeds, ecclesiology), as well as understanding how our theology interacts with every aspect of our day-to-day lives.

My name is James and I'm in my second year of Landscape Architecture here at the University of Guelph. I loved GCM's series of Theology Of _____ discussions. For me, large churchy words can be intimidating and prevent me from understanding a conversation. We started this series by covering the basics, such as the foundational creeds and beliefs of a few denominations. I love learning with this community because nobody will judge based on where you're at with a topic.

In the following weeks we pulled (from a teapot!) topics on slips of paper that were submitted by students. We then brainstormed a theology of the topic as a group, based on the foundational creeds and beliefs that we discussed earlier. The topics ranged from "tea time" and "music" to "human sexuality" and "scripture". For one thing, these discussions helped me realize that ordinary people like us can still engage with complex theological topics. I also appreciated learning that even the seemingly little things in life can be approached in a spiritually meaningful way. We all did very well at engaging the topics with wonder and curiosity. Overall, it was great to have lighthearted conversations about everything from what kinds of music should be played in church worship services to serious discussions about the importance of Sabbath rest and taking breaks.

Theology of...

Weds @ 7pm | Raithby House



Theology in a Teapot

Weds @ 7pm | Raithby House



WINTER IN REVIEW

W (5:30) **Community Dinner**

W (7pm) **Theology of...**

Th (5:30-7) **Faithful Adulting:
Nutrition & Stress**

F (9-11) **Coffee &
Conversation**

F (11-noon) **Campus Prayer**

GCM
Schedule



Feb
10-16

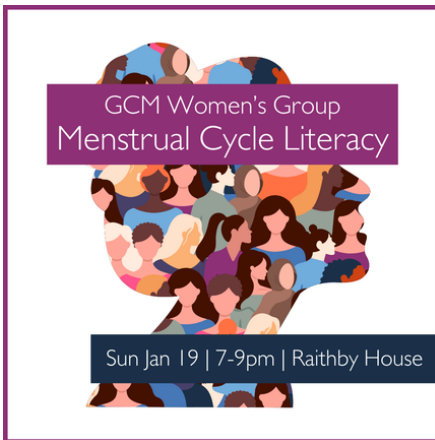
A typical week at GCM, such as the one pictured here, includes Community Dinner on Wednesday evening, immediately followed by a faith discussion or Bible study of some kind. Then, on Friday mornings we make fresh coffee and take over the community room in Raithby House for students to be able to drop by, fuel up with some coffee, chat with friends, or even work on homework. At 11am Christian students from across campus groups arrive to pray in unity for the University of Guelph and the surrounding community. Nearly every week there are also one or two additional events, like Church Hop, Women's Group, or Faithful Adulting. Not pictured in this schedule are the twice weekly intern meetings - one to plan programming and one to engage in faith formation, as well as Sara's regular pastoral care meetings throughout each week.

Faithful Adulting

One of GCM's foundational beliefs is that faith is and should be integral to everything we do. In line with this, over the past 2 years we have been hosting "adulting" workshops that teach basic life skills and incorporate reflections on the intersection of faith and that particular skill. This semester, our faithful adulting series included learning about nutrition from a naturopathic doctor, about basic car maintenance from a retired mechanic, and about mending and sewing from one of the students in our community.



Women's Group



Women's Group happens on cozy Sunday evenings in comfy clothes with lots of snacks. These evenings are a special time for women to talk with each other about relationships, our role in the church, and our bodies. A highlight of Women's Group this semester was having Jerren and Maggie, local Christian midwives, come and share with us about finding rhythms that attune with our menstrual cycles.

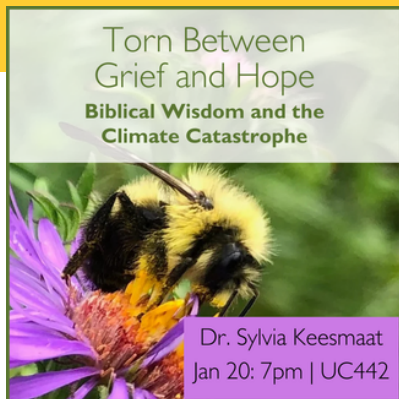


Church Hops

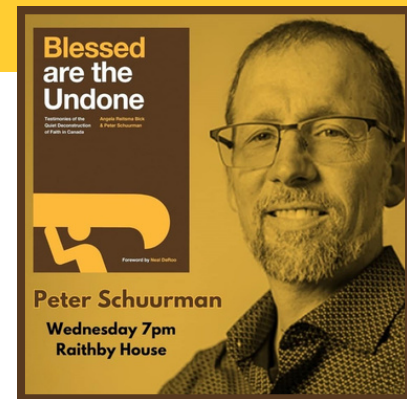


Every 3 weeks GCMers and ECMers head out together to learn about a local church, typically attending a service and then either meeting with leaders to ask questions or sharing a meal with the churchgoers. This semester we were able to visit the Salvation Army (Guelph Citadel), Church of the Apostles, Royal City Mission, Holy Rosary Church, and Arkell United Church.

Special Events



This semester, GCM was blessed to be able to welcome multiple speakers to share with our students, including scholars Dr. Peter Schuurman (also the chair of the GCM board) and Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat. Sylvia's talk focused on balancing grief and hope in understanding and responding to climate change through a Biblical lens. Peter led a discussion on his research on the changing landscape of faith within the Canadian context. Both gave students an opportunity to think about how faithful perspectives can be applied to the challenging topics of our time.



Safe Church Conference

By Brianne Gayfer, GCM Admin Coordinator

One of the things that is so valuable to me about GCM is the commitment to preventing and addressing abuses of power. As GCM staff, both Sara and I have a responsibility to take yearly training related to our Safe Campus Policy. This year we had the blessing of attending the Safe Church Conference organized by our GCM Safe Campus Coordinator and beloved board member, Carel Geleynse, with the support of Classis Huron. We spent time with 50 other CRC-related staff and volunteers hearing from speakers including Amanda Benckhuysen (former director of CRCNA's Safe Church Ministry) and Sheila Wray Gregoire, a prolific Christian author, podcaster, and speaker, as well as screening the "For Our Daughters" documentary, exploring sexual abuse in the church.



Throughout church history, each time period has had its strengths and challenges when it comes to faith and theology. Growing up in the early 2000s, a major topic the church was concerned with was sexual purity. I was taught by kind and wonderful Christians, including family, friends, and church leaders, that, as a girl, my body was inherently an issue for the boys and men around me. For example, I remember being explicitly told that all of my friends' fathers would be unable to prevent themselves from looking at my preteen and teenage body with lust, especially if my clothes were too tight or too revealing. Little support was provided in navigating romantic relationships and physical connection. Much of the Christian media at the time pushed for courtship over dating and flirted heavily with the idea that saving your first kiss until marriage might be a good idea. I once attended a very popular and well-respected Christian conference for teen girls that included a speaker focused on modesty who spent a good portion of the time teaching us to put a hand over our chest anytime we bent down to pick something up. What this left me with was a deep and abiding sense of shame about my body and about being noticed or taking up space, as well as a fear that men and boys were not safe and were not capable of seeing women and girls as anything other than objects. In GCM's Women's Group, students have expressed that they have similar feelings and anxieties after growing up with these messages.

While I have done a lot of work on my own to learn healthier beliefs about men and women, modesty, and sexuality, it was so valuable to hear directly from Sheila who is doing that work for the broader church community through her advocacy and research. An additional highlight was the free copy of her book *She Deserves Better*, which was provided to all attendees and focuses on healthy, biblically-grounded messages for girls and young women. I look forward to using that resource as my 3-year-old daughter grows up and I am grateful for the opportunity to attend such a wonderful conference.



Contact Us



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