

Guelph Campus Ministry

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



Guelph Campus Ministry

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.

My Grad Student Experience with GCM

By Megan Fluit

In Fall of 2021, I moved to Guelph to attend the University of Guelph for a two-year master's degree program. I had heard about Guelph Campus Ministry (GCM) from people in my family and from others who had gone to U of G. For me, GCM already had a good reputation for engaging and supporting a large group of students. Since I had done my undergrad at a different university, I was entering an environment where many of the people my age had already spent years forming a community. However, I was delighted to quickly discover that the GCM community was not an exclusive one. I felt welcomed into the group and encouraged to continue coming to events and connecting with the many students—both undergrad and graduate students--involved in GCM.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other Christians at the University of Guelph through GCM events, and through participating in the GCM grad student group, led by Sara DeMoor. Both have offered experiences that inspired me to reflect and think critically about how I choose to navigate graduate student life. I also appreciate the chance to share and learn from the wealth of wisdom and experiences of my peers.



One of the more memorable events for me this past year was a 3-part discussion series called "Why (Not) Church?". Sara led us in discussions around what it means to be a part of the church, how Scripture describes the church, what makes church great, and what aspects of church have disappointed us. The series concluded with a panel of three church planters and leaders who shared stories about their journey with the church. This discussion was especially important for us students coming out of the pandemic-time of online services, where many of us felt disconnected from a physical church community.

I am thankful for Guelph Campus Ministry, its leadership, and its students, and I appreciate the opportunity it has offered for us to be encouraged and challenged through important conversations. GCM's influence in my life has caused me to think deeper about what it means to be a Christian and to love and follow Jesus in today's academic culture--and beyond it.

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Wrestling and Resting: Reflections from a GCM Intern

By Brianne Gayfer, PhD student

Entering the 2021-2022 school year, I was exhausted from a faith perspective. I had given years of my life and much of my time to a local church community that deeply disappointed me by failing to stand with victims against an abusive leader. I was angry and hurt not just at my home church, but at the institution of church as a whole, because of how many churches and many Christians behaved during the pandemic and in the wake of George Floyd's very public murder. GCM in many ways was my refuge – a place where I could wrestle with that anger and hurt and work towards reconciling the behaviour of Christians with what I believe to be true about Jesus. At GCM I felt like I could bring my whole self – not just my hurt and anger, but also my dual identities as a Christian and as a graduate student. Sara has an incredible gift for validating faith and vocation as one holistic identity.



When I applied to be a GCM intern I had two equally strong reasons for doing so: I wanted to give back to a community that had supported me, and I wanted to more deeply wrestle with my disillusionment with the Christian faith. Just before beginning internship, my sister-in-law became unexpectedly pregnant and my husband and I offered to adopt the baby when he or she was born in December 2021. GCM encouraged me to front-load my service as intern in the Fall semester, so I led twice weekly in-person morning prayer meetings using the liturgical resource *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*.

When our daughter was born, I continued participating in biweekly mentorship meetings with Sara and in weekly meetings with the other interns, and I took a step back from hands-on leadership of events. I am someone who nearly always chooses to volunteer once I am invested in a particular community, especially a community of faith. In the past, this has often felt exhausting, as community organizations are often strapped for manpower and heap more and more burdens on the same volunteers. I cannot begin to express the blessing that was poured into my life by the way that the GCM internship turned that pattern on its head.

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Contact GCM:

 www.facebook.com/GCMuniversityofguelph

 [@guelphcampusministry](https://www.instagram.com/guelphcampusministry)

 **Sara DeMoor**, Campus Minister: sdemoor@uoguelph.ca

Continued: Wrestling and Resting: Reflections from a GCM Intern

By Brianne Gayfer, PhD student

As an intern, I spent time serving the community for sure – both in the leadership role I already outlined and in providing ideas and feedback related to programming during our weekly intern meetings. But I also had the deeply unsettling (in the best way) experience, when I would offer to take on too much work, of being gently reminded that I did not need to do so – that Sara and Alison as staff and the other interns could handle the workload without me overextending myself, during the early months of parenthood. On top of this was the gift of the semesterly honorarium – accepting this gift almost felt like a spiritual discipline on its own.

Here I am, many paragraphs in, and I have failed to even talk about the parts of the internship that were the most life-giving for me: the biweekly meetings with Sara and the weekly intern meetings. In my meetings with Sara, she was willing to bear witness to the anger and pain I felt as I tried to work through what had happened with my church and what that meant for my faith.



In our weekly intern meetings we discussed two books: first *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans, and then *Life of the Beloved* by Henri Nouwen. The first was more in my wheelhouse, as I am always up for an academically-informed deep dive into wrestling with Scripture. And indeed, I did get a lot out of *Inspired*. What surprised me, however, was how much I got out of *Life of the Beloved*. *Life of the Beloved* is not my typical Christian read – there were not a lot of footnotes to outside sources or academic research, and the writing was warm and intimate.

While I normally tend towards arguing/wrestling/fighting with books, this one felt like an invitation to just rest in God. As Nouwen says in the book, "...all I want to say to you is 'You are the Beloved' and all I hope is that you hear those words as spoken to you with all the tenderness and force that love can hold. My only desire is to make these words reverberate in every corner of your being – 'You are the Beloved.'"

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Financial Contributions are what makes this ministry happen. GCM is grateful for those whose gifts make our ministry possible at the University of Guelph. Donations can be made online at www.canadahelps.org or by pre-authorized payments. Please contact our office at gcm@uoguelph.ca for the PAD Plan Agreement. You may also send a cheque to: Guelph Campus Ministry Treasurer, c/o Water Street Church, 287 Water St, Guelph, ON N1G 1B6.