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Canadian Association of Christians in Student Development

What I've Learned: Reflections on twenty-five years in Student Development

by Sue James

Master's College and Seminary
Toronto, ON

Rev. Sue James is ordained with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Educating students outside the classroom is her passion. Before her Student Development career, Sue served as a youth worker for 6.5 years. Her husband Doug is also on MCS faculty. They reside in Peterborough with their children, Rachel and Rodney.

Twenty-five years have gone so quickly. I can hardly believe it!

What a wonderful journey it has been working in the Student Life Department of Master's College & Seminary (formerly Eastern Pentecostal Bible College). In 1982 someone said to me, "If you last

three years in this Department you will be doing well."

Boy, were they wrong. When you love your job as much as I have, you just don't want to leave! This is not to say that it has been a rose garden experience every day. There have been many ups and downs, moments and days when I was convinced that I'd had it with students and thought, "Oh, give me a factory job." Many days, out of frustration and fatigue, I've wanted to throw in the towel. Other days I have felt too inadequate for the task assigned to me. Yet, the fact is I love people and I am convinced that God

has called me to serve others. And with his help I have endeavoured to do this.

When I was 18 years old I was enrolled at Eastern Pentecostal Bible College. Three weeks into my first year I decided it was not for me. It seemed to me that everyone could do everything better than I could and I hated residence life. I left and went back home. Disillusioned and feeling like a failure I wandered in my own wilderness for two years. Later I got back on track, went back to EPBC and completed my degree. You have no idea how many *(continued on page 2)*

INSIDE THIS EDITION ...

God's Word for Committees	3
Making Disciples.....	5
Burnout or Brownout?	6
CD Review: "Rural Urbanitis".....	7
Milestones.....	8
Editor's Notes.....	8
Who Said That? (poem).....	9



photo: Booth College

times God has used that experience in my life to speak to defeated students.

Mother Teresa once said, "God has not called me to be successful but He called me to be faithful." It is with this attitude that I have tried to live.

Romans 12:15 counsels us: "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." This is the prayer of my heart. Therefore, I've asked God to give me compassion for students and to make me ready and able to help these students in specific ways – especially when they are hurting and going through difficult times. Over the past twenty-five years, my roles and responsibilities have changed a great deal – from Advisor of Women, to Dean of Women, to Director of Residence Life and now to Director of Student Development. In 2003, the college went from a residence school in Peterborough to a non-residence school in Toronto, with campus students as well as numerous Distance Education centres and on-line courses. This move was one of the biggest hurdles for me. The changes in the Student Life Department were very difficult, and helping students make these adjustments was also a huge responsibility.

However, 1990-91 was my whirlwind year: engaged in April; married in June; moved to a new home with my new husband in July; first baby born in March of the next spring. From the hospital, of course I had to stop off at the college to show my baby Rachel to everyone. Wow, did my life change! Talk about an increase in stress levels. The juggling act of wife, mother and professional started and I have been balancing all these roles ever since.

As I reflect over these twenty-five years, I have had to learn many things. Allow me to offer some advice to some of you

who may be starting out in this rewarding field.

Make sure your life is on track spiritually. Keep the main thing the main thing. Matt 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well." Make it a daily practice to be in prayer and in the Word. You will need to rely on God, so have your mind renewed and your spirit refreshed daily.

There is no perfect role model in this field. Continue to model yourself after Christ and strive to be like Him.

Lead with a servant's heart. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. What an example to follow. Serve with humility of spirit. Always be ready to give and to forgive. Never stop caring and showing compassion for the students. Do not underestimate how desperately important you are to their lives.

Endeavour to live a balanced life. You can become overwhelmed with your responsibilities in Student Development, but be sure you maintain a life outside of the college. Don't take work problems home with you. Remember that nutrition, exercise, rest and relaxation are vital to physical and mental health. Make quality time just for you and watch for burnout. You can't help others if your own life is a mess.

Don't be a one-person show. Teamwork in this department is essential. You cannot do this on your own. You need the assistance and advice that only a good team can offer.

Admit when you are wrong. The Bible tells us that we are to work towards perfection, but also that none of us have arrived there. "I'm sorry" or "I was wrong, will you forgive me" are hard words to say. But, students will gain more respect if you can swallow your pride and admit failure.

Have a good support group around you. There will be times when you feel that you have come to the end of your rope. It is comforting to know that you have a few reliable people around you who will help you or pick you up when you have hit rock bottom. You will need encouragement, and someone to spur you on again and again.

Accountability partner. Choose someone in your life with whom you can share anything. Have regular accountability sessions with that person. There are too many temptations in the world that will try to lure you. Satan knows your weaknesses and he will do his utmost to make you fail or fall. Be on your guard continually.

A good sense of humour will go a long way. This work is stressful. It is tiring and draining. If you don't have one, you need to develop a good sense of humour. Don't take yourself too seriously. Remember, laughter is good medicine.

Keep learning and keep current. Try to be on top of what is going on in the world. Things change so fast. Read books and journals. Take a course or go to a seminar. Stay informed and be up to date with what is happening around you.

Be yourself. There is no perfect role model in this field. It is easy to compare yourself with others, but it is important to be real and authentic. Students will *(continued on page 3)*

twenty-five years *continued from page 2*

accept you for you. Continue to model yourself after Christ and strive to be like Him.

Expect the unexpected. It seems to me that no two days are alike. You can have your days or week all planned out, but just wait! Unforeseen circumstances, crises, and interruptions lurk around the next corner. Be prepared! Flexibility is a necessity in your work as a Student Life professional.

The 80% theory. When I first came to work in this Department, the Dean of Students told me and others something that I have never forgotten. He said, "Remember this, at any given time, operate with this in mind, there will be 80% of people that like you and your decisions, but there will always be those 20% who will not." Just accept that fact!

Although this list could be endless I will stop there.

I have looked at this twenty-five year journey as a wonderful privilege of

serving students. If I had it all to do over again, there is no doubt in my mind that I would do it. Sure there were many bumps in the road, but that is all part of the process. God has helped me and has proven Himself to be faithful along the way. I am very thankful to Him and His leading.

I have a little motto on my wall and I would encourage you to remember it as you continue on your journey: "Live well, laugh often and love much." And, keep the faith!

God's Word for Committees

by Dr. Bob Crawford

Queen's University, Kingston, ON

Dr. Crawford spent ten years as Dean of Student Affairs at Queens University in Kingston, ON. He has returned to teaching in the School of Computing, but his research interests are still in student development and student outcomes, so he appreciates staying connected with colleagues.

During my ten years as Dean of Student Affairs, my Calendar was absolutely crammed with meetings. These included meetings with students, meetings with staff, and lots and lots of *committee* meetings. Some involved three people and some involved twenty-three, but the majority were five to seven people in a room, trying to accomplish some task, formulate plans, draft policy, guess about the future, or solve a problem, and so on.

To a large extent, I thrived in this environment. I found meetings that have a clear agenda and are well run are interesting and productive. That, however, isn't true of all meetings, which

accounts for the success of such books as Patrick Lencioni's *Death By Meeting*.

I have learned a lot about meetings over the years. I became particularly conscious of one aspect: how people interact in meetings. Not surprisingly, my initial focus was on *other* people, with considerable awareness of how they treated *me*. But that wasn't something that I could directly address, so instead a light came on for me one day when I was reading the opening verses of Ephesians 4:

I began to focus on how I treated other people in meetings.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

I stopped and blinked and read it again ... and again. Verse 2 said:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

I concluded that this should be labeled *God's Word for Committee Participation*, and saw four key points relating to how we should treat each other in committee meetings. And I knew that I needed to first adopt these ideals myself.

First of all, Paul tells us to *be completely humble*, and the principle I take from this is that I need to recognize that maybe, just maybe, I'm wrong. Often in a meeting I am sure that I am right, that it is others who are missing the point or are wrong in their understanding or misguided in their ideas. But being *humble* means opening the door to the possibility that others may be right.

Furthermore, being *completely humble* means realizing that maybe I am wrong. I need to keep an open mind to these possibilities all the time.

Okay, but what if I'm in a committee meeting and we're discussing a point on which I really am right. (Being humble doesn't mean that you are always wrong!) Well, *(continued on page 4)*

committees *continued from page 3*

secondly, Paul says, *and [be] gentle*. This command tells me what my style should be when explaining and defending my position: gentle, *completely gentle*. There is no room for being strident or overbearing or pulling out any of the amazing insensitive set of tools—some very sharp, others very blunt—that we have at our disposal. I need to be kind, considerate and thoughtful; that is, all the characteristics we think of as *gentle*.

Okay, okay, but what if after an hour of speaking gently on this one point—a point on which I really am right—people are still not coming around to my position? Paul's third command is: "*be patient*."

Can Paul really have meant this to apply to a whole difficult hour of committee discussion? Well, I don't see any stipulations to this decree. Just, *be patient*. This means that I can't get frustrated—and this is tough. I can't fool myself that it's okay to be frustrated as long as I don't show it. First of all, I probably can't hide it—it is going to show. But more importantly, we aren't told to *look patient*, we're told to *be patient*.

Then what about the worst-case scenario? (Yes, you can probably describe even worse cases than this, but let's not go there.) The meeting ends and we haven't reached an agreement. Isn't that simply intolerable? Am I not allowed to be annoyed with my colleagues? Maybe even feel irate? Not if we listen to Paul's fourth decree: *bearing with one another in love*. This doesn't mean we always have to agree on everything, for sometimes it is disagreements that make our lives and our work so interesting and, at times, exciting. But at times it's tempting to think: I will feel better if I sulk a bit and look hurt. After all, wouldn't it be good for people to know how upset I am with them? Nope. *Bearing with one another in*

love is plain language. It isn't just putting up with others in a disgruntled way. It is putting up with—*bearing with*—others, *in love*.

Paul puts a cap on these four principles when he writes in the next verse, *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*. Being a good committee member takes *effort*. Some days I'm not interested in being humble; on others it strikes me that there might be a better approach than gentleness; and at times patience wears thin. But the bottom line is the *unity of the Spirit*. So to this end I have to *make every effort*. It's unbiblical of me not to.

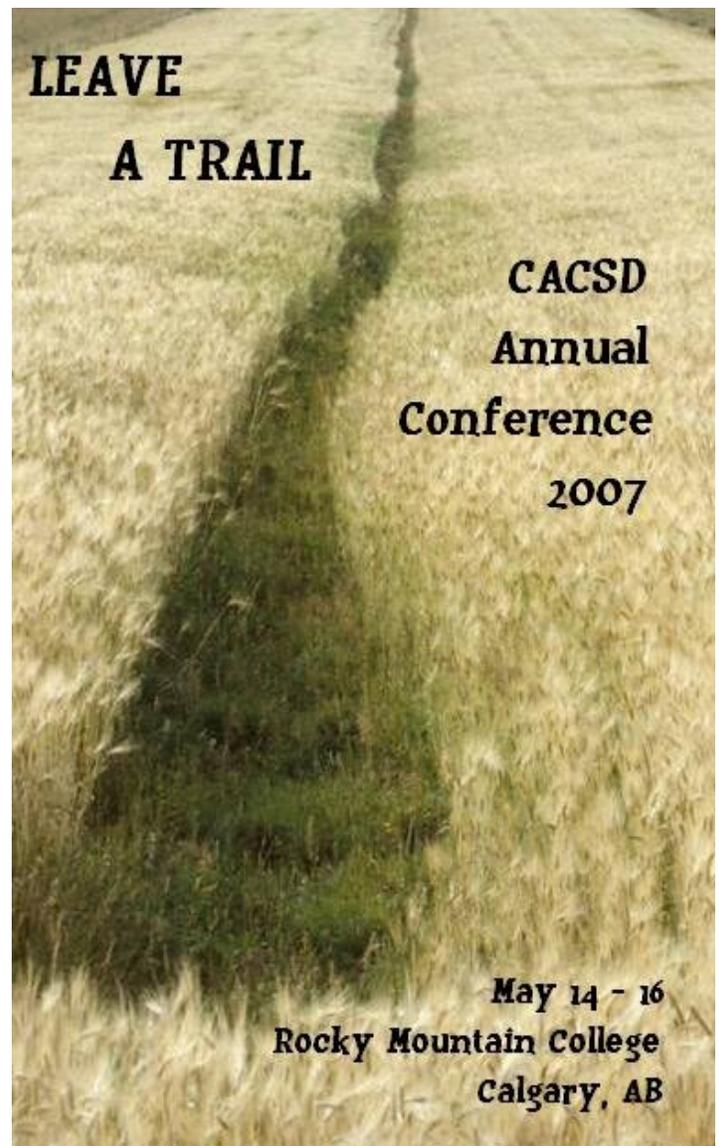
I have worked for 34 years on a secular campus. Generally, others I meet with are not joining with me to make the same application of Ephesians 4. Community is valued, and civility is fostered, but *keeping the unity of the Spirit* is not a stated principle. But this doesn't mean that I can't apply these principles to my own participation in committee meetings.

Perhaps it is even more essential to apply these principles in a Christian context. On a Christian campus, or in a church setting, these verses in Ephesians 4 serve as a principle for participation in committee work. Maybe including these verses at the bottom of

each agenda could provide a reminder. Just imagine what would our meetings be like if all of our participation was characterized by Ephesians 4:2?

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Finally, to state the obvious, Paul didn't write these commands with only committees in mind. Might I suggest that committees weren't in his thoughts even remotely? Therefore, these are principles that we need to live out in every aspect of our lives. So here is a suggestion: Start with your committee work, and take it from there.



Making Disciples

By **Connie Duarte**

Director of Student Ministry

[GBU Portugal](#)

Connie develops Christian leadership among students on university campuses in Portugal. She went to Portugal single and married Joao, an engineer who discipulates male team members. They have one son and another due any day.

This article was written for a Portuguese student audience and distributed by email to interested prayer supporters. Connie has given permission to reprint it here.

I'm working on a new project with Edith Vilamajó from [IFES](#). She's the head of Evangelism Training in Europe. A few years ago she was challenged to write systematic bible studies on the topic of evangelism, to show how much we can learn about evangelism by studying the life of Jesus. A few months ago Edith invited me to join her and I accepted.

During the month of August I began writing one of the studies, using a very familiar passage but looking at it from a different angle. I took the point of view of someone who had never read the Bible before to try and understand what a first time reader would see in the text that perhaps I had previously overlooked. What I discovered surprised me and served as a "wake-up" call for me as I began this academic year.

What I noticed about Jesus is that He saw people. I mean, he really saw them. He noticed them. He took note of them—and then he felt ... compassion, pity, sadness, and amazement. Jesus, with all the things he had to do, with all the people surrounding him, with all the pressure and persecution confronting him—he noticed people.

I don't. That's awful to admit but it's true. I live in a city of 2.5 million people. When I come into the office I ride the train and metro with well over a thousand people. On any given campus I'm surrounded by a few more thousand. Sure, when I work with GBU students the number drops to a few hundred, but that's still a lot of people. To me people often cease to be people. Instead, they become mere blurs in my day, obstacles that get in the way of where I want to go, road blocks to getting my work done. If I don't even see people, you can well imagine that I don't feel too much about them either (except maybe anger or annoyance). If I don't see people or feel anything about them what, do you suppose, motivates me to talk to them about Jesus? What do you suppose motivates them to listen? Exactly, the answer to both questions is the same: nothing.

What I noticed about Jesus is that He saw people. I mean, he really saw them.

In contrast, Jesus saw the woman at the well and cared for her. Jesus saw the woman who was bleeding for 12 years and had compassion on her. Jesus saw the rich young ruler and was sad for him. And because Jesus saw and felt for these people many listened to him and followed him (became his disciples). In order for Jesus to take an interest he had to keep sight of what he was here to do: minister to people.

And that's really what we're here to do too, isn't it? Jesus must be sad watching us—me—running around "doing ministry," all the while ignoring those

we are called to minister to. Do you ignore those around you? Think about these people you have contact with:

Administrators/Secretaries: Those who sign you up for your classes take your money, give you directions, etc. What are their names? Did you smile at them and try to understand that this is a really crazy time for them too? Did you say an encouraging word or were they just another obstacle, a bother for you?

Professors: Whether you like them or not, whether they are "good" or not, you have them for the next 4 months. Do you respect them by showing up on time and engaging in their class (whether they do or not)? Do you do your best for them? Do you encourage them when it's obvious they are having a tough day? Do you say a prayer for them as they begin their lesson?

Colleagues: Who are the people in your classes? Do you know them all or just "your friends"? Who always comes in alone and sits alone? Who always seems angry, funny, scared, sad or lonely? Do you choose to sit by the lonely, be gentle with the angry, laugh with the funny and be compassionate with the sad? Do you take the time, before you enter your class, to pray for these students, that they will learn, that they will be comforted, that they will be understood, that they will meet Jesus?

Friends: It's tempting to treat our friends like they are our therapists, cheerleaders, parents and ego builders. But do you consider what is happening to them? Can you get past "dating" and "sports" talk to find out what's

(continued on page 6)



disciples continued from page 5

really happening in their lives? Do you know what they are afraid of? Can you help them answer their fears? Do you mostly use “I” or “you” when talking to them? Have you ever cried with them, been angry for them, had compassion for them? Do you pray more for you or for them?

I have a theory. It’s not scientifically proven, but I suspect its true. My theory is that if we don’t *see* people every day and if we don’t feel anything for them then we will never care enough to share Jesus with them, to read the Bible with them, or to disciple them. Guilt isn’t a strong enough motivator and it isn’t a biblical motivator for making disciples either—but love is. In order to love people we need to begin to see them as Jesus sees them; and feel for them as Jesus feels for them.

That’s what we want to focus on this year: making disciples. We need to ask ourselves some difficult questions, some of them I’ve already asked above. But other questions we need to ask are: What does it mean to make disciples instead of converts, or acquaintances or even friends? What is my role in this? What should be my role in this?

People responded because Jesus took an interest in them.

This focus on making disciples is not just for the experts—those who are gifted in evangelism. Gifted evangelists will find this theme simple and will continue to do the work of an evangelist long after this year is over—

and I thank God for them. This theme is for those of us who find it a bit scary to think about proclaiming Christ, or who maybe can’t even define disciple making. It’s for those of us who need to be reminded every now and again to relax and enjoy the people God has given us. It’s for those of us who need to understand the importance of living evangelism and proclaiming the truth of Christ daily and naturally. It’s for those of us who get too busy with “stuff” to notice that those annoying objects around us are actually people who really need to meet Jesus.

This year is for anyone who wants to learn to see as Jesus sees and to feel as Jesus feels.

Read [“Making Disciples – Part II”](#).
Select the English pdf file.

Burnout or Brownout?

Open Letter from a Colleague

by Scott Francis

Dean of Students
Full Gospel Bible College, Eston, SK

Scott is married to Janelle, who also teaches at FGBC, and they have two children. He is a former youth pastor who describes himself as “Daniel Boone with a Bible” and uses his blog for mentoring.

Dear Student Development worker,

How are you doing? Are you busy? Are you tired?

There are two types of tired. One is slept away with one good night in the sheets. The other exhaustion is much deeper. This one feels even worse in the morning.

The difference is like a sprinter and a marathon runner. The sprinter, after 100 meters, may be temporarily winded but is ready to go again that same day. The marathon runner is inconsolably shattered and done competing for the rest of the week. College life is much like the latter.

You might know this feeling: You have not “sprang” out of bed in months. Standing in front of the mirror at the start of the day, you feel like it should be the end of the day. Nothing of great consequence is on the agenda, and yet there is a quiet nagging feeling of dread. Hiding in the layers of your psyche is a rogue emotion that just wants a good irrational crying session. I know because I have been there.

I should have known better. A new baby, a thesis deadline, and a waiting list of serious student issues all required twenty all-nighters one semester. When my eye started twitching, it should have been a warning sign. But there was so much “good” stuff that needed doing. It is a long familiar story, but two years later I am still trying to bring recovery to the frazzled neurons in my brain.

Sports psychology reveals that high level performance can be maintained only temporarily. To continue to perform optimally, we must rest optimally. I wish someone would have told that to the twitchy-eyed-all-nighter-idiot

(continued on page 7)

two years ago. If we want to do well we must rest.

Let us be honest: No one is going to give us a medal for burning out.

CD Review:

“Rural Urbanitis”

by Martin Blumrich

reviewed by Colleen Taylor

Student Development professionals are typically multi-talented. Martin Blumrich fits this description. Dean of Students and Instructor at Nipawin Bible Institute in Northern Saskatchewan, Martin, is also a talented songwriter and musician. At the CACSD conference in May, Martin treated his colleagues to a concert, featuring songs from his forthcoming CD. It was a delightful and cozy setting—a “house concert” in the Heritage College & Seminary student lounge. While it is illuminating to hear stories behind the songs from Martin himself, the CD is fairly self-explanatory, with short paragraphs telling something about each song’s origins.

This rich and refreshing CD is fast becoming one of my favourites. Martin’s lyrics are intelligent, poetic, and skillfully crafted, speaking of community and faith, life and love. The rhythms and

Here are three pointers learned from the being on the recovery side of burn out.

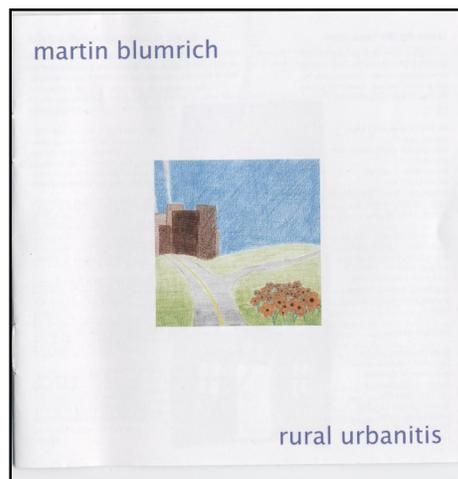
1) Be a good animal: Sleep lots, eat well, exercise, breath deeply and make love to your spouse (if appropriate). Do not believe that the mind and body are separate. What is good for the heart is good for the brain.

2) Swing left or right: Most of our daily activities can be polarized as either right or left brain thinking. When you take a break to rest, do something from the other hemisphere. If you read technical books, read poetry in your break. If you concentrate for hours in

meetings, loose yourself for hours hiking with the dog. Paint a picture, read an adventure novel or do a puzzle. Getting caught up on your office work will not get you caught you up on rest.

3) Meditate: Learn the skill of relaxing and focusing. This not only brings the health benefits of the relaxation response, but it also re-programs your instinctual behaviours because the process is very similar to hypnosis. Truth within scripture will only set you free if it is internalized and owned.

May you find rest this semester.



Martin is also listed as the crayon artist himself.

Invite Martin to sing for you – on his CD or, even better, live and in person.

THIRSTY, DIGGING, DRY (excerpt)

*Give me water, I'm thirsty
From digging my own well
I'm tired and so weak
Thinking of quitting, might as well*

*What a love,
that picks me up when I'm down
and under almost drowned
What a love,
that sees me for what I am
Don't understand
It's too profound*

Milestones

Adel (Letourneau) Klassen of Columbia Bible College: "I have moved to a new position, Director of Alumni Relations (from Service Learning Associate) as Columbia develops the first ever alumni relations office and a vision to re-connect with 70 years of alumni. It's a huge job, but I'm excited to take on this new challenge and start something fresh...the possibilities are endless!"

Diane Pearson, Vice President for Student Services at Canadian University College, has announced her retirement for September 1, 2007. A Search Committee has been formed to seek a replacement.

Kara Cornies was born to **Karen and Ron Cornies** on November 14th, 2006 at 8:40 p.m.; 8lbs, 7oz, 21 inches. Mum, Dad and Baby are all doing well.

Rob and Tanya Hughes are grateful for their early Christmas present. **Makenna Grace Hughes** was born at 11:46 a.m. on Dec 22nd, 2006; 7 lbs, 12 oz, 20 3/4 inches.

Editor's Notes

A strong theme of rest has emerged in this issue of *Partner*. Perhaps the beginning of second semester seems like a strange time of year to talk about rest and self-care. After all, we are coming into the home stretch of the academic year.

Yet in the rush and excitement, it's important to keep perspective and balance. I remember crashing after many exhausting semesters. Is that

avoidable? Sue James and Scott Francis think so. Connie Duarte contributes some messages we can share with our students (and apply to ourselves), while Bob Crawford muses on patience and gentleness in meetings. Two academics speak to us in a different voice: Martin Blumrich through music and Scott Francis through poetry.

Why not rest on a retreat this semester? The CACSD executive has created a

special [retreat bursary](#) for this purpose. Every blessing for a restful semester.

Colleen



photo: Booth College

Partner is the official journal of CACSD (Canadian Association for Christians in Student Development), published at least twice per year in PDF format and electronically mailed to all members of the Association. The purpose of *Partner* is to promote professional development, research, publication, and community among Christian professionals in the field of Student Affairs, particularly in Canada. The ideas and opinions published in *Partner* are not necessarily the views of the executive officers or the organization of CACSD, and are solely those of the individual authors.

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Who Said That?

To my RAs and SRC

by Scott Francis

**A whisper comes out of the breeze
Deity camouflaged in air**

"Mighty Warrior"

The coward turns, "Who said that?"

Who said that?

**Someone whispered in your ear last spring
But knowing God is sovereign
There was more than one voice**

"Will you lead the students next year?"

Who said that?

**There are others who are more qualified.
Others who are smarter, more committed
and better suited.
But they are not here.**

**Moses my servant is dead – now, cross this river and take the land.
The other RA has graduated – now, take us where we have never
been.**

**You are the one sovereignty picked to lead this year.
You have a commission from God.
You may be scared, you may be unsure.
But, hear the words to the coward in the wine press.**

"Be strong and courageous."

photo: Booth College