

## THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS and EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

### ATLANTIC SCHOOL of THEOLOGY

[www.astheology.ns.ca](http://www.astheology.ns.ca)



Atlantic School of Theology serves Christ's mission by shaping effective and faithful ordained and lay leaders and understanding among communities of faith. We did this in a variety of ways in 2025. With students and alumni in almost every United Church of Canada Region, we bring together a community with an extensive understanding of the varied needs of the church. The Summer Distance MDiv continues to be the degree with the highest enrollment. This form of the MDiv is normally 5 years and integrates the 2-year SME required for ordination into the program of study. This program brings students together for 6 weeks of intensive learning on campus in the summer, and online, synchronous, and asynchronous classes are taken in the fall and winter. This integrated MDiv, suitable for those who have been approved as candidates and deemed eligible for a pastoral appointment outside of SME, enables candidates to begin working in a ministry site at the start of their degree, or at any point within it, integrating the study of theology with the practice of ministry, allowing them to earn an income, serve the church and experience 6 weeks each year of in person community, formation and learning. Many of our graduates will be ordained at spring meetings of their regions, and we rejoice in their success and the ministry they will continue to share with the church.

In addition to the MDiv degree, we have United Church of Canada Students enrolled in the MA, as well as 3 diplomas and a wide range of continuing education options. The Diploma in Theological Studies and the Diploma in Intergenerational Faith Formation are lovely stepping stones for those interested in theological education but not sure if they want to commit to a degree. AST is also beginning to offer micro-credentials for those looking to develop recognized skills in practical aspects of pastoral ministry. We believe these short-term, specifically focused areas of learning will provide people with credentials that will be valuable for the wider church.

The Bachelor of Theology degree, which includes a "Ministry Specialization" stream, is proving popular with UCC students. We anticipate our first UCC graduates in this stream in May 2027. This degree reduces the barrier for those without an undergraduate degree who feel called to serve the church and want academic excellence at a bachelor's level, combined with opportunities for practical experience serving the church. Students who complete the degree and all the requirements for Testamur can be approved for SME as the final requirement for ordination. We are excited about the ways this may meet the identified needs of our founding parties. We value our relationship with the Office of Vocation and Candidacy Boards across the country as we seek to respond to the educational needs of the church for shaping effective and faithful leaders. We are grateful to Pine Hill Divinity Hall, who offer all United Church of Canada Candidates for ministry with a full tuition bursary, allowing them to follow their calling without incurring huge debt.

Our President, the Rev. Dr. Heather McCance, works closely with the other heads of UCC colleges and schools as we seek to find ways of sharing ideas and resources. As part of that consortium, AST is pleased to be part of the large-scale Lilly Grant, Reimagining Theological Education Across the United Church of Canada Affiliated Schools. In addition to this grant, AST is the lead school in a second large-scale Lilly grant given to work with schools from other denominations and the Canadian Council of Churches on Ecumenical Shared Ministries.

We are excited to move this initiative forward and help congregations, students and judicatories develop and work successfully in these ecumenical partnerships.

AST is involved in various accreditation processes to ensure that we maintain the highest standards of theological education.

Like all educational institutions, we face challenges, and the road ahead is not always clear; however, there is a spirit of optimism and a sense of renewal within our school community as we chart a path for the future.

It is a joy to work with United Church of Canada students as well as those who support them within the administrative structure of the church and individual communities of faith. We welcome your input as we seek to serve the ever-changing needs of the church. It has been a pleasure to serve as Dean at AST for these past 3 years.

With the Deepest Respect and Gratitude,

*Susan MacAlpine Gillis*

Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis  
Academic Dean  
Atlantic School of Theology

CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES



The Centre for Christian Studies is a national theological school grounded in the tradition of *diakonia*. We prepare people for ministries in the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada and offer lifelong learning for anyone who wants to deepen their faith-in-action.

### 2025 Students and Programming

Central to the preparation of diaconal ministers and lay leaders are the learning circles, the vessels through which learning, growth and development occur. In addition to the regular circles, a 2-week Learning on Purpose circle was held in Winnipeg in June 2025. The Theme circles offered in 2025 included

Ministry as Community Building, Worship,  
Grief and Loss, Ministry as Listening,  
Power and Privilege, and

Health, Pain and Trauma, as well as the three Integration Year Circles.

Learning on Purpose and all Theme circles are open to lay people, candidates for all ministry streams, and ministry personnel for Continuing Education. More information is available online about [upcoming learning circles](#), for both online and in-person 6-day intensives and 6-week circles.

In Winter, 2025, we also offered a course on Intercultural Leadership for Educational Ministry, in collaboration with Emmanuel College and St. Andrews College.

Two students and one programme staff person were able to be part of the meeting of the Diakonia World Federation (DWF) in Tanzania, in July 2025, and that formed their Global Perspective Experience.

In other programming news, we continued our free, monthly, 'lunchtime' Zoom CCS Fridays on topics, such as

- Punching Up or Punching Down: Comedy, Politics, and Social Justice
- Unbounded Stories from Palestine,
- Our Daily Bread: Resisting the Central Lie of 'Diet Culture',
- Decolonizing Diakonia,
- God and Money, and
- Microaggressions

### **2025 Milestones and Celebrations**

The 2025 graduates were Hyerim Park, Letitia Berger, Lisa Byer-de Wever, Lisa Leffler, and Lynda Dickson. Hyerim Park was a candidate from the Prairie to Pine Regional Council.

Ann Naylor was recognized as a beloved and honoured Companion of the Centre. Ann's commitment to diaconal ministry and to the Centre for Christian Studies is unquestioned, as was evidenced by the number of former students who spoke of the profound influence Ann had on their personal formation and ministry identity. Her service to the General Council Office of the United Church of Canada as staff and then as Acting General Secretary in the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education was acknowledged.

It was with a deep sense of gratitude that CCS accepted and acknowledged the retirement of Cheryl Thiessen. Cheryl served faithfully as the Office Administrator for 10 years and was also celebrated at the graduation event.

Later in the calendar year, the contract period of Gwen McAllister came to an end. Gwen held the role of Interim Development Coordinator for 2 years.

The Centre welcomed two new members of staff: Robyn Cruz and Marlene Britton.

Robyn assumed the role of Finance and Administration Coordinator, having previously worked as a manager with the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Council. She has brought to CCS her love for administration and her deep understanding of her own roots as an Indigenous person.

Marlene assumed the role of Principal for Leadership and Development, having previously served at the General Council Office of the United Church of Canada, as the Director of the Office of Vocation.

### **2025 Strategic Planning and Deeper Partnerships**

The recommendations in the areas of governance simplification and staffing restructuring have been put into place. New staff were hired as detailed above, and significant, deep conversations were held with potential partners in theological education. While those conversations were taking place, town hall meetings were also held with the various constituencies of CCS in order to share the progress of the conversations, as well as to garner helpful contributions and to have concerns aired.

### **2025 Sustainability and Partnerships**

Amidst the shifting sands of theological education, funding challenges, and volatile investment markets, we continue to be sustained by generous donors, creative collaboration, dedicated and visionary volunteers, Council members, and staff, a diaconal imagination of what church can be in the world, and

God's grace. We are thankful for the mutual partnerships with which we engage in this sacred ministry of education, spiritual care, and justice. Particularly with; Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, St Stephen's College, St Andrew's College / Saskatoon Theological Union, associate schools in the United and Anglican Churches of Canada, and the national staff who support them, Diakonia of the United Church of Canada, Anglican Deacons Canada, Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC), and all who support CCS and its students (particularly, diaconal Mentors, Field Placement organizations & communities of faith, Learning Facilitators, Local Committee members).

***Curious about which CCS Diaconal Diploma and Certificate students  
live in your region or relate to your candidacy board?***

Jamie Miller, Hyerim Park (grad '25), Shaun Loney

**In addition...**

*The 2026 Learning on Purpose course will be held in June at Five Oaks, in Paris, Ontario.* Come deepen your self-awareness as a leader in these changing times, discern your next steps in ministry or formation, learn practical tools like the Spiral model of theological reflection, and engage liberative perspectives of the bible, theologies, and social analysis. And it's fun! From puppets to Paulo Freire to prayer, music to Miriam to social movements, come learn together.

**To know more...**

- Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter Common Threads: <http://ccsonline.ca/blog/common-threads/>
- Follow us on Facebook or Instagram to hear about happenings and upcoming events.
- For information about the program and studying with us: <http://ccsonline.ca/about-ccs/>
- For more details and numbers, 2025 Yearbook, 2025 Annual Report, and financial statements: <http://ccsonline.ca/event/ccs-annual-general-meeting-2025/>

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Marlene Britton,*

*Principal*

**EMMANUEL COLLEGE**



**EMMANUEL COLLEGE**  
OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear friends in the United Church of Canada,

Greetings from Emmanuel College at Victoria University in the University of Toronto. We give thanks for your ongoing partnership in theological education, leadership formation, and the shared work of nurturing ministry across the Church. It is a privilege to share a brief update on the life and work of the College.

**Lilly Endowment Grants: Pathways for Tomorrow**

Emmanuel College is deeply engaged in the *Pathways for Tomorrow* initiative, supported by the Lilly Endowment. This includes:

- **\$1M USD** awarded directly to Emmanuel College
- **\$10M USD** awarded to the United Church of Canada (Collaborative Grant)
- **\$6.5M USD** awarded to the Toronto School of Theology (Collaborative Grant)

These grants are enabling us to strengthen leadership pathways, expand continuing education, and deepen collaboration with the United Church of Canada.

As part of this work:

- We will be hiring a **Manager for the Emmanuel Professional Advancement and Continuing Training Centre (EMPACT Centre)** this spring. This role will help coordinate Emmanuel's work within the Lilly initiative and support collaboration with United Church partners.
- We are also launching a **pilot Artist-in-Residence program**, supporting creativity, worship life, and experiential learning within theological education.

#### New Centre for Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counselling

We are pleased to share that Emmanuel College has secured **\$750,000 in funding over 10 years** to establish the:

#### **Tung Lin Kok Yuen (TLKY), Canada Society Research and Education Centre for Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counselling**

This groundbreaking Centre will:

- Launch a **new academic journal** in Buddhist Spiritual Care and Practical Theology
- Host **academic conferences and scholarly gatherings**
- Offer **psychospiritual continuing education for healthcare professionals**
- Serve and support **Buddhist communities in Canada and beyond**

This initiative reflects Emmanuel's growing leadership in multifaith theological education and its commitment to equipping leaders for diverse spiritual care contexts.

#### Faculty Updates

We celebrate important milestones among our faculty:

- **Dr. Glenn McCullough – Interim review:** Successfully completed his interim (pre-tenure) review.
- **Dr. Henry Shiu – Tenure and promotion:** Approved for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, effective July 1, 2026, along with a year of research leave.
- **The Very Reverend Dr. Carmen Lansdowne – New appointment:** We were pleased to welcome Dr. Lansdowne to Emmanuel College on December 1, 2025, following the completion of her term as Moderator of the United Church of Canada. She serves as Assistant Professor of United Church Studies—the first appointment of its kind at Emmanuel—and will serve as the Director of the Master of Divinity program, as of July 1, 2026. We are deeply grateful for the leadership and insight she brings from across the national Church, enriching the formation of our students and strengthening our shared work of preparing future ministry leaders.

#### Student Admissions

- **Continued growth in applications:** Emmanuel is experiencing another year of strong application growth, with sustained and increasing interest in our multi-faith Master of Psychospiritual Studies program.
- **Steady MDiv enrolment with renewed focus:** Applications to the Master of Divinity program remain steady. Through our participation in the Lilly Endowment *Pathways for Tomorrow* initiative, we are intentionally deepening engagement with United Church communities—supporting vocational discernment and encouraging potential leaders for ministry.
- **Strong doctoral interest:** Emmanuel has received a growing pool of applicants, including 26 PhD applications in the first round, among the highest in recent years.

- **TST-wide doctoral trends:** Across the Toronto School of Theology, there were 54 PhD applications (32 international, 22 domestic).

We continue to discern ways to strengthen financial support for students, ensuring accessibility and competitiveness within the broader University of Toronto context.

#### Psychospiritual Continuing Education Initiative

Supported by a generous gift from **Ms. and Mr. Price**, Emmanuel has launched a **three-year pilot in Psychospiritual Continuing Education:**

- A dedicated **program coordinator has been hired**
- A **soft launch will take place online on April 24, 2026**
- Initial instructors include **Prof. Jenny Bright** and **Dr. Agnes Wong (SickKids Hospital)**
- A formal public launch is anticipated in **2026–2027**

This initiative aligns closely with Emmanuel's commitment to equipping leaders for **spiritual care, counselling, and ministry in complex contexts.**

#### Alumni Update: Centennial 2028

As Emmanuel College prepares for its Centennial in 2028, we are updating our alumni records and reconnecting with graduates across generations. If you are an Emmanuel College alum, please reach out to [emmanuel.admissions@utoronto.ca](mailto:emmanuel.admissions@utoronto.ca) to ensure we have your current contact information and can keep you connected to the celebrations ahead.

We are also delighted to invite alumni to our **annual Alumni Day on May 11, 2026**, a special opportunity to return to Emmanuel, reconnect with the community, and celebrate the life of the College as we begin this journey toward our Centennial. Two of our faculty members, Prof. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson and Prof. Nazila Isgandarova will be workshop leaders for the Day.

#### Closing

We remain deeply grateful for the United Church of Canada's ongoing partnership in theological education and leadership formation. Your communities continue to shape and send students to Emmanuel, and we are committed to forming leaders who embody deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice.

With gratitude and every blessing,



Rev. Dr. HyeRan Kim-Cragg,  
Principal and Professor of Preaching  
Emmanuel College

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**ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE**



Dear Kin in Christ of the Prairie to Pine Regional Council,

I am grateful for the continued support and encouragement of the Regional Councils, and I am pleased to share an update on the life and work of St. Andrew's College. There is much to be thankful for, and a strong sense that we are building on solid foundations while responding faithfully to the needs of the church today.

The Oliver & Gruchy Learning Centre continues to emerge as a central platform for accessible theological learning. It is serving both congregations and the wider church with programmes that are flexible, grounded and responsive. The Centre has become a trusted space for ongoing formation, supporting lay leaders, ministry personnel and those exploring new questions of faith and practice. Its reach and impact continue to grow, and it reflects our shared commitment to learning that is open, hospitable and connected to the realities of ministry.

Our collaboration through the Saskatoon Theological Union remains a significant strength. Working alongside our partner colleges, we are expanding learning opportunities through shared faculty, joint programmes and a spirit of genuine collegiality. This collaboration allows us to steward resources wisely while also enriching our students' academic and formational experience. The current alignment with the STU is strong and life-giving, and it continues to shape our teaching and community in constructive ways.

The College continues to welcome a strong cohort of students preparing for leadership in the church. Our students bring diverse experiences, cultural backgrounds and vocational stories, alongside a deep commitment to ministry and service. Their presence enriches classroom learning and community life, and their engagement gives us confidence in the future leadership of the United Church. We remain attentive to the changing patterns of ministry and are committed to preparing leaders who are adaptable, reflective and grounded in faith.

Alongside this, important work is underway to strengthen pathways of leadership development and vocational discernment within the United Church. We are paying close attention to how people are invited, accompanied and supported as they explore calls to ministry and other forms of leadership. This work is relational and collaborative, and it reflects a shared desire to nurture gifts with care, clarity and integrity.

We also continue to value and deepen our local and international partnerships. These relationships broaden our perspective and root our work in the global church. We are especially pleased to name our new relationship with Murray Theological College in Zimbabwe. This partnership is already opening opportunities for mutual learning, shared reflection and deeper solidarity, and we look forward to where it may lead.

Overall, there is a strong sense of momentum and hope. We remain committed to serving the church with humility, imagination and faithfulness, and we are thankful for the ongoing relationship with the Regional Councils as partners in this shared ministry.

In Christ,

*Dea. Dr. Richard Manley-Tannis*  
*Principal, St. Andrew's College*

## SANDY-SAULTEAUX SPIRITUAL CENTRE



Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) is a place where we honor the Creator's good Earth, being our greatest Teacher and Provider. Within that vision, the SSSC holds space for multiple groups of people to experience and learn more of the ways of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being through the strength of Elders' wisdom that guides us to foster teachings of respect, healing, and connectedness to be shared for the benefit of all individuals and for restoring balance and wholeness among all peoples and all creation.

Many types of people from all across the Country connect with SSSC to participate and support its programming, which includes, but is not limited to, family wellness, such as Return of the Buffalo; reconciliation through intercultural and land-based teachings and ceremonies; and spiritual leadership training through the Indigenous Ministry Program through the United Church of Canada (UCC). This program provides an educational pathway to ordained and diaconal ministers with the UCC, as well as presbytery-certified Indigenous ministry candidates in The Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC). Due to the nature of this report, the focus will primarily be on the Indigenous Ministry Training.

### Elders' Vision

Francis Sandy and Dr. Jessie Saulteaux were two elders from different parts of the Country who shared a dream to have Indigenous spiritual leaders serving in their communities as ministers and leaders who would understand and respect the spiritual, social, cultural, political and historic values that are important to each of them, respectively.

*Dr. Jessie Saulteaux* had a vision of a sky full of many stars, each representing an Indigenous Christian Leader trained to serve the Indigenous churches of the UCC.

*Francis Sandy* had a dream that all 22 United Churches in Ontario and Quebec would be served by Indigenous Ministers.

Both Theological schools, the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre in Manitoba and the Francis Sandy Theological School in Ontario, operated from the 1980's until both schools amalgamated as one in 2011 and became the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. To date, including our founding schools, there have been 2356 spiritual leaders who graduated from the course.

### Indigenous Ministry Training Highlights for 2024-2025

- The Keeper of the Circle (Principal/Director) Aliesha Desjarlais, assisted in the role as Keeper of the Learning Circle from June 2024 to December 2024, when Rev. Maggie Dieter joined SSSC as KOLC in January 2025 and works 0.6 FTE.
- Leadership Mondays were implemented in April 2025. Its purpose is to hold space for students to bring ministerial issues, concerns, and questions for peer support and to deliver learning opportunities in response to needs that arise, i.e., Theological Reflection, ministry identity, conflict, and communication styles, etc.

### Active and Non-Active

- Active = 10
- Including: 1 = Ordination suitability; 2 = Ordination Affirmation; 3 = Ordination Promise; 3 = Exploring; and 1 PLAR student
- Inactive = 4

Location of Students:

- Active Student: 4 = Ontario; 4= Manitoba; 2 = Alberta
- Inactive Students: 4 = Manitoba

**2024-2025 Academic Calendar:****1. BS2 Wisdom and Psalms**

- **Course Description:** From the Wisdom books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations), a discussion of: the images of God and the Spirit; themes, metaphors, proverbs, poetry and art; and human-to-human relationships and with creation. From the Wisdom tradition of Indigenous Elders, a discussion of these same matters is intended to encourage appreciation for and use of this cultural wisdom.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
  - Learn to ask questions and find answers that will help them understand the context of the Psalms and Wisdom Scriptures and the meanings of imagery and language used. Tools for understanding and interpreting historical and cultural forms will be introduced and used.
  - Know how to research and apply appropriate Indigenous stories and cultural information as a complement to and illustrative of their presentation of the Scriptures.
  - Be encouraged to think creatively and to observe carefully the various means and methods that Elders use in passing on cultural wisdom.
  - Think reflectively about the Wisdom Scriptures and Traditional Wisdom and where they agree, disagree, complement, contrast and intersect.

**2. HS4 Prophets and Prophecies**

- **Course Description:** This circle invites participants to reflect on prophetic imagination as inspiring and participating in the creation and recreation of the world toward greater justice and harmony amidst cycles and systems of power built on dominance and death. It asks participants to draw together resources from both Indigenous and Christian traditions to enliven a posture of prophetic ministry to (re)build communities that promote life and justice amidst cycles and systems that wield oppression, death, and a consciousness of empire that plunders and dominates.
- **Learning Outcomes**
  - Understand the context in which the prophetic books of the Hebrew Scriptures were compiled, recurring themes the prophets spoke to, and how these informed practices of storytelling and sacred tradition in the ancient Near Eastern context.
  - Recognize chronological timelines as they informed the experience of Biblical prophets and Indigenous prophets from different time periods.
  - Identify similarities and differences in how Indigenous and Christian traditions relate or diverge in the role of prophets and prophecy.
  - Discuss personal experience of prophets/prophecy and how it relates to communities and contexts today.
  - Demonstrate the ability to integrate concepts of the role of prophets, prophecy, and prophetic imagination through language, stories, ceremony, or cultural protocol.
  - Interpret and practice an appreciation for the importance of women's roles in prophetic imagination in the (re)creation of worlds of greater justice and harmony.

**3. HCD1 Introduction to Church History:**

- **Course Description:** This Learning Circle offered an overview of church history from the perspective of mission. It explored the missionary movements of the early church through the present, with particular emphasis on the missionary work of The United Church of Canada. The colonial impact of the mission on Indigenous peoples was critically examined.

- **Learning Outcomes:** at the conclusion of the learning circle, the student will be able to:
  - Identify how Christian mission work has evolved within the 2000-year history of the Christian Church.
  - Understand the colonial impact of Christian mission on Indigenous peoples
  - Understand the evolving forms of home and overseas mission within The United Church of Canada

#### 4. **BS 1 Introduction to the Bible and Bible Study Methods**

- **Course Description:** This course provided an introduction to the Bible and Bible study by exploring the Bible's major themes and the story that it tells of the Creator's relationship to humanity. The course looked at how the content of the Bible is shaped by the geographic, cultural, and social contexts out of which its different writings emerged. The Circle looked at various methods and approaches that can be used to study the Bible in ways that nurture faith in the Creator and the Creator's saving ways.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Through participating in this course, students acquired:
  - An overview of stories of the Bible that tell how the Creator creates the world & works to heal and renew it;
  - Knowledge of the geographical, historical, and social context out of which the Bible's different writings emerged;
  - Greater awareness of the Bible's major themes and teachings;
  - Familiarity with different ways of reading and studying the Bible;
  - Recognition of how certain aspects of the Bible must be resisted because they are theologically and ethically problematic for Christians as a whole, and especially for Indigenous peoples;
  - Greater awareness of how the Bible relates to Indigenous worldviews and ways;
  - Deeper appreciation for how the Bible can nurture healthy and life-giving Christian faith.

#### 5. **CE5 Youth and Urban Ministry**

- **Course Description:** Explored spirituality, theology, and practices surrounding the faith formation of youth and people who live in urban settings. Students learned about different ways that urban and youth ministries and outreach look in urban settings, identified ways to partner with urban ministries in their area and generated practices for walking alongside youth on the adventure of discipleship.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Gained deeper insights into:
  - How ministry in urban centres can be shaped in a time of change and disruption to be one of accompanying individuals of all ages in their faith journey, their spiritual development, and their personal growth in ways that encourage and support renewal of a cultural identity and positive self-esteem.
  - How organizations and ministries meet the diverse needs of individuals
  - The gifts and challenges of working with urban settings that foster mutuality, equity, and respect.
  - How church and community can walk together with people of all ages in a good way that creates conditions to break down systemic barriers and build opportunities that bring wholeness, self-identity, economic, social, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.
  - Indigenous spiritual ways of knowing that provide guidance, grounding and understanding of how the Creator is present in the lives of Urban Youth to enhance their sense of belonging, wholeness, and wellness.
  - Empowering youth in their own advocacy efforts in the community to have their needs met in the urban centres.

## 6. PM3 Communion, Baptism, Marriage, and Funerals

- **Course Description:** This course looked at the history, theology, and practice of Christian worship services for communion, baptism, marriage, and funeral/celebration of life and to compare these with traditional Indigenous teachings and ceremonies and enhance knowledge, skills, and experience of Indigenous teachings and related traditional Indigenous ceremonies for rites and passages through life alongside Christian theology and worship services for communion, baptism, marriage, and funeral/celebration of life. Students will also learn how to record these events to meet requirements for church archives and vital statistics.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
  - Gained understanding of the history and theology of Christian religious practice through reading, research, preparation and delivery of services.;
  - Able to draw comparisons between Christian practice and Indigenous understandings and practices with the teaching Elders in the Learning Circle.
  - Students will reflect their understanding and experience of course material in small and large group discussions as well as through interactive or dramatic presentations to the class.
  - Will have learned how to adapt resources to share learnings in their field placements.
  - Will have practiced theological reflection relating the benefits/challenges in sharing course learnings through their community ministry practice through their learning journals.

## 7. PM3 Communion, Baptism, Marriage, and Funerals

- **Course Description:** This course was designed to explore practical tools in crafting and delivering sermons, as well as look at oral traditions. The Learning Circle participated (virtually) in the 2025 Festival of Homiletics that provided space for deep theological reflection. Its preachers/lecturers were inspirational. They demonstrated how to navigate 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. The 2025 theme was *Preaching to Heal the Divide*, apropos for a time such as this in our families, communities, and world.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Students will have:
  - Explored Biblical teachings, theology, image, deepened understanding of practice and role of worship and preaching and how it can be grounded in hope
  - Incorporated individually or in pairs, designed a worship service, presided and delivered a sermon.
  - Begun to compile a list/folder and become familiar with worship and sermon resources for their own use.
  - Reflective journal entries from learnings and observations.

## 8. CS 2 - Gospels

- **Course Description:** This course was designed for students to gain experience and skill in reading and interpreting the bible and theological reflection on scripture.
- **Learning Outcomes:** The student gained
  - Insights into the world of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine (Jesus 'world);
  - A basic understanding of how the Gospels originated and how to read them as stories about Jesus;
  - Understanding of key differences between the Synoptic Gospels and John;
  - Understanding of and appreciation for the distinctive themes, emphases, Christology, and characteristic styles of each of the four Gospels;
  - Acquire a solid grasp of the overall content and structure of each Gospel;
  - Reflect on the ongoing significance and relevance of the life and teachings of Jesus for people today;

- Gain experience in interpreting Scripture in community for purposes of helping and healing.

During the period that we are gathered at the SSSC, the Keeper of the Learning Circle has set regular time to check in on a one-on-one basis with each student. There is also an opportunity to gather virtually or by telephone in between Learning Circles.

Post Learning Circle, the Keeper of the Learning Circle reviews the Learning Circle participants' assignments and journal entries.

- In June of 2025, SSSC held a Friends and Family Gathering
- Completed the development of the Prior Learning Recognition Assessment (PLAR) Pathway and facilitated PLAR Pathways for 1 student and 1 guest who had an abundant amount of experience, skills, and strengths relating to ministry.
- Worked collaboratively with the Indigenous Office of Vocation, supported local ministry personnel to prepare to offer training and mentorship for individuals seeking to become Sacrament Elders.
- Participated in the UCC's Theological School review with SSSC colleagues and students.
- Connected with the Vancouver School of Theology to review our historic relationship.
- Participated in a professional development day with colleagues and Family Way Lodge
- Participated in a UCC 100th Anniversary celebration
- Ongoing work and support with the Vision Keepers and the Students between Learning Circles.

#### 2025-2026 Academic Calendar:

<b>October 2025</b> Five Oaks, ON	BS4 Daniel and Revelations AT8 Traditional Teachings
<b>January 2026</b>	HS2 Exodus, Judges, and Kings TH4 World Religions
<b>March 2026</b>	PC7 Mental Health First Aid BS3/PC6 Scriptures & Healing
<b>May 2026</b>	AT1 Traditional Medicine PC4 LGBTQ2S+ & Healthy Relationships

#### Other Events at SSSC in 2026:

- Monthly and seasonal circle teachings and ceremonies (sweat, pipe, fasting)
- Seeds to Stew: Three Sisters every quarter
- Return of the Buffalo monthly
- Community Connection events weekly to monthly
- Mamawe Ota Askihk Family Camp once per year
- Art & Spirit (TBD)

The [Annual Report for 2024-2025](#) summarizes the activities, achievements, and challenges of the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC).

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Aliasha Desjarlais*  
*Keeper of the Circle*