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**How Shall** We Disagree? DAVE LOEWEN

Alma Matters: Inspiring Alumni Engagement CATHY KITS

**1** See, I Am Making All Things New! DARREN SPYKSMA

14 School as a Place of Healing and Hope for Students Impacted by Trauma JENNY WILLIAMS & AMANDA BROADWAY

21 From Bubble to Bridge: the 2022 Leadership Conference ED NOOT 0 Or can be delight call upon God at a
1 I will teach you b
Almighty hath, as
2 Behold you all ak vain things will
3 This is the

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#### Dave Loewen

# How Shall We Disagree?

Christian communities have always had their disagreements. But these days, our differences are expressed with ever-increasing hostility and mistrust. Is there a better way to engage when we can't agree?

SPOKE AT A CONFERENCE involving Christian schools across North America about a year ago. Afterward several people questioned me on where I stood on a myriad of issues. I was taken aback. I was trying to share the importance of centring our schools' visions and missions on the gospel. For some reason, that led people to need to know my stance on critical race theory, sexual orientation and gender identity, Black Lives Matter, and more, And it didn't feel like there was an invitation to talk about these topics; instead, it felt like there was pressure to choose a side. In philosophical terms, the idea of boiling everything down to one or two options is called reductionism. It takes complex issues and ideas, oversimplifies them, and then reduces them into two camps that each of us must fit into to feel accepted. And this is the rub; if you don't choose a side, you can feel ostracized by both camps, but if you choose a side, you are no longer respected by those in the other camp, and there are massive assumptions about who you

are and what you think about a whole bunch of different subjects. In the end, reductionism takes away from the creative, thoughtful, and diverse representation that is the Kingdom of God. It reduces "every tribe and every nation" to "this tribe or that tribe." It limits our ability to creatively and imaginatively seek the Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

This division is already impacting our school communities or has the potential to at any moment. One psychologist refers to our current culture as "toxically divisive" and goes on to explain that existing in a toxic culture makes us unwell as humans. This is not good news, especially for our children, who are being formed in the context of this culture.

I think pride is one of the key factors of making things so divided. There seems to be a declining posture of humility and an increasing posture of confidence and certainty in one's opinion. Somehow, we have lost the ability to be curious towards one another and instead have decided it is more important to be sure of our views and then convince one another of those views. Instead of listening and engaging with someone who disagrees, we tend to regress to a "fight or flight" response. This can look like talking over someone or using strong words to

intimidate/dismiss someone, or it can look like dismissing someone completely and having nothing to do with them. Neither of these seems to be consistent with the call of the gospel.

Oxford theologian Alasdair McIntyre states, "I can only answer the question, 'what am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'of what story or stories am I a part?" As followers of Christ, we are rooted in a different story that is *not* the same as our current culture of division. Our story is the grand story of the Bible: creation, fall, Israel, inauguration, and fulfillment. And we find ourselves between inauguration and fulfillment. What does this mean? It means Christ came to inaugurate a Kingdom that He has invited us to participate in. Think of how many times Jesus says, "the Kingdom of God is like...." He is explaining to us what the Kingdom of God is like and how we are members of the Kingdom in

this world. That is our place in the story – a people who, by no merit of our own, have been invited by a scandalously loving God into full membership into a new Kingdom, a Kingdom inaugurated by the coming of Jesus!

To be clear, this is a *new* Kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament but fundamentally shifts its orientation from the Old Testament. For example, the people of Israel existed in a culture of holiness connected to purity and purity rituals. These included the food they ate, circumcision, and ritual

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bathing (M'qvahs), whereas New Kingdom holiness is attained by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Membership in this New Kingdom is now less defined by outward rituals and more noted by evidence of the

> work of the Spirit in God's people – the fruit of the Spirit. It is also abundantly accessible "to all the world," regardless of race or creed. In the New Kingdom, how we are to be followers of Jesus in a broken world is central. It requires a new orientation, or as biblical scholar, N.T. Wright calls it, the introduction of "Messiah thinking," a way of being in the world that is fundamentally oriented around the fact that we have been bought by the body and blood of Jesus. This directly impacts how we work with one another. The New Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Spirit, and we are to be marked by the Spirit; we are to bear the Fruit of the Spirit as we engage the culture around us. There are too many examples in Scripture of how we are to treat one another to cite here but let me give just one that has captured my imagination as of late. It is the Christ hymn of Philippians 2: 5-11 (KJV):

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being the in the very form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Whereas God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Biblical scholar Michael Gorman calls this Paul's exhortation for Christians to don a posture of cruciformity. We are people of the cross, saved by grace alone, and as we walk in this world, we are to bear that reality in all we do. It's opposite to the posture of pride, "but made himself of no reputation... he humbled himself...." Of course, this doesn't mean we do not have genuine disagreements (or else why would there be over 41,000 denominations in the world?). But it does mean that *how* we disagree matters. It matters that we see each other as made in the image of God and worthy of our time and curiosity. It matters that we see ourselves as sinners redeemed by God's scandalous love and therefore carry ourselves with humility. It matters that we take Paul's exhortation seriously to "honour everyone." To me, this means we need to don a posture of the mind of Christ as we engage a culture of division. So may our Christian school communities be marked by the mind of Christ so that our children may be formed into Christlikeness. <sup>©</sup>

> **DAVE LOEWEN** dave.loewen@scsbc.ca SCSBC Executive Director



# Cathy Kits

Is your school inspiring alumni engagement? Are you seeking the opportunities to show God's faithfulness to current students by providing them with an ongoing community (a place of belonging) in their post-secondary years?

ECENTLY I HAVE BEEN WRESTLING with the subject of alumni engagement in our schools. For many students, graduation from high school feels like the end of a relationship. Often it is. In the past, schools were not always intentional in walking with their graduates as they set out on their new journeys. The lack of staffing resources, databases, and social media, made staying connected much more difficult than it is today. This has resulted in a communication gap of many years, making it challenging to find these alumni, much less re-engage with them.

While finding all those past graduates may not be possible, it is not too late to consider prioritizing establishing an alumni program at your school. In every school community, some alumni would welcome the opportunity to re-engage with their school in meaningful ways. This is also an opportunity for schools to continue to show God's love and faithfulness to the students who pass through their walls by providing them with an ongoing community and place of belonging in their post-secondary years and beyond.

Engaged alumni can become a critical part of

Alumni engagement can be defined as "activities that are valued by alumni, build enduring and mutually beneficial relationships, inspire loyalty and financial support, strengthen the institution's reputation and involve alumni in meaningful activities to advance the institution's mission." (CASE) your school's culture. Alumni can be a school's most enthusiastic champions! This is especially true for the students who were transformed through the living out of the mission and vision of your school. Over time these alumni may become your school's best ambassadors, volunteers. As you begin to build your program, remember that the needs and preferences of your recent graduates will differ from those who graduated years ago. Different strategies will be required to communicate with them. You might start by

giving partners, and sponsors.

Beyond financial giving, if provided with the opportunity, recent graduates can immediately impact your school by engaging with middle and high school students and helping them identify the pathways they want to explore upon graduation. They can share their post-secondary successes and challenges with your students and offer strategies for applying to schools and navigating the first year of college or university. Those in the trades can provide advice about how they can access programs and apprenticeships to move them into a trade, and early career alumni can share their experiences about entering today's workplace. Their fresh outlook on job searches and expectations can



Engaged alumni can become a critical part of your school's culture; alumni can be some of a school's most enthusiastic champions! inviting them to engage with your school's social media, where they can see what's going on at the school, sign up for email, or RSVP to events. From here, you can facilitate introductions between alumni in online communities and at events to connect them, the school, and your current students.

We know that stories have the power to inspire and engage, and there is untapped potential in continuing to engage with your past students through story. You already have a shared story with them; your goal is to invite them into the school's ongoing story. Some schools feature alumni in their community publications. This can be an effective way to hear their stories, and to share yours in a way that will resonate with them, connecting the past to the present and people to each

help students prepare for interviews, internships, and job offers.

There are endless ways to involve these former students, inviting them to use their gifts, whether coaching a sport, assisting with a school play, or providing opportunities to share their area of expertise with your current students.

Consider beginning alumni engagement with your current graduating class. As it is significantly easier to maintain relationships than to rebuild them later, establish a protocol for communicating with them immediately after graduation. This makes it clear that their journey with your school continues even after they graduate. other, and making your school stronger for future generations of students.

Whatever vision you have for integrating your alumni into your present story, building an alumni program begins with making it a priority, and dedicating time and resources to it. Alumni engagement will not happen overnight, so developing strategies than can be executed in the short term and sustained over the long term is crucial. However, if done well, your alumni and your school community will benefit for years to come. <sup>Q</sup>

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#### 2I-25 AUGUST 2023 SUMMIT PACIFIC COLLEGE ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE

Year Three of the revamped summer **RESIDENCY: A PLACE FOR CHRISTIAN DEEPER LEARNING.** The Residency begins with as a week-long intensive professional development opportunity equipping educators to implement Christian deeper learning into their current practice. Then schoolbased teams are supported throughout the year on an agreed-upon schedule.

This year the Residency will be offering four courses: Project-Based Learning, Teaching for Transformation, Christian Deeper Learning: Worldview, and Christian Deeper Learning: Improv. Each course features a low coach-toparticipant ratio. Participants will leave with a practical understanding of a deeper learning framework that can be immediately incorporated into their learning practice.

#### **REGISTER TODAY!** Registration is now open for August 2I-25, 2023. Visit <u>residency.scsbc.net</u> for more information Contact us: <u>residency@scsbc.ca</u>

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CHRISTIAN DEEPER LEARNING: WORLDVIEW

TEACHING FOR TRANS-FORMATION

CHRISTIAN DEEPER LEARNING: IMPROV





#### Darren Spyksma

## See, I Am Making All Things New!

The biblical call to reconciliation is far greater and more demanding than any dictionary definition; the gospel call to reconciliation is a call to pay the debts on behalf of others. A radical and almost unfathomable expectation is at the heart of the story we claim as Christian schools!

HE BIBLE IS A STORY of reconciliation. A story of God reconciling himself to all creation and inviting us to reconcile with each other and with creation. A story set in a world tainted by human selfishness on a path to destruction if it weren't for the mysterious and abundant love of God. A God so committed to reconciliation that He sent His Son, His very essence, into the world to show humans and all creation how to live as part of His reconciliation story. As Christian schools live into God's story of reconciliation, they are invited to look at the many elements of running a school through God's lens of reconciliation.

When a person reads the word reconciliation in our present time in history, it conjures up various

thoughts and emotions. A quick definition search suggests that reconciliation is complicated even for dictionaries to define. Definitions vary between "the restoration of friendly relations," "the action of making one view or belief compatible with another," and "a situation in which two people or groups of people become friendly again after they have argued." The biblical call to reconciliation is far greater and more demanding than any of these definitions. The biblical call to reconciliation, as represented in the Incarnation, is a call to pay the debts on behalf of others. A radical and almost unfathomable expectation is at the heart of the story we claim to be our story as Christian schools. What would it look like to live out the biblical story of reconciliation in the systems and practices in Christian schools?

#### **Culture as Reconciliation**

A reconciliation culture puts others first. Though challenging to measure, the culture and feel of a school are palpable upon entrance into the building. When families or students arrive late for school for the third time in a week and the eleventh time in a month, a reconciliation culture ensures that staff are not issuing "late slips" and asking for clarification. Instead, as much as is feasible, meeting the family with the necessary information they need to make the transition to school as seamless as possible. If a type of slip is required, let's call it a "We're Glad You're Here" slip.

In a reconciliation culture, staff are aware of each other's health and well-being. Staff look for opportunities to serve their peers, sharing well-designed resources (i.e., visual schedules, numeracy centres, opening circle prompts) freely with colleagues rather than using the idea of a new resource as an opportunity for personal gain.

#### Instruction as Reconciliation

Instruction through the lens of reconciliation places relationships at the centre of design. To reconcile is to be in relationship and willing to do the hard work of repairing that which is broken. As a broken person, a Christian school graduate should exhibit the skills and characteristics of a person willing to acknowledge their faults, take responsibility for their actions, and move forward without shame. All while knowing they continue to have roles and responsibilities that benefit and support the community. Instruction that does not encourage and demand a collective responsibility for each individual's learning is counter to the interdependent nature of God as found in the Trinity. Opening circles, peer teaching, mentoring, collaborative work, service, and other outward-looking practices are pedagogies that can help students practice the reconciliation story. A school's pedagogical choices can assist students in developing the self-awareness and others-awareness necessary to see relationships and reconciliation as key elements of learning and God's call on their life as community members.



#### **Assessment as Reconciliation**

No aspect of Christian schooling negatively impacts students' ability to see themselves in God's reconciliation story more than in a school's assessment systems. Any system which highlights personal achievement (i.e., awards, letter grades, percentages, and other similar practices) over collaborative development is inadvertently or intentionally rejecting God's story as the guiding story in the school. In a reconciliation culture, assessment practices should be created to focus students on growth and development within a context of mistakes as a critical element to learning. Penalties for taking longer to master a particular curricular competency (i.e., averaging marks) make the foundation of learning fear and competition, and invite cheating towards achievement rather than a focus on learning. By creating assessment practices that foster and expect reciprocal engagement between educator and learner, learning is improved and reinforces the interdependent nature of creation.

#### **Curriculum as Reconciliation**

Does the learning in your school's classrooms point students toward a deeper understanding of God and His plan for reconciliation? A curriculum with foundations in God's story is built on a structure that acknowledges God created all things good. We know that through humanity's selfishness, all aspects of creation have been negatively impacted by sin. With Christ as our example, we are invited into a way of learning that brings healing and redemption to our interactions. As we collectively live with the goal of reconciliation, God is working to restore all creation. A curriculum that reconciles explores various and wide-ranging perspectives on all learning areas. It explores the chance that the dominant story of the day is not the only story and that a reconciliatory curriculum ensures that varying voices are heard, especially the voices of the marginalized and voiceless. God is a God of all things, not just the dominant culture or story of the day. Curriculum and resources should show the complexity, pain, and beauty represented in differing perspectives of a single topic or event. Flowing out of this complexity, good learning plans will acknowledge the need for humility, listening, wrestling, and contemplation as crucial components of the learning journey.

Many competing stories are vying for the attention of our schools. To stay true to a school's mission and vision, we need to employ decision-making filters that orient us toward a God who cares deeply for all aspects of creation. As you make decisions about systems and structures for the 2023–24 school year, may an orientation toward reconciliation be one of the filters you apply to your ongoing planning. Darren Spyksma@scsbc.ca scsBc Director of Learning

### School as a Place of Healing & Hope for Students mpacted rauma



Adopting informed practices can improve academic, behavioural, well-being, and life outcomes for traumaimpacted learners and their classmates. Students benefit from feeling safe, having positive relationships, and engaging in practical self-regulating activities. Is your school developing informed approaches to trauma?

#### Jenny Williams & Amanda Broadway



CHOOLS ARE WELL-POSITIONED to support children who have lived through trauma. Trauma-informed practices in safe, caring, and relationally supportive schools can help promote healthier brain development and improve learning, social, and health outcomes for children

and youth. In Isaiah 61:1 (NLT) we are called to comfort the brokenhearted.

#### Trauma

Trauma is not defined by the events one experiences, such as natural disasters, war, abuse, bullying, loss, neglect, pain, serious injury, discrimination, or witnessing or experiencing violence. Trauma is our body's stress responses to events that surpass our nervous system's ability to cope. Constant or prolonged trauma is toxic to the brain; it can impact brain development, gene expression, and our ability to learn (Burke-Harris 2018).

#### Symptoms of Trauma

When children experience prolonged trauma, the result is toxic stress in the brain. In this state, the thinking brain goes offline, and the brain stem takes over and responds as though there is an ongoing threat. The nervous system is kept in a constant state of dysregulation, leading to flight, freeze, or fight responses that may manifest as (Brummer & Thorsborne, 2022):

- 1. Flight Responses
  - a. Bolting out of the classroom or school grounds
  - b. Running away from the situation/person
  - c. Hiding in the bathroom
  - d. Hiding under a desk



- 2. Freeze Responses
  - a. Head on desk
  - b. Blank stares
  - c. Inability to move
  - d. Disassociation
  - e. Refusal to answer questions or follow commands
  - f. Appears forgetful
  - g. Avoids tasks
- 3. Fight Responses
  - a. Aggression
  - b. Outbursts of anger
  - c. Yelling
  - d. Silliness
  - e. Arguing or threats
  - f. Disrespectful language, swearing
  - g. Refusal to comply or defiance
  - h. Pacing
  - i. Throwing objects or slamming doors
  - j. Hitting/biting/spitting

The above list of stress responses is not exhaustive, and some symptoms of toxic stress do not fit into the flight, freeze, or fight categories. Other developmental and psychological impacts of trauma may be observed (Cole et al. 2005):

- Learners may regress to behaviours seen in younger children
- Learners may re-live trauma during flashbacks, which look like disengagement
- Learners may startle easily or appear jumpy
- Learners may seem scared or have physical

Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia

#### School as a Place of Healing and Hope for Students Impacted by Trauma

signs of anxiety, such as fast heart rate, sweating, shaking, nausea, and shortness of breath

- Learners may experience crying and sadness and have no interest in playing with others or engaging in previously enjoyed activities
- Learners may have sleep problems

#### **Student Interview**

Amanda Broadway is a high school teacher, Indigenous outreach teacher, and inclusive educator. As an outreach teacher, her role was to locate students who had stopped attending school and offer them an alternative graduation program. One of Amanda's outreach students impacted by trauma was interviewed following graduation. Part of this interview is shared with permission.

Student: My anxiety used to be very bad. It is better now, but I still struggle. Most of the students in this outreach program suffer from anxiety.

Outreach Teacher: *Where did it start*?

Student: Well, we [outreach students] all hang out and talk about this. It starts from the family unit. Starts from having your security taken from you as a child. For example, my dad left when I was young. My mom asked him to choose cocaine or me and my sister. He chose cocaine. He left. We haven't really spoken to him since. As far as we know, he still does cocaine. Those experiences change a little kid's world. We grew up in poverty, and mom tried her best to raise us. She left us alone for long

When children experience prolonged trauma, the result is toxic stress in the hrain. In this state. the thinking brain goes offline, and the brain stem takes over and responds as though there is an ongoing threat. The nervous system is kept in a constant state of dysregulation, leading to flight, freeze, or fight responses.

periods of time to work. We now have no parents. Kids need parents. Most of us [outreach students] experienced this.

Outreach Teacher: *How does this affect you at school?* 

Student: You start missing a few days of class. Then you feel bad cause now you are behind. You come back, and the teacher gets mad at you. You miss more days. You don't want to get into more trouble, and the missed work becomes like a snowball to the anxiety. Self-esteem is low as it is. You go to a party, and a kid offers you weed or other drugs. You do it and say yes because you want these people to like you. When you are at a party and doing drugs, you are having a common interest. You have instant friends. You now have people to connect with.

Outreach Teacher: *What can we do as a school?* 

Student: We all say what you want to hear in the moment at school. We feel bad. We want you to like us, but we will go back to the same things when we are out. When I am at school,

I feel bad 'cause teachers don't like me or say hi to me. We screw up, but I won't return if teachers are mad at us.

Outreach Teacher: How should we respond to you?

Student: Don't be mad at us when we screw up. We already feel bad.

Outreach Teacher: *Anything else we can do? As teachers? As a school?* 

#### School as a Place of Healing and Hope for Students Impacted by Trauma

Student: Notice the kids who are not attending early. Especially the grades in 5, 6, and 7. These kids need adults in their lives to connect with. A role model.

This conversation provided the school staff with valuable insights into how trauma may affect students and how educators can respond more effectively by connecting with students, looking past their behaviour to learn more about their stories, showing care, and providing positive role models.

#### Key Components of a Trauma-Informed Approach

Desautels developed trauma-informed approach in schools (Desautels 2020):

- Create strategies and processes that help learners perceive their environment as safe and non-threatening, such as predictable routines and creating safe and welcoming spaces in the school. The perception of safety is vital for the brain and nervous system to function in a way that allows for learning to occur.
- 2. Build **strong, positive, and supportive relationships** among staff, students, and students. Relationships perceived as safe, supportive, and unconditional can be a source of healing for trauma-impacted learners. Research shows that, even under stressful conditions, consistent support from caring adults perceived as safe and supportive can help prevent or reverse the damaging effects of the toxic stress response.
- 3. Develop processes to help learners **understand brain development, how stress impacts the brain, and strategies** to increase their capacity for executive function and self-regulation. Emotional dysregulation can lead to challenging behaviours and disengagement from learning and relationships.

#### Ten Trauma-Informed Guidelines for Schools

Dr. Judith Howard synthesized key research findings in trauma informed practices to develop ten trauma-informed guidelines for schools outlined in the Australian *National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education* (Howard 2021)

- 1. Effective trauma-informed practice in schools relies on leaders who are trauma informed and can lead trauma-informed thinking, processes, and services at school.
- 2. Schools engage in high-quality, whole staff training in trauma-informed education to help educators gain the knowledge, understanding, and consistent approaches that effectively support students who have experienced trauma.
- 3. Identify learners impacted by trauma and ensure that trauma-informed practices and supports are available to these learners.
- 4. Seek to involve the children and youth impacted by trauma in designing and evaluating activities and supports intended to meet their needs.
- 5. Use trauma-informed practices to support all learners, as these practices will benefit all learners, including those learners who remain unidentified.
- 6. Emphasize the importance of developing constructive working relationships with parents and guardians of those with trauma.
- 7. Develop working relationships with local child and youth agencies and specialists who provide services to their learners.
- 8. Develop a schoolwide multi-tiered system of support for students and educators.
- 9. Provide support for educators' professional and personal well-being that proactively addresses the potential impact of supporting traumatized children and youth. Providing

#### School as a Place of Healing and Hope for Students Impacted by Trauma

educators with the time and processes for collaboration, support, supervision, and reflection on practice will help to build educator capacity and resilience.

10. Develop and revise policies that impact and address trauma-informed education, such as creating positive and instructive discipline policies and practices.

Adopting a trauma-informed approach and practices can improve academic, behaviour, well-being, and life outcomes for trauma-impacted learners and their classmates. All children and youth benefit from feeling safe, having positive relationships, and engaging in effective self-regulating activities. As articulated so powerfully by the outreach student, students will be more likely to engage in school when they feel like they belong and staff care about them.  $\bigcirc$ 

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#### **Recommended Resources**



#### Relationship, Responsibility and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners Kristin Van Marter Sourers & Pete Hall (ASCD, 2019)

Drawing from their extensive experience working with schools, students, and families, the authors provide practical advice to help educators:

- Create a culture of safety in which everyone feels valued, important, and capable of learning;
- Understand the four areas of need--emotional, relational, physical, and control--that drive student behaviours and how to support these needs with interventions;

- 3. Understand what the trauma-invested practices look like in action through real scenarios that identify students' unmet needs and suggest interventions to support students and their families; and
- Develop deeper and different ways of thinking about their role in impacting students learning, attitudes, and futures.

#### **Online Study Guide Questions**

A helpful online guide with reflective discussion questions for each chapter is available. This PDF is available as a resource to lead your staff in a book study focused on building practices that support all students as well as students impacted by trauma.

- Jenny Williams



#### A Burning in My Bones

Winn Collier (WaterBrook, 2022)

A Burning in My Bones, the authorized biography of Eugene Peterson, is a compelling read. Rather than aggrandizing the author of *The Message*, the biographer paints a picture of a passionate follower of Jesus who is fully human. The book traces Peterson's early years and the formational role of both his small-town Montana childhood and his mother's passionate Pentecostalism had on him and his unfolding desire to become a pastor. Peterson flourished in theological and biblical studies but turn away from academia to submit to a call to parish ministry.

The author paints a clear picture of a man who sought first and foremost the Kingdom of God, so much so that he often felt his work as a pastor (which he loved) pulled him away from a life of prayer, study, and writing with, about, and for God. Peterson's humility and desire to serve the Kingdom are present throughout book, including in the origins of *The Message*, which began as short, translated Bible passages for his own parishioners who were struggling to understand the biblical text.

The book is deeply enriched with excerpts from Peterson's own journals along with comments from his wife, Jan, and their three children. A Burning in My Bones is honest, well-written, and inspiring (I read it in three days over the Christmas break!).

— Dave Loewen

#### from BUBBLE to BRIDGE

#### EDUCATING CHRISTIANS FOR A DIVERSE WORLD

Leadership Conference | November 5, 2022 MARION LARSON & SARA SHADY of Bethel University, Minnesota

T JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, over 100 school board members and leaders joined us for a rich day of learning and networking in early November 2022. We gathered to hear keynote speakers Drs. Sara Shady and Marion Larson address us on the theme of "From Bubble to Bridge." They began the day by reminding us, as Diana Eck says, that "diversity is a fact; pluralism is an achievement."

This theme of bridge building is timely as we witness increasing diversity and conflict in our society. We were reminded that Christians, and organizations that bear the name of Christ, do not always navigate diversity well.

We were encouraged to resist models of isolation, discern models of conformity, and embrace models

of inclusion. According to Miroslav Volf, inclusion resembles a mutual embrace where "none remains the same because each enriches the other, yet both remain true to their genuine self." The story of John Lewis reminded us that building bridges can be risky, requiring courage and insight, recognizing that it may invoke conflict and require sacrifice.

Bridge building is best achieved when we engage the other with receptive humility, reflective commitment, and imaginative empathy.

Participants were privileged to hear three unique "bridge-building" stories from Christian school alumni and leaders. We were challenged to envision bridges our Christian schools can build in our local communities. •

ED NOOT





















#### **News & Events**



Visit scsbc.ca/navigate-conference-2023 for more information

The Business & Development Conference has a new name!

#### NAVIGATE

The SCSBC Conference for Advancement & Finance

Mark your calendars! April 2–4, 2023

New location! Coast Tsawwassen Inn Tsawwassen BC

Keynote speaker: Dr Rod Wilson

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#### Letters to the Editor

We invite questions, comments, as well as any general feedback you may have about *The Link* to contact@scsbc.ca

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