

Interdisciplinary Conference: Playing God

Guest Editorial by Jacalyn den Haan

The earth is full of the glory of God. For us as humans, this glory shows itself when we become everything we are meant to be as image bearers of Christ. It shows itself when we use both our power and our vulnerability to assist the flourishing of world.

All too often the church has mistaken its call to be image bearers and has failed to bring about justice and reconciliation to our world. We have become idolaters who prefer to use our power to manipulate others, or who refuse to take the risk of our vulnerability and prefer to sit comfortably in our church pews. Yet power and vulnerability in creative tension and tandem have the potential to bring us into healthy relationship with one another. To return to

this image-bearing calling and bring about positive change as Christians in our world, we should seek to repair our relationships with others through using both our power and vulnerability for good.

At the Interdisciplinary Studies Conference September 23 and 24, keynote speaker Andy Crouch, executive editor of Christianity Today and a senior fellow of International Justice Mission, led faculty, students, staff, and friends of King's through such discussions. This year's conference, entitled Playing God, opened our eyes to how power is both a gift and a risk. Through Crouch's use of story, song, and PowerPoint diagrams, the

continued pg. 2

In This Issue

- 1 Interdisciplinary Conference: Playing God
- 2 Reflections on a Semester in Latin America
- 4 King's Dedicates Commemorative Bench and Garden
- 5 Community Garden Update
- 6 Quest Mexico
- 7 2015 Honduras Water Project
- 8 Lady Flower Gardens



Andy Crouch gives a keynote address

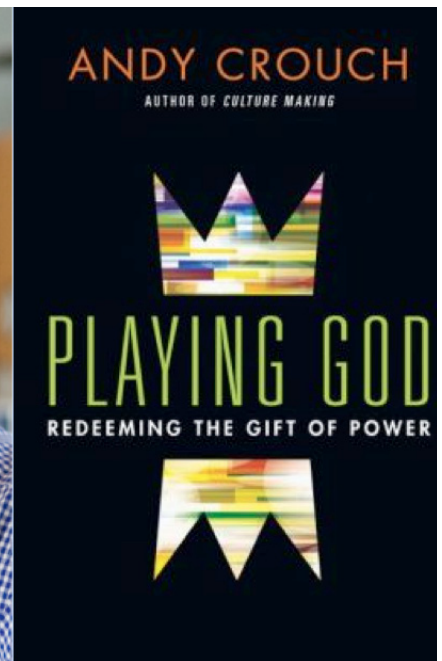
King's community was drawn into a deeper understanding of our calling as Christians in the affluent and powerful West.

The I.S. Conference heard from various people on the this subject. Omar Khadr spoke about his experiences at Guantanamo Bay and since his release from prison. His interview with Dr. Arlette Zinck revealed the power of storytelling – both listening to other's stories and telling one's own story – to overcome disparity between people. Found Wanting, an art installation by Betty Spackman, studied the relationship between humans and animals, and how “there can never be a feast without a sacrifice”. An evening performance of the play The Amish Project told the story of a school shooting in an Amish community, and explored what it means to forgive: to submit our power and

vulnerability to those who have hurt us in order to repair relationships.

With the highest attendance in I.S. history, this conference was one full of energy and lively discussion. It

was also a practical and poignant reminder of our role as Christians in our world. Staff and students left the conference with a sense of hope and potential for flourishing through the call of Christ to seek justice in our world.



Reflections on a Semester in Latin America

by Tyler Struyk

In the winter semester of 2015 I spent four months in Central America living, studying, and traveling. I was participating in the Latin American Studies Program, a study abroad program of the organization known as Council for Christian Colleges and Universities of which King's is a member. Most of my time was spent in Costa Rica but part of my time was lived out in Nicaragua and Panama as well. Our professors had us studying Latin American history, culture,

and politics, as well as liberation theology, globalization, socioeconomic issues, and of course the Spanish language, without which I don't think I would have survived my time there.

I decided to participate in this program because I wanted the opportunity to study in a foreign language setting and especially because of my fascination, long cultivated by King's, with issues of globalization, environmental degradation/protection, social justice,

and poverty all four of which are strongly interrelated and very present realities in Latin America. Of course, the change in climate was attractive too.

These aspects of my time were naturally very prominent every day and I was able to immerse myself deeply in these issues and learned much. However, even more impactful than the formal education I received was what I learned from the individual Costa Ricans

continued pg. 3

and Nicaraguans I came to know and love. Despite my own shortcomings, often due to an inherent North America ego and entailing assumptions, I was showered with grace each day and welcomed into their homes as a family or close friend. I had to learn how to be vulnerable, to be able to rely on the generosity and service of others. This was not an easy thing to do, especially being from a North American culture that bombards us every day with the message that vulnerability is an unwanted and unfortunate thing. On the contrary, through this forced vulnerability I was able to experience much through a lens I would not otherwise have had access to. In this I had the joy of witnessing alternative ways of living and through this was challenged in my own faith, habits, and convictions,



Central Valley in Costa Rica

hopefully to a place where they now encompass a more wholesome and reconciliatory worldview. Perhaps it is still too early to define how my study abroad experience

has shaped and is yet shaping me. I am still trying to figure that all out and it goes far beyond the small things like being aware of where my fruit comes. On the program we defined learning as “a change in behaviour” and much of that presumed change occurs when we return to our respective homes. I can say that this study abroad experience has broadened my understanding of what it means to be a Christian living in the world and how we are called to effect change not just abroad but, perhaps especially, in our communities where we have the greatest power to do so. I am still wrestling with what I saw, learned, and was graciously given in Central America and I don’t expect that to change anytime soon. For now, I am happy to be back at King’s and allowing my experience to augment and enrich my continuing education in this place.



Tyler with his Nicaraguan sisters

King's Dedicates Commemorative Bench and Garden

by Jacalyn den Haan

On September 30, 2015, The King's University dedicated a bench and garden in commemoration of the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The bench was built by Dr. Brian Martin and the project facilitated by The Micah Center. The dedication saw faculty, staff, students, and members of the King's community gather around the bench to listen to words of reconciliation from Aboriginal leaders. It reminded all present of the legacy of the land on which we live.

The construction of the commemorative garden was born as part of King's ongoing response to the legacy of the residential school system. King's involvement in seeking reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada began in the winter of 2014. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which toured across Canada, held events at the Shaw Conference Center in Edmonton from March 27 to 30 of 2014. This ignited a series of responses from King's, including a full-semester course on Truth and Reconciliation and a 2-day conference about the Commission and Aboriginal history. One of these days was spent at the Shaw, where students attended sharing circles, smudges, and panel sessions on what reconciliation means for Canada.

King's made several commit-

ments to the Aboriginal people as a response to the Commission, commitments which follow from the recommendations outlined in the commission's findings. Dr. Melanie Humphries re-stated these at the September 30th dedication to remind the community of the promises we have made. They include the construction of the bench and garden, increased movement towards intentionally educating King's students about Aboriginal history, and as a community intentionally upholding Aboriginal rights.

The September 30th service was not only a moving remembrance of things past, but it also looked to the future of the relationships between settlers and natives on Treaty 6 land. It was a service full of hope. One of the mandates of the Truth

and Reconciliation Commission was to return to survivors of residential schools their voice and place within the community, and this commemoration sought to do that through ceremony, storytelling, and song.

Reverend Travis Enright, a member of King's Board of Governors and a Canon Missioner in Edmonton, spoke about the garden as a resting place. Before the smudge ceremony that he conducted, he told listeners that he was not here to bless the bench and garden. They themselves would serve as the blessing for King's, and for all who came to the bench.

During the smudge, he invited us to place our hands on one another,

continued pg 4.



Littlechild and Humphries look on as MLA Marlin Schmit addresses crowd

linking each person in the circle surrounding the garden to everyone else present. In this, all were reminded of our greater connectedness to one another and to the earth. Enright blessed each person present with the smudge.

After the smudge ceremony, Chief Wilton Littlechild, one of the three Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners, came forward to speak. He was invited to sit on the bench while Dr. Will Van Arragon introduced him, following which he shared with us his family's history in regards to residential schools. He spoke of the need to remember our past so that we might move into healing.

The service ended with a call-and-response benediction taken from a poem by Maya Angelou. We declared that "the ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain/ We

are a going on people who will rise again". These words, full of hope, gave all present a vision of a good way forward in regards to relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. And this hope was found in the conversations spurred by the ceremony. It was in a reminder from our MLA that Alberta's government is taking seriously

the recommendations put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was in the action that King's itself is taking towards reconciliation, and the commitment that the institution has to respecting Aboriginal peoples and educating about their histories.



The bench and mosaic artwork

Community Garden Update

by Erica Prins

The 2015 garden season is just wrapping up and most of the vegetables have been harvested!

The purpose of the community garden is to promote healthy, flourishing lifestyles through providing people a place to grow fresh produce and engage in satisfying labour. By participating in the garden, we hope to encourage environmental sustainability and promote food security by consuming less energy and eating locally. We also hope to create a social

community by bringing gardeners more in touch with the source of their food. We hope that they will share in collective ownership of the garden.

This year we expanded the garden from 16 to 24 raised bed plots so that more people are able to garden. All of the plots were quickly claimed as interest in being part of a community garden has continued to grow in recent years. We have also expanded to include members of the Ottewell community rather

than being exclusive to King's students and staff.

Further plans for the community garden include organizing and participating in more gardening events or events in collaboration with Sustainable Food Edmonton. Some of these events include potluck dinners, garden bike tours, and more. We look forward to the garden's continual growth and what it will bring.

Quest Mexico

by Joseph Zondervan

Following a (primarily) sleepless night of flights and layovers, the 2015 Quest Mexico group arrived at the Quest base in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico on February 15. The group immediately departed for La Estacion, a former train station-turned-squatter settlement at the heart of Cuernavaca. Here, 6000 people live in extreme poverty, constantly threatened with eviction from the government that they have been unjustly forced to inhabit for decades. Listening to and speaking with the families of this community proved to be a eye-opening beginning to a challenging yet rewarding week.

The following day, our group was challenged to buy five simple groceries items and bus fare to “El Centro” of the city, using the average Mexican wage of 70 pesos (\$5.86). Although the groceries consisted of the “bare essentials”, the task proved nearly impossible. However, the majority of Mexicans live day-to-day on this wage. Over the next few days, discussions with Mexicans from all areas of life, professors from the University of Mexico, former illegal immigrants, and social activists, revealed the level of corruption present in both the Mexican governments and in other North American governments and organizations, which has led to the perpetual persecution of Mexicans.

At first it seemed impossible to

find hope in this overwhelming tide of corruption. During the last few days, however, the group heard of the tireless efforts of a social activist, willingly placing himself in perpetual danger to publically voice the end of his, and the Mexican people’s tolerance for corruption. Similarly, we met with a former priest who has opened the doors of his church to social outcasts, regardless of orientation or economic class. To see action on a larger scale, the group visited Amatlan, an indigenous community which has kicked the government out of its village and has since survived and thrived autonomously. Actions like these have inspired other modern revolutionary movements.

Quest Mexico revealed a side of Mexico invisible in resorts: a side so

deeply corrupted that it threatens to immobilize hope. However, the actions of individuals and communities have made deep and far-reaching impacts on Mexican society, and has empowered Mexicans to expect justice. The King’s group left Quest having heard the voices of the persecuted, having dreamed with the activists, and having discovered a culture whose economic state is deeply intertwined with our own.

The King’s group returned from Mexico exhausted, saturated with information and emotion, but also inspired, knowing that even when the way forward seems foggy, there is still a plan for action. The challenge now lies in preventing this experience from growing stagnant, and allowing it to manifest and flourish through informed action.



The Quest Mexico team

2015 Honduras Water Project

by Justine Vandergrift



Quebrada Honda

This past May, eleven King's students journeyed to southern Honduras in participation with King's ongoing Honduras Water Project. This year marks the 20th year King's has hosted this program. The project this year was unique in that it was part two of a project begun last May in Quebrada Honda. It was also an all-female team, led by Carol Moreno. Once again, with the help of the King's community, they raised more than enough funds to cover their travel and building supplies for the project.

Prior to the trip, I met with Sarah Van Woerden (BSc '16) to ask her about her thoughts on it. It was Sarah's second year with the

project. She described to me how she fell in love with Quebrada Honda in 2014. She knew she had to go back this past year to see the project completed. At first, she was apprehensive about going with a new team, and she wanted to be careful not to have expectations based on her experience with the previous team. Sarah's family spent a year in Honduras when she was growing up, so she was also excited to spend time visiting friends before the King's team arrived. Her goals were to improve her Spanish, and to ask some of the questions she'd found since being in the country last May. She wanted to go deeper this time and further understand the community in which the team worked.

The team would like to thank everyone who supports this trip. Even though donors may not always hear about the benefits of service-learning trips, Sarah and others can attest that it is a worthwhile investment as it has greatly increased her passion for justice. She has also made many valuable friends and has seen a hope in the community of Quebrada Honda. In Sarah's mind, the people of this town are not poor. Rather, they are people each one of us can learn much from.

So thank you from Sarah and the whole team for supporting this project as it grows a global vision for justice and renewal.



Kyssha, Hernado, and Sarah

Lady Flower Gardens

by Jacalyn den Haan

This past summer, Wes Verbeek (BSc '15) and myself (BA '15) conducted a storytelling project on Lady Flower Gardens, a community garden in northeast Edmonton. Our work involved photographing and interviewing participants at the garden, and researching the garden's history. It resulted in a comprehensive report outlining values and stories driving the garden's existence, and in presenting at conferences at King's.

Lady Flower Gardens has been in existence since 2011, when property owner Doug Visser and visionary Kelly Mills united to develop a garden that serves marginalized people in Edmonton. It invites people from 9 different organizations across Edmonton including The Mustard Seed and the Wecan Food Basket, to grow vegetables together on communal plots. Its primary purposes are to providing sustainably grown food and to allow people to renew their spirits through entering into community at the garden.

The report that this project produced will be published on Lady Flower Gardens' forthcoming website. While it gives an overview of the garden's vision and direction, it also functions as an advocacy tool for the garden. The garden, located in Edmonton's Horse Hills, is currently under threat of development from industrial expansion, and the report will be used to tell the garden's story to people in Edmonton. In so doing, the goal is to preserve

the garden as a place of renewal and hope for underprivileged Edmontonians.

Wes and myself had the opportunity to present their research at two conferences. The first was King's annual Summer Research Symposium. This was an excellent opportunity for Wes and myself to bring the story of Lady Flower Gardens to the collective consciousness of King's students and faculty.

Secondly, we gave presentations during the breakout sessions at this year's Interdisciplinary Studies Conference. The conference, which focused on human power and vulnerability, gave a unique and enlightening lens through which to analyze the research that they conducted. The interplay between power and vulnerability is certainly present at the garden

– and it is in the striking redistribution of power to those who are often cast out of society that the garden strives to achieve that hope is found.

Lady Flower Gardens is a place where students can experience hands-on the importance of community development and sustainable agricultural practices. As the vision and scope of the garden grows, it continues to draw in students from King's. Students from the Environmental Studies department at King's have previously taken learning trips to the garden. This fall, students in the ENVS 491 Internship Reflection class will conduct research at the garden. King's faculty plan on furthering this involvement as needs and interest present themselves.



View at Lady Flower Gardens