



To the churches in Classis Huron,

What can I say after fifteen years as a campus minister here in Waterloo? There's obviously a lot I could reflect on: stories to tell, successes to celebrate, challenges to engage, discouragements to lament. Indeed, as part of my leaving, I did just that; I wrote an exit interview for the Classis campus ministry committee. It came out to over 9000 words. It could've been longer.

As my final report to the broader assembly of Classis Huron, I'll spare you from reading that graduate seminar length piece. (Though of course you're more than welcome to read it - [here's a link](#). Or, send me an email and I'll send it your way).

Instead, I'd simply like to offer my gratitude. It has been a privilege to engage these two campuses in the name of Jesus since 2008, a privilege made possible by your generous support, both financially and through your prayers. It's truly a testament to how big our vision is for ministry and missional outreach here in Classis Huron.

Indeed, this has been Classis Huron's ministry. Not Brian's ministry, even though I've dedicated most of the hours to it over the past fifteen years. I've been your ambassador to these two campuses, representing the good churches in this area, and the Christian Reformed Church more broadly. And of course, more significantly, I've sought to be an ambassador of the Kingdom of God on University Ave in Waterloo. I pray that I've done it well.

So: thank you! Your support has meant a great deal to me. It has, I trust, helped the gospel good news resound across campus, and contributed to the faith formation of scores of young people over the years.

My approach to campus ministry has always been a highly relational one. My desire is less about being an event planner or cruise director for young folks; I'd prefer to get to know them well and walk alongside them as they figure it all out. In that spirit, I'll leave the rest of this report to some of those students. I've attached some reflections from some folks I've met on campus along the way who have been especially dear to me. Reading their reflections was tremendously encouraging to me, and I pray it'll be encouraging to you too.

Thank you again for your support over the past decade and a half. As I move into my new position with Resonate Global Mission, I'm excited to take what I've learned about campus ministry with me, but I'll also carry with me the warmth and comfort that comes from being surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.

Peace to you all in the name of Jesus,

Rev. Brian Bork

Throughout my years as a student at Laurier, Waterloo Campus Ministry had a significant impact on my life as a student. The weekly discussion events led by Pastor Brian, on Wilfrid Laurier's campus specifically, were extremely educational and positively affected my intellectual life and faith development. Working in tandem with other Christian chaplains, Brian and his colleagues were able to foster an environment of trust and acceptance, providing a safe space to tackle life's big questions through scriptures, literature and stories. I can say without a shred of doubt that I learned more about how to listen and converse with people in a humble and loving manner there than most other experiences in my life.

On a more personal level, Pastor Brian Bork has had an incredible impact on my life. He has given me advice and guidance through some of the hardest moments of my life thus far, and truly exemplifies grace, charity, love, hope, and kindness. Brian has an amazing gift for working and conversing with students one on one. As many of you will know, it can be challenging to navigate the intellectual and philosophical climate of the modern university. Brian is skilled at helping students discern the uncertainty of these climates in light of Christian teachings. My own faith journey would be far more muddled without his gracious help.

In Waterloo, Classis' campus ministries provide programming at two universities with a combined population of over fifty thousand students; basically, a mid-sized city. The gifts of churches in the area allow the CRC to have a much needed presence for students who are often living on their own for the first time. I'm sure I can say on behalf of the many students who have experienced this ministry that your gifts are truly transformative and appreciated.

*- Phil Marfisi, BA in Political Science, 2018*



Brian came into my life in a time of transition and many questions regarding my faith, beliefs and worldview. University is often a time of radical transformation, and I know I would not have grown into the person of faith I am today were it not for Brian's quiet but consistent care and influence during my time at Laurier. Through our mutual love of soccer and coffee, we connected deeply.

Through bi-weekly meetings for multiple years, Brian would never answer my questions for me; instead, he would lead me through the hills and valleys of my own heart and mind to find the deeper truths I was actually looking for. He would find the right questions to ask and sound counsel to give in any and every point of conflict, struggle and confusion I would bring to him. Looking back, those times were transformative for me. I could safely engage the grey-zones of faith and life, and be grounded in the deep truths of our tradition.

What strikes me as the most 'Brian' thing is that he continues to engage and care for me. He supports my own ministry now, he keeps up and gives sound advice in various arenas of my life, and engages me in his family life and career as well. Brian will always be the prime example of what a mentor can and should be.

*- Josh Brown, BA in International Development, 2019*

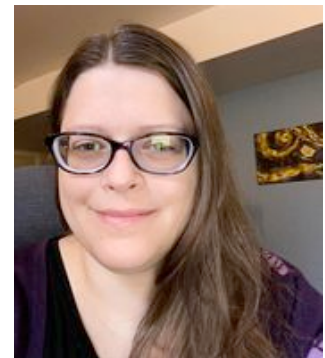


Brian was a big part of my long, part-time undergrad journey at Laurier. I first met him through Fermented Faith at a table full of pub food, where we discussed all the things we're told not to discuss at the table (religion and politics being the big ones). To this day, I miss those times. They were full of real life challenges and discovery. I was the resident pot-stirrer of course, and those stirring skills came in handy when Brian, myself and another student started Collective Kitchen. Knox Church blessed us with funding and a generous kitchen space. Food and cooking skills are always scarce when it comes to university students and this initiative provided both. Once a month, we would grab students and make healthy, batch cooked meals together. The skills learned, the food given, and the fellowship created was life-changing. I now realize food surrounded most encounters Brian and I had! Near the end of my degree and slightly after, Brian hosted Friday Night Dinners once a month. I was grateful to still be included. There is so much for students, but once you enter the "real world workforce" there's very little. Brian would welcome us into his house, and often we packed in more than a dozen students in his dining room meant for six.

There are many more words I could say, many other experiences and moments of support I could express, but my university experience would have been only a fraction of itself without Brian. I'm sad to hear other students will miss the Brian Experience at the Laurier and UW campuses, but I know he'll continue to bless and impact all those around him.

Blessings,

*- Amy Robinson, BA in English, 2019*



The CRC campus ministry community was my favourite place to be at U Waterloo. Brian created a space for curiosity, spirituality, kindness, and compassion to flourish. The campus ministry meetings were always the highlight of my week. I can't forget the delicious meals, either! This space/community Brian created is the standard by which I have measured every faith gathering since to ensure it meets my spiritual and intellectual needs.



Whenever I think of the warmest, most compassionate, most Christ-like people I know, Brian is among the first set of people that come to mind, so it is no surprise that he created the community he did. I am forever grateful to have had this example during one of the most formative periods of my adulthood.

Brian's departure leaves a gaping hole in the Christian community at Waterloo and Laurier. However, I am excited for the people that will encounter Brian in his new ministry, all of whom will be incredibly fortunate.

*- Dayna Nelson, BA in Psychology, 2017*

I met Brian six years ago in my second year at Wilfrid Laurier University. Having recently recommitted my life to Christ, we met regularly to chat about life and theology. During these

one-on-ones, I experienced incredible growth as we studied several books and prayed together. Early in our relationship, I knew I could trust Brian with some of my deepest struggles. As I opened up, I was constantly met with a gentle and wise council that refreshed me with insight and clarity. With abundant patience and grace, Brian showed me how to grow my relationship with God while shining Christ's light in my community. It wasn't just the content of our discussion that impacted me but also Brian's style of mentorship that modelled how to approach discipleship in my life. Since graduating from Laurier, Brian and I have continued to stay in touch. I am delighted to start my last year of law school and to have the opportunity to continue being guided by Brian, who has proven to be an invaluable mentor in my pursuit of fulfilling God's calling for me.

- Jaaron Pullenayagem, BA in Business Administration, 2019



I attended University of Waterloo from 2012-2015 and appreciated the campus ministry led by Brian during that time. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss faith issues with peers at a secular institution. Communion weekly on Monday mornings, conversations over tea or nachos with peers and the Soup and Speaker Series were events that I appreciated.



I had done my undergraduate degree at Dordt University and I was so glad that this group existed during my Master's degree so that we could have discussions about how to live as a Christian and be a light in this world.

Now, I'm a youth leader in Barrie and I tell our youth that this program exists and they should find the campus chaplain when they go to an Ontario school. It helped me during my time to find a like-minded community of students and I hope it continues for decades to come.

Blessings Brian and congratulations on a term finished!

- Nathanael Couperus, MAS, Civil Engineering, 2015

Over my 6+ years at the University of Waterloo I have participated in several of Brian's ministries and found connection with others in the community through prayer and communion groups, shared meals (and meal preparation!), and fellowship with other grad students. I found great value in the welcoming attitude of campus ministry when I was new to Waterloo and Brian's familiar face over the years is one of the factors that has helped bring warmth into a university that often seems to shun such connection.

- Ben Armstrong, PhD candidate, Computer Science



As a graduate student (and now a researcher) in Waterloo, things are always in flux around you – friends graduate, colleagues move to different universities, and UpTown is constantly under construction. This change felt especially drastic after the pandemic, during which everything felt stale – socially, mentally, and especially spiritually. Meeting Brian Bork and attending the on-

campus grad fellowship right after the pandemic felt like a spiritual breath of fresh air. I can confidently say that the grad fellowship provided me with a sense of feeling anchored amidst the flux. It gave me a space to connect with Christian folks from different backgrounds but shared the same stage of life, where we could share stories, discuss concerns, and pray together. Additionally, on a personal level, the mentorship and guidance of Brian has been an invaluable blessing in my life, and I am truly grateful that our paths crossed.

- Vinodh Raj, *Research Associate, UW*



During my undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Waterloo I was part of several campus ministry gatherings. Early morning prayer, communion at The Table, and Friday night dinner were all meaningful fellowships that echoed the early church and connected us with the simple yet ancient traditions of the church. Doing these things as students during the week provided contrast with our frantic secular studies and deadlines.

Pastor Brian was an important leader in these spaces, coming to each with a reassuring non-student perspective blended with a sincere desire to learn about the lives of the students there. I believe that Pastor Brian's presence and the ministry formats he chose made the campus ministry a place that embodied peace, thankfulness, and always a spark of joy. Pastor Brian consistently made time to talk with me outside the communal places I was regularly invited into and participated in. During these conversations Pastor Brian showed that whatever the topic, a love for God and a love for the people of KW permeated his thinking. The Spirit through Pastor Brian did all these things, creating in me an uplifted and deepened faith. I cannot imagine being blessed with a better campus minister.

- Kyle Langendoen, *BMath (2018) and MMath (2021)*



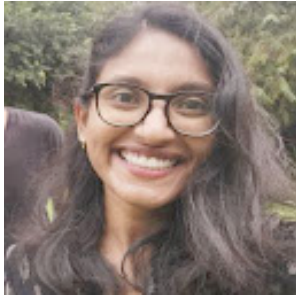
Christian Reformed campus ministers are my people. Throughout my undergraduate time in Guelph and my graduate degrees at Laurier, they offered faith-based encouragement and mentorship. They ensured that I was welcomed and valued by Christian peers. They surmounted structural barriers assisting me to access churches, social gatherings and conferences that were not technically wheelchair accessible. They nurtured and bore witness to the gifts that I bring to ministry, education, and hospitality. They assisted with advocacy and vocational discernment. More than that, they served as spiritual brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers when needed!

- Chantal Huinink, *MDiv/MSW, 2018*



I have known Brian through Human Beans and the Graduate Fellowship at the University of Waterloo since October 2022, for which Brian was the chaplain. The first time I was invited

for Human Beans, what intrigued me was the coffee for a dollar, and the topic for that day which was on jazz music, and I ended up being pleasantly surprised by how insightful the talk was and how warm and welcoming the fellowship had been. At the graduate fellowship, we would start with a story prompt which Brian would email us at the start of the week to ponder over, and we would bring our stories to the table on the day of the Graduate Fellowship, and this was something I would look forward to from the beginning of the week, and rush for as soon as class ended. In both of these fellowships, Brian has been an insightful chaplain that I could look up to, always guiding our discussions back to the Bible with sound doctrine, no matter how wild the stories became, and patiently ensured that each of us were heard and welcomed. Both fellowships always felt like a breath of fresh air, and I am grateful to have crossed paths with Brian in this short period of time.



- *Vinitha Raj, MA candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering, UW*

The years being involved with Brian and the Campus Ministry at UW have been such a blessing to me. Seeing Brian led by the spirit through morning prayer meetings, delicious Friday night dinners, his role as a husband and father, as well as a 1-on-1 mentoring relationship has shaped my spiritual life and showed me a piece of the kingdom of heaven. Brian has helped teach me what it means to rest with God and to appreciate and dwell in the slow rhythms of everyday life.



One example of this is Brian's love for the communion table and his heart for sharing food with and among fellow friends and believers. This mundane yet radical act of fellowship strengthens the body of Christ and leads to healthy communities. That has been very evident in the Campus Ministry. I want to thank Brian for all he has done in my life and I look forward to see where God is taking him.

- *Isaac Veldhuis, BAS, System Design Engineering, 2021*

The University of Waterloo has many great things, but one of the top is the CRC chaplaincy group. Here I was able to find a spiritual home and community. Whether it be wrestling about how to live one's faith in whichever vocation God may lead them to, enjoying fellowship over meals, discussing ideas together over drinks in an ecumenical setting, Communion before classes, retreats, or worshipping together, the group, and Brian, helped me remain rooted in the Christian faith, of the Reformed variety specifically, and grow in my relationship with Jesus. Brian was instrumental in walking alongside many of us in our faith, and was always happy to meet up for coffee. While other commitments faded in importance to me, the chaplaincy group grew in importance over the years, and became a sanctuary as well as a place to be challenged. It became a spiritual home, and one of my fondest memories of UW.



- *David Vanderwindt, BES, Urban Planning, 2018*

Wherever I moved for school, campus ministry was a big part of my life, community, and faith journey between GCM, Geneva House, and WCM. Campus ministry quite literally kept me in the faith while moving around for school, and Brian's influence on me and my faith was a big one during my time in Kitchener. Even though I wasn't a UoW or Laurier student, and once working not a student at all, Brian first made me feel welcome, very quickly became a trusted mentor, and just about as quickly also a trusted friend. Through various programming I made friends, but most of all Brian's instant welcomeness to let anyone in his home, chat anytime he was free, and engage with anyone anywhere in their life with compassion and respect is what truly makes him reflect the love of Christ.

- *Brian Vandermey*

Brian's chaplaincy at Laurier kept me connected to other students of faith during what is always a really destabilizing period. Particularly through our weekly meetings of Fermented Faith, what I found was not just fellowship and connection but friendship invested in how we live out our lives as Christians in an increasingly complex and difficult-to-navigate world. Our conversations and laughter was life-giving, reminding me of what it meant to be in communion at a time I was away from my home church and struggling to find connections interested in what our traditions had to offer. Fermented Faith and Soup & Speaker are models of what fellowship on campus should look like and I remain incredibly grateful for the years I spent learning from and with Brian.

- *Mynt Marsellus, BA Film Studies, 2017*



I was so happy that I was allowed to join the faculty book club after moving to Waterloo some 16 years ago upon my retirement from Medicine Hat College in Alberta. Here I found a vibrant group of academics that loved books and stimulating discussions, ably led by Brian Bork. Brian took a leadership role in choosing good books for us to study, often giving us a choice between several good books. And he didn't shy away from recommending large and dense theological works, one notable example being *The Crucifixion* by Fleming Rutledge, which helped me to sort out my understanding of the death of Jesus. I can remember only two examples of books that Brian recommended that I thought would have been better left on the shelf! Only two out of some 40 books that we studied isn't bad!

We were not an easy group of academics to lead in discussion, with some tending to monopolize discussions. What else would you expect from eccentric academics? I especially appreciated Brian's attempts at guiding discussions so that more could participate. At times he did this by asking a leading question at the beginning of our discussions and having each person around the table respond to the question.

I also appreciated Brian's availability to meet with us after sessions or in his home to discuss matters of concern to us. I met with Brian a number of times to discuss some difficulties I was facing in my church and in our family. Here I very much appreciated Brian's pastoral heart, empathizing with the problems I was facing, helping me to think through the issues, giving me good



biblically-grounded advice, and then concluding with meaningful prayers which on occasion led me to tears. Thanks so much, Brian for being a pastor to me.

Brian also helped me to connect with ministries at the university, including his own, which led to invitations to give lectures and allowed me to still feel useful as a retired Christian academic.

Thanks for your ministry, and blessings to you as you move on to a broader related ministry. I will miss you.

*- Elmer Thiessen, retired Professor of Philosophy*