



# OCSTA News



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT – INDOCTRINATION

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*"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out." Isaiah 42:3a*

*"It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin...so watch yourselves." Luke 17:2, 3a*

*"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'" Matthew 5:37a*

When I was home raising four children, there were days when I thought I would go out of my mind. One of the favourite stories that my children remember is the day when they were fighting and calling each other names. I lost it and actually said, "Stop calling each other names, you idiots!" They stopped immediately, turned, and burst into laughter as I went red.

One of the fine lines in our work with students (and our children) is the ability of those of us in authority to cross over to indoctrination, the "Do as I say, not as I do" school of hard knocks. True education is a risky business. We educate our students so that they learn to ask "Why?" and "Show me," and as educators (or parents), we have to have pretty good reasons as to why we say the things we say, do the things we do, and believe the things we believe.

I had a colleague once tell me that he almost lost his faith because his parents would not allow him to question anything. He felt that they controlled his actions, his choices, and his path. I asked him how he managed to hold onto himself. He told me that he would always think, "Well, at least they can't control my mind or what I am thinking!"

We want so desperately for our students and our children to "have faith," but the ironic thing is that we cannot force this on them. It reminds me of the movie *Bruce Almighty*. The character played by Jim Carrey wants his girlfriend to love him even when he cheats on her, but "God" (in the form of Morgan Freeman) tells him that making someone love him is not in the Almighty's power. Now I am a good enough Calvinist to know that there is a balance of freewill and God's irresistible grace or sovereignty, and I am also a good enough Christian to know that I will never understand that teaching which seems paradoxical.

What I do know as an educator and as a parent is that love and faith are not "things" to be packaged and handed over. They are taught by the way one lives, by the way one models. This task does not come without responsibilities and discipline. I remember a high school classmate who stated quite emphatically that he was not a Christian (this was in a Christian high school) and that he didn't believe all this stuff. BUT, he was still expected to be respectful during devotions and singing, he was expected to go to chapels, and he was expected to understand the facets of faith and Christian perspective and be able to articulate them. In fact, later in grade 12, I marvelled that he actually chose to take the newly developed Biblical Perspectives course. I remember thinking, that boy is searching.

We talk of being communities of grace, communities of safety, and I believe that means that we also have to be places where the smouldering wicks of faith are not snuffed out. As educators and leaders, we need our "yes" to be "yes" and our "no, no" but those words must come out of compassion for our students. We must live our lives integrally. We cannot, on the one hand, demand that our students "have faith" if we use means to control them that are violent or a type of indoctrination. We cannot tell them not to call each other names and then turn around and do it ourselves. Christian schools need to be the "safe" places where the tough questions can be asked and no one is rejected because they don't fit the "Christian" mould.

And I know from experience that if we manage to find that balance, we might be surprised at how often students (and our children) forgive us for our mistakes, our shortcomings, and our foibles. ☺

Shalom, Diane

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## HOSPITALITY TO FAITHFULNESS

Last October's convention utilized as its theme, ***Meet Me at the Well***, based on the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman. The idea of hospitality and invitation permeates the story as it should our schools and classrooms. In the final keynote address of the 2009 convention, Peter Schuurman challenged all of us to think of new ways to be invitational to the "strangers" in our midst. He wondered out loud who the Samaritans are in our society today and who we ought to meet at our respective wells. For many of us, it is easy to be hospitable in our classrooms, our homes, and our churches, but what about our cities, our neighbourhoods, and our communities?

For Christian education to be transformative, it cannot just stay "inside"; it must move outside of our schools, our homes, and our churches. As educators, we need to ask ourselves how our schools can be lights in our broader communities. We need to engage our schools in making a difference. Or we need to ask ourselves whether anyone would notice if our schools disappeared overnight. Would we be missed?

What is NOT being talked about here is how to be relevant. Os Guinness, in his book *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance*, notes that the Christian faith ought not to be swayed into relevance. What we ARE talking about here is the rock bottom value of trying to be faithful. It is through faithfulness to the call of God on our lives that we wake up each morning ready to do His will. And it is in community (families, schools, churches, associations) that we work together to call each other to those tasks. It is in community that we can unwrap the gifts that each of us has to be who God intended us to be.

Hospitality has to do with meeting and greeting, but it also has to do with listening and responding. If you meet a stranger, the only way that that person can become less strange is to engage him or her in conversation—to listen and to ask questions with great interest. As educators, we know that to teach and learn is to sit with students, hear them, listen to them, and engage them. Can we teach our students and ourselves to do the same with the society that we live in?

Somehow, we have to put our money where our mouth is; we have to cultivate behaviour that is grounded on belief. It is not just good enough to say something and then not act on it. Our students are watching, our children are watching, the world is watching, not to catch us in a lie but to know that our values, beliefs, and the things that we say are more than empty words. It is our actions that really count (though our words are also important).

The planning for the 2010 OCSTA Convention is in full swing. The committee has chosen the theme ***Woven Together in God's Faithfulness***, based on Hebrews 10:23-25.

***Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

The term "woven together" implies that we as educators are not only living and working amongst others, but we are investing in each other; we form relationships by relying on and helping one another on a daily basis. The fabric intertwines, overlapping and integrating each strand within each other. The woven fabric is representative of how we need to continue meeting together and encouraging one another to form a strong-knit community.

May we be woven together as an educational community, a community that is a reminder of God's faithfulness daily. May we recognize that our communities are a part of how God is faithful. May we not take them for granted. May we encourage one another and meet with one another, continually thanking God for his faithfulness, and may our hospitality move us to faithfulness.

*(report from the OCSTA Convention Planning Committee)*

## SHARING STORIES OF REMARKABLE EDUCATORS

### 'INSPIRING EDUCATORS'

by Natalie VanAndel

*The Promotion and Membership Committee has commissioned this series of articles celebrating those educators, leaders, and mentors in our lives who have encouraged and led us in the art and craft of education. This series is part of an overall theme for the OCSTA NEWS wherein we are hoping to be a "community of gratitude" looking at the past, celebrating the present, and anticipating the future. If you would like to share stories of remarkable educators who have influenced your life, please contact the OCSTA office.*

I was asked to write about who inspired me to be a teacher and who might be inspiring now in my role as an educator. Many people inspired me, and it is difficult to single out just one. You see, I was one of those children who loved school from the first day I entered the kindergarten classroom. I was terrified, but I loved school. I wanted to learn, play, and be with my friends. I was always playing school as a child, and I think my dolls were the smartest dolls in the world—or at least in Alberta.

I feel that there were many educators who have impacted me. They have helped my love for school to grow and have influenced me as a teacher. I believe that out of all these people there are two who played the biggest role in who I am as an educator today.

I have many recollections of my elementary schooling. My teachers were all highly qualified, I'm sure, but the teacher who stands out the most for me is my sixth grade teacher, Miss Gerty Heinen. There were two grade six classes in Immanuel Christian School, and I was so excited when I found out I would be in her class. I was a good student but lacked self-confidence. Miss Heinen was always positive and encouraging. She always made me feel good about myself and what I had done. I felt loved and valued. Several years ago, I had an opportunity to visit with her. I told her that she was the teacher who impacted me the most in all my years at school. She was shocked and asked me why. I told her that she had great faith in me and helped me to start developing that faith in myself. I also told her I felt unconditionally loved and valued in her classroom.

That love for school I had in kindergarten continued to grow, and I knew I needed to be a teacher, so off I went to Calvin College. I was offered a job in Woodstock. I accepted that job and I still teach there.

One of my administrators was Mr. Bill Barneveld. I feel he is the other person who has had the most impact on who I am as an educator today. He was and still is my biggest cheerleader. Often, I still lack confidence in my abilities, and I fear undertaking new challenges. Bill was always beside me, encouraging me and pushing me to take on these new challenges and opportunities. He always knew that I was capable before I realized it and so gently nudged me. I am forever grateful to Bill for this. He was always ready to listen, encourage, support, and be there for me. I always felt loved, valued, and supported by Bill.

Every day, I walk into my classroom with God beside me. I pray and try my best to lead my students to be all that God created them to be. I encourage them, love them, build them up, and teach them. I pray that God will continue to use me to influence young lives for Him, just like I was influenced and shaped by my teachers and colleagues.

*Natalie VanAndel teaches grade four at John Knox Christian School in Woodstock. She has a real passion for children and their learning. Natalie enjoys the challenges of teaching. Her desire is to serve God and show Him to the children in her classroom. Natalie and her husband, Eric, have three children. Two are in university and one is in high school.*

## SUMMER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OCSTA is pleased to offer the following workshops during the week of July 5-9, 2010:

- Reading Assessment and Strategies for Reading Success in the Primary & Junior Grades
- A Hands-On Survey of Free and Open Source Educational Software
- Restorative Justice Part 1 (2 day workshop)
- Hospitality, Hostility, and Humour: Humanizing the Image of Our Muslim Neighbours
- The Digital Projector (Gr. 1-8) (*being held at Halton Hills Christian School, Georgetown*)
- JUMP Math
- Assessment Strategies in JK/SK and Making Learning Centres Work in Your Kindergarten (JK/SK)
- Restorative Justice Part 2 (2 day workshop)
- Teaching Students Who Learn Differently (General) (3 day workshop)
- The Art of Collage & Computer Art (High School)
- English Classroom Instruction (High School)
- Listening to Those Who Hurt
- Interpreting Media Messages: Bias and Subjectivity in Popular Culture
- Crafting the Identity of Your Drama Department (High School)

Register online or complete the registration form and send it to our office (registration form is available on our website and on page 29 of the Summer Institute Booklet). **Registration deadline is May 7, 2010.**

### Being offered the week of July 19-23, 2010

◆ EDUC 616 Social Context in Education: Schools and Classrooms as Communities of Grace

To register for the EDUC 616 course, please apply online at:  
[http://www.calvin.edu/academic/graduate\\_studies/documents/Non%20Degree%20App%2008%20R2.pdf](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/graduate_studies/documents/Non%20Degree%20App%2008%20R2.pdf)

Complete the Graduate and Undergraduate Guest Application Form. All payments for this course are to be made through Calvin College.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY WITHIN OUR MEMBERSHIP

### Pray With Us

Sympathies are extended to **Greta Goodwin** (Calvin Christian School, Hamilton) with the loss of her father, Bill Boonstra, on October 30, 2009.

Remember in your prayers Mike and **Sharon Putt** (Guelph Community Christian School). Sharon's mother, Ruth Layzell, went to be with her Lord and Saviour on Sunday, January 31, 2010.

Please also remember in your prayers the family of **Ivan Stam** (Guelph Community Christian School) with the sudden passing of his mother, Jean Moelker, on Saturday, January 30, 2010.

**Anne Ashcroft** (Honorary Member) passed away peacefully on Easter Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at Freeport Health Centre of the Grand River Hospital, Kitchener. Anne was a teacher and vice-principal at Woodland Christian High School, Breslau, for 20 years.

### Celebrate With Us

Congratulations is extended to Paul and **Annetta Lammers** (Calvin Christian School, Hamilton) with the arrival of their firstborn, Jadon Hank, on February 19, 2010. Jadon arrived five weeks early, thus allowing his mom to put in a full day of teaching on February 18th! After a few extra days in hospital for observation, Jadon was welcomed home by beaming parents who give thanks to God for this precious bundle of joy!

Congratulations to Lori-Anne & **Stephen Janssen** (Knox Christian School, Bowmanville) on the birth of their second child, Ryan Elijah, born February 4, 2010, 10 lbs, 8 oz and 23 inches long. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

## Calendar of Events

March 24	OACS JK/SK Advisory Committee	April 16	OCSTA Seaway Valley PD Day—Kingston
March 25	OCSTA Convention Planning	April 23	OCSTA North Toronto PD Day—Woodbridge
March 26	OCSTA Finance Committee	April 26	Credentials Committee Meeting
March 29	Seaway Principals—OCSAA	April 27/28	CSI Trustee Course-Pension—Toronto
March 30	OCSAA Professional Standards	April 30	OCSTA Bluewater PD Day—Strathroy
April 1	OCSTA Board of Directors	April 30	Retirement Celebration—Dr. Justin Cooper
April 6	Coordinating Committee	May 6	Worldwide Christian Schools—International Opportunities Committee
April 12	EHE Math Workshop—TDCH	May 7	OCSAA Spring Membership Meeting
April 13	Grand Region Principals—OCSAA	May 8	CEJ Board—Grand Rapids

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