

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY REPORT TO ASSEMBLY 2017

Dear Bishop and Delegates:

Vancouver School of Theology is a theological graduate school preparing candidates for Christian leadership in the church and the world in respectful collaboration with other faith traditions and Indigenous people.

Sauder School of Business Partnership and Initiative: Our denominational partners have indicated to us that leadership in the church requires intelligence in the areas of finance, coaching and mentoring, administrative excellence and strategic thinking. We have established a strategic partnership with the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia to help our graduates better prepare for ministry (2016-2017).

Faculty/Staff: Prof. Harry Maier is on sabbatical. The Rev. Janet Gear won the 2016 Roy M. Davidson Trust Award. The Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris was made professor Emeritus in September of 2016. The Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart had a tenure review. The Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee applied for promotion in professorial rank. Our faculty are incredibly busy both in speaking engagements and in publications. A book launch was held at VST in September of 2016 to celebrate numerous publications. Mr. Lonnie Delisle, Music Director at Canadian Memorial United Church and Director of Universal Gospel Choir, has been hired as Musician-in-Residence.

Continuing Education 2016-2017: In September 2016, Bishop Melissa Skelton was our Somerville Lecturer on The Spirituality of Benedict of Nursia. In May of 2017 our annual inter-religious conference on the topic of “Visions of the End Times” brings together scholars of different faith traditions. Summer School 2016 had 9 courses taught over two weeks to 130 participants, the best attendance we have seen in five years. Summer school 2017 takes place in July- August 2017. The Rev. Dr. Kate Bruce, a homiletics professor at Durham University, UK, who is also a stand-up comic!, will teach “Preaching: Igniting the Heart of Losing the Will to Live.” For the entire program see: <http://vst.edu/vst-summer-school/summer-school-2016>. The Native Ministries Consortium Summer School also takes place at VST in July. Courses include “The Doctrine of Discovery, A ‘Christian Empire’ and the Colonialization of the New World,” with Mark Charles. For the entire program see: <http://vst.edu/isc/isc-about/continuing-education/nmc-summer-school>.

VST Academy: The Vancouver School of Theology goes ‘on the road’ twice a year. Following on the success of our January 2016 mini-M.Div. at Hillhurst United, we will bring our educational program to Victoria, Calgary, Bellingham, WA., and Courtney/Comox. Our faculty are currently developing an inventory of mini-courses so that congregations can select the offerings most pertinent to their context.

Academic Enrollment/Convocation 2017: The number of full-time equivalent students in the fall of 2016 was 68 an improvement from fall 2015. In the spring, registrations in degree programs were less than the previous year. This challenge requires our attention. The Anglican Church of Canada has the second largest (37) cohort of students. VST has students from at least 15 Christian denominations. 10 Jewish students are registered in courses. Most students are registered in the M.Div. program. Jill Jackson, won the 2016 Charles Helfling Student Prize from the *Anglican Theological Review* with her essay “Reordering Desires: A Trinitarian Lens on

Eating Disorders. On May 8, 2017, we confer degrees and certificates on 25 graduates at convocation at Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver. We confer honorary doctorates on The Rev. Christopher Ferguson, General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (in absentia). Archbishop Tutu we hope will be present via a recorded message his degree and hood will be delivered to him at a future date.

Finances: VST achieved a balanced budget in the fiscal year 2015-2016. We have established the VST Foundation which holds 35 million dollars with an expert board to manage its assets. We draw a revenue stream of 4% from the Foundation for the operations of the school and the capital has increased. Donations remain steady from a decreasing number of donors. We are developing a strategy to increase our donor base.

We offer thanks for the partnership we have with the Anglican Church as together we participate in God's reconciling mission through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Respectfully submitted, Richard R. Topping

Principal, Vancouver School of Theology