

From the Administrator's Desk

Jean-Guy deBlois
Administrator
Farel Seminary

Graduation of Mr. Winston Bosch

Farel is proud to announce the graduation of Mr. Winston Bosch on November 15, 2011. Winston came to Farel after having completed a master’s degree international development and adult education (U. of Guelph) and having served for a number of years as a coordinator of relief and development in Mali, West Africa in conjunction with CRWRC. He now resides in Repentigny, Qc. where he has taken a call as pastor from the Église réformée St-Paul de Repentigny. Congratulations, Winston!



New Books by Farel Profs

Former dean and now visiting professor of biblical studies at Farel, Dr. Daniel Timmer, recently released a book with InterVarsity Press on the theology of the Book of Jonah. Entitled *A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, salvation and spirituality in the book of Johah*, this book appears as volume 26 in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series edited by D.A. Carson. Timmer's book helps us understand the ‘surprises’ of the Book of Jonah. These surprises, he argues, are no less true for readers of our day than they were for the book’s original audience. Readers of Timmer’s book have noted its usefulness both for the seminary classroom and the pulpit. Many have said that it will become one of the standard works preachers will want to read when preparing for a sermon on Jonah or the Prophets of the Old Testament.

Jason Zuidema, dean in January 2012, has also put out a new book on French-speaking Protestants in Quebec. Although French-speaking Canadians have largely been Roman Catholic, there has been a small, but significant Protestant minority among them for much of their history. Several important studies on these Protestants have appeared in French or in short articles in English, but there is no broader survey in English. Based on significant archival study, a fresh reading of printed texts and the work of a generation of historians, this collection of essays edited by Zuidema brings together the work of leading scholars in the field to bring reasoned perspective on various narratives of the history of this often forgotten religious minority. The book is available from Brill Academic Publishers at www.brill.nl.

Farel and Chaplaincy: A New Marriage?

by J.G. Zoellner

“ You have to love spending time with people, just being where they are.” That’s what one of Farel’s founding fathers, David Craig, once said to me back in 1990. Was he talking about being an evangelist? Partially. A pastor? Well, that too! He was actually talking about becoming a military chaplain in the Canadian Army. While being pastor David Craig in civilian life, he was also Major David Craig, Army chaplain. I too chose to serve as a Canadian Army chaplain, a ministry I’ve been exercising, part-time, for over 20 years, while pastoring a Montreal church and teaching at Farel. Yet Farel’s link with the chaplaincy goes beyond David Craig and myself. Today, one of Farel’s recent graduates, David Rozeboom (2009) is a civilian chaplain with the Montreal based Seafarers’ Centre, while current second-year student David Castonguay is preparing to pursue the full-time military chaplaincy in the Canadian Forces. I believe Farel is a good place to prepare for chaplain ministries, for at least two reasons: (1) our understanding of the gospel; and (2) our ability to offer close, one on one training.

First, Farel’s understanding of the gospel is particularly helpful in preparing men for military chaplaincy. The gospel is, first and foremost, about what God does for us and in us, rather than what we do for God. It’s about Jesus taking the initiative to come to us in our sin, provide himself as our substitute to satisfy his judgement, in order that we might be declared forgiven and adopted as his, forever. The gospel is all grace...unmerited favour flowing from the Holy Spirit!

What does the gospel have to do with preparing and sustaining pastors in military chaplaincy? By definition, military life is one of performance and merit. Faster, stronger, further. Never pass a fault. He who dares, wins! At its heart, the military is asked to take human life in the name of the state. Jesus’ gospel, on the other hand, lays out who we truly are: sinners in desperate need of God’s mercy and forgiveness; not upright men and women of spotless integrity. And only the gospel really shows that the ultimate power for change in this world is not the force of the sword, but the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. So in a military world of incredible pressure to perform and in situations where one can make an idol of armed power, the gospel both gives hope of forgiveness in our failure and brokenness, and warns us away from the pride of idolatry. Chaplains have immense ministry in these two key areas of military life; without the gospel one simply cannot minister in Christ’s name.

Second, Farel’s small size encourages a seminary experience in which students and professors see a good deal of one another, spend time together, and function more like brothers in the Lord than as professor and student.

What does this have to do with preparing for chaplaincy, be it civilian or military? At it’s heart, chaplaincy requires good “people skills.” In the chaplaincy, one calls this a “ministry of presence,” which usually means “hanging out” with people, often in their most painful and vulnerable moments. More than this, a chaplain has to learn to “read between the lines,” to see and feel intuitively what’s going on in peoples’ lives, below the surface and behind the mask. When you train at Farel, you learn these “people skills,” almost by osmosis. Why ? There’s no place to hide! There are no big classes; you have to interact with others, and most classes appen around a table like a graduate seminar. Or, as you come into the building, you must pass by the open office door of administrator Jean-Guy deBlois, who always invites you in and asks “So, how are you doing today?” Students living in this environment learn to relate to others, feel for others, read others. And they begin to take initiative to “hang out” with others, which often becomes second nature to them.

“You have to love spending time with people, just being where they are.” Perhaps, in the near future, Farel will add to its curriculum a new course on chaplaincy. It may even become a “place of choice” for young men preparing for civilian or military chaplaincy. Farel and chaplaincy: seems like a new marriage with a bright future !

- Rev. J.G. Zoellner is pastor of L’Église réformée St-Jean (Montréal), lecturer in Pastoral Theology at Farel, and Deputy Chaplain for the Quebec Area of the Canadian Forces. He is a member of the Order of Military Merit of Canada.

