

Fall 2022 Update/Classis Newsletter
Brock Campus Ministry

As we began this new semester and school-year, anticipation was in the air. There was a sense that we were finally going to have a normal year. Two years of pent-up expectation. Two years of grieving lost opportunities, events, in-person education and programming. Two years hoping to never attend a Zoom meeting again. And then it happened. In September of 2022, we had a full return to campus and a launch of Brock Campus Ministry - and what a launch it was! From our first ever Faith Fair, where we hosted 17 churches, young adult ministries, and religious clubs at Brock; to our welcome Campfire with over 50 students, to the beginning of our internship program with 5 interns – September was quite the month.

In September we had the joy of starting a variety of weekly ministries for those who call Brock home. These ministries continued throughout the semester in a variety of schedules – some weekly, others bi-weekly, still others once or twice a semester. A few of these need to be highlighted to see what God has been doing here at Brock.

1. Our weekly Monday Night community of 15-20 students gathered in-person once again and began a series titled 'Authentic Faith'. You can read more about these studies on our website here: <https://www.brockministry.com/post/authentic-faith>. This community is a solid community of 15-20 students who call Brock Campus Ministry home, but we also see a number of guests come join us from time to time. One story in particular stands out among the rest. A student who we will call Ruby found her way silently into the couched side of the Faith and Life Centre for the beginning of our Monday study. Throughout the study she asked 'devil's advocate' questions, pushing back on most things that I would say. I loved it, as this is central to what a Bible study on a University campus should look like! At the end of the study, Ruby came over to me. Pensively she said: "Thank you so much for having me. It was such a beautiful, amazing community and study. I grew up in the church my whole life, and have studied the Bible many times, but not like this. I will probably never come back, but it was such a meaningful experience." This is a perfect example of the liminal space that Campus Ministry occupies for University students – an opportunity to come, listen, and participate without any expectation – even with the comfortableness to be able to say you will never come again! Our prayer is that Ruby would continue to sense the tugging of the Holy Spirit on her heart and maybe even join us again!
2. Our Beechwood and Bibles weekly Bible study began every Tuesday. In it, any and all students are welcome to come read the Bible aloud and enjoy some local donuts together. Many of the students who wander in have never read the Bible before, some are unaware of who Jesus is. This group is such a gift to be a Gospel witness and to share the truth of Scripture with those who would otherwise not engage the Bible while at University.
3. Our bi-weekly Toonie Suppers have grown like never before, almost to the point of not having enough food! From 3 or 4 students a few short years ago, to nearing 70 students at one of our suppers this year, we have seen some incredible growth. We've served over 500 students this semester! But, ministry is not about growth – it is about how this

growth is met with the opportunity to create community and share the Gospel message through acts of service and love. Toonie Suppers have been an opportunity to serve students a healthy and affordable meal, while also creating an alternative cell-phoneless community for students to come and eat together. One week, I noticed a student sitting off on their own with their meal, their head buried in their laptop. I pulled up a chair and asked to excuse my rude interruption, followed by me asking to join him. The student, who we will call Joe, reluctantly obliged. I pried with a few questions, and then conversations began naturally. After 20 minutes, both of our meals had gone cold, but we felt seen and connected. A volunteer from one of the CRC Churches joined us with their hot soup and the conversations continued. As the meal came to an end, the student Ben (not his real name) said to me, "Thank you for coming and talking to me. I cannot express to you how much I needed to be talked to. I will be back tomorrow." God, by His Spirit, is moving divinely through chicken noodle soup and Bible studies all the same.

4. This Fall, we hosted two separate 'Cafe Days'. Opportunities for students to come see the Faith and Life Centre for themselves, eat some free healthy snacks and hot coffee, and connect with other Brock students. Throughout these Cafe Days, we connected with and served over 100 students. Many of these students either did not know that Faith and Life was a space they could access, or felt that it was not a place where they were comfortable or welcome. One student in particular who I connected with over a cup of coffee shared with me that she had always felt the pull to come to see the Faith and Life Centre, but never felt comfortable. As we chatted she shared how peaceful, inviting, and safe of a space it was - something that she had not experienced in her 3 years at Brock. So many others have and continue to share this sentiment about the Faith and Life Centre and many of them attend a Cafe Day and then find their way to one of our studies, events, or even to spiritual counselling.
5. Halloween Alternative Programming - This year for Halloween, the interns wanted to offer an alternative programming Halloween celebration. For many students at Brock, there is a pressure or expectation that they would attend a big Halloween party on or off-campus. This puts a lot of students in an uncomfortable place as they do not want to celebrate in the ways that most University students celebrate. So, the BCM Interns decided they would host an alternative Halloween party. It was a hit. Bobbing for apples, Halloween bingo, painting pumpkins, and a table full of snacks. Students from on and off-campus came all dressed up! This was an initiative started and run entirely by our wonderful interns!
6. Student-led James Study - Another intern-led initiative was the Book of James study. Two interns, Faith and Amy, gathered weekly with any student who was interested to read through the book of James aloud. After reading each chapter, there was space for questions, discussion, and always some good snacks.
7. Student-led Christmas Service - A third intern-led initiative was our first ever Christmas service held in the Faith and Life Centre. One of the interns, Jack, took it upon himself to put together an entire Christmas liturgy and even prepared a 15-minute reflection. We had a violinist, vocalist, and keyboard player. We sang Christmas carols, and finished the evening with hundreds of homemade Christmas cookies thanks to so many of you! It was a gift to share the Christmas message with so many here at Brock.

8. Christmas Care-Packages - A University semester is long and grueling. Only 4 months long, but filled with assignments, quizzes, tests, labs, extra-curriculars, and so much more. This year especially as a return to in-person programming, students have been exhausted emotionally, physically, and spiritually. As we came up on Christmas and this exhaustion was reality for so many, we had the opportunity to hand out 40 care-packages to students. Filled with homemade cookies and hand-written encouragements by so many of you, we had the opportunity to bless students with a thoughtful gift from our churches. Students were deeply touched by the thoughtfulness and encouragement to finish the year off well. Thank you to all of you who contributed, what a gift it is to have a Classis that seeks to participate directly in our ministry.

We have seen God moving at Brock this past semester. In the hearts of community seeking students, in our Bible studies, craft events, cafe days, World Cup watch parties, spiritual counselling, toonie suppers, and everything in-between. It has been a joy to be the Christian Reformed representative here on Campus, and it is my prayer that students might come to see the grace and love of Jesus every single day through our ministry of presence here at Brock.