

GREBEL NOW

Conrad Grebel University College Magazine

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOLARSHIP

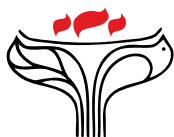
Research at Grebel

The College's commitment to curiosity and creativity in community

Remembering Grebel's First Chaplain

Walter Klaassen was one of the foundational figures in Grebel's history

FALL 2025



Vol. 42 No. 1

Soundtracks in Video Games - 6 | Peacebuilding from Theory to Practice - 7 | Young Voices in Worship - 8
Faculty Scholarship - 10 | 2024-25 Annual Report - 17 | Alumni Scholars Inspired by Curiosity - 23

In this Issue

Fall 2025 | Volume 42 Number 1

Commitment to Curiosity and Creativity in Community	3
Remembering Grebel's First Chaplain	4
Soundtracks and Scholarship in Video Games	6
Peacebuilding from Theory to Practice	7
Young Voices in Worship	8
Faculty Leadership in Action	9
A Sampling of Scholarship from Faculty	10
Final Print Issue for <i>The Conrad Grebel Review</i>	15
Reimagining Research	16
2024-25 Annual Report	17
Windows to the Future Campaign	21
Alumni Scholars Inspired by Curiosity	22
The Legacy of Former President John E. Toews	28
New Honorary Member of the University	29
Fred W. Martin and the Power of Generosity	30
Bearing Witness to the Stories of Others	31
It's a New Year!	32
Chris Brnjas Named Director of Development	33
Calendar of Events	34
Alumni Activities	34

Spotlight on Scholarship

This issue of *Grebel Now* focuses on scholarship, an integral part of Grebel's mission and identity. While the College welcomes thousands of students each year in pursuit of knowledge, Grebel's faculty inspire learning and engage in rigorous scholarship themselves. This issue

Front cover:
PACS student B.B. Adewusi presented her findings on potential therapeutic benefits of video games in the PACS 401 Senior Research Seminar

highlights the research and creative work of our faculty and features a small cross-section of alumni who are advancing scholarly pursuits—all making a difference in a wide range of fields.

Inside, you'll find the 2024-25 Annual Report, photos from Grebel activities and alumni events, and updates on our most recent building project and capital campaign. We celebrate remarkable achievements and remember several people who

made a deep impact in Grebel's history and passed away this year.

After 24 years of service, Fred W. Martin, Director of Advancement, has retired, leaving a legacy of student support, endowments, buildings, ideas and most importantly—relationships. Dig into this issue to see who is stepping into this role.

Be sure to take note of the many upcoming events where you can return to Grebel, take in a concert or lecture, or sign up for a workshop!

Jennifer Konkle, Marketing and Communications Manager



Grebel Now is published annually by Conrad Grebel University College.
Send all comments, submissions, and ideas to: grebel@uwaterloo.ca

MANAGING EDITOR

Jennifer Konkle

DESIGNER

Jennifer Konkle

ADVISOR

Fred W. Martin

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Konkle, Troy Osborne, Marcus Shantz, Margaret Gissing, Audrey Whitman, Zoey Pearce, Fred W. Martin, Allie Boyd, Alison Enns, Paul Heidebrecht, Jane Kuepfer

PHOTOGRAPHY

Margaret Gissing, Jennifer Konkle, Fred W. Martin, Allie Boyd, Devon Grainger, Mennonite Archives of Ontario, alumni contributors

Copyright © 2025
Conrad Grebel University College.
All rights reserved.
Permission should be received before reprinting excerpts longer than 200 words.
Available online. Printed in Canada.

Moving? Send your new address to Alison Enns
Conrad Grebel University College
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6
519-885-0220 x24217
aenns@uwaterloo.ca

**WE SEND OUT A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER.
MAKE SURE YOU'RE SIGNED UP FOR IT TO KEEP
INFORMED OF EVENTS AND OTHER GREBEL
NEWS. EMAIL AENNS@UWATERLOO.CA**



**UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO**



ConradGrebel



ConradGrebelUC



@Conrad_Grebel

RESEARCH AT GREBEL

The College's Commitment to Curiosity and Creativity in Community

BY TROY OSBORNE, DEAN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

At Grebel, excellence in research and creativity is central to our mission and identity. Our support for research reflects the vision of founding president Winfield Fretz that Grebel students and faculty would be fully embedded in the university and “compete in intellectual discourse and research with any person on the university faculty or other colleges.” This vision continues to guide us today. Our faculty are not only educators but also active researchers, composers, performers, and advocates who contribute to multiple scholarly disciplines and take those conversations beyond the College into the community.

Research takes many forms at Grebel. It can mean composing a new piece of music, uncovering lost voices in Mennonite history, exploring causes of conflict, or deepening our understanding of the Bible and Christian faith. It is expressed and assessed in peer-reviewed books and articles, public performances, and community-engaged projects. While an individual's creativity and curiosity may lead them to explore a particular topic, the work often extends beyond the walls of the academy into the community, where it helps us understand ourselves and the world more deeply.

Our research also enhances our teaching. When faculty bring insights from their scholarship into the classroom, they model independent, thoughtful, and informed conversation. By offering students the opportunity to engage in research and creative work, they help students become curious, critical, and compassionate in whatever fields they go into. A critical support for faculty and student scholarship is our library and the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, which extends the opportunity for research to scholars from across the world, community members interested in genealogy, and pastors looking for sermon insights.

The impact of Grebel scholarship extends beyond the concert hall, journals, and books. Faculty at Grebel consult with civic leaders; visit schools and churches; and take on leadership roles in professional organizations. They are sought out by the media and organizations on a variety of topics. Recent examples include spirituality in the latter stages of life; the significance of Pope Francis's visit to Canada; carceral abolition and transformative justice; and the design for Canada Post's Christmas nativity stamp. This diversity of expression reflects the interdisciplinary nature of Grebel's academic programs.



This spring, Troy Osborne and David Neufeld led a group of alumni and friends on a trip to Europe, bringing their historical research to life and marking 500 years of Anabaptism.

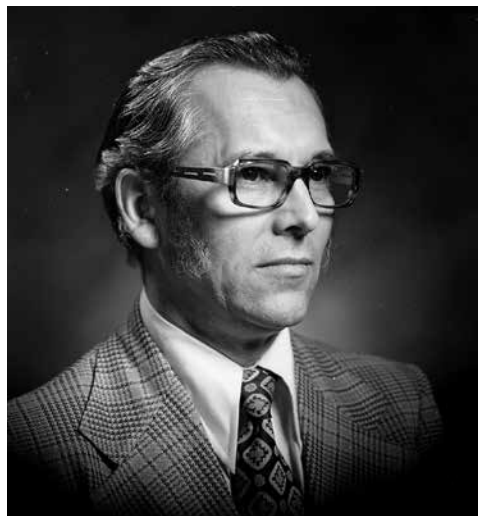
Faculty research, at its core, is driven by their individual interests and artistic inspiration. One of the joys of working at Grebel is the opportunity to celebrate each other's research breakthroughs and steady perseverance in Faculty Forum presentations or more formal events like the Eby Lecture. In addition to the intrinsic value of scholarly curiosity and new knowledge and creativity, Grebel faculty contribute to the College's mission “to seek wisdom, nurture faith, and pursue justice and peace in service to church and society” by modelling the kind of intellectual engagement we hope to see in our students and in society. Discovering something from the past can illuminate who we are in the present, and careful contextual reading of the Bible can shed new light on our own relationship to the divine. Studying the causes and effects of conflict can help prevent future conflict from erupting, and a sublime musical movement might move us in ways that are inaccessible to words alone.

In a world where higher education faces increased scrutiny and constraints on free inquiry and expression, a vibrant culture of scholarly excellence is not taken for granted. It enriches our teaching, lifts our spirits, informs our constituent communities, and helps us imagine a better world.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Remembering Grebel's First Chaplain

BY MARCUS SHANTZ, PRESIDENT



Walter Klaassen was born in Laird, Saskatchewan in 1926, married Ruth Dorean Strange in 1952, completed his PhD at Oxford University in 1960, came to work at Grebel in 1964, and died in fall 2024 at the age of 98.

At Grebel, we remember Walter Klaassen as one of the foundational figures in our college's history. Walter was not only the first chaplain, but also the first dean of students, a founder of the

University of Waterloo's Religious Studies department, and (with Winfield Fretz) one of the first two faculty members at Grebel. He was a scholar of the Radical Reformation, an articulate pacifist, a public intellectual, and a kind but deeply principled man.

Walter came to Grebel in 1964 from Bethel College in Kansas, attracted by the new vision for a Mennonite college embedded within—and fully engaged with—a growing public university. When he arrived at Grebel, construction on the new building was finished, but the culture and spirit of the place had not yet been built. Walter helped lay the foundations for that culture—one student, one chapel service, and one lecture at a time.

Later in life, Walter made a point of stating that, “My involvement at Grebel was a joint effort with Ruth.” In addition to managing the household while Walter was absorbed with the task of starting a new college, Ruth was an accomplished peace activist in her own right, addressing the United Nations General Assembly on the topic of disarmament in 1982.

One of Walter's conditions for accepting the role at Grebel was that chapel attendance would be voluntary—unlike most other Mennonite colleges of the time. He reasoned that coercing religious participation was neither consistent with Anabaptist convictions, nor an effective strategy for engaging students in the unsettled 1960s—especially at a Mennonite college where most students were not Mennonite. “People should come because they want to,” he said.

Nevertheless, he paired his conviction about religious voluntarism with a clear commitment to his role as a chaplain. Walter was a deeply pastoral presence for students. He and Ruth welcomed students into their home, listened patiently, shared meals, and offered quiet guidance. I've heard dozens of stories from alumni who remember his kindness and support in the classroom, the chapel, and around the dinner table.

DEDICATION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

I came to live at Grebel as a second-year transfer student. I was a United Church kid, and I didn't know anything about Grebel. I was just looking for a place to stay, and luckily a last-minute space opened up.

In order to stay in residence, I had to take a Grebel course. I chose “The Quest for Meaning in the 20th Century,” taught by Dr. Walter Klaassen. After I submitted my first paper, Dr. Klaassen asked to meet with me. He explained that although I had good ideas, my sentence structure and grammar would cost me 30–40% on every paper. If that didn't change, I wouldn't make it through second year—let alone to graduation.

Then he did something amazing. He offered to review every single paper I wrote (not just for his class, but for all

my courses) on the condition that I gave him my drafts 72 hours before the deadline. For the entire year, I'd either slip papers under his office door or bike to his house, where Mrs. Klaassen would sometimes offer me a cup of tea. The next day, I'd pick up the marked-up version from his office or his secretary. This went on through my third and fourth year too.

Years later, when I was working in the Ontario Premier's Office and the Attorney General's Office, I was asked to shift from policy to communications. When I asked why, they said, “Because you're an excellent writer.” I owe that to Dr. Klaassen, who gave so much of his time to helping me succeed at university.

—John Marshall (*BES* 1985)

Seminar class led by
Walter Klaassen, 1969



He had the gift of being both exacting and encouraging. Arnold Snyder recalled handing in a paper he thought was pretty good—only to receive the lowest mark of his undergraduate career. “In retrospect, the paper wasn’t very good,” Arnold said. “But rather than discourage me, it urged me on.” (Arnold later became a distinguished scholar of Anabaptist history and a colleague of Walter’s at Grebel.)

Walter also wrote and spoke out passionately on contemporary peace issues—from just war theory to the ethics of welcoming American draft dodgers during the Vietnam War. He believed that history must speak to the present, and that the gospel had political consequences. A sign that read “Work For Peace” used to hang underneath a cross on the wall in his office—expressing his belief that faith must be lived out in everyday life.

Walter taught courses in biblical studies and Anabaptist history, but his reach extended far beyond the classroom, and far beyond Grebel. His works on the early Anabaptist leaders Pilgram Marpeck and Michael Gaismair were important contributions to the study of the Radical Reformation. He translated several sixteenth-century Anabaptist texts into English, making these voices accessible to new generations of readers. His book *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant* has remained in print for over fifty years, and continues to introduce readers to Anabaptism as a distinct Christian tradition.

Walter continued to be a productive scholar and peace activist well into his later years. His son Frank remembers that he gave his final academic lecture at age 91—arriving with a map, two index cards, and complete command of the room. He continued to translate Anabaptist and Mennonite historical texts up to his death.

Those of us who work at Grebel today inhabit a culture that Walter helped to build. Much of what we take for granted here bears his mark—the tone of our chapel services, the mix of academic and residential life, and our continued commitments to Anabaptist-Mennonite studies, theological education, and peace and conflict studies.

Last year, I was fortunate to be part of an online conversation with Walter to talk about Grebel’s history. He said that he sometimes thought of Grebel as “his kid,” and that its growth had far exceeded what he imagined in 1964.

We asked him if he had any advice for us. He smiled and said, “No, I think not, because I’m not there. But I would say, carry on with the programs and the direction in which it’s going. I am always so gratified that I was able to be part of it at the beginning to get this thing going.”

We’re grateful for that too.

THE QUEST FOR MEANING

As a 17 year-old, way out of her comfort zone, I took Walter’s class “The Quest for Meaning in the 20th Century” and was pushed in so many ways. I don’t remember much about the course other than being asked to think in ways I had never been asked before. I reconnected with Walter years later when he moved to Saskatoon. Eventually he began attending my congregation at Nuntana Park Mennonite Church, and we would have our weekly hug.

I saw him in the hospital several days before he died. I reminded him of that undergraduate class, “Quest for Meaning” and he asked, “Did you find it?” Walter showed me that the search for meaning is a quest that lasts a lifetime. He modeled that, and he encouraged his students and friends to do the same.

—Geraldine Balzer (MA 1983)



Soundtracks and Scholarship in Video Games

BY JENNIFER KONKLE, SENIOR MANAGER OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

When Marina Gallagher was sitting in Professor Laura Gray's Music and Landscapes class in 2013, she didn't imagine that the connections she was making between pastoral music, landscapes, and classical literature would lead her back to Grebel a decade later, teaching a special topics course on video game music.

"I was completing my Joint Honours in Music and Classical Studies and I started to realize that there were many resonances between the pastoral tradition in music and in classics," she shared. Marina built on the interest she first developed at the University of Waterloo and went on to earn a PhD in Musicology from the University of British Columbia in 2023. Her research explored the relationship between music and landscapes in *Final Fantasy X*, *XII*, *XIII*, and *XV*, and how music affects how players feel about different types of locations in video games. "My PhD dissertation examined the musical and visual features of pastoral areas—forests and fields—and what I call anti-pastoral locations," she explained, "hellish underworld-type locations that draw on horror conventions like darkness, fog, and labyrinthine layouts to unsettle you. I found that there are certain features of pastoral and anti-pastoral music that are more prevalent in video game music and create a strong sense of peacefulness and apprehension, respectively, in players when they're used together in a piece of music."

Marina has continued to investigate how music creates an emotional experience while playing video games and how it influences the way players interact with the game world. "For example, the music evokes different emotions in boss battles based on what type of enemy you're facing, such as a regular opponent, versus a friend or an ally who's been turned against you, versus your own doppelganger," she described. Marina is now looking specifically at adaptive location and battle music in *Final Fantasy XVI*. The game transitions seamlessly between exploration and battle versions of the same piece rather than using a separate battle track within areas the developers call "stages," which heightens the emotional peaks of the narrative. "For example, you'll be exploring some ruins," Marina explained, "and the music will fade in extra instruments like drums or French horn for the battles, and then fade them back out when you return to exploring. So, I'm looking at how the music transitions between exploration and battle states and how that supports your immersion and makes you feel more unified in your purpose in these kinds of areas." To lay the groundwork for her research, Marina must map out the exploration and battle themes, often transcribing them by ear before analysis.



Music classes at UWaterloo and Grebel introduced Marina to many facets of music, including theory, piano literature, music history, and writing a thesis. "These courses gave me a foundation that I could come back to. The professors at Grebel encouraged me to conduct interdisciplinary research when I started to see resonances between Music and Classical Studies, and I was able to find my own path and build my own niche in my chosen career as a result," she said. Her studies also prepared Marina for the expectations and rigour of graduate school, especially in terms of conducting music research and looking at source material. "It opened up many different possibilities," she reflected.

Today, Marina is a part-time instructor in Grebel's Music program and has taught Video Game Music and is currently teaching Understanding Music. She has also been a resource to students in the Game Development Club and to students who are composing their own video game soundtracks. Off the UWaterloo campus, Marina teaches video game music appreciation classes for teenagers at the Laurier Academy of Music and Arts, and she teaches private piano lessons and music theory. She also enjoys creating digital resources for other music educators via her store, The Travelling Troubadour Music Resources, on TeachersPayTeachers.com and Boom Learning.

Through her teaching, research, and creative projects, Marina is uncovering new layers of emotional meaning in digital worlds, as she continues to explore how music shapes the video game landscape.

Peacebuilding from Theory to Practice

BY AUDREY WHITMAN, COMMUNICATIONS COOP STUDENT

Peace is not just a theory for Maria Lucia Zapata Cancelado (Diploma in PACS 2001); it is a daily mission. As a Colombian lawyer and peace scholar, Maria is the Director of the Institute for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at Javeriana University in Bogotá. Her work at the Jesuit school focuses on restorative justice and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Maria began her career as a lawyer during a pivotal period in Colombia's constitutional development as the country was emerging from decades of armed conflict. After completing her bachelor's degree in law at the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, Maria's interest in peace and conflict grew. Pursuing a Conflict Resolution Specialist designation at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana was her first taste of the world of peacebuilding which heavily influenced her career track. In a country that suffered from mass conflict, being a peacebuilder was a complex and controversial role. Training as a law practitioner gave Maria "a broad vision of current conflicts, violence, and peacebuilding." She added, "They complement each other."

Maria earned her PACS diploma from Conrad Grebel University College in 2001, where she developed an interdisciplinary approach that reshaped her perspectives on law and peacebuilding. She then got a master's from Notre Dame and a PhD in Peace Studies from the University of Manitoba.

Today, through her position with Javeriana University, Maria is working on restorative justice initiatives in Colombia, creating safe spaces that promote peacebuilding and healing for those in her community. "What I do is help people understand the dynamics of violence, conflict, peace and peacebuilding," she explained. "Conflict is something that is normal in human relationships, but there are tools and approaches that can help us to better understand conflict and also to build peace."

Maria specializes in restorative justice in the context of post-Accord Colombia after the peace agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government of Colombia. One of the main areas of her work surrounds mandates, one of which highlights that transitional justice needs to be restorative. Although, "there are no precedents in this area," Maria clarified, "so, we have to, in Colombia, do it from scratch." Ongoing conflict in Colombia motivates Maria to also support and develop humanitarian aid, gender equality initiatives, and local peacebuilding within surrounding rural communities and parishes.

Reflecting on why scholarship is important in building peace, Maria asked, "How can we be inclusive of different populations like youth and Aboriginal people or Black communities or a former combatant?" During the beginning of her career, Colombia's constitution was in the beginning stages of being rewritten. It was the time of historic possibilities in the country. Maria recalled thinking, "How can we use the knowledge that I have in different ways? What possibilities are there? And what else can I learn?" Maria went on to work alongside the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, collaborating with communities in alternative dispute resolution and community-based mediation.

Maria's advice for future peacebuilders is to balance academic excellence with true connection. "You need to be able to connect with people," the professor encouraged. "Be able to read and process and understand all the information that you have read, then put it in contact with real human beings."

Maria has spent her life studying and building peace. From Bogotá to Waterloo, she has promoted peace through conversation, justice, and compassion. Her academic career displays the impact of an education at the College, where learning encourages real-world change and action. As she continues her work promoting restorative justice in Colombia, Maria reminds those around her that peacebuilding begins with exchanging points of view.



Young Voices in Worship

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

Think about a time when you attended a worship service in a community that was new to you. What stood out as different? What is most important about worship for you? Now imagine you're 13-29 years old. Would you answer differently?

Two Grebel alumni, Sarah Kathleen Johnson (BA 2007, MTS 2008) and Mykayla Turner (BSC 2020, MTS 2024), are asking these very questions through a collaboration on the Young People and Christian Worship study. This research project aims to shape better conversations about teenagers, emerging adults, and Christian worship by valuing their experiences as an important theological voice. "Young people can enrich the theology and practice of all worshippers," explained Sarah, a principal investigator. Sarah and her co-principal investigators, Nelson Cowan and Emily Snider Andrews, plan to publish a book to share their research with scholars, pastors, and worship leaders.

This project builds on Sarah's previous scholarship. "My research values the lived experience of ordinary worshippers, especially those whose perspectives have been historically marginalized in the church and the academy—this includes young people," she said. "My research is committed to responding to the concrete needs of the church." She added, "I am also invested in engaging ecumenically across Christian traditions and to interrogating the relationship between Christian worship and social justice." Sarah's recent book, *Occasional Religious Practice: Valuing a Very Ordinary Religious Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2025), is another example of her approach.



Mykayla Turner

Mykayla's role involves putting ideas into action and collecting qualitative data. Last summer she conducted interviews, focus groups, and participant observation at several worship-related camps, including Ontario Mennonite Music Camp at Grebel. As co-director of the camp, she performed research alongside her director duties.



Sarah Kathleen Johnson

At this point, patterns are only beginning to emerge. "One pattern that stands out in this very early stage is the diversity of perspectives of young worshippers," shared Sarah. "This includes diversity *among* different Christian traditions and diversity *within* each tradition."



"Young people demonstrate a great deal of curiosity and openness when it comes to experiencing worship practices or styles that are unfamiliar to them," added Mykayla. "Our qualitative data shows many interviewees engaging in thoughtful reflection on how, for instance, a Catholic mass might be very meaningful for other people even if it's a confusing experience for someone who regularly participates in evangelical worship."

"Studying young people and Christian worship is a surprising return to the focus of the MTS thesis I wrote at Grebel in 2008, which explored theological and pastoral questions associated with the integration of youth into worship leadership in Anabaptist Mennonite congregations," Sarah reflected. "Opportunities that I had as a teenager and emerging adult to be involved in worship leadership and teaching others about worship, including at Grebel, fueled my interest in studying Christian practices and led to a vocation and career in liturgical scholarship." She now works as Assistant Professor of Liturgy and Pastoral Theology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa.

As a PhD student in liturgical studies under Sarah's supervision, Mykayla noticed how her research interests have evolved. "My scholarship has moved from a focus on music in worship while I was earning a Master of Sacred Music degree, to the entire context of a worship service," she explained. "I can take seriously a young person's reflection on music while also understanding how it relates to the rest of the service."

Both Sarah and Mykayla trace their work back to foundational experiences at Grebel. "I would not be completing doctoral work in liturgical studies or assisting with this research project if it were not for the role that Grebel and Professor Kate Steiner played in introducing me to this academic field," Mykayla said. "Participation in Grebel's worship practicum course was an especially formative experience, as I worked with other students of different backgrounds to plan and lead a worship service for local churches."

Their research and personal experiences highlight how active involvement and exposure to different worship styles are enriching the church today. "When we focus too much on how to recruit new young people, we sometimes undervalue the diversity of those who already participate," noted Mykayla.

"We hope this research will lift up the voices of young worshippers across Canada and the United States," added Sarah, "and inspire local leaders to listen deeply to the young people in their own communities."

Faculty Leadership in Action

BY ZOHEY PEARCE, COMMUNICATIONS COOP STUDENT

When Jeremy Bergen began attending Canadian Theological Society (CTS) annual meetings during his doctoral studies, he didn't expect that he would end up as its president. This is just one example of how professors often step into leadership positions in scholarly associations, a demonstration of their commitment to service.

Now Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies at Grebel, Jeremy described the society—like many scholarly associations—as a “place for scholars to share their research with each other, make connections, and engage in conversation on the deeper questions of a particular discipline.”

“It was a supportive environment for me to present work, test ideas, and meet other scholars,” he added. “I had some ideas about how to improve how the society operated, and that may have been one reason I was nominated to serve as president, which I did from 2016 to 2017.” Jeremy remains close with established scholars he met at CTS—some of which have led to collaborative research projects like the one he is currently working on about church apologies.



As past president of Canadian University Music Society, Associate Professor Laura Gray organized the annual MusCAN conference at Grebel in May 2025, with workshops, panels, keynotes, and concerts. Under her five-year leadership, the society underwent a major management restructure and overcame financial challenges.

Troy Osborne, Grebel's Dean and Associate Professor of History, serves on the Classics of the Radical Reformation Series board, where he assists in translating and publishing scholarly documents. “I am very grateful for the work of the teachers and scholars who taught me. I want to support the work of future historians, just like I was nurtured by the work of so many others,” explained Troy.

“Serving on a music board is important for making connections and for supporting others,” said Karen Sunabacka, Associate Professor of Music at Grebel. “It fosters creativity and excitement and allows me to support others in their own creative work.”

Similar to Jeremy and Troy, Karen spent several years as a board member for the Canadian New Music Network, serving as vice-president of NUMUS, and as GroundSwell's Board Chair, which is Winnipeg's New Music Series. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Karen continued building GroundSwell's board. She assessed its needs, strengthened operations, and overcame other significant challenges, resulting in a strategic plan that set the organization on a stable path for her successor. “It was rewarding to see a small organization begin to thrive and move forward in many exciting ways,” Karen said.

“Serving in my capacity has underscored to what degree Canadian scholars, whether working in Canada or other countries, have contributed to the academic discipline of biblical studies in both French and English,” Alicia Batten explained, Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies and the President of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies. “Canadian scholars have made a significant impact, and it is an honour to serve on the executive.”

Other Grebel professors also serve in their respective scholarly organizations, reflecting Grebel's mission to seek wisdom in service to church and society.

GREBEL FACULTY CONTINUE RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN RETIREMENT

PROFESSOR EMERITUS MARLENE EPP'S book *Eating Like a Mennonite: Food and Community Across Borders* (McGill-Queen's University Press) is the 2025 recipient of the Dale W. Brown Book Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. The award is administered by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, where Marlene gave a public lecture in October. She also has a forthcoming article in the *Canadian Historical Review* titled “After the Influx: Canadians Respond to World Refugee Year, 1959–1960.”

PROFESSOR EMERITUS LEONARD ENNS' half-hour composition *This Thirsty Land* will receive its first European performance by the Hugo Distler Chor of Berlin and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra in October. His newest environmentally themed work, *Taiga*, a companion to *Ten Thousand Rivers of Oil* and *This Thirsty Land*, will premiere with the University of Guelph Choirs on November 29, 2025, and will also be performed by the Victoria Choral Society with Ballet Victoria during their 2026–27 season. This fall marks Len's 27th season as Founding Director of the DaCapo Chamber Choir, with upcoming concerts in November, February/March, and May.

A Sampling of Scholarship from Faculty

Grebel faculty are experts in Music, Church Music and Worship, Peace and Conflict Studies, History, Theological Studies, Mennonite Studies and Religion, Culture, and Spirituality. Not only are they dedicated professors, but they are esteemed scholars in their respective fields, working on a wide variety of research projects. The following pages detail their recent and current projects. Read a full list of faculty publications, compositions, presentations, and articles online: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications



ALICIA BATTEN

Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies

Research areas: Christian origins, especially the Letter of James; Religion and Material Culture, especially Dress; Satire and early Christianity

Recent publication: “Courtroom Theatrics in the Letter of James,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 143 (2024): 697-715

Current project: I am writing a commentary on the Letter of James that engages the text in its ancient context, but also includes attention to the Letter’s reception throughout history. I am also developing a book proposal that examines the ways in which ancient Christian writers engaged in satirical descriptions of their opponents. How did they use satire and why?

Music suggestion: *East Meets East* by Nigel Kennedy and the Kroke Band



JEREMY BERGEN

Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies

Research areas: Contemporary Christian theology; Anabaptist/Mennonite theology; church apologies for historical wrongs; martyrdom; ecumenism; Holy Spirit

Recent publication: “Papal Apologies for Residential Schools and the Stories They Tell,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 12.2 (2023): 48-62

Current project: I am completing a book for Baylor University Press tentatively titled *Christian Martyrdom and the Unity of the Church*. From a theological perspective, I examine how the stories Christians tell about various martyrs might advance unity among Christians, and how those stories might undermine unity. My scope is broad though one chapter considers the complicated legacy of Anabaptist martyrs in light of ecumenical reconciliation.

Book suggestion: *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel* by Rowan Williams



NATHAN FUNK

Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies

Research areas: Professional values and competencies in peace work; religion and culture in peacebuilding; the Middle East

Recent publication: “Ameen Rihani as a Protagonist of Peaceful Change,” paper presented at the Arab Kings Book Symposium, King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, January 15, 2025.

Current project: I am a co-director of a SSHRC-funded research project exploring the subject of peace professionalism. My fellow researchers and I believe that the peace field can be strengthened by greater clarity about core values that guide and motivate practice as well as by enhanced understanding of key competencies for working with conflict to advance constructive change.

Book suggestion: *Navigating Polarities: Using Both/And Thinking to Lead Transformation* by Brian Emerson and Kelly Lewis



LAURA J. GRAY

Associate Professor of Music

Research areas: Jean Sibelius; early twentieth-century British music criticism; The British Symphony

Recent project: Principal organizer and host of the 2025 MusCan annual national conference held at Grebel in May, which included papers, concerts, and lecture-recitals with over 100 participants

Current project: I'm continuing progress on a book project, *The Sibelius Cult and the Condition of England*. This project examines the significance and impact of the reception literature (newspaper reviews, books, and journal essays) on the British public's perception of Jean Sibelius' works and how these texts function as a kind of formative "paratext," alongside direct public interaction with the works (broadcasts, public performances, and recordings).

Book suggestion: *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* by Christopher Small



LAUREEN HARDER-GISSING

Archivist-Librarian

Research areas: Mennonites in Ontario and Canada, from both historical and archival research perspectives

Recent publication: "Canadian Mennonites and Citizen Activism, 1970-2000." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 37 (2019): 133-157.

Current project: I am working on a history of Mennonites in Canada from 1970-2020 with co-author Brian Froese. The book will be a first attempt to place Canadian Mennonite experiences of the last half century in historical perspective. I hope it will be as absorbing to read as it has been to research.

Book suggestion: *Working* by Robert A. Caro. The spare title disguises a personal and thoroughly engaging exploration of how to get to the heart of any story.



PAUL HEIDEBRECHT

Director, Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement

Research areas: Peace entrepreneurship; social innovation; political advocacy; technology and ethics

Recent publication: "The Temporal Relations of Digital Peacebuilding: Disruptive Innovation and PeaceTech." Roundtable presentation at a research workshop co-organized by the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Geneva Graduate Institute, and European University Institute in Florence, Italy on October 11, 2024.

Current project: While I continue to contribute to and learn from the global PeaceTech movement by working with start-up founders and supporting technology governance initiatives, my primary focus is strengthening the research capacity of the Centre for Peace Advancement. This includes initiating and supporting collaborative projects with affiliated organizations, research fellows, students, and community partners.

Book suggestion: *The AI Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking* by Shannon Vallor



JANE KUEPFER

Schlegel Specialist in Spirituality and Aging

Research areas: Spirituality; aging; spiritual care in long-term care; dementia and autonomy; moral distress in long-term care work; spousal bereavement

Recent publication: "Exploring Intersections of Meaning and Service in Late Life," in *Spiritual, Philosophical, and Psychotherapeutic Engagements of Meaning and Service*, ed. K. Harper, T. S. O'Connor, and D. Maoz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024), 365-78.

Current project: I am creating four resources/toolkits that will be available both online and in print to support the provision of spiritual care in long-term care homes: *Strategies and considerations for inclusive spiritual care*; *Spirituality and dementia*; *Spiritual care at end-of-life*; and *Providing spiritual care: Guidance for LTC Leaders*.

Book suggestion: *Loving later life: An ethics of aging* by Frits de Lange



NAREN KUMARAKULASINGAM

Definite-term Faculty Member, Peace and Conflict Studies

Research areas: Political violence; global justice; colonialism and decolonization; narrative writing

Recent publication: “Bandung and Decolonization,” in *Elgar Encyclopedia of Development*, ed. Matthew Clarke and Xinyu (Andy) Zhao (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2023), 581–84.

Current project: I’m asking “Can South Asian narratives of collective violence furnish an ethical grammar for understanding the increasingly rapid unravelling of the West that we find ourselves amidst?”

Book suggestion: *Human Acts* by Han Kang (trans. Deborah Smith)



ERIC LEPP

Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies

Research areas: Everyday peace; conflict transformation; identity and conflict; encounter; coexistence; graffiti; aesthetics and peace

Recent publication: “Red Paint Resistance: A Spatial-Temporal Case Study of Graffiti as Civil Resistance in Contemporary Settler-Colonial Canada.” *Peace and Change* (2025).

Current project: My current work explores graffiti as a powerful medium for local voices in conflict-affected areas, emphasizing its ability to communicate social and political grievances often overlooked by mainstream or power-imbedded narratives. My particular focus is engaging with how the spatial context and timing of graffiti reveal unique insights into community struggles and aspirations for peace.

Book suggestion: *Say Nothing* by Patrick Radden Keefe



JOHONNA MCCANTS-TURNER

Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies

Research areas: Christian social ethics; Black feminism and womanism; carceral abolition; restorative justice, transformative justice, and interpersonal violence; narrative, arts-based and participatory research

Recent publication: “Prison-Industrial Complex Abolition and Transformative Justice: A Primer for Christians” (co-authored with James McCarty), in *The Business of Incarceration: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Prison-Industrial Complex*, ed. Justin Bronson Barringer, Sarah F. Farmer, and James McCarty (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2025).

Current project: My current book project, *Love in the Wake of Wounding* (Eerdmans Press), argues for abolitionist and reparative responses to intimate violence against Black women, drawing from the resources of Black feminist and womanist Christian ethics and liberatory anti-violence movements.

Book suggestion: *Practicing New Worlds: Abolition and Emergent Strategies* by Andrea Ritchie



DAVID Y. NEUFELD

Assistant Professor of History

Research areas: Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe; Anabaptists and Mennonites; the History of Archives

Recent publication: “In the Clergy’s Sights: Making Anabaptists Visible in Reformed Zurich,” *Religions* 12, no. 15 (2024): 1495.

Current project: In *Separating Tares from Wheat: Making an Anabaptist Minority in Early Modern Switzerland*, I reassess Swiss Anabaptist separation. This book project responds to an incongruity: an emphasis on separatism as this group’s defining mark, set against copious archival evidence of Anabaptists’ deep embeddedness in rural society. Over a century of coexistence, I show that patterns of conflict between Anabaptist villagers and members of the Reformed majority stemmed from ongoing efforts to differentiate dissenters from their neighbours.

Book suggestion: *They Flew: A History of the Impossible* by Carlos Eire



REINA NEUFELDT

Associate Professor and Chair, Peace and Conflict Studies

Research areas: Critical dialogue and polarization; missing figures in histories of peace and conflict studies; ethics and peacebuilding; action research and reflective practise

Recent publication: “Power and the History of Peace and Conflict Studies: Disremembering Gladdys Muir and the First Peace Studies Program.” *Peace and Change*, Early View (March 2025): 1–10.

Current project: Designing collaborative initiatives with UWaterloo colleagues that connect dialogue and dialogue skill development to respond constructively to problems of difference and polarization. One example is working with Grebel students and residence program, alongside the Centre for Community Based Research, exploring concerns amongst Grebelites about polarization on campus and in society more broadly, as well as their ideas for response and interest in different forms of dialogue.

Music suggestion: *On a mangé le soleil* by Cephaz



TROY OSBORNE

Dean, Associate Professor of History

Research areas: Early Modern Europe; Anabaptist and Mennonite history

Recent publication: *Radicals and Reformers: A Survey of Global Anabaptist History* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2024).

Current project: I’m working on a translation of the earliest Anabaptist martyrology *Het Offer des Heeren* into English. I’m also contributing to a special issue commemorating the 100th anniversary of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Book suggestion: *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* by Molly Worthen



CAROL PENNER

Director and Assistant Professor, Theological Studies; Chaplain

Research areas: Feminist theology; abuse; Mennonite worship

Recent publication: “Prayers about War.” *Vision* 26, no. 1 (2025), 91-95. She recently presented a paper at the Believers’ Church Conference in Amsterdam titled “A Witness to the World: Congregations Where We Don’t Abuse Each Other.”

Current project: I have a popular blog of worship resources (leadinginworship.com). In my work as chaplain, I will have more opportunities to post prayers and litanies this year.

Book suggestion: *My Peace I Give You* by the Poor Clare Sisters of Arundel



KATE KENNEDY STEINER

Associate Professor of Music

Research areas: Liturgical music; chant; early medieval polyphony; liturgical theology

Recent publication: “The Insular Daily Lady Mass of the Thirteenth Century: Sources, Repertory and Transmission.” *Plainsong & Medieval Music* 33 (2024): 121–46

Current project: I’m interested in lay participation in the medieval Lady Mass: Medieval churches were noisy places, full of constant liturgical activity. In England, a morning mass dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary was offered in most cathedrals, monasteries, and collegiate churches in chapels dedicated to Mary. These masses were important training grounds for young choristers and composers, and were more frequented and supported by lay people. My project investigates the music, architecture, iconography, and lay support of these Masses.

Music suggestion: *Music for Compline* by Stile Antico



DEREK SUDERMAN

Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theological Studies

Research areas: Psalms; lament; minor prophets; violence and the Bible; history of interpretation

Recent publication: Psalms, "Introduction" and "Biblical Context Notes," *Anabaptist Community Bible* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2025).

Current project: I am finalizing edits for my book *The Social Audience of Prayer: A Rhetorical and Canonical Study of Individual Lament Psalms* (in *Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, Eisenbrauns and Penn State). I am also writing a commentary on Nahum-Zephaniah for the Believers' Church Bible Commentary series, a collaboration among several Mennonite/Anabaptist denominations; I have represented Mennonite Church Canada on the BCBC Editorial Council for 20+ years.

Book suggestion: *The Spirituality of the Psalms* by Walter Brueggemann; *The Luck of Nineveh* by Arnold Brackman



MAISIE SUM

Associate Professor of Music

Research areas: Ethnomusicology; comparative musicology; music, performance, and identity; collective music practices; music, ritual, and spirituality; music, emotion, and meaning; theory and analysis; variations & improvisation; music, health, and wellbeing; music and the diaspora; music in Morocco and Bali

Recent publication: "Music for the Unseen: Interaction between Two Realms During a Gnawa Lila," *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 9, no. 3 (December 2013): 151–82.

Current project: Drawing on ethnographic research, my book project investigates the enduring significance of Gnawa music to the lives of hereditary Black Moroccan practitioners and their followers in the changing climate of late 20th-century Morocco. It foregrounds the transformative role of the guembri (a 3-string lute) to Gnawa culture, as an instrument of healing, human expression, and aesthetic pleasure.

Music suggestion: *Feeling Good* sung by Nina Simone



KAREN SUNABACKA

Associate Professor of Music

Research areas: Compositions that explore her Métis and Manitoba heritage; the sounds of the Canadian wilderness; women's voices in electroacoustic music; women, girls and media images

Recent publication: *p̄simwak - Moons II*, for SATB choir, violin, and piano. Commissioned by the Grand Philharmonic Choir; premiered March 22, 2025.

Current project: I'm working on two projects, both with text by my mother, Joyce Clouston. The first is a 10-minute piece for 8 cellos titled *Water, Reeling and Kin*, commissioned by the Agassiz Chamber Music Series Cello Festival to be premiered on October 31st in Winnipeg, MB. The second project is a 7-minute work commissioned by Tafelmusik for spring 2026 for voice and baroque Orchestra.

Music suggestion: *Sustenance* by Elation Pauls



MARK VUORINEN

Associate Professor and Chair, Music

Research areas: Performance of choral music. Fall 2025 performances include Beethoven's *Missa Selemnis*, Handel's *Messiah* with the Grand Philharmonic Choir and the Duruflé *Requiem*, John Shepard's *Media Vita*, and Herbert Howells' *Take him, earth, for cherishing*, with The Elora Singers.

Recent CD recordings: with The Elora Singers: *To the Ground from the Sky* (2023), featuring music for choir and percussion ensemble, and *In beauty may I walk* (2024).

Current project: I am preparing for performances with The Elora Singers at the Elora Festival (July 11-26). This year's festival will feature concerts of music by W.A. Mozart, G.F. Handel, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Ēriks Ešēvalds, artistic collaborations with the jazz-funk-Indian-fusion band Autorickshaw, the Penderecki String Quartet, Jeremy Dutcher, soprano soloists Karina Gauvin and Myriam Leblanc, and the Junges Vokalsensemble Hannover.

Music suggestion: Mozart *Piano Concerto in A major*, K.488, second movement.



Final Print Issue for *The Conrad Grebel Review*

BY TROY OSBORNE

The Conrad Grebel Review, established in 1983, was an initiative of Conrad Grebel University College's first Chaplain and Religious Studies Professor Walter Klaassen. In his introduction to the first issue, he located the journal at a critical moment of Mennonite self-assurance and noted that the time was ripe for a journal that looked at the present and towards the future. Whereas other Mennonite journals "focus particularly on the Mennonite story past and present," he wrote that "Our task is to reflect more on present and future in the context of the whole church and the world."

Writing on behalf of the entire editorial council—the College's faculty and administration—Klaassen hoped that the content would extend beyond Mennonite matters, reflecting the multi-disciplinary makeup of Grebel's faculty. Klaassen stated in his first editorial: "The conditions for accepting contributions for publication are that they reflect sound scholarship and that Christian faith be the acknowledged perspective from which an issue is discussed."

Despite the proclamations of confidence and denominational breadth, the first volumes reflect a community of scholars still discussing the contours of Mennonite theological thought and group identities that drew from the Mennonite and Anabaptist pasts. Nevertheless, contributions soon included articles, poetry, lectures, reviews, reflections, and "literary refractions" that spanned topics of theology, Mennonites, biblical studies, history, religion, Christianity, peace, music, literature, and philosophy.

The Review's success was the result of its editorial leadership and the maturity of Anabaptist-Mennonite thought. Primarily managed in-house, Grebel faculty such as Rodney Sawatsky, Arnold Snyder, Hildi Froese Tiessen, Marlene Epp, Jeremy Bergen, and Derek Suderman were responsible for setting the direction of the journal and choosing articles. They were supported by an editorial board, consulting editors, managing editors, copy editors, and Pandora Press.

Theological Studies Professor Jeremy Bergen was editor of *The Review* for nearly a decade (until 2017), working closely with Managing Editor Stephen Jones. In the face of declining

subscriptions and conflicting readership perceptions, Bergen showed innovation and persistence in establishing agreements with online databases, even as he clarified the journal's purpose and grappled with the question, "Is *The Conrad Grebel Review* about Mennonites, by Mennonites, or for Mennonites?"

With awareness of and gratitude for the dedicated work by previous scholars and former colleagues, Grebel made the difficult decision to end publication of *The Conrad Grebel Review* at the end of 2024. This decision was not taken lightly, but it was necessary in the context of changing faculty interests and a strained financial context for the College, the University of Waterloo, and higher education in Ontario.

Kyle Gingerich Hiebert was the final *Review* editor, leading the journal through the pandemic to its final issue. His team championed the journal and its mandate to advance thoughtful, sustained discussions of theology, peace, society, and culture from broadly-based Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives while remaining steadfastly committed to scholarship of the highest quality.

Grebel is planning to redeploy financial resources and faculty energy in support of a new online publishing platform for scholarship on Anabaptist/Mennonite topics, working with several Mennonite institutions of higher education to explore potential models for carrying journal conversations into new, open access forms. Grebel faculty are excited about the possibilities of this new venture, as the new online project is being designed with the same multi-disciplinary spirit that animated *The Conrad Grebel Review*.

In his reflection in the last issue of *The Review*, Bergen asked, "What is the future for the kinds of conversations that The Review has hosted in the past, and will its legacy and ethos live on in other forms?" Even as conversations and debates move to new platforms with reimagined leadership, my hope as Dean and a historian is that future readers will continue to find the records of the conversations in its pages worthy of their consideration for many years to come. And we hope that the journal's network of readers and contributors will join us on the new platform when it launches.

Reimagining Research

BY PAUL HEIDEBRECHT, DIRECTOR, KINDRED CREDIT UNION CENTRE FOR PEACE ADVANCEMENT

Research was one of three core activities prioritized when the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement was first envisioned over a decade ago. This might strike you as a rather predictable move, given that the primary purpose of every one of the other thirty centres and institutes currently based at the University of Waterloo is to elevate research in a particular thematic area or field.

Many of my colleagues “across the creek” would have assumed that Grebel was adding peace to the array of other concentrations of research expertise found on campus, including those who pursue scholarship in broad areas such as climate, energy, and water. The Centre for Peace Advancement would join these other centres in pursuing grants, conducting studies and experiments, and producing peer-reviewed journal articles and other publications. This assumption would have been misplaced, however, not only because we also have a mandate to advance peace through training and community engagement, but because our research activities are in service of agendas that go beyond traditional scholarship.

Indeed, our research community is anchored by affiliated organizations such as Project Ploughshares, whose advocacy for nuclear disarmament, controlling the arms trade, and regulating emerging technologies of warfare is grounded in the careful efforts of their core team of three researchers. They pore over government documents, corporate reports, media analysis, and even social media images, as well as consult with civil society and academic partners to generate timely analysis and recommendations. This is an example of research with a larger purpose—informing, challenging, and holding government policy-makers accountable.

Other examples of agenda-laden research can be found in any one of 15-20 projects that another one of our affiliate organizations, the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR), is pursuing at any point in time. Their team of almost a dozen researchers partner with a wide range of community organizations working to support newcomers, provide healthcare to vulnerable groups, and meet many other social needs. CCBR’s approach to research is always community-driven, participatory, and action-oriented, and they have played an instrumental role in advancing this approach across Canada and beyond over the past four decades.

The Centre for Peace Advancement community is also eager to equip students with research skills, and many have benefitted from internships with our affiliated organizations and research fellows. In addition, CCBR launched a new Certificate Program in Community Based Research earlier this year in collaboration with Grebel and the University of Waterloo. And for the past seven years, the Centre for Peace Advancement has facilitated Waterloo’s participation in Map the System, a global research competition organized by the University of Oxford that requires students to apply a system-thinking lens to clarify their understanding of a complex social or environmental challenge. We have seen Waterloo students succeed at the national and global levels of this competition, and we have seen them use their research as a springboard for policy interventions, program innovations, and social entrepreneurship start-ups.

Research is an important way we can better understand—and take action on—the growing number of challenges our world faces in building peace. As the Centre for Peace Advancement’s dynamic community of participants continues to evolve, we look forward to growing our research capacity and impact.

SPIRITUALITY AND AGING RESEARCH

BY JANE KUEPFER, SCHLEGEL SPECIALIST IN SPIRITUALITY AND AGING

At the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA), knowledge gained through research is valued. Even more important is that knowledge becomes practice, to enhance life for older adults. Research generated through the RIA’s Spirituality & Aging program housed at Grebel is directly supporting spiritual care in long-term care (LTC) through resources provided online to the LTC sector. By surveying LTC homes throughout Ontario and interviewing

spiritual care providers (SCPs), I’ve found that less than half of homes employ anyone in that role, and that many homes feel underequipped to meet spiritual needs. Initial recommendations coming from the research encouraged every LTC home to hire a SCP, so as part of my work with the RIA, I created a practical resource for administrators, including information about spiritual care, a job description, and interview questions.

To meet further needs identified through research, we’ve piloted an online program to deliver spiritual care training that recognizes the unique context of LTC (including aging and end-of-life issues, dementia, multi-faith care, family counselling, and healthcare team skills). On the RIA website, watch for the upcoming release of three new spiritual care resources for supporting inclusive spiritual care, end-of-life, and spiritual well-being in dementia.

In early November, seven Grebel students attended the annual Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Opportunities like these show how the Grebel experience helps students connect a sense of purpose and practicality to their studies.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Some important things only become clear with hindsight. For example, this year marked the 500th anniversary of the baptism of Conrad Grebel. The significance of that event was not obvious at the time. Conrad Grebel was (by official accounts) an irritating and irresponsible figure, whose baptism was yet another act of nuisance against the authorities. But 500 years later, he is seen as a founding leader of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church tradition—and our college bears his name.

Other things that matter are there all along, but they seem to hide in plain sight. This past year at Grebel drew our attention to these things. We witnessed strong student leadership, gifted teaching, scholarship, and mentorship, and the many acts of community that express the enduring values we aspire to promote. In a year when the whole world roiled with crisis and uncertainty, we found hope and conviction in the daily work of building and being a community of learning. It's what we've always done at Grebel, since 1963.

We also endured continued financial pressure last year. The impact of this pressure is no longer hypothetical—its effects are increasingly real at universities across Ontario, including at the University of Waterloo. In this context, we're grateful that we finished the year with a modest operating surplus. We found the discipline—and the donor support—to continue replacing and repairing our aging buildings. And we distributed more scholarships, reaffirming our commitment to support our students financially.

What's "in plain sight" is not just the challenge of steering a small, mission-driven college through unsettled times, but also the many gifts of those who make it possible: students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and board members. Their commitment to Grebel's mission is not abstract; it's expressed every day, in thoughtful action, hard work, and generosity.

2024-25 was a year when some challenges became more visible. But so did the remarkable dedication of the Grebel community, and its determination to meet the moment with purpose and hope.

On behalf of the Board,

Marcus Shantz
President

Donny Cheung
Chair, Board of Governors



The Grebel student body put on a production of *The Clockmaker's Daughter* in winter—an incredible feat of organization and talent.



Orchestra@UWaterloo celebrated their 20-year anniversary and performed a concert with pieces they played at their first performance. The founders of the orchestra and other original members attended.



More than 100 donors and students gathered to honour scholarship recipients and express gratitude to donors. This photo includes Rotarians who have been championing a peace scholarship for MPACS.

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Grebel employed 15 full-time and two definite-term faculty, along with 31 adjunct instructors. Together, they taught 175 courses, including five new ones, to thousands of UWaterloo students. Faculty conversations frequently focused on DEI and the challenges of AI. Grebel faculty illustrated the breadth of their scholarship through public lectures, panels, book launches, concerts, faculty forums, and conferences. They published books, chapters, articles, compositions, and delivered workshops and presentations.

To celebrate 500 years of Anabaptism, Karl Koop presented the Bechtel Lecture on “Anabaptist Beginnings and the stories we tell” and the Institute of Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies offered a service of music, reading, and reflection to mark the anniversary. Leonard Friesen offered two public lectures on “Mennonites in Imperial Russian and Soviet History.” MTS presented *Bonhoeffer: Cell 92*, a cinematic theatre production.

Partnered with the UW Research Institute for Aging, the Spirituality and Aging program organized monthly webinars and hosted the annual seminar featuring Mark Roberts speaking on the “Third third of life.” The Milton Good Library worked with volunteers to digitize *The Canadian Mennonite* (1953-1971) and migrated the Mennonite Archives of Ontario website. MAO opened a new exhibit, *What They Carried: The Archives of Russlaender Mennonite Immigrants*. *The Conrad Grebel Review* published its final two issues in January 2025.

The Music Department revised its curriculum to be more accessible and advance decolonization, and they introduced three new specializations: Intensive Music, Performance, and Composition. The program graduated 10 majors and 18 minors. In addition to hosting 14 Noon Hour Concerts, Music organized 18 ensemble concerts, including the 20th anniversary concert of the Orchestra@UWaterloo. 543 UWaterloo students participated in ensembles (335 for credit). Choral Day attracted 230 local high school students for workshops and concerts.

The number of PACS majors (13) and minors (14) declined slightly, while course enrolment held steady and recruitment showed promise. PACS cross-listed more courses, while faculty collaborated with UWaterloo colleagues and departments. One PACS and four MPACS students participated in internships, a marked decrease from last year. Teena Faust won first place in the C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest, and faculty member Eric Lepp offered the Eby Lecture on “Paint as Protest.” PACS hosted a Peace and Justice Day for high school students.

The Master of Theological Studies program put much effort into recruitment, with positive results. A third year of sharing enrolment in two online courses with CMU continued, this year with a course on Minor Prophets. Nine students participated in Supervised Experience in Ministry placements in churches, nursing homes, the University of Toronto, and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. The program also continued work on the seven-year review process and offered a course on Theologies of the Global South with Sessional Instructor Pablo Kim.

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

Grebel had 3909 individual undergraduate course enrolments from students across all faculties at UWaterloo. This five-year low is on par with 2019-2020 and within normal fluctuations.

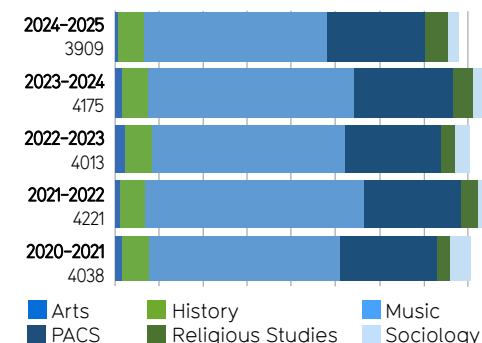
GRADUATE STUDIES

Peace and Conflict Studies and Theological Studies admitted 13 and 21 new master’s students, respectively. Course enrolments rebounded slightly compared to last year, with a total of 32 MPACS and 32 MTS students in the program in the fall.

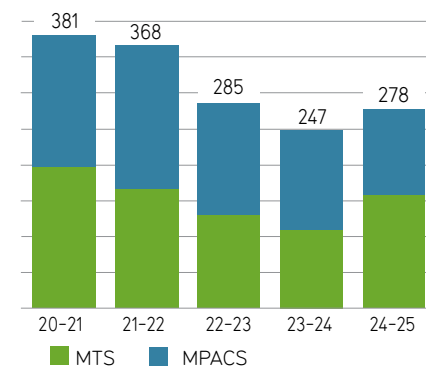
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE

Continuing education workshops saw high demand this year, as the Conflict Management Certificate program celebrated its 25th anniversary. Program profits exceeded anticipated revenue by more than 300 percent and a review process and software upgrade began.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE ENROLMENTS



GRADUATE COURSE ENROLMENTS



Kayla Burmaster and Aria Scerbovic presented their research at UWaterloo's annual Culture Fest, which celebrated outstanding student work and made connections across culture-related disciplines. It was co-organized with faculty member Jeremy Bergen in his work with the Religious Studies Department.

KINDRED CREDIT UNION CENTRE FOR PEACE ADVANCEMENT (CPA)

The CPA celebrated its 10th anniversary, launched a Certificate Program with the Centre for Community-Based Research, and supported 87 practitioners, entrepreneurs, and researchers and 19 students. *Local Futures*, a Peace Incubator start-up, received \$900,000 in government funding, while two new ventures joined and \$296,000 in external support was leveraged. Even with a hiatus, the Grebel Gallery presented four exhibits.

STUDENT SERVICES

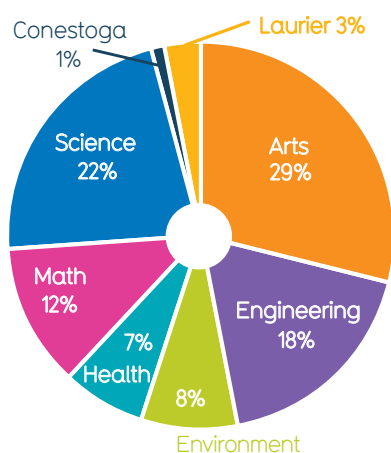
Student Services set the tone for the year with an Opening Celebration themed around the idea of planting seeds. The on-site All-Grebel Retreat featured a “Choose Your Own Adventure” afternoon that brought students, faculty, and administrators together for informal relationship building. Led by enthusiastic and conscientious student leaders, the year unfolded with many planned activities like talent shows, mocktails, an “Is It Cake?” challenge, leaf jumping, the Roommate Challenge, square dancing, and fort-building, and other initiatives run by student groups. Students volunteered on a Mennonite Disaster Service trip to Mississippi, sold cream buns at the Mennonite Relief Sale, hosted a car wash, and packed hygiene kits for Mennonite Central Committee.

With a full residence and apartments, Grebel welcomed 259 residents from all UWaterloo faculties. 105 students served in formal leadership roles—a number that continues to grow. In a 60% monetary increase over last year, 143 residence students received \$252,832 in awards that recognize leadership, achievement, and need. Student Services equipped student leaders with DEI training and first-response resources while forging relationships with campus partners for complicated situations. Speakers at Community Supper – many Grebel alumni—helped to strengthen Grebel’s culture of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Grebel’s faith composition was 21% Mennonite, 25% Protestant, 19% Evangelical, 7% Catholic, and 5% other religions, and 31% no faith tradition—and reflective of Canadian demographics. International and American students made up 7% of the student body, including two refugee students who are sponsored by Grebel students. The Chapel program emphasized student involvement and saw strong participation. Along with MTS, the Chapel Committee hosted a Public, Intentional, Explicit Day celebrating Grebel’s 2SLGBTQIA+ members.

A major undertaking this year was the student-run musical *The Clockmaker’s Daughter*, involving 80 students. The Inter-College Cup, run with the other University Colleges on campus, was built on comraderie, energy, and friendly competition.

AREAS OF STUDY



REGIONS

LOCATIONS | STUDENTS

British Columbia	5
Alberta	1
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	3
Ontario	220
Quebec	1
USA	8
International	9

FINANCIAL AID

196	Grebel students received
\$576,310	in awards and bursaries.
\$155,381	came from external sources
\$68,825	came from internal sources, and
\$352,104	came from endowment earnings.

OPERATIONS



Grebel received the “Greatest GHG Reduction Award” from Sustainable Waterloo Region following heat pump renovations in the academic wing, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from 404 tons Co2 to 304 tons. Mimi Browne, Devon Grainger, and Fred Martin accepted the award on behalf of Grebel.

Much of the year was spent planning for the residence renewal project, including a feasibility study (which found window replacement would not significantly reduce GHG emissions), the convening of a Building Advisory Committee, design work with Martin Simmons Sweers (the original residence architects), and hiring Nith Valley Construction. Phase 1 of the \$4 million project began in April. It includes renovating four student washrooms and replacing the domestic boiler with heat pump hot water heaters.

The multi-zone HVAC unit upgrade in the academic building was completed in April. This heat pump and energy recovery ventilator have already reduced the College’s natural gas usage and carbon emissions. Other projects included replacing the leaking academic wing roof and attending to plumbing and hot water radiator heating issues in the residence building.

The Anti-Racism, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity working group commissioned a survey and shared findings and recommendations as a first step for greater inclusion and belonging at Grebel.

UNDERGRADUATES OF 2025

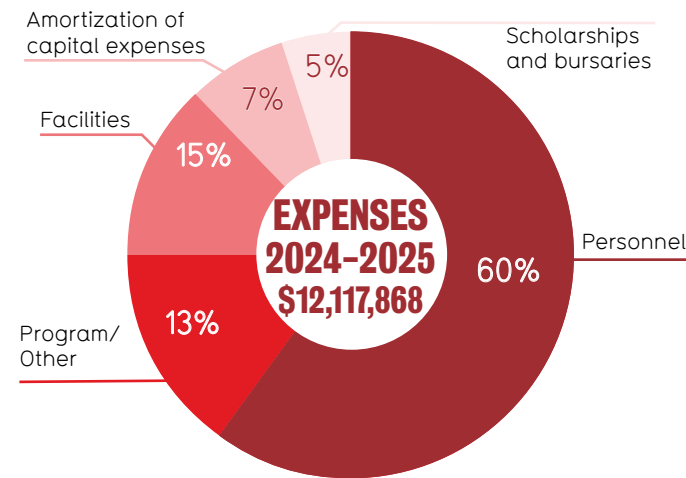
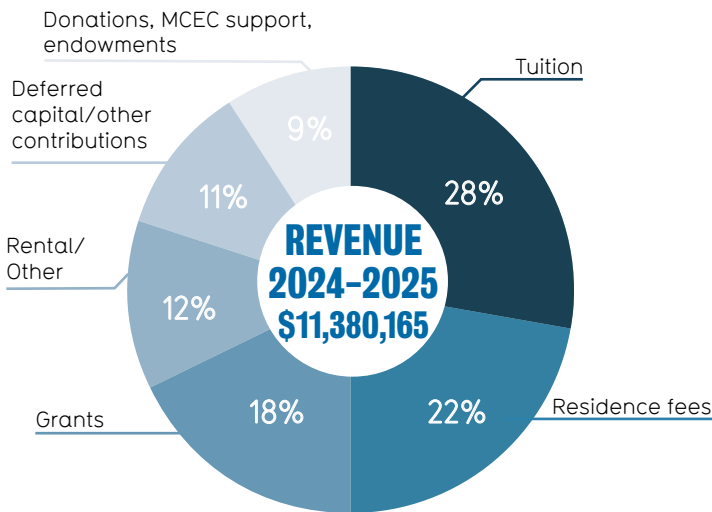


FINANCE

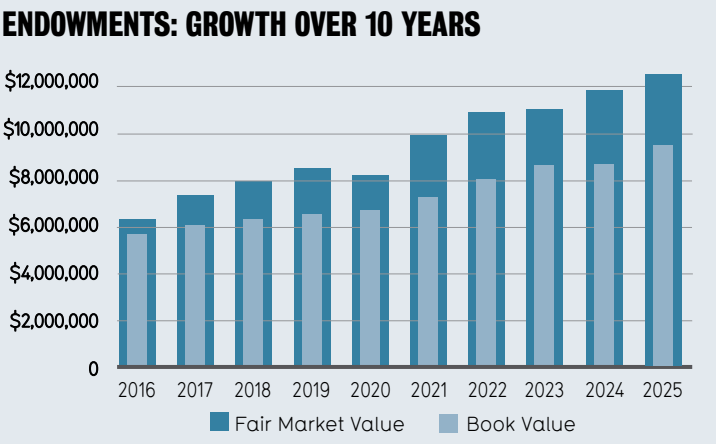
The College ended the year with a modest Operating Fund surplus of just over \$110,000. This welcome news is the result of careful effort across all departments to manage resources, during what continues to be a difficult funding environment.

The Operating Fund tracks Grebel’s day-to-day business, and does not include major repair and maintenance projects or building amortization. Last year, we completed the replacement of our 50 year-old HVAC system in the academic wing, installed a new roof, and began early stage work on our residence renewal project. With these expenses factored in, our consolidated deficit was \$737,703. Generous donor support has made it possible to be good stewards of our aging buildings.

Strong endowment earnings and donor support enabled us to continue investing in our students through students awards. A total of \$576,000 was distributed in scholarships and bursaries—a 14% increase over the previous year.



For complete audited financial statements, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/annual-report



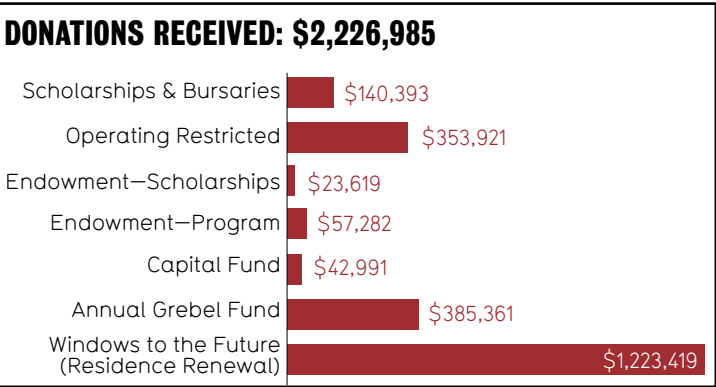
ADVANCEMENT

Grebel was built with the vision and support of generous donors. The Grebel community continued to benefit from that legacy. Through gifts, pledges, workplace matches, and bequests, alumni and donors provide essential support for endowments, scholarships, and capital projects. Donor support remained steadfast again this fiscal year, with an 81% donor retention rate. The Grebel Fund goal was met, 80 new donors gave generously, and alumni made up 61 percent of the donor base.

By April 30, 2025, the Windows to the Future capital campaign had secured \$3.4 million in gifts and pledges, with \$1,223,419 donated in the fiscal year. This project includes critical upgrades to air handling systems, washrooms, and plumbing infrastructure, enhancing the spaces where students spend so much time.

Student scholarship support continued from established partners like Rotary Clubs and Mennonite Disaster Service, with new contributions from Mersynergy Foundation and Kelowna Mennonite Church. Student financial aid rose by 14 percent, and alumni engagement deepened with good participation at nine events, including an Alumni Community Supper. Larry Cornies received the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Service Award and 17 alumni returned to speak at Community Suppers.

With \$2,226,985 raised this year and over \$12 million at year end in the endowment portfolio, Grebel’s financial position is strong and grounded in resolute generosity from the Grebel community.



Windows to the Future Campaign

BY FRED W. MARTIN, DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT

Funding building and infrastructure upgrades in buildings that are more than 60 years old isn't always exciting. However, Grebel alumni and donors have helped to embrace this challenge. With a late summer pledge of \$500,000 from John Marshall (BES 85), we have eclipsed our \$4M minimum fundraising goal! With this strong support, we are also able to upgrade the lounge furniture and internet infrastructure in the residence.

"Grebel is an amazing place and was foundational to my life—not only my studies but my social life and networks of friends. And I'm glad to support this important fundraising campaign that will help Grebel's students," said John. As a student, John was deeply involved in student life in the residence and was impacted by the academic support of professors like Walter Klaassen.

This summer, four washrooms were renovated and preliminary work was done for the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning upgrades. The second stage of upgrades will occur in summer 2026 when air source heat pumps will be installed in all of the residence rooms and the final two washrooms will be upgraded.

It has been gratifying to see alumni from all eras band together to help fund the cost of renewing our residence for a new generation of Grebelites. For example, Tim (BMATH 2015) and Jessica (Clancy) (BSC 2017) Dyck along with Rebekah (Winter) (BSC 2016) and Chad Bender sponsored a room. Tim, who served as Student Council President noted, "We are feeling blessed to be in a position to give back to the place we called home, and the place we first met! We drive by every day, so we are constantly reminded of the role Grebel has played in our lives."

Roy Hoffman (BASC 1964) from Montreal, sponsored a room in memory of his wife Sandra (Funk) (BA 1966) who passed away in 2023. "I'm happy to be able to do this," said Roy, who was part of the third graduating class from Engineering at Waterloo.

Approximately 15 rooms have yet to be sponsored, and these donations will fund other capital upgrades to the residence and apartments. "Our capital reserves are depleted and additional support for this project will provide needed resources for any future infrastructure issues that may arise," noted Mimi Browne, Director of Operations.

"Fundraising campaigns are usually about building new things, but we've raised over \$4 million to replace old plumbing and boilers," said President Marcus Shantz. "We're so grateful to have generous donors who understand the importance of good stewardship."

WINDOWS to the FUTURE



The residence plumbing infrastructure was in dire need of replacement—even more evident during construction.



In thanks to John Marshall for his gift, the fourth-floor lounge will be called the "John Marshall Student Lounge."



"Renovating the bathrooms wasn't just a slight upgrade, it was something that has now made our lives easier and the space more functional," said Gillian Devich, a current residence don.

DONATE TODAY! \$10,000 WILL HELP UPGRADE THE HVAC IN ONE RESIDENCE ROOM

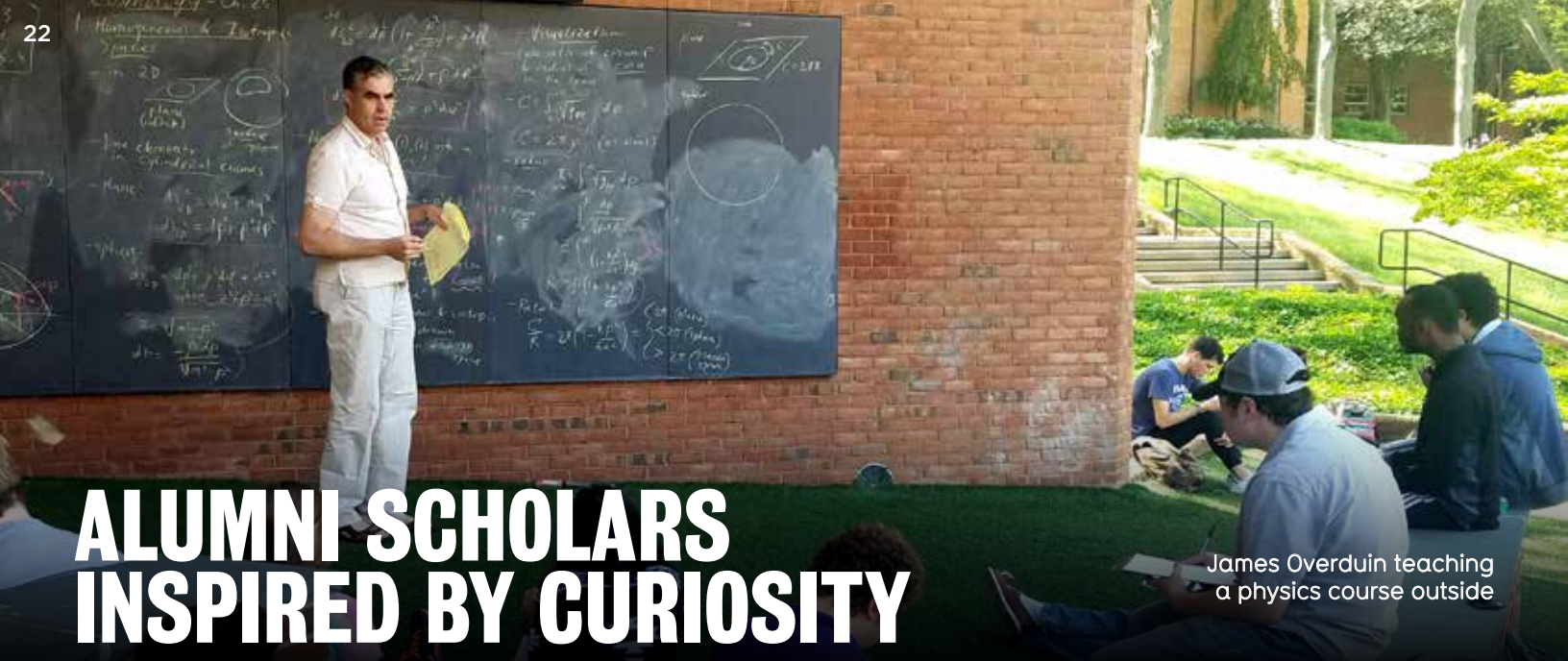
Help to upgrade Grebel's HVAC system and improve air quality in the residence.

Pledge on your own or together with friends or a past roommate!

- \$10k per room
- \$5k with your roommate



[UWATERLOO.CA/GREBEL/RESIDENCE-RENEWAL](https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/residence-renewal)



ALUMNI SCHOLARS INSPIRED BY CURIOSITY

James Overduin teaching
a physics course outside

Not only does Grebel have a long legacy of talented and engaged professors, but many students in Grebel courses and dorm rooms have gone on to become distinguished scholars in their own right. We were delighted to hear from alumni studying very diverse topics—reflective of the conversations students might have around the lunch table. We asked them to explain their scholarship to a non-expert and to share a question that is the basis of their work right now. We wanted to know if their work today relates to what they studied as an undergraduate student and how Grebel might have influenced their career path. These profiles are just a glimpse into the scholarship of some of the many Grebel alumni inspired by curiosity in their work.

JAMES OVERDUIN (BSC 1989, MSC 1992)

Professor of Physics, Towson University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

I'm a physics professor at Towson University in Maryland, where I've been for 16 years. This is an American comprehensive four-year college, which means I spend about a third of my time on research and the other two-thirds on teaching. I feel fortunate to have ended up in a job that is exactly right for me.

I am mostly a theorist, which means I am cheap! I don't have a laboratory or do experiments. My study focuses on the areas of gravitation, cosmology and astrophysics. I try to find ways to combine disparate branches of physics into a single, more unified theory, and to test attempts by others to do the same thing. I am especially interested in unified theories involving more than three dimensions of space plus one of time.

I am working on a book called *Dust and the Dark Night Sky* that explores an old question in cosmology: why exactly is the sky dark at night? If you look at the latest images from the James Webb Space Telescope, they show mostly empty space between the galaxies. How can that be, if the universe is filled with galaxies all the way out to infinity? Shouldn't the most powerful telescopes reveal a solid wall of galactic light, the same way you see a solid wall of tree trunks if you are in the middle of a large forest? The answer is intriguing: it turns out that the amount of empty space between the galaxies tells us how young the universe is.

There is a straight line from what I do now and what I studied as an undergraduate at Waterloo. In fact, the line goes back to Rockway High School. I had read a book back then called *Flatland* and became intrigued by extra dimensions. Like at Grebel, my teachers

at Rockway encouraged me to “go confidently in the direction of my dreams” (our Grade 12 graduation theme, which I now know comes from Thoreau). When I got to Waterloo, a new professor from Cambridge, Paul Wesson, had just joined the Physics department. I took his course on cosmology and relativity and fell in love with the subject. Later I accompanied him to California to work on my master's degree. During the time we were there, he discovered a new unified theory based on extra dimensions. He and I and a few others formed a small group to study and test this theory, and although I have branched out in other directions too, this work has remained closest to my heart.

My time at Grebel formed me into a full human being. It opened up my world—from Dean of Students Gloria Eby to the staff and students around me, it provided a supportive, nurturing yet also stimulating community where I could explore new ideas and directions and figure out who I was and what I wanted to do. I remember intense late-night conversations with peers: Roger Bergs, Sheryl Chapman, Wendy Chappell, Michel Enns, Wes From, Tim Garrett, Gus Gissing, Mary Goerzen, Ted Harms, Chris Hiller, Shelby Krahn, Kevin Kroeker, Cathy Manning, John Marshall, Caroline Presber, Suomi Salovaara, Bob Tees, Andy Toy, Jane Van de Ban and so many others. But especially my roommate, Ken Stevens. He upended my view of the world when he said in the middle of an argument: “You know, maybe things aren't just true or false. Maybe there are other possibilities” (and provided theological references). That moment—and others—carried over from my life into my work, making me less afraid to take risks.

LEANNE HILL (BA 2008, MA 2009)

University College Lecturer of Foreign Language Didactics
University College of Teacher Education Styria, Graz, Austria

As a faculty member at the University College of Teacher Education Styria in Graz, Austria, I train pre- and in-service teachers in teaching English as a foreign language at the primary level. I also conduct and collaborate on research projects related to foreign language teaching education.

I study how teaching subjects like music in a foreign language can help students learn both the subject and the language more deeply. Right now, I'm exploring how CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teachers balance language and content. Understanding this can help improve teaching practices and student outcomes in multilingual classrooms.

My research builds on my UWaterloo background in English literature and music, as well as my Austrian teaching degree in English as a foreign language and music education, combining all fields to investigate language learning through music education.

Grebel's community-minded environment nurtured my curiosity about education and inclusive learning, which continues to shape both my research and my teaching philosophy. It is also where I met my Austrian husband in Leonard Enns' Chapel Choir!



Photo credit: PHSt/Rauter

JONATHAN SMITH (BCS 2019, BBA 2019)

Staff Machine Learning Engineer
Meta, San Francisco, USA

I work as a Staff Machine Learning Engineer at Meta on AI Safety for Youth. I research and build AI systems that help protect people online and improve global participation in technology governance.

A core question guiding my work is: how can AI serve users' diverse values, needs, and expectations? This means designing technology that benefits people across cultures and contexts, rather than just a narrow group. It also requires grappling with real-world tensions,



like the different needs of parents and teenagers in online spaces. By grounding AI development in human needs, and navigating the conflicts between them, we can create systems that are more trustworthy. With the rapid global adoption of AI, this moment is critical for charting the right directions for long-term safety.

At Waterloo, I studied Computer Science, which gave me a strong grounding in algorithms, machine

learning, and data-driven problem solving. Studying business alongside computer science helped me see how economic, social, and institutional factors shape the direction of technology. Together, those perspectives taught me that advancing AI responsibly isn't just a technical challenge but it's also about understanding the broader systems into which these technologies are introduced.

Grebel emphasized community, ethics, and peacebuilding in a way that reshaped how I think about technology. Courses like PACS 315: Engineering and Peace, and my time with the Centre for Peace Advancement and the PeaceTech Living-Learning program, pushed me to co-create with communities and centre care, equity, and accountability in AI research.

STEPHEN MCDOWELL (BA 1982)

Assistant Provost for International Initiatives; Interim Dean of The Graduate School; John H. Phipps Professor of Communication
Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

I've served as Assistant Provost for International Initiatives at Florida State University since 2018, as the John H. Phipps Professor of Communication since 2006, and joined FSU in 1996.

My academic teaching and research focus on international communication, media in South Asia, and issues and challenges in governing communication on the internet. Administratively, I advance international engagements, such as student international experiences, travel safety, international graduate students, and international research collaborations. The context for international connections and cooperation has changed significantly. Exploring the best ways to prepare our students to be responsible leaders in the world in which they will live in and work is a central goal of my work.

I studied Economics and Political Science as an undergraduate, with an interest in international studies. These areas connect very well with my goals and responsibilities now.



At Grebel, I took courses on the Arab-Israeli conflict with Frank Epp and Peace and Conflict Studies with Conrad Brunk. These introduced me to international issues and challenges, and the need for thoughtful investigation and effective communication. I followed up with graduate studies in international studies after completing my degree at Waterloo. I also sang in Chamber Choir with Wilbur Maust while at Grebel and have enjoyed singing in choirs ever since.

Building a strong network of meaningful relationships was an important part of my Grebel experience. Maintaining relationships has been an enjoyable part of my current responsibilities. Connecting with people at meals together is also important. I feel very fortunate to have lived and studied at Grebel, with the academics, music, food, and community life. This helped prepare me for a wonderful series of activities over my career and to work with outstanding students, faculty, staff, and community partners.

COLLEEN SHANTZ (BA 1983)

Associate Professor; Director of Advanced Degree Studies
St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, Ontario

I am Associate Professor at St Michael's College, University of Toronto, where I teach New Testament studies and early Christianity, and also serve as Director of Advanced Degree Studies. My scholarly interest is primarily in the experience (in distinction to the beliefs) of the earliest Christ adherents—how things like ritual, emotion, and religious experience were attractive and helpful to them.



I'm currently working on two projects: a book about the significance of emotion in Christian origins and an examination of what material remains, like art and archaeology, can tell us about the imperial context of early Christianity and how they resisted and sometimes cooperated with those patterns of power.

As a student, it was extraordinarily helpful to me to be able to take humanities courses from across the departments of the University of Waterloo (psychology, sociology, philosophy, and religious studies). My research now is strongly interdisciplinary, drawing significantly on the social sciences and cognitive science. My undergrad studies laid the groundwork for that integration of disciplines.

While studying across the university, it was helpful to have Grebel as a home base where I could process ideas that were new and (helpfully) unsettling of my existing ways of thinking. I remember with gratitude the intellectual generosity of Rod Sawatsky, the passion and innovation of Conrad Brunk, and the gentle patience of John Miller in receiving my persistent questions!

REBECCA JANZEN (BA 2007)

Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
Humboldt Foundation Research Fellow, German Mining Museum, Bochum, Germany (2025–2027)



I am Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina, and Humboldt Foundation Research Fellow at the German Mining Museum in Bochum, Germany. As part of my scholarship, I read books, watch movies, look at art, and read memos, letters, and documents in archives to explore how writers portray people of different religions. I complement this with conversations with

people in those groups to better understand how they understand themselves. One of those groups I study is Low German-speaking Mennonites in Latin America.

Right now I am looking at Catholicism in mining communities—especially local devotion to particular saints or apparitions of Mary. I want to know how mining communities practiced their religion, and how governments, museums, and cultural agencies like UNESCO later use religion as a key part of their interpretation of the past. This matters because it helps us understand the realities and consequences of mining—and perhaps could help us as a society make sure that we are not covering up environmental disasters with positive, hopeful, or religious rhetoric.

I studied history and Spanish as an undergraduate, so my work uses a lot of historical methods and focuses on Latin America, combining both degrees. I took a class on Mennonite History with Marlene Epp that influenced my work on Mennonites. The Grebel community also influenced the way I look to create community with other scholars.

PAUL FIEGUTH (BASC 1991)

Professor and Associate Vice President—Academic Operations
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario



My “regular” position is Professor in Systems Design Engineering, but I currently serve as Associate Vice President—Academic Operations. I work in the Provost's Office, overseeing planning and budgeting for the university, along with a variety of other academic-support tasks (including acting as liaison to the Affiliated Colleges, including Grebel).

My position is largely a support role for every faculty and administrative unit on campus. This includes coordinating multi-year planning to sustain the overall ecosystem that allows scholarship to thrive.

Although my current role is *meant* to be 100% administration, I still have a large number of graduate students, so I am still quite active in mentoring research. My focus is on hierarchical methods and statistical image processing—methods to address challenges in medical imaging, remote sensing, industrial inspection, and video analysis.

I studied Electrical Engineering at Waterloo and really enjoyed data analytic courses like Signals & Systems and Control Theory, which are still related to the research I do now. My administrative position needs me to work with and relate to nearly every corner of the university, so my passion for interdisciplinarity almost certainly helps there.

My time at Grebel (and my Mennonite upbringing) instilled in me a passion for community! I think a community and university-wide mindset is central to my current role, and played a large part in the last 20 years of my career development, which has been one service role after another—admissions officer, associate chair undergraduate, department chair, associate dean, and now associate vice president.

JOANNE ROBERTS (BA 1993)

Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty;
Professor of Economics
Bates College, Maine, USA

I'm the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty and Professor of Economics at Bates College. In my role, I support faculty in pursuing their research across the liberal arts, through mentoring programs, access to research funds and opportunities, campus infrastructure and student research opportunities. Faculty bring their research into the classroom and use classroom experiences to inform and enhance their scholarship.

My research focused on public economics—how economic institutions and incentives impact allocations and outcomes. I have explored this across contexts ranging from legal institutions to unemployment insurance, tax evasion, and charitable giving. I continue to be deeply interested in how institutional structures impact communities. This feels tightly tied to my current work trying to develop systems and cultures that help faculty pursue meaningful work both in and beyond the classroom.



I was lucky to receive amazing mentorship as an undergraduate student at Waterloo. That experience impacted the entire course of my career and also my firm belief in the lasting impact of good mentorship and support. Grebel was a formative time for me. It is where I began to find my voice and to develop confidence in myself. It introduced me to the transformative power of living and learning in community. I can trace a straight line from that experience to my decision to work in fully residential small liberal arts colleges. I hope to play a small part in helping others share in these experiences.

DEBORAH ZUERCHER (BA 1983)

Professor; UHM Director of Pacific Initiatives; Founding PACMED Director
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

I am a full professor at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), serving as the Director of Pacific Initiatives and the Founding Director of PACMED. PACMED is a Pacific-focused, culturally responsive graduate degree program with cohorts across the Hawaiian Islands and several Pacific nations including American Samoa, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau.

My student-centered work supports agents of change in co-creating place-based, culturally sustaining curriculum that uplifts the voices, identities, and knowledge systems of Pacific Islander communities as they integrate STEM academic content to solve real-world problems.

In my work, I look at how I can facilitate access to high-quality undergraduate/graduate university degree programs to earnest

candidates in remote regions of the world. It is a social justice and equity mission to close the digital divide in respectful, reciprocal, and responsible ways.

Peace and justice courses I took at Grebel laid the foundation for pioneering restorative discipline and justice in my roles as principal and professor. I use relational Mennonite mediation skills in my international work daily and the music that I studied continues to keep me calm and at peace.



Professor Helen Martens once challenged our class to ask three questions about everything we hear or read: 1) Is it true? 2) How do you know it is true? 3) So what? How are you going to use the information to impact the world positively? I stand on the shoulders of giants like Conrad Brunk and Len Enns in my work. The course curriculum, and also the hidden curriculum of community-building that happened at Community Suppers, Silver Lake retreats, and Chapel Choir concerts influenced my desire to question and address injustices in education. I am ethnically Swiss Mennonite, and I discovered that I identified with nations that have experienced persecution and colonization, like our Anabaptist ancestors.

CRAIG MARTIN (BA 1999)

Assistant Professor of Business; Director of the MBA Program
Redekop School of Business,
Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Associate Fellow, Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology,
University of Cambridge

My work generally falls in two categories: 1) teaching students to manage resources within organizations; and 2) researching the relationship between theology and economics.

My current work looks into the biblical understanding of wealth—in particular, the ownership of productive wealth and non-productive wealth. Biblically, these are treated differently, as they have different benefits and dangers to one's spiritual life and faith. This research can also be used to better design policy in general society, as it helps to safeguard society from the same issues.

I did a BA Honours Economics degree at Waterloo, so my work



today is directly related to my studies. While figuring things out, I also considered a Religious Studies degree, so I took a fair number of courses in that area as well—many were Grebel courses. Grebel influenced my career too, since it was at Grebel that I first took a serious look at my faith and was introduced to theology. I am now bringing together both economics and faith in my work.

GERALDINE BALZER (MA 1983)

Associate Professor; Department Head in Curriculum Studies,
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

As Associate Professor in Education, I'm interested in disrupting systems that marginalize groups, building more inclusive classrooms and research spaces. My research follows two paths



grounded in decolonization and social justice. One works with teachers to expand literature choices beyond the Euro-centric canon, including diverse global voices. This ensures that the voices of students in Canada's increasingly diverse classrooms are represented and heard. Exposure to these stories helps students understand the systemic racism and unconscious bias that privilege the status quo and laid the foundations of our colonial history.

My second path explores reciprocity in research with Indigenous communities. Research has historically been extractive, taking knowledge from communities without permission and not using the knowledge gained to help the communities. My recent research in Guatemala attempted to shape research questions alongside community members. Through this work, I learned how deeply embedded Western research paradigms are. The challenges of meeting the expectations of western academia and of Indigenous community are complex. We have a tangled web of data to unravel and weave into something that serves both communities.

My undergraduate degree was in English and Theatre Arts, and I completed an MA in English at Waterloo. I became an English teacher, and taught in Inuit communities in Arctic Canada where I was challenged by my students to look for their stories.

I was a resident at Grebel in the mid-seventies and I feel as if I was exposed to the injustices of the world and encouraged to do something about it. There were tangible acts of resistance like demanding produce from unionized farms; the kitchen staff tried to meet that request. We held a symposium on Indigenous issues in Canada. I went to Haiti with Winfield Fretz to consider international development—perhaps my first glimpse into the ravages of colonialism.

Alongside building an awareness of global issues that resulted in inequities in our society, Grebel was the place where I connected my faith to those issues and recognized that what I believed and how I lived were one and the same.



ALLISON MURRAY (MTS 2012)

Associate Professor of Feminist Theology and Gender Studies
University of Oslo, Norway

I am Associate Professor of Feminist Theology and Gender Studies at the University of Oslo, Norway. My work combines the study of theology, history, and gender studies to understand how gender roles have been understood in Christianity over time, with a special focus on tracing the roots of anti-feminism in 20th-century Evangelicalism.



In my research, I look at why egalitarian and feminist voices struggle to gain traction. Recent studies have shown an up-tick in male participation in church communities, but this tends to be accompanied by rather regressive ideas about gender. Nearly 40% of young American Christian men said that they supported the repeal of women's right to vote. How can those of us who see the gospel as liberating work to undermine these trends?

My undergraduate degree from Laurier was in History and Religion & Culture, and I often chose gendered topics in my research projects, so in many ways I am on the same track that I have been in since I was 18 (although I didn't think that would lead to living in Norway!).

My time in the Master of Theological Studies program at Grebel was important to my career direction. The supportive professors encouraged me to consider a PhD, and I could see how theological understanding was going to be crucial to unpacking my subject matter. I took classes on women in Christian history that introduced me to the sub-discipline of gender history. These courses provided important tools and frameworks that I carried into my doctoral work and my ongoing research.

MELODY MORTON NINOMIYA (WLU 1997)

Associate Professor; Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in
Community-Driven Knowledge Mobilization and Pathways to
Wellness, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario

I am Associate Professor in the Department of Health Sciences at Wilfrid Laurier University where I hold a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Community-Driven Knowledge Mobilization and Pathways to Wellness. I work in close partnership with communities to co-lead applied research that directly supports health equity, rights, and policy change. This includes work in areas such as pregnancy and alcohol, FASD, mental wellness, data sovereignty, and child welfare.

Alongside this work, I conduct metaresearch to examine how the research ecosystem (e.g., universities, funders) can better support equity- and rights-based approaches. While much research is done on or with communities, less attention is given to the dominant knowledge and institutional systems that shape research itself.

Motivated by exemplary models, my meta-research work is focused on shifting the research ecosystem away from framing marginalized people as problems to be fixed, and toward identifying structural barriers and opportunities for transformative change.

My scholarship reflects cumulative learning from formal education and diverse lived experiences—as an undergraduate, high school teacher, co-executive director of Community Mediation Services (St. John's), as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer, foster parent, graduate student and postgraduate researcher, community-based research consultant, and university professor. I initially double majored in kinesiology and mathematics in undergraduate studies to become a high school teacher, which I did. Although I expected a long-term teaching career, my master's thesis work sparked a shift toward research, and my doctoral work solidified my interest in applied health and wellness research.



The culture, opportunities (like being a don), and people at Grebel affirmed the importance of relationships, community, and belonging for me. Fundamentally, much of my current research involves advancing rights and access to resources—through research—in ways that are relational and value community, a sense of belonging, individual and collective strengths, and human dignity.

ERIC KENNEDY (BKI 2012)

Associate Professor of Disaster and Emergency Management
York University, Toronto, Ontario
Editor-in-Chief, Canadian Journal of Emergency Management

I hold several roles in emergency management and disaster research. Wildfires are becoming more frequent for many reasons, like climate change, changes in where and how we live, how we've suppressed past fires, and how we approach firefighting. My work supports both fire response agencies and communities in making more evidence-informed decisions about how to get ready for and respond to wildfire.

The question at the centre of my research is "How might people, communities, and agencies live in better relationship with wildland fire?" We do this by integrating evidence and values—wildfire isn't just a technical or scientific problem, but a social, human, and value-based problem too.

My undergraduate degree in Knowledge Integration prepared me well for working in very interdisciplinary spaces like wildfire. It was through those studies that I got hooked on the social dimensions of science and chose to do my PhD in the field of science and technology studies. But, it was probably my time volunteering with the Campus Response Team that really unlocked my passion for working on emergencies.

There were some very direct connections between my time at Grebel and my becoming a disaster and emergency management

researcher, like leading Mennonite Disaster Service trips to New Orleans to rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, and serving as a don (lots of mini crises can crop up there!). But, I think Grebel was about creating communities of care, of trust, and of strong relationships between diverse folks—and that, more than anything, is at the root of how I study wildfire.



HOI CHEU (BA 1991, MA 1993)

Director of Doran Planetarium
Full Professor, Northern Ontario School of Medicine University
and Laurentian University, Sudbury, ON

I am Full Professor of English Literature in the School of Liberal Arts at Laurentian University, while I also work as Director of the Doran Planetarium within the School of Natural Sciences. My main research projects focus on how to make medical and health education and research more socially accountable. By "social accountability," we mean the achievement of more community-engaged and equitable care. The question that preoccupies my mind all the time is: "How do we communicate science properly in a time of misinformation?"

My undergraduate degree may seem irrelevant to what I do now—I was an English major with a music minor, and I went all the way to obtaining a PhD in English Literature. Nevertheless, this academic background is highly relevant. My interest has always been in the effective communication of difficult ideas through the art of storytelling. This is vitally important in science and health knowledge communications. It was not until I joined various interdisciplinary health and science research teams that I discovered the relevance.

At Grebel, I switched from being a science nerd to becoming a bookworm. After all, it was only my second year after moving from Hong Kong to Canada. Grebel's professors and classmates—especially Miriam Maust (spouse of Dr. William Maust, Chair of the Music Department at the time) and Shelbey Krahn (a classmate from Grebel who later became my wife)—spent extra time helping me improve my language and writing skills. Most important yet abstract, however, was the ethos of a compassionate community that cared about social justice and peace, which was vital for shaping my humanity.



The Legacy of Former President John E. Toews

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

With sadness, the Grebel community mourned the passing of John E. Toews on September 29, 2024. He served as Grebel's president from 1996 to 2002 and Academic Dean from 1971 to 1973. John most recently lived near Boston, Massachusetts, and is survived by his children Delora Toews Schneider, Dawn Toews Hartman, and Mark Toews, and was predeceased by his wife Arlene Toews.

Born in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, John pursued a mix of church ministry and post-secondary education in both Canada and the United States. With a BA from Tabor College, an MA from Wichita State University—both in History—John attended Mennonite Brethren Bible College for Theological Studies and achieved a PhD in New Testament Studies from Northwestern University-Garrett Theological Seminary.

John was an avid scholar with an interest in biblical studies (particularly the writings of Paul), history, theology, and church leadership. He was an editor of *Power of the Lamb* (1986) and *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Women in Ministry in the Church* (1992). In retirement, he wrote *Romans: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (2004) and *The Story of Original Sin* (2013).

Devoted to theological education, John was known as an effective administrator, quickly taking on leadership tasks at various institutions. John served numerous Mennonite institutions during his career, including as teacher at Fresno Pacific University Biblical



Seminary, Academic Dean at Grebel, teacher at Tabor College, Professor and then Dean at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, and finally as President at Conrad Grebel University College.

John arrived at Grebel in January 1996, during a time of difficult financial and administrative challenges. Under his leadership,



Grebel's budget was balanced, the donor base grew significantly, and the student residence expanded. During his presidency, donations to the College's annual fund grew by almost 500%, and new endowments were established to fund programs and provide financial aid for students. These actions set the College on a path for future growth and success.

Financial circumstances demanded that John downsize operations at the beginning of his presidency. However, by 2002, Grebel was in a position to hire new faculty. Later program developments, including the creation of a graduate program in PACS and expansion of the PACS undergraduate program, a Peace Centre, and the expanded MTS program, were envisioned in a strategic plan that John developed.

Toward the end of John's presidency, the College embarked on an ambitious building expansion. The project included an extended residence building that added 24 beds, an eight-unit apartment building that held 32 more students, and a glass atrium that linked the residence and academic buildings together—a long-held dream for the community. In recognition of his transformational contributions to Grebel, the Board named it the "John E. Toews Atrium."

"Those of us who live, work, and study at Grebel today owe a debt of gratitude to John Toews," said President Marcus Shantz. "His leadership during a tough period ensured the long-term future of this place."

Named Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies in retirement, John continued his scholarship with the company of his wife Arlene in Fresno, California. He later moved to Massachusetts. The Grebel community delighted in John's last visit to Waterloo in 2013 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the College.



New Honorary Member of the University

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

E. Paul Penner, a pillar of Grebel, retired in March 2024, leaving a 36-year legacy of commitment, care, and hospitality, as well as memories of pranks, laughter, and classic movie nights. After living at Grebel as a student, he returned in 1988 as Business Manager, then transitioned to Operations Manager in 1995, and finally to Director of Operations. His primary responsibilities were managing the staff, operations, and buildings of the College, but to Paul, the job was a mission of hospitality, service, and community-building.

Many of Paul's achievements are easily visible. During his career, Paul led four major building projects: the patio addition and kitchen and dining room renovation (1992), the atrium, short end extension, and apartment construction (2003), the academic wing expansion (2014), and the dining room renovation and kitchen expansion (2021). He also oversaw smaller improvements, repairs, and initiatives. Paul demonstrated patience and expertise when working with the many trades needed to maintain or build an academic and residential institution, resulting in a well-functioning space.

"Paul told me, many times, that the purpose of operations is to make sure that our programs succeed, and that people come together, and that we show hospitality to everyone who lives, works, and visits here," reflected President Marcus Shantz at Paul's retirement party, which took the shape of an epic alumni talent show called Paul-a-Palooza.

"Paul believes in students and advocates for them," added Marcus. "And he believes in the goodness of bringing university students together to create a welcoming, intentional community at Grebel. It's good for the students, because they find belonging and connection and purpose here. It's good for the world, because the world needs people who know how to create community and how to bring people together," Marcus said. "That's why Paul always thought expansively about his work. It's the reason why his job didn't end at keeping the lights on—he got involved with faculty, staff, and students in programs and projects."

With a focus on sustainability, Paul worked with Grebel students to be on the forefront of environmental initiatives, including creating a pollinator garden, installing solar thermal panels, instituting recycling and composting programs, building a green roof, and leading the Green Team.

In operations, Paul supervised and supported Grebel staff, strengthened policies, and gave staff a voice. Within the University, he supported change management regarding benefits as well as the bidding and evaluation of a new employee and family assistance program provider. As a seasoned administrator, Paul was a resource across the University, with a positive and collaborative attitude backed by knowledge and expertise. He served on many UWaterloo committees, including the President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability and working groups on climate, energy, and waste management. His experience in facilities management and project implementation provided constructive feedback for proposed initiatives and plans.

Paul's dedication to Grebel and Waterloo extended to his genuine care for students. He attended every event, welcomed students and families, mentored leaders, and kept in contact with decades of alumni. As someone who saw beyond the building he managed, Paul has impacted generations of students with his leadership, friendship, and community spirit.

In recognition of Paul's long and exemplary career, University of Waterloo President Vivek Goel and the Senate Nominating Committee for Honorary Degree granted E. Paul Penner the title of "Honorary Member of the University," formally conferred at Convocation on October 25, 2025. "Your compassion for the campus community, a willingness to facilitate meaningful partnerships, and a commitment to strive for impactful sustainability outcomes have left a lasting impact," wrote the President.

Congratulations to Paul on this well-deserved honour!





FRED W. MARTIN AND THE POWER OF GENEROSITY

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

For 24 years as the Director of Advancement at Grebel, Fred W. Martin has been a tireless advocate for Grebel, building strong relationships with donors, alumni, students, churches, and community partners. Described as a thoughtful and creative leader with a dedicated and energetic spirit, Fred raised money to expand both the College and its programs.

Fred arrived at Grebel in 2001 as the College's first full-time development employee, working with presidents John E. Toews and Henry Paetkau to fund an ambitious building project that added apartments, extended the residence, and linked the buildings with a glass atrium. Over the next two decades, he led successive campaigns with presidents Susan Schultz Huxman and Marcus Shantz which expanded academic and community spaces, transformed the kitchen and dining hall, and renovated the residence.

Fred helped inspire more than \$40 million in gifts from Grebel's generous donors, creating a strong foundation for Grebel that will fund scholarships and programs for generations to come. He worked to grow the fair market value of Grebel's endowments from around \$2 million in 2001 to more than \$12 million in 2025. In Fred's last year at Grebel, the College provided \$576,310 in student awards and bursaries, compared to \$42,195 twenty years earlier. Fred has demonstrated thoughtful vision in his work, connecting

with donors who shared his hopes for what Grebel could become, and then together, bringing those ideas to life in support of Grebel's mission.

"Fred is one of the most successful fundraisers in any Mennonite organization in Canada," said President Marcus Shantz. "At the heart of his success is his belief in what this college does, and what we all can do together when we are at our best. And it's that earnest, completely sincere commitment that made him great at this job. It's why he was so successful in inviting all kinds of supporters to be part of this work. Fred offered an invitation to find common cause and to join a very special community."

Not only did Fred strengthen Grebel's financial foundation, he also led the alumni community with energy and enthusiasm. Fred planned reunions, gatherings, sports games, picnics, talent shows, and celebrated every anniversary. Alumni and donors described Fred as a kind, warm, and easy-going presence whose deep integrity and genuine love for the church shaped his work. Tireless in his advocacy for Grebel, he has been both a fundraiser and connector, putting human relationships and community building at the centre of his work.

Fred retired at the end of September, leaving a legacy of generosity and community. The Grebel community thanks him for more than two decades of tireless service and wishes him many new adventures.

HART OF THE COMMUNITY

For more than two decades, custodian Peter Hart has been a consistent, kind presence for Grebel residents. Initially responsible for cleaning the residence wing, Peter built genuine connections with students and invested in their lives and successes.

Peter's co-workers describe him as an approachable, patient, and friendly person who understands the importance of checking in and keeping up with what is happening in others' lives. "Peter brings dedication, reliability, and a strong work ethic to his role," described Devon Grainger, Building Operator. "He greets students with a smile, helps them when they need assistance, and makes sure classrooms are ready for learning each day. His quiet support helps foster a sense of care and community within the school."

"Peter is an excellent trainer," added Mimi Browne, Director of Operations, "which is no surprise since he has been to teacher's college. One of his strengths in his role has been finding the most efficient way of doing things and his ability to communicate that. Peter has been a joy to work with because of his commitment to keeping Grebel clean and running smoothly and because he is an engaged and caring coworker."

Peter will retire at the end of October, and the entire Grebel community wishes him a healthy and happy retirement. He plans to spend more time in his garden tending to his "plant babies."



Bearing Witness to the Stories of Others

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

“Unsung heroes. Niggling, unanswered questions. Quirks and oddities. Unnecessary obstinance by persons, institutions and governments. Personal stories. And the occasional bit of humour.” Journalist Larry Cornies (BA 1975) gravitates toward human topics in his writing, rewarded by reader responses to these stories and columns. “Readers are already inundated by the big news stories of the day. They need a little humanity and humour too—or maybe just the passing pleasure of a good read,” he explained.

Larry is a master of his craft. He has sustained a distinguished 45-year career in journalism, teaching, and community service. His vocational path wasn’t direct, but his choices contributed to the depth and perspective that he brings to his work. Larry is the recipient of Conrad Grebel University College’s 2024 Distinguished Alumni Service Award, recognizing his significant contributions to the field.



Joining friends who planned to live at Grebel while studying at the University of Waterloo in the early '70s, Larry declined an acceptance from Carleton University’s journalism school and instead focused on Religious Studies at UWaterloo. “Part of a journalist’s success hinges on one’s ability to acknowledge one’s own biases and to recognize that people from family

structures, belief systems, cultures and identities, different from one’s own, see the world through different lenses,” Larry reflected. “My undergrad courses in Religious Studies helped me do that, especially courses and encounters with non-Christian faith traditions. Those insights were valuable in navigating journalistic relationships with people of backgrounds different from my own.”

After receiving his BA in 1975, Larry pursued journalism at Wichita State University’s Elliott School of Communication, while serving as associate editor of *The Mennonite* in Newton, Kansas. Then in 1986, Larry attained a Master of Arts in Journalism from the University of Western Ontario, with a specialization in Broadcast Television.

He has since worked as an editor and writer at *London Magazine*, *The London Free Press*, and *The Globe and Mail*. His work has earned awards for individual pieces and overall excellence. He is a sought-after speaker who creatively weaves journalism into topics of ethics, community, the digital age, Mennonites, history, and crisis.

Larry is also invested in educating a new generation of journalists. He has taught journalism law and ethics, news writing, feature



Alumni Chair Michael Shum presented Larry Cornies with the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Service Award at Community Supper in January, where Larry was guest speaker.

writing, and opinion writing at Ryerson University, Conestoga College, and Western University. He has consulted with University of Toronto Scarborough, Centennial, and Sheridan on journalism curricula. Today, Larry is a freelance columnist at Postmedia Network and writes a column every two weeks.

“The combination of practising journalism and teaching it has been self-sustaining,” Larry shared. “I still write a fortnightly column, just for the sheer pleasure of meeting people, bearing witness to their stories and crafting something readable from those encounters, combined with my own interests. The enthusiasm of journalism students for the craft has also kept me engrossed, as have opportunities to consult on and shape journalism curricula.”

Larry has judged the Junos and Ontario Newspaper Awards, consulted for The Grand Theatre, and served on several boards, including Grebel’s Alumni Committee and Board.

“Grebel contributed to my senses of duty and opportunity by its very existence: a vibrant community, with roots in Anabaptist faith, firmly planted on the campus of a large secular university,” reflected Larry. “Its presence there bore witness to the fact that people from my particular tradition had something to contribute to—and a place in—Canada’s larger academic and research communities. In my case, that ended up being journalism, both in church and secular settings.” He added, “As a church journalist and historian, President Frank H. Epp was untiring in his nurture of my abilities, as was David Kroeker, managing editor of *Mennonite Reporter*, which had its offices at Grebel during my first year. Taken together, Grebel had an outsized influence in shaping my career aspirations.”

Grebel’s Distinguished Alumni Service Award is given to an alum who has made a unique contribution to the world that represents the ideals and purposes of the College. “Having had the pleasure of serving on the Alumni Committee with Larry, as well as the 60th Anniversary Committee, I always appreciated the perspectives that Larry brought to the table,” said Michael Shum, Chair of Grebel’s Alumni Committee. “He understood the values of both keeping with tradition and change for the better, and the teams benefited greatly from his experience, insights, and ideas. His generous community contributions along with his acclaimed journalistic and teaching career showcase Grebel’s values, which is why Larry is a deserving recipient of Grebel’s 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award.”



Move-In Day



Move-In Day



Student leaders



Act of Community

IT'S A NEW YEAR!

BY ALLIE BOYD, COMMUNICATIONS COOP STUDENT

A sunny Labour Day weekend saw students new and old moving into Conrad Grebel University College for another year of learning and growing together. There was no shortage of returning students to welcome first-year residents and lend a helping hand moving belongings into dorm rooms.

"This is my favourite time of year at Grebel," said President Marcus Shantz. "It's great to meet new students and their families, welcome back returning students, and to see them all start to make the connections that will lead to lifelong friendships."

"The start of each academic year is a fresh opportunity for curiosity and discovery. It's energizing to feel the excitement of new and returning students," said Dean Troy Osborne. "With a large graduate student cohort and strong undergraduate enrollments, our faculty are already inspired by the interactions in the classroom, conversations in the halls, and the music drifting across campus."

This year's Opening Celebration and Chapel centred on "Who is my Neighbour?" and emphasized that neighbours include everyone we meet. For the annual Act of Community, Chaplain Carol Penner led residents, students, staff, and faculty in writing hopeful and encouraging messages on the path, including "You got this!," "Remember to breathe," and "We are not strangers."

Staff/Faculty
vs Students
Volleyball Game



All-Grebel Retreat
Coffee House



Opening
Chapel
Service



Graduate Student
Orientation



Incoming Campus Hosts:
Madeleine Neufeld and Max Chute



Outgoing Campus Hosts:
Charles Biswas and Clare Malakar

Chris Brnjas Named Director of Development

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

Chris Brnjas (BA 2012, MTS 2014), a double Grebel alum, is returning to campus as the new Director of Development at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo. Beginning in mid-October, Chris will lead fundraising and alumni relations for Grebel by building relationships through donor engagement, major gift strategy, planned giving, and alumni events.

“Chris brings a great combination of professional experience and first-hand knowledge of Grebel,” announced President Marcus Shantz. “He understands that his role is more than fundraising—it’s about connecting people to community, and helping that community to thrive and grow. I’m sure he will bring a strong collaborative spirit to his work with all stakeholders in the Grebel community.”

With a BA in Peace and Conflict Studies and a Master of Theological Studies degree from Grebel, Chris has first-hand appreciation of Grebel’s academic programs. As a student, Chris lived in the College residence, worked as a custodian, and served as a student leader in multiple capacities. Chris also held jobs with Grebel Student Services as Interim Chaplain and Interim Student Services Assistant as he covered staff leaves, led key activities, recruited students, and facilitated allocations of student scholarships.

“I’m excited to be back at Grebel to build relationships with donors, alumni, and everyone inside the building,” shared Chris. “We all know Grebel is a very special place, and any way I can do my part to help keep the community healthy and thriving—sign me up!”

“Chris cares passionately about Grebel,” shared Lori Guenther Reesor, a board member who served on the hiring committee. “He brings energy, enthusiasm, and fundraising experience to the role. He worked as a summer custodian at Grebel for four summers, which makes a great calling card when he visits Grebel donors. He’s already demonstrated his connection.”

Chris began his fundraising career in 2018 at Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) as Associate Development Officer. In this role, he grew a portfolio of major and mid-level donors, facilitated donor meetings and events, led an internal DEI initiative, and was heavily involved in the MEDAx pitch competition

for young entrepreneurs. Most recently, Chris worked as Director of Strategic Accounts at Blue North Strategies, where he directed multiple non-profit accounts and provided leadership in delivering optimal direct marketing and consulting projects.

“For me, fundraising and alumni engagement all starts with relationships,” explained Chris about the approach he will take for his work. “I want alumni and supporters to see Grebel as more than just a memory, but as an ongoing presence that shapes students and the wider world every single day. My job is to meaningfully connect them to that impact through facilitating positive relationships.”

As someone who cares for his community and the church, Chris also co-founded Pastors in Exile (PiE), a community-based ministry for young adults, where he pastored, raised funds, and led workshops. Chris has volunteered as a board member for Shalom Counselling, been a Mennonite Church Canada National Delegate, served on Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Congregational Ministries Council, and more. Chris also attained a Master of Arts in Theology: Spirituality and Psychotherapy from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Chris follows Fred W. Martin who served Grebel for 24 years.



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

uwaterloo.ca/conflict-management

Skills-based
conflict
management
training.
In-person and
virtual workshops.

CALENDAR



2025

UNTIL FEBRUARY 28

Grebel Gallery: DRAFTS 6
– Mapping Diasporic Identities

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

Alumni Community Supper

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

Grebel Gallery Exhibit Launch

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31

Winnipeg Alumni Gathering and
Concert with Karen Sunabacka

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Fall Open House

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Balinese Percussion
Ensemble Concert

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Sawatsky Lecture
with Braxton Shelley

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Gospel Music Workshop
with Braxton Shelley

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Make-a-Difference Market

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Chamber Choir and
University Choir Concert

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Orchestra@UWaterloo Concert

NOVEMBER 27

Saskatoon Alumni Reception

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Jazz Ensemble Concert

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Instrumental Chamber
Ensemble Concert

2026

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Bechtel Lecture with
Isaac Villegas

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

March Open House

SUNDAY, APRIL 12

Grebel Convocation

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

Beer and Bites Alumni Gathering

SATURDAY, JUNE 6

2000–2005 Era Alumni Reunion

Reunions and More

Over the past year, alumni came together at Grebel and in communities near and far. Gatherings and activities included: ① an afternoon of visiting at Ron and Ingrid Kielstra's home in the Niagara Peninsula, a ② visit and presentation from some '60s "Grebel Gals" at a fall Community Supper, and ③ lots of reminiscing at October's Alumni Community Supper. The winter and spring brought ④ a visit from Power TakeOff employees to learn about Grebel's capital campaign, ⑤ a tasty Beer and Bites tour with the other University Colleges, a ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ joyous time of reconnecting at the Late '90s Era Alumni Reunion, and a ⑩ fascinating talk in Ottawa by Mark Schaan about AI and the Canadian Government.





In Grebel's Footsteps

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

As rain seeped into clothes and muddy rivulets ran down the path, 31 Grebel alumni and friends were taking a slippery hike into the mountains of Bäretswil, Switzerland. Their destination was a hidden cave known as the “Täuferhöhle,” where Anabaptists once worshipped in secret. In the dim, damp cavern, the group sang hymns and shared a meaningful communion service, breaking bread with others who had also made the trek.

This memorable afternoon was part of a twelve-day tour of Anabaptist sites in Netherlands, Germany, France, and Switzerland, organized by Tourmagination. Led by Grebel faculty members Troy Osborne and David Neufeld, other trip highlights included the hidden Singel church in Amsterdam, the tower where Dirk Willems was imprisoned in Asperen, Menno Simons’ hometown in Witmarsum, and numerous churches and cathedrals. Another meaningful stop was the site of Conrad Grebel’s family home in Zurich (pictured here).

On the final day, the group gathered with approximately 3500 Anabaptists from across the globe at a day-long celebration organized by Mennonite World Conference to mark the 500th anniversary of the first adult baptism. Activities included workshops, musical performances, panel discussions, walking tours, and archival displays. The day culminated with a worship service at the Grossmünster church that was livestreamed to other locations in the city and around the world. Titled “The Courage to Love,” the worship service focused on reconciliation and featured favourite music from different countries, a “radical disruption,” a footwashing ceremony, a letter from the pope, and a litany. As the crowds left the church, bells pealed around them in joyful cacophony.

SIXTY YEARS, SIXTY VOICES

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

As a way to mark Grebel’s 60th anniversary in 2023–24, we embarked on an ambitious storytelling project that celebrated just a few of the many people who have made Grebel a unique place to live and study. Over the course of two years, we interviewed 60 interesting alumni to tell their stories of accomplishment, challenge, adventure, and creativity. We spoke with alumni on different continents and, learned how their degrees in Music, Peace, Theology, Science, Engineering, Math, Architecture, and many other programs were foundational to their vocations, hobbies, and interests today.



Darren DeMelo
(MTS 2017)



Dorothea Funk
(BA 1976)



Benny Skinner
(BA 2019, MA 2023)

It was an honour to hear about each person’s path to their life today. Community was a recurring theme as alumni recounted their memories of residence life, shared meals, chapel services, life-long friends, collaborative projects, and lessons learned. Alumni noted how their time at Grebel helped them to discover or clarify their identity, values, or vocational calling, face challenges, and find understanding in times of doubt.

We enjoyed hearing about the Grebel faculty members who welcomed questions, encouraged the then-students to follow their interests, and mentored students beyond the classroom. Many alumni have mentored others in their own lives and continued that support of others.

All 60 stories are available to read in full on the Grebel website. Get ready to be inspired, amazed, impressed, and delighted!

**READ ALL THE
STORIES**



[uwaterloo.ca/
grebel/60-stories](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/60-stories)



1960s



1970s



1980s



1990s



2000s



2000s



2010s



2020s

OPEN HOUSE DAYS

**Saturday,
November 8, 2025**

**Saturday,
March 28, 2026**



Visit Grebel during
open houses, or
book a personal tour.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 0040065122
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
Conrad Grebel University College
140 Westmount Road North
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6

DO YOU KNOW THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREBELITES?

Do you know someone planning to attend UWaterloo in the coming years?
We need your help as alumni, parents, families, and friends to spread the word about Grebel. Students can visit us at an open house or arrange for a private tour to get a taste of residence life and our academic programs.

uwaterloo.ca/grebel/future-students