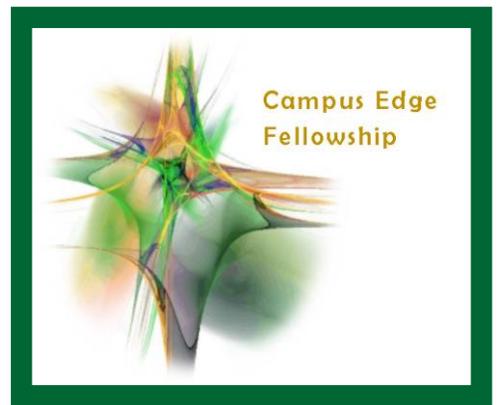


# Campus Edge Newsletter

Spring 2017



## Report from the Board

A lot has happened since the last Campus Edge Fellowship (CEF) Newsletter, and the Board sees much that we can be thankful for, and many reasons to be enthusiastic about the future of the ministry. In December, a team from Christian Reformed Home Missions visited to conduct a review of CEF. Team members met with Brenda, Board members, and students participating in the ministry. We received the report of the Home Missions Review Team last month and were delighted with the many positive things it had to say about Brenda and the work of CEF. The report also included a wealth of useful suggestions for making CEF a stronger and more effective ministry going forward.

At the end of March, my predecessor Jake Baker stepped down from the CEF Board, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service on the Board. He has held every executive office (sometimes two at the same time), always working hard and cheerfully to help the ministry thrive. Jake is finishing his Ph.D. and moving on to the next phase of his life, and all of us who have served with him on the Board wish him well.

Brenda continues to lead a ministry that serves the unique spiritual needs of the graduate and professional students at MSU - organizing Bible studies, arranging weekly pub theology sessions, keeping the students informed about events of interest on campus and in the community, hosting social activities, and sometimes simply being there for students who need someone to talk with about things going on in their lives.

As always, we are thankful for your prayers and encouragement, and we ask for your continued support both spiritually and financially. We invite you to our annual Celebration Dinner to be held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Lansing Country Club. It will be an opportunity to hear about and rejoice in the work God is doing through Campus Edge Fellowship.

## Bridging church and society

Campus Edge Fellowship once again participated in a study from *The Colossian Forum*. Last year the study focused on origins; this year the focus was on sexuality. On one hand, society seems to do a better job of talking about sexuality than the church does. Yet, society also emphasizes sexuality to the point that it seems to be the primary part of one's identity. In light of this, how do Christians help those in the church talk about sexuality in a healthy way, as well as bringing a theologically sound understanding of the challenges and joys of sexuality to society? We've especially seen the absence of this in the conversations related to homosexuality where the church and society seem to clash the most.

Most of those who participate in Campus Edge have spent much time within church circles and can appreciate the church's desire to love their neighbor and honor the truths found in the Bible, especially when it comes to sexuality. At the same time, growing up in society today, especially the university, most of those involved in Campus Edge have learned to value tolerance of other's views and choices. They can see how the church might be misperceived by those in society and how society might not understand where those in the church are coming from. It is my hope that these conversations we've had on sexuality and the wisdom of those involved in Campus Edge will allow them to be a bridge between society and the church.

Brenda  
and  
Jess



## Pastor's Report

Spring Semester has brought with it joys and challenges. Alongside of our regular Monday and Saturday studies, we've continued the Pub Theology group, added a weekly discussion on sexuality, and offered two retreats. The first retreat focused on Ignatian spirituality, and the second was time away at an Episcopalian monastery. In our studies, we pondered how differently society and church approach sexuality and spent time digging deeper into the Bible: the book of Ecclesiastes on Mondays and the prophets Elijah and Elisha on Saturdays. To read more about these, please see the reflections here that have been adapted from [www.campusedgemsu/reflections](http://www.campusedgemsu/reflections). We're delighted to say that we once again have twenty-five people participating regularly and at least that many who are peripherally connected to the ministry. The past semester was a bit quieter in terms of attendance, as CEF competed with the time pressures that come with starting clinical rotations, completing comprehensive exams, and finishing up dissertations, alongside of the breaks of spring break and Easter. Yet, all this hard work is paying off, and CEF can rejoice that multiple people connected to the ministry have (almost) completed their dissertations. Your prayers are requested for those who've finished up their studies – that things will go well as they find and take up new jobs and responsibilities. Pray also for those who are having other life events – like weddings or babies. By the time we send out this newsletter, baby Kronemeijer should have arrived, and I'll have started my maternity leave. I will miss the meaningful conversations I have with students, but I am also thankful for the time the board is giving me to adjust to taking on the new identity of mother. I'll be back in August, and until then Jessica Fox, one of CEF's emerging leaders and a newly minted MSU PhD has graciously agreed to take over many of my responsibilities for the summer.



### Elijah – Like us and not like us

Elijah is mentioned multiple times in the Bible. He is presented as an example for us, showing us how powerful and effective the prayer of a righteous person is: “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:17-18). Yet, it doesn’t seem like prayer is quite that simple: pray, and it will happen. Despite the text’s claim that Elijah was human *just like us*, it seems like Elijah’s prayers were different. Studying the stories of Elijah in the Old Testament lets us see that the text does tend to portray him as not quite human. He appears out of nowhere, doesn’t grow old, runs faster than Ahab’s chariot, spends a lot of time on mountains (the place where God dwells), and then disappears into the sky on a flaming chariot (see Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge* and Goldingay, *1&2*

*Kings for Everyone*). Elijah speaks the word – there will be no rain – and it is so. It is only at the end of 1 Kings 17 that Elijah (and his prayers) are portrayed in a way that is closer to our own experience. The widow’s son has stopped breathing, and she accuses Elijah of coming to remind her of her sin and kill her son. While Elijah prayed for the boy to come back to life, he did so with questions (1 Kings 17:19-23). He did not assure the widow that all would be well. Instead, the text suggests that Elijah – despite everything we know about the power of Elijah’s prayers – pleaded for God to restore the boy’s life. The text gives the impression that Elijah was as astonished and overjoyed by the son’s return to life as we expect his mother was. It is this kind of prayer – the plea for the impossible and the recognition that this impossibility might not be God’s will (but that I am allowed and even ought to pray for it) – that I think all of us can relate to. Knowing more of the background of Elijah and his prayers helps make the words of James 5 a bit more comprehensible. The text is both simple and not so simple: Pray and God will do amazing things. At the same time, do not expect everything: we are mere human beings (like Elijah) and not God.

### Ecclesiastes as a Fitting Text for Graduate Students

“Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless!” (Eccl 1:1). While such a refrain might be typical of how many grad students feel, it doesn’t sound particularly Christian. It’s certainly not what you expect from a preacher or religious teacher.

As we started off the book of Ecclesiastes, numerous students mentioned that they’d heard teaching on this text that assumes that what is written in Ecclesiastes are the words of someone describing what life looks like without God. Once the writer came to know God, the situation changed completely. In the same vein, once we come into the fullness of life in Christ, these words no longer apply to us. As reassuring and hopeful as this explanation might be, the problem with it is that it is *not* what the text actually says. The text is written by someone who is part of the congregation/assembly, often translated as the preacher or teacher, and he gives no indication that these words do not describe his current perspective on life, despite these words being not the sort of thing that we usually hear in church. The words spoken in Ecclesiastes 1 seem to be of a person who is weary, hopeless, depressed, and disillusioned. It is a bit disconcerting, as these words seem so far from hope, faith, love, joy, peace – all the nice Christian words – we often use to talk about life.

Considering the life of a grad or professional student – too many tests, multiple assignments without a clear purpose, multitudes of paperwork, uncertainty about grants and future jobs, the phase of dissertation (and/or research) and more – these words in Ecclesiastes provide a very fitting description of what life feels like right now. There is something deeply comforting in hearing someone from within the church speak not simply of joy and peace, but also of the hardness of life, whether that relates to being a student or following Christ, including taking up one’s cross. At the same time, the whole book of Ecclesiastes also reminds us that before we go back to striving to do everything and trying to make the world a better place (or simply get all our work done) that we should take a step back: eat, drink and be merry. In other words, we should rejoice in the good gifts we have, and give thanks to God.



### How can you support Campus Edge?

- **PRAY:** Give thanks for what God has been doing with Campus Edge, ask for wisdom as we minister, and pray for the challenges that students face.
- **DONATE:** A significant amount of our budget is made possible through individual donations. Donations can be mailed to 1509 River Terrace Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823 or made online via our website ([www.campusedgemsu.com](http://www.campusedgemsu.com)).
- **VOLUNTEER:** We are always looking for help with meals or desserts for our studies.
- **ATTEND:** Join us for our weekly meal or for Pub Theology on Tuesday evenings.

**Thank-you for your support!**

*Campus Edge Fellowship is a Christian organization that exists to provide support, solidarity, and fellowship to the graduate students and professional academic community of Michigan State University. In the spirit of intellectual inquiry, we seek to address deep questions of spirituality, faith, and an understanding of God.*

### Contact Us!

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### CEF Board Members

Jeff Biddle, Marcie Durso, Eric Walcott, Steve Roels, Kristen Hintz, Beth DeBoe, and Drew Kim