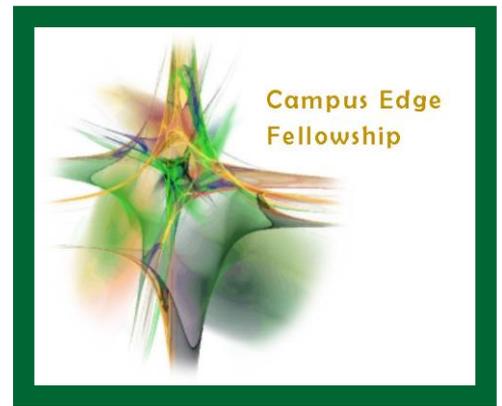


Campus Edge Newsletter

May 2018



Campus Edge House

Report from the Board

Dear Friends,

As another semester draws to a close, we on the Campus Edge board can reflect once again on the good work that Campus Edge Fellowship is doing for graduate and professional students studying at MSU, and the items in this issue of the Newsletter provide some insight into what that work has involved. You will see that this semester's CEF Bible studies included an exploration of the book of Ezekiel and its seemingly strange stories, and purposeful confrontations with some of the more difficult and Faith-challenging questions raised by the Bible and Christianity. In choosing these topics, Brenda has continued her practice of providing the students who participate in Campus Edge with the sort of intellectual challenge and opportunity for robust discussion that they enjoy, and that provide what for some of them is the most effective path to a deeper faith.

The Board is also excited about and busy preparing for the Annual Campus Edge Celebration, to be held at the University Club on June 5th. The event will feature a dinner followed by a piano recital graciously provided by Derek Polischuk. We eagerly encourage all past and future supporters of Campus Edge Fellowship to join us there. It should be a fun event, and an excellent way to celebrate the great work that God has done this year through Brenda and Campus Edge.

-Jeff Biddle, Campus Edge Fellowship Board President

Pastor's Report

The studies this past semester have focused on understanding God and the Bible better. The first half of the semester looked at Ezekiel, and the second half focused on difficult topics in Christianity and the Bible. In pub theology we talked about everything under the sun: aliens, parenting, mental health, the American dream, human nature, technology, etc.

We continue to have about 25 people participating in Campus Edge. We've had a number of new people, including through pub theology which brings in people less likely to come to studies. Being a small ministry where we yearly say good-bye to people graduating, numbers can be a point of stress; we are thus always thankful when people continue attending Campus Edge. At the same time, I trust that God is using all our interactions, even if they are brief, to allow Campus Edge to reach people who are struggling. I am also thankful that a faculty and staff prayer group has begun again and that both Jeff Biddle and I have been able to attend. I pray that this will be a blessing to the wider campus, especially in light of the difficulties at MSU this past year.

Thank-you for your prayers and support of the efforts of Campus Edge.

- Brenda Kronemeijer-Heyink, Pastor of Campus Edge Fellowship

Applying Ezekiel to our lives today

It was a joy for me (Brenda) to look at the book of Ezekiel. The text is fascinating and strange, which is why Ezekiel became the focus of my dissertation. Yet, the text's peculiarity makes it difficult to see how it might apply to our lives. Going out and being like Ezekiel is not really an option: in the first five chapters, Ezekiel eats a scroll, is told to lie on his side for more than a year, run around the city hacking at a chunk of hair with a sword, and create a mini-enactment of a siege. Doing any of these things today would more likely result in somebody wondering what is wrong with you than having people assume such actions are God's way of speaking to us.

Yet, there is something to the startling nature of Ezekiel's actions. They definitely make people wonder (cf. Ezek 24:19). When we think about applying Ezekiel to today, the question we've been asking is what we can do to make people wonder about God and what following God looks like.

Perhaps, as in the book of Ezekiel, it will appear as if those around us do not hear us. Yet, "whoever would serve as the messenger of God must recognize that the calling is not to success but to faithfulness." (Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 131). In light of this, we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves if we are not radically changing the world or bringing more people to Jesus. At the same time, we can trust the Spirit is working in the world around us, including at the university, and that people will indeed ask us who God is and what faith and spirituality look like.

CEF Saturday Study



Why talk about difficult topics?

The studies in the second half of the semester focused on difficult topics in Christianity and the Bible. As many people avoid these conversations because of potential conflict, it's not always obvious why we should talk about these things. Yet, studying these difficult topics can help us love God and those around us. Reading the Bible carefully, as well as listening to those around us, makes us aware that knowing and understanding the Bible isn't easy. How could God command the Israelites to destroy all the Canaanites when they went into the promised land, an act that people today would consider genocide? Why would a caring, all-powerful God allow people to be attracted to people of the same-sex if it's sin to act on those feelings? What about gender dysphoria? Hell?

These are hard questions that many struggle with. Not talking about them doesn't make the struggles go away; in fact, it often makes it worse and may even cause people to question faith. Looking for answers to these difficult questions allows us to use our God-given intellect to know God better. At the same time, sometimes the answers are unclear, as witnessed by how differently Christians address these questions. The Bible also seems to suggest (in the book of Job) that as mere humans, it is not our place to understand all things. So sometimes the questions do not need to be answered so much as they need space to be voiced. When address the problem of suffering, Mike Wagenman, a campus minister at University of Western Ontario, notes that sometimes it's not about answers so much as providing a "listening ear and open heart" in the middle of the pain and the struggles.

Graduate School is hard on mental health

Colleen Flaherty in *Inside Higher Education* recently reported on several studies that "suggest that graduate students are at greater risk for mental health issues than those in the general population. This is largely due to social isolation, the often abstract nature of the work and feelings of inadequacy — not to mention the slim tenure-track job market." *Nature Biotechnology* speaks of graduate students being "more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population." A lack of good work-life balance (difficult amid the demands of graduate school), alongside of conflict with or lack of support from supervisors, were linked to higher anxiety and depression. The study calls for a change in the culture of academia to address the mental health crisis.

Please pray for all those affected by this mental health crisis: the graduate students who are experiencing mental health challenges and those who have the ability to make changes for the better.

Contact Us!

Web: <http://campusedgemsu.com>

Email: info@campusedgemsu.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/campus.edge.71

CEF Board Members

Jeff Biddle, Marcie Durso, Steve Roels,
Kristen Hintz, Beth DeBoe, Allison Young,
Rob Tempelman, Dirk Oudman



Saturday Night Study

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).
- **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!

A decorative banner for the Campus Edge Fellowship Annual Celebration. The top part features a colorful, abstract background with musical notes and a treble clef. Below this is a graphic of a piano keyboard with keys in various colors. The text below the keyboard reads:

**Campus Edge Fellowship
Annual Celebration**
Tuesday, June 5th - 6:00 pm

Featuring Derek Polischuk

University Club - Heritage Room
3435 Forest Road, Lansing

In celebration of the great work God has done this past year, please join us for a dinner reception & performance.

To Respond Click on info@campusedgemsu.com or call 810.547.6210. Responses needed by 5/30. Please note any dietary restriction when you respond.

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.