

## Convocation Address

This year marks the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Queen's College and we think of the many graduates and faculty who have served this institution and who have gone on to greater glory. Let us pause for a moment of Silence in thanksgiving for their powerful witness.

### **Silence**

May their Memories continue to be a blessing to us.

Your Honours, Mr. Chancellor, Mister Chair of Queen's College Corporation, Bishop Organ, Archdeacon Taylor and Members of Corporation, Faculty and Staff, Archbishop Linda, Minister Osbourne, Associate Vice-President Cadigan, Members of the Clergy, Families and Guests of Students of the College; to the Graduating Class of 2021, and all our friends and supporters.

What an honour and a privilege it is for me to be installed tonight as your new Provost and Vice-Chancellor. And to be installed by our Chancellor, Bishop John Watton, with whom I graduated some 31 years ago, was particularly poignant. Oh my, how times have changed! Thank you so much for sharing this faith journey with me.

2021 marks the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Queen's College. Last night we gathered at St. Thomas' Church for the Convocation Eucharist. We gathered in the very same place that the first students of Queen's would have gathered for prayer and

learning. How amazing is that?? When I walk down the hallway at the College and I see those boards with the names of all of the students who have studied, prayed and been transformed at Queen's College I am often overwhelmed at the marvellous things that God has done through us, and what God continues to do through us.

I don't know if anyone has told you lately – but you are amazing. As Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminds us, you are God's work of art. You as individuals, but also you as a community of people – the Body of Christ. You are God's glorious work of art, created to reflect God's beauty in this world and to remind the world of the beautiful Good News of Jesus Christ.

Those of you who know me, know that I love to work with textiles, wool in particular. And so when I look at you, not only do I see you as God's amazing work of art, I see you, and I see us, as God's tapestry – or maybe a crocheted afghan. Beautifully connected one to the other – each one contributing colour and texture to this community we call Queen's College.

If I look back on the last 180 years, patterns begin to emerge; rhythms come and go as we have learned new things and let some other things go.

And it is an unending tapestry – never complete. Each graduate tonight has brought some of what is unique to them and added to who we are, and so we have all been transformed.

And each faculty member also brings their own technique, teasing out undiscovered beauty and nuance among the many threads of the fabric.

It is my honour and joy to pick up the threads of this amazing tapestry from Provosts who have come before me. Some who are here tonight have been key in my own formation – Canon Cluett and Rev Dr. Boyd Morgan – thank you. And I particularly want to thank Dr. Rick Singleton for his tireless and creative leadership over the past five and half years. You have certainly left your mark and added much to the beauty of this College. I am pretty sure I can see a bit of nautical rope woven through there..... And I must also acknowledge Dr. David Bell's work as our recently retired Dean - thank you Sir, for your unique and inspired contribution to the fabric of Queen's College.

And while it is important to look back with thanksgiving and to recognize the patterns and enjoy the beauty of what was; Queen's College is a living fabric, continuing to grow, with new colours and patterns showing themselves every day.

Queen's College continues to offer degree programs: Master of Divinity, Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theological Studies and Master of Theology, as well as the Associate in Theology, the Diploma in Theology and Ministry and various certificate programs with over 100 students currently enrolled. We continue our work with the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, while also nurturing our relationships with local denominations, such as our partnership with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador (PAONL) and Tyndale University.

And we continue to teach the subjects you have come to expect from us: Biblical Studies, Church History, Liturgy, Moral Theology, Theological Studies and Pastoral Studies.

These threads provide the foundation of what we do. Like the best of fabrics – they provide a construction that is strong and durable but also quite flexible.

Over the past few years we have been using digital technology on a more regular basis and certainly the pandemic has made it our daily reality. Moving to offering our programs in a Hybrid manner – both online and in-person – has required plenty of flexibility. There is now a digital thread woven throughout everything we do and it catches the light in its own unique way and adds depth and texture to everything around it.

This rich addition to the fabric of the College has meant that we can gather for prayer on a daily basis with people from across our province and even beyond. Students who study by distance in our Associate Program, whom we would rarely see in our building, are now praying with us and sharing in building a new community. We look forward to seeing folks sign in online, bring greetings and tell us how their day is going. We now have students at least 5 different countries and, within Canada, from as far away as Alberta! Having those voices and experiences has made a profound difference to our community of learning. Adding the digital thread has added so much more than “we could have asked or imagined.”

But it is important to remember that we are a theological college and an academic institution. So we do not simply add new threads to our fabric without stopping to reflect on what it means to do so theologically. To that end we will be adding a new course in the Winter Semester - “Faith and Worship in a Digital Age”. This course will be taught by Reverend Robert Cooke, soon to be our newest full-time

faculty member. Robert will bring his considerable experience in this area as well as his ongoing PhD research. He will be encouraging students to stop and consider how this “digital age” impacts how we do theology and how we worship together. Robert has been a long-time contributor to the fabric of Queen’s College and I am looking forward to the new dimensions he will add in the years to come.

Looking back over the patterns that we have created also means considering what threads have been missing; what voices have not been heard; who has been historically left out. In this past year it has become increasingly obvious that we have much to learn about the history of our country’s and our church’s interaction with indigenous peoples, particularly our role in the Residential School system. This is a voice of wisdom and truth that we need to include as we go forward. We are committed to acting on the 60<sup>th</sup> Call to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which states:

60. We call upon leaders of the church parties to the Settlement Agreement and all other faiths, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all student clergy, and all clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.

To this end, we will be offering a new course in Winter 2022, which will then become a required course for all degree programs. This new Moral Theology/Church History course, “Reconciliation as a Church in Canada”, is being developed by Dr. Michelle Rebidoux and it will include the history of Residential Schools in Labrador and Newfoundland. By making this a required course, we are ensuring that this thread of our story is going to be remembered and honoured as we go forward. The thread of Truth and Reconciliation will remain a core part of the fabric of Queen’s College.

In addition to the new courses we are offering, our regular courses are constantly being reassessed and new materials and new professors add their own touch. This term we have welcomed Reverend Paul Grimes to our faculty teaching “Pastoral and Spiritual Care with Seniors.” And Reverend Miriam Bowlby will join us in the Winter Semester to teach “Pastoral Leadership and Administration.” Many of you will know Miriam from Cochrane Street United Church in St. John’s. These new adjuncts bring a wealth of experience as well as fresh energy and vibrancy.

Along with these new adjuncts are those who provide us with stability and history – those who know where we have been and so have the gift of knowing what is possible. Many of our Adjuncts have been with us for decades and there are no words to convey the depth and beauty and wisdom they have provided and continue to provide. We are forever in your debt.

The combination of new and familiar leadership means that the patterns of the past morph into those of the new in seamless beauty.

We are God's works of art, and we are each given unique gifts that we are called to use – for we are also called to be God's co-creators. Isn't that what we do when we seek our vocation – seek to live into the beauty of who God has made us to be and to offer that as a gift to the world? So the work of theological education then is to equip students with the skills they need to discern their vocation, and the courage to live it out. And it is work -- hard work -- but it is so worth it.

We need to be reminded that living out this vocation is possible. We usually have a Sunday in February when we focus on Queen's College asking people to consider their vocations and asking them to financially support the College. This Queen's Appeal Sunday is our major fundraiser for the year. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this past year we were unable to do that. But it is still important that we be reminded of our vocations and reminded to say "yes" to adding our uniqueness to the tapestry of Queen's College. So during the month of October we have been highlighting stories of our graduates; stories of folks who said "yes" and equipped themselves for service. Our "stories from our boards" have been posted on our Facebook and YouTube pages. I encourage you to check them out and see some of the wonderful colours that have been woven into the fabric of our past. Hopefully you will be inspired to become a part of our continuing future. The more threads we add, and the more diverse they are, the greater the beauty.

And while I stand by my statement that you are all amazing, there are some of you that I need to name as having added much to my first 6 months at the College. I need to thank the Bishops, Archdeacon and the Chair and members of Corporation who answered my many, many calls and emails and have shared their wisdom and offered their support. To the Faculty, new and, well, not old, but experienced, who

let me continually bounce ideas off them and who lob great ideas right back at me. To our Leadership Team – Fr. John and Dr. Carmel who give so much of their time and share their vocations so generously. And of course to Dana Bishop who has simply been amazing and whose leaving will certainly leave a void – you have added so much joy and beauty to our community and we wish you nothing but the best as you take on your new position.

And to the students and graduates and students-to-be and families and supporters – You are why we exist. The founders of this college saw a need for a place here in Newfoundland and Labrador where you could come and learn and be formed and transformed for ministry and service. And the work continues. New threads, new colours, new visions pointing to God’s presence in this place, reminding us of the beauty of being God’s work of Art.