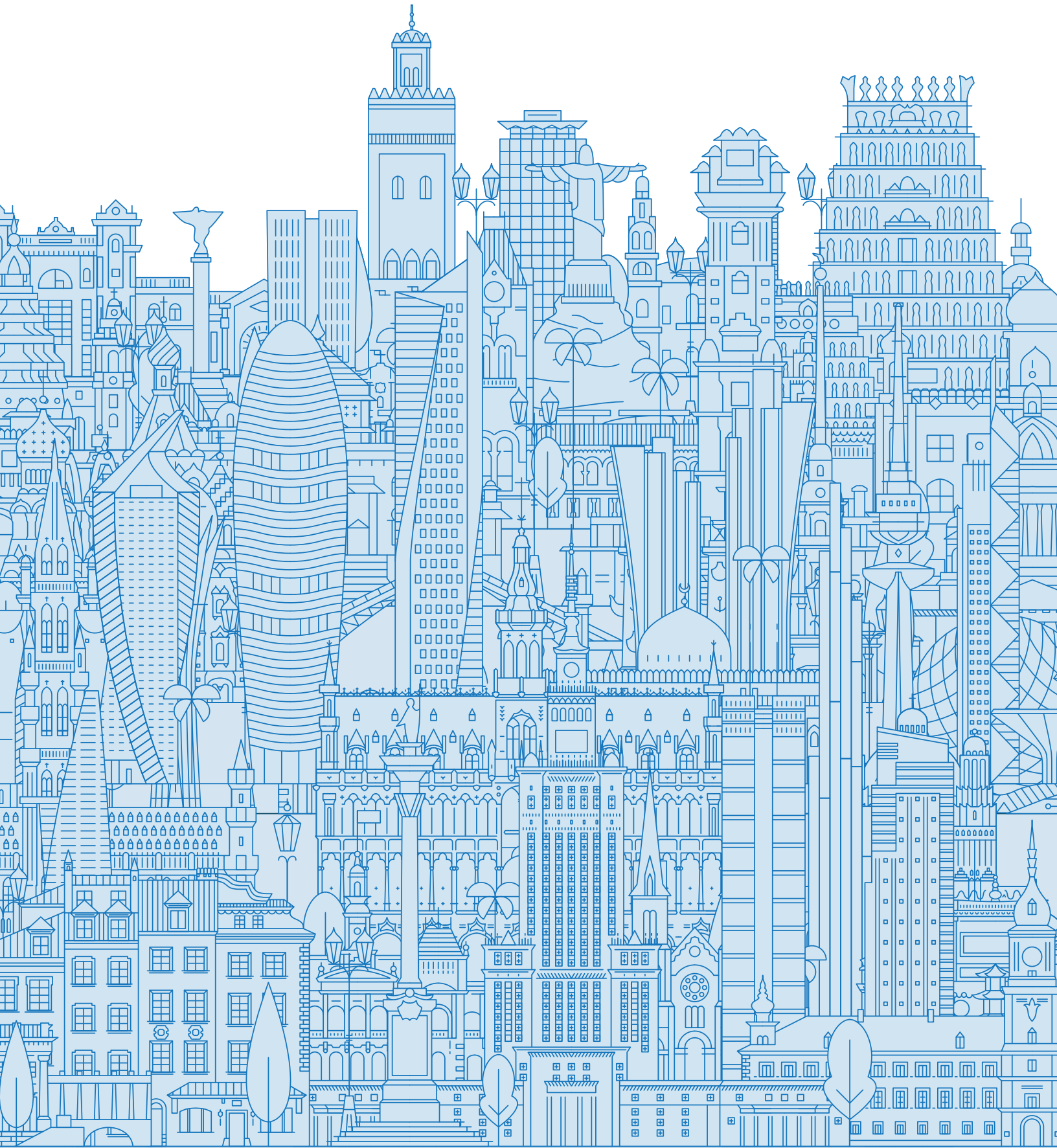


Report of the President of Ambrose University to General Assembly 2024



REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF AMBROSE UNIVERSITY

In this transition year, the report to Assembly is provided jointly by outgoing president Rev. Dr. Gordon T. Smith, and incoming president Rev. Dr. Bryce Ashlin-Mayo. The formal transition takes place in May 2024, but this report is being prepared in March 2024.

Ambrose University and Seminary has long been a vital and vibrant part of the mission and vision of the Alliance Canada. With a history spanning more than a century – and now more than twenty of those years in Calgary. The school – in all its former iterations – celebrates some 14,500 alumni, many of whom serve with the Alliance. In this transition year – as the presidency of the university changes hands – we are honoured to provide this report on behalf of the Board of Governors, the leadership and the faculty.

AMBROSE MISSION

Our mission statement puts it succinctly: *Ambrose University prepares men and women for wise, joyful and redemptive engagement in the church, society and the created order through excellent Christian post-secondary education.*

Specifically, Ambrose is a unique institution of higher education because of the vital and generative relationship between a Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Arts and Science. Additionally, Ambrose includes a dynamic and growing business program and a post-baccalaureate program in education. Taken together, the faculty and staff are equipping men and women for local and global kingdom service, in the church and in the world.

As such, we are at the forefront of one of the most dramatic developments of the last generation – the emerging partnership in global mission between those called into ministry in the life and ministry of the church and those called into the arts, into business, into education and more.

We accomplish this by bringing together an extraordinary cohort of faculty and staff – gifted teachers, scholars, preachers, artists, musicians, scientists, and researchers.

APPOINTMENTS AND TRANSITIONS

We welcome the following as newly appointed since the last General Assembly – a smaller cohort than usual, partly as a result of financial constraints:

- Wilian Gatti Jnr, PhD – Associate Professor of Business
- Kristian Caldo, PhD – Assistant Professor of Chemistry
- Alyssa Michaud, PhD – Assistant Professor of Music

In January 2024, Dr. Christy Thomas was appointed to the Associate Dean position in the School of Education. Christy joined the Ambrose Education faculty in 2020 and has a Doctor of Education from the University of Calgary, along with over 20 years of experience in the K-12 system in Alberta.

There have also been some significant departures over the same period:

- Sherry Martens, PhD, Associate Dean of the School of Education who retired at the end of the 2023 school year. Sherry served 7 years as Dean and oversaw the significant growth of the program during her tenure.
- Rev. Terry Fach, Campus Chaplain after 10 years in the role.
- Rita Dirks, PhD, recruited by Nazarene University College to build the English Literature program more than twenty years ago, retired at the end of summer 2023.
- Liza Abraham, PhD – Associate Professor of Chemistry
- Rodrigo Dal Ben de Souza, PhD – Assistant Professor of Psychology

TRANSITIONS – BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The composition of the Ambrose Board of Governors is defined in the Ambrose bylaws:

- The president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and the national director of the Church of the Nazarene Canada (ex officio)
- One member appointed by the National Board of the Church of the Nazarene Canada
- Six members appointed by the Board of Directors of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
- One Christian and Missionary Alliance District Superintendent
- Up to five members-at-large appointed by the Board

Following a season of significant change on the Ambrose board of governors, there has been a period of reasonable stability for the last couple of years. That said, there have been changes that need to be reported here:

Three of the governors appointed as part of the 2021 cohort have since resigned, each for different reasons, but none were able to complete their first term:

Krista Friesen, a board appointee, resigned in the summer of 2022 as she and her family moved to Texas for an employment opportunity.

Kari Leoganda, another board appointee, resigned in winter 2023 as she no longer felt able to travel from Vancouver for board meetings.

Dale Meister, an Alliance appointment, who very ably steered the land sale to a successful conclusion and chaired the presidential search committee, resigned in January 2024.

In addition, Lawrence Stalder, an Alliance appointment, reached term limit on June 30, 2023.

Further, two other board members reach term limit in June 2024: Cal Buss and Larry Koop. Both are board appointees.

With the exception of the most recent resignation, all vacancies have been filled. The new board members are as follows:

Following a recommendation from the Ambrose board, at its July 2022 meeting the Alliance Board of Directors appointed Rev. Dr. Leonard Lam to the Ambrose board for a four-year term with effect from July 1, 2022. Rev. Dr. Lam is the lead pastor of Mid Town Chinese Alliance Church in Calgary.

Janet Kirby, a businesswoman from Kelowna, BC with extensive accounting, board and non-profit experience was appointed to a four-year term beginning July 1, 2023, as a C&MA representative.

Alexandria Randell, a Chartered Professional Accountant from Calgary, AB, and a recent alumna, also appointed to a four-year term beginning July 1, 2023, as a board appointee.

Howard Louie, a businessman from Vancouver, BC, a member – and former board chair – of Tenth Church appointed to a four-year term beginning July 1, 2023, as a board appointee.

Further, Debi Mills, Board Chair and an Alliance appointee from Stony Plain, AB, was reappointed for a second term beginning July 1, 2023.

There are three nominees for appointment being presented by the Ambrose Nominating and Development Committee to the Ambrose board at its Spring 2024 meeting. As one is an Alliance appointment, a recommendation for appointment will be forwarded to the Alliance Board of Directors if the Ambrose board approves the recommendation.

ALLIANCE CANADA CHURCH RELATIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

The Alliance Board of Directors gave notice in early 2024 that the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ambrose University will be reviewed and revised. President Ashlin-Mayo will take the lead on this process from the university perspective.

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY: SPECIAL UPDATE FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Faculty of Theology refers to the faculty and programs of Ambrose University's undergraduate School of Ministry and graduate Seminary. These programs comprise about one-third of Ambrose students.

School of Ministry

There is a national decline in the number of young men and women pursuing vocational ministry through traditional Bachelor of Theology degrees. Ambrose's School of Ministry has had similar enrolment challenges and is actively conversing with our sister schools across Canada and the US. To stimulate enrolment, we are looking to creative delivery options in partnership with churches as a potential model for the future. The future of undergraduate ministry is changing, and a blend of being embedded in a robust Christian University (for *efficient* delivery) and Church-partnered online options (for *innovative* delivery) is part of the future for undergraduate vocational ministry preparation.

Seminary

Ambrose Seminary enrolment (graduate degrees) is experiencing exponential and explosive growth. Several factors influence this, including mid-career transitions, online delivery modalities, and, most notably, international students who have come from all over the world (Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin

America, etc.), many with a calling to serve the church in Canada. The Seminary offers several degrees: Master of Christian Studies, Master of Leadership and Ministry, Master of Theology, Master of Intercultural Ministry, and Master of Divinity. Many of our degrees are offered in Chinese, with about one-third of our students studying in Mandarin. Our Chinese program actively partners with the Canadian Chinese Alliance Church Association.

In 2022, Ambrose Seminary partnered with The Alliance Canada and the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Chile (Seminario Teológico Alianza in Temuco, Chile), to offer our Master of Theology degree to one cohort of students. Eight Chilean Alliance pastors are currently studying in Chile as students of Ambrose Seminary; this will develop their capacity to offer more advanced degrees in the local Seminary.

A pilot project with Beulah Alliance Church (Beulah Training Institute) to offer a two-year Certificate in Leadership on-site at Beulah launched in 2022. Going forward, the partnership will continue with a revised curriculum, learning from the initial pilot. Our goal is to find a sustainable, reproducible, and cost-effective model for church-partnered theological education.

Ambrose is committed to finding new, innovative, and affordable pathways to vocational ministry. Some of the additional ways we do this:

- The Finish Free Scholarship for Master of Divinity students, covering the tuition for the final 30 credits of the 90-credit MDiv.
- A 5-year BA/MDiv, launched in Fall 2023, which allows students to complete both a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies at Ambrose University and an MDiv at Ambrose Seminary in as little as five years.
- Ambrose offers Intercultural Ministry degrees (a rare degree in Canada – specifically preparing men and women for Intercultural missions).
- We are actively exploring options with multiple partners (Alliance Canada churches, camps, etc.) with embedded School of Ministry and Seminary programs.
- As part of our Educational Agreement with The Alliance Canada, Ambrose delivers the Foundations of Ministry Certificate for non-portable licence holders (program led by Rev. Dr. Ric Strangway). We offer these classes online and have an active and positive partnership with the Western Canadian District. We are keen to partner with other districts (utilizing our online delivery methodology).

Marketplace Ministry

Understanding the changing landscape of international ministry workers and the increasing need and interest in co-vocational pastoral ministry, Ambrose is actively and intentionally preparing men and women for marketplace ministry through several tracks:

- Every student at Ambrose University takes our core curriculum classes in Bible and Theology. We integrate faith and learning in all our classes, programs, and degrees. In addition, students are formed and developed in a Christ-centered community.
- Many of our Seminary Students are studying with the desire to be co-vocational and continue to serve in their secular profession as they serve the church or engage in missions.

CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Ambrose University has a Campus Master Plan that provides guidance to administration for future development. And for many years we had assumed that our next major expansion would be a chapel and worship space. Indeed, the Ambrose report to Assembly in 2022 noted that the Ambrose board had approved a motion empowering administration to pursue a capital campaign to facilitate that expansion.

However, for multiple reasons administration reluctantly determined that it was not the right time to embark on a capital campaign related to major expansion. But still, the campus needed additional classroom space to accommodate mid-sized classes – those of 25-30 in order to accommodate existing classes and to allow for growth in the student body. Various options were considered, ranging from leasing space at the nearby professional centre to installing an Atco facility on campus. Ultimately, after careful consideration of available options, the board approved a small (6,500 sq ft) new-build that will house our growing School of Business and include classrooms, office space, and student meeting spaces.

Although costs have increased since the construction plans were first developed, we were able to begin construction in late-2023. This was made possible by a handful of very generous donors who had contributed around 70% of the \$2.5 million project costs by last Fall. Thanks to a predominantly mild winter in Calgary, we are already past the weather-dependent stages of construction. Fundraising continues, and we hope to have all costs covered before the project is complete (currently anticipated for late-summer 2024).

ACADEMICS – ENROLMENT AND PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Full-Year* Unduplicated Headcount

Year	Arts & Science	School of Business	School of Ministry	Undergrad Open Studies	Education After Degree	Seminary	Total Headcount
2019-2020	519	Previously included in A&S totals	93	84	84	240	1020
2020-2021	531		85	102	114	242	1074
2021-2022	387	93	68	38	115	346	1047
2022-2023	342	102	48	70	145	319	1026

**Full-year* covers the period May (Spring semester) to April (Winter semester) in each academic year.*

"Open Studies" means that a student has not declared their major and, therefore, cannot be assigned to a Faculty

Fall 2022 enrolment did not reach projections – perhaps a final hangover of the pandemic as prospective students took a year out following the two very difficult pandemic years. Fall 2023 enrolment saw an overall 4% increase in both headcount and credit hours but did not reach anticipated levels.

Despite lower enrolment, there has been growth in a number of areas, including the Seminary, Education, Business and Social Sciences.

A new trend that we are seeing is increased international enrolment – a bump in 2021 that has continued in the years since. There are some inherent risks with international applicants – primarily timely visa approval at the Federal level – but for 2024 Ambrose has been given permission to enrol 80 international students. In Fall 2023 we welcomed a total of 37 new international students, including 9 from Hong Kong (all enrolled in Theological Studies in Chinese), and 9 students from Nigeria. We charge a modest premium

for international arts and science undergraduate tuition, but School of Ministry and Seminary students pay the domestic rate.

In May 2023 Dr. Smith's oft-postponed visit to Hong Kong finally took place, in which he undertook a number of different recruitment activities – school visits, parents' events – in addition to teaching and preaching in local churches. Because of the timelines of the application process, it is quite possible that none of the students currently enrolled from Hong Kong were influenced by those visits. However, we are hopeful that we will see further interest from students in the region for a Fall 2024 enrolment.

We currently have three students from Ukraine enrolled at Ambrose. Their first year costs – tuition and on-campus living costs – were completely underwritten by churches and donors and for the rest of their time at Ambrose these students will make an increasing contribution to their own costs, but the school will cover the remainder. Once again, we have been delighted with the generosity of donors and churches in making this possible.

Since our last General Assembly, we note the following developments:

- Introduction of a third Education cohort on alternate years.
- Pilot project delivering the Education program primarily in the evenings and weekends, although still with a requirement to complete the practicum elements in local schools. The pilot launched with seven students in winter 2024.
- Ambrose Seminary is partnering with Northern Theological Seminary in a Lilly-funded project known as "Seminary Now" – a subscription-based, streaming video platform delivering graduate-level courses.

EVENTS

There are multiple events during a typical academic year, but we focus on four here: Deeper Life Conference; Ambrose Research Conference; Downey Lectures; and, the pinnacle of the academic year: Commencement.

The **Ambrose Research Conference** (ARC) took place primarily online in the spring of 2022. The theme was *Adjacent Possibilities: Research That Makes Room for What's Possible*, described in the promotional materials thus: *"The adjacent possible is a kind of dramatic pause, hovering on the edge of the current conditions and imagining a different future. Hear Ambrose University students and professors engage important questions: How can unexpected changes or crises lead to innovation? How does pushing the boundaries of a research topic, real-world problem, or organization open up new possibilities for research, problem-solving, or social change? Can a better understanding of the margins of our fields lead to more effective inter-disciplinary collaboration, organizational cooperation and inter-personal collaboration?"*

The ARC theme for 2023 was "Climate Change and the Christian University", examining the diverse ways that climate change can impact people, society, business, education, the arts, and faith. And for 2024 the conference theme was "Prudence, Justice, Courage, And Temperance: The Cardinal Virtues in Life and Learning" and invited participants to reflect on the place and meaning of the cardinal virtues with a Christian university. This event is always a highlight of the year and a great showcase for the many exceptional students and faculty we have across the institution.

The 2022 **Deeper Life Day** took place in person in early October and had a theme of “Accepting the Burden of Being a Modern Individual by Rightly Belonging to Christ” with plenary speaker Dr. O Alan Noble, Associate Professor of English at Oklahoma Baptist University and editor-in-chief of *Christ and Pop Culture*. Following the plenary session students had a variety of breakout sessions to choose from, including service opportunities and seminars.

The 2023 Deeper Life Day took place in early October with a theme of “Pop Culture” featuring plenary speaker Josh Larsen. The plenary sessions examined how it is possible for Christians to engage with pop culture with grace, discernment and appreciation, and a further exploration of how movies can be prayerful expressions of lament, praise, joy and confession. Following the plenary sessions students had a variety of breakout sessions to choose from.

The **Downey Lectureship** for 2022 was offered in mid-October with the option to attend in person or online and featured Dr. Willie Jennings, ordained Baptist minister and the Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies at Yale University. His lecture series “Reframing Salvation” included two evening lectures and a chapel talk, all open to students, faculty, staff, and the public. These lectures were very well attended.

The Downey Lectureship for 2023 was to have been delivered by Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, Academic Dean at Bethlehem Bible College. A native Christian Palestinian from Bethlehem, Palestine, he would have brought a Palestinian Christian perspective on the 55+ year Israeli state occupation of Palestinian land and people, through a lens of peacebuilding. However, just 24 hours before he was due to fly to Canada the situation in the region dramatically altered and, for both family reasons and logistical issues, he was forced to cancel his trip. During the week of the lectures we had also planned to host Dr. Jack Sara, President of Bethlehem Bible College and former pastor of Jerusalem Alliance Church but, although he was already in North America at the time of the incursion into Israel, he returned home as quickly as practical to rejoin family. Chapels that week carried on the intended spirit of the lectures, as well as a focus on prayer for the situation in the Middle East.

It was a delight to be able to return to in-person **graduation** ceremonies in 2022. 213 women and men walked the stage that year and were addressed by accomplished representatives of their fields: Allan Elkin, Principal of the Cochrane Christian Academy, addressing the School of Education; Dr. Gerry Turcotte, President of St. Mary’s University in Calgary – one of our ‘sister’ institutions – brought remarks at our undergraduate commencement; and Dr. Jo-Ann Badley addressed our seminary graduates as one of her final public acts as Dean of Theology.

The 2023 Commencement exercises took place at the end of April (Education) and beginning of May 6 (Seminary and Undergraduate) with around 180 students graduating. Sgt. Martina Noskey of the RCMP Wood Buffalo Division, addressed the School of Education – a ‘full-circle’ moment for Associate Dean Sherry Martens – who retired last year - as Sgt Noskey was a pupil in the first group of student Dr. Martens ever taught as a qualified teacher. Dr. Paul Spilsbury, Academic Dean at Regent College and formerly the Dean of Arts & Science at Ambrose University, brought remarks at our undergraduate commencement; and Rev. Dr. Keith Taylor, former pastor of Beulah Alliance Church in Edmonton addressed our seminary graduates.

We anticipate a graduating class of around 190 in 2024.

FINANCES

Ambrose finished the 2022-2023 fiscal year with a very modest surplus. We had hoped and anticipated that the sale of the land on the southwestern edge of the campus would be complete before the end of the fiscal year but a series of delays, caused primarily by City processes, meant that it was the end of June 2023 before the sale finally closed. The proceeds of the sale were used primarily for debt reduction – the institution is now carrying only around \$2 million in debt – and this has decreased debt servicing costs significantly. We also anticipate that there will be a small surplus at the 2023-2024 year-end (April 30).

The increased enrolment in Fall 2023 is encouraging, of course, although we are still not quite to pre-pandemic levels and the increase was not as high as we had budgeted for. The base operating grant from the Government of Alberta was reduced slightly in the 2022-2023 budget year and has now remained at the same level for two further years (2023-2024 and 2024-2025). Given that the institution is not immune to the effects of inflation, this is effectively a cut in funding.

The university has, however, received modest Targeted Enrolment Expansion grants for business and social sciences in the last couple of years. This is separate from the base operating grant, but does come with terms and conditions that make the funds vulnerable to reduction or withdrawal. The additional funds are helpful, of course, but there are additional costs associated with the grants and so the impact on the ‘bottom line’ is not substantial.

With the uncertainty surrounding the budget, we are currently carrying faculty vacancies in Pastoral Theology, Music and Biology – a prudent step fiscally, but one that increases the burden on those teaching in those programs.

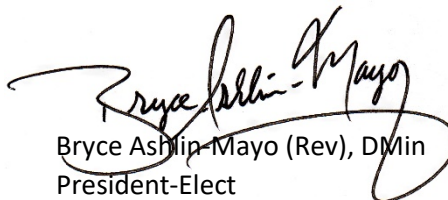
CONCLUSION

In all of this, we cannot stress highly enough how much we value the partnership we have with The Alliance Canada. Your ongoing partnership, expressed through funding, prayer and promotion, is vital to our mission. In the changing landscape of higher education and the demand for Christian men and women prepared for vocational ministry and the marketplace, our partnership with Alliance congregations is pivotal. Thank you for your shared commitment to Christian higher education.

Respectfully submitted



Gordon T. Smith (Rev.), PhD
President



Bryce Ashlip-Mayo (Rev), DMin
President-Elect