

Ecumenical Campus Ministry Lethbridge - - - News

ECM Blessing of the University Campus

This fall has been a very busy one as we started the term at the university with a blessing of the campus. Elder Shirlee Crow Shoe and I prayed for our students and Provost Dr.

Michelle Holstein spoke. Afterwards we handed out hundreds of popsicles donated by Chartwells. It was a grand way to kick off the term. [Photos for the Campus Blessing are from the University of Lethbridge Facebook page.](#)





Smiles and Snacks

We've had a lot of fun running Smiles and Snacks on both our campuses again this fall. Every Tuesday at the polytechnic and every Thursday at the university, volunteers hand out smiles and snacks, visit, and teach crocheting and cross-stitch to



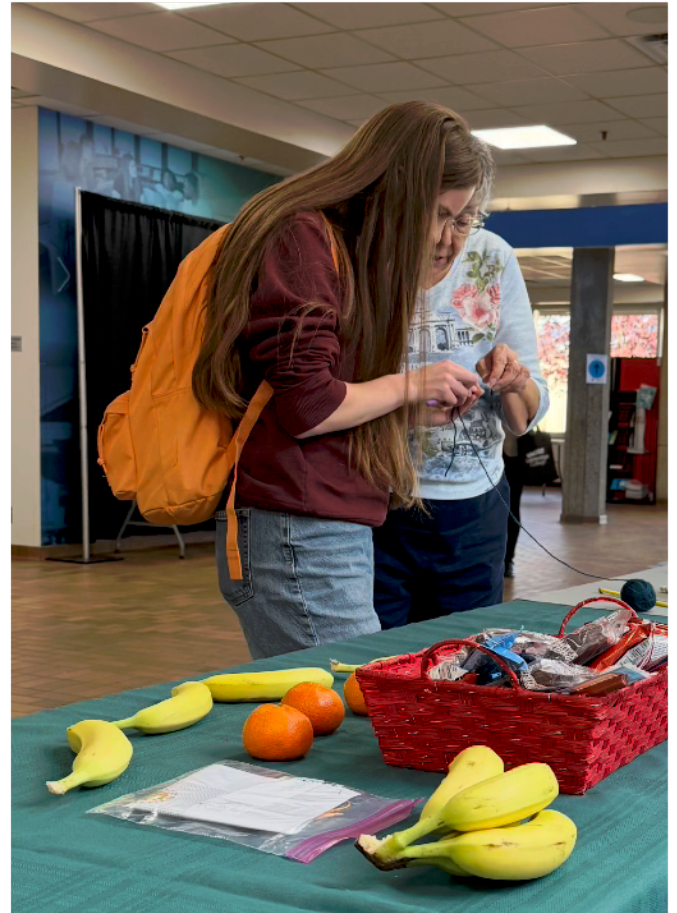
students. We ask volunteers to come regularly (some every two weeks, some every week) so that students get to know them and they get to know the students. Some students grab a banana or



granola bar and hurry on to their class, while others stay and visit for a bit, talking about what's happening in their classes or how their weekend tournament went. Some students sit down to do some crocheting or colouring. Others come back to show off their handiwork.

It's a joyous experience for volunteers and students and we hear constant feedback from people on campus that it has made a great impact on our

“for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink”



campuses. Last week, a university student said, “This is the highlight of my week,” and a polytechnic student told a volunteer, herself a grandma, after they had talked for a while, how much he missed his grandparents. More than once, there have been tears shed as people make deep connections.

This is a significant part of how we live out our ministry as encapsulated by Jesus in Matthew 25.

Food insecurity is a significant problem for an unfortunately large percentage of our students, and it seems to be worse this fall as more students have been asking how to access food supports than usual. ECM initiated the food pantries at the university and supported the food pantries at the polytechnic from the beginning



to help them feel supported and cared for. The Creative Initiative grant allows us to be creative in



and continue to find ways to support food initiatives on campus. We are very grateful to the Alberta Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) for a Creative Initiative grant that allows us to run our Kerber Friendship Programme of which Smiles and Snack is a large part. The Kerber FP, named after former ECM board members and polytechnic alumni, Dick and Yvonne Kerber, focusses on connecting students with volunteers from the community

finding ways to connect with and support students, especially around food.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me"

Many of the students who make a point of stopping at Smiles and Snacks come from away. It may just be Calgary, or it could be Punjab, but they aren't "at home" and they can find it lonely. It makes a big difference for students to have someone who

looks like a mom or a grandpa ask after them, make a fuss over how they did on a test, or give them some encouragement. I was surprised when I realized one of our wonderful volunteers speaks both Punjabi and Hindi, and now students from India regularly come by to talk to her in their own language. Recently I met

Years later he told me he had never forgotten that and was trying now to pay it forward to others needing support.



“I was naked and you gave me clothing.”

Over the years, we’ve supported a variety of student initiatives to provide inexpensive warm clothing to students or collect winter clothing to give to those in need. Just today, I dropped off a large donation of warm clothing from a retired faculty member for international students, and I’m helping another student track down a winter coat and boots before the

an alumnus, a new Canadian, who told me that ECM had really helped him when he was a student a long way from home.

cold really hits. It isn't a big part of what we do, but I'm grateful we can support on-campus initiatives to do this.



"I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me"

Over the years I have provided pastoral support to students, faculty, and staff in a variety of situations. I've visited with the sick, prayed with the dying, officiated at funerals, and comforted the grieving. I've officiated at weddings and

baptized babies. At times, I've also connected students to lawyers, attended court with them, and helped them visit family members in jail. It is a deep privilege to walk with people on this holy ground, and now, after 30 years of ministry, it is often multi-generational connections with families.



From the ECM Treasurer

Imagine a place where students walking the bustling halls of Lethbridge Polytechnic and the University of Lethbridge can pause for a warm smile, a nutritious snack, and compassionate support—this is the reality ECM Lethbridge strives to create. For over thirty years, our ministry—supported by four sponsoring denominations—has offered a welcoming presence on campus, guided by our dedicated Chaplain, Erin Phillips, and overseen by a capable ten-member volunteer board. Serving over 12,500 students might seem like a daunting task, but with the help of many generous volunteers, we make it possible—especially through our weekly Smiles and Snacks program. Thanks to the kindness of our supporters, we're able to keep our food pantries stocked and provide special meals for students. Recent grant funding has also enabled us to pursue creative new initiatives, ensuring every dollar benefits students. However, funding our annual operations remains a challenge.

As our partner denominations adjust to declining attendance and changing realities, our core support has not kept pace with the rising expenses required to sustain our Chaplain—the heart of our ministry. We have no building or office overheads, so your donations support our essential mission directly. If you are able, please consider supporting ECM Lethbridge so we can continue our vital work. Here are a few ways you can help:

- Donate through Canada Helps to ECM Lethbridge
- Send a cheque payable to ECM Lethbridge to: c/o 2406 11th Avenue South, Lethbridge, AB T1K 0K8 (Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, office hours 10 am–2 pm, Monday–Friday)
- Make an electronic fund transfer (EFT): please contact Chaplain Erin for the correct email address

All donations will receive a Charitable Donation Receipt. Your generosity makes a campus community of care possible—thank you for helping us nurture and support so many students.

Sharon Tillmanns



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