

What is DEAR to Emmanuel College?

Introduction

Emmanuel College believes in the notions of difference and equity and strives to implement them in the many aspects of its institutional and community life. These values are demonstrated in the College's mission statement, which acknowledges its history "rooted in the ecumenical heritage of the United Church of Canada..."; its relationships "...with Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and other religious communities..."; and its purpose to prepare "leaders and scholars for rigorous theological inquiry and for inclusive practices of justice and care, contextual analysis, creative activity, and interfaith engagement."¹

Emmanuel College has been blessed with the gifts and teachings of its Christian foundation. However, due to its colonial history, it has not always lived up to the principles of equity and respect. Inspired by Eurocentric expressions of Christianity, this legacy contributed to establishing systemic barriers that prevented minoritized / racialized communities from contributing to the church, as well as to the erasure and belittlement of Indigenous beliefs, forms of knowledge, and religious traditions. Emmanuel College confronts that history of colonization head on and aspires to transform it.²

As the Emmanuel community continues to grow and expand with members of other faith traditions, it is eager to recognize that different peoples, cultures, knowledges, and faiths will enhance our common learning experience and understanding. This process will not be without tension and conflict but will require mutual commitment and dialogue.³

As we collectively move forward, this declaration, which is intended to inform decision-making processes at Emmanuel College, also is a living testament that acknowledges that efforts are underway to address our

¹ "Humankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. In God's evaluation, the most nobly among you are the ones most mindful [of God], God is All-Knowing, Experienced" (Qur'an 49:13).

² "Hurt not others with what pains yourself" (The Buddha, Udânavarga 5:18, trans. 1883:27)

³ "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12a, New Revised Standard Version"

limitations. We need continually to seek new ways to listen to voices that have not previously been heard in the life of Emmanuel College.

Dignity, Equity, Accountability, and Responsibility (DEAR)

Dignity

We affirm our uncompromising commitment to the innate and sacred dignity of all persons, creation and the land, with an appreciation of the rich array of differences in the human and created experience.⁴ This means we value each member of our community as full participants worthy of respect.⁵

Dignity is the heartbeat of right relations. Emmanuel thus rejects any form of bigotry and discrimination -- such as racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, and classism. We also commit ourselves to actively counter other social phenomena that threaten the flourishing of life such as colonialism, globalized market capitalism, Eurocentric cultural imperialism, and environment degradation; forces which demean, distort, and dehumanize the sacred dignity of persons and creation and interrupt our capacity to approach the divine.

Equity

We recognize that unjust and unequal social structures are pervasive in our societies. We denounce these forms of oppression. But denouncing is not enough! We strive to create the conditions for equity at Emmanuel.

⁴ These experiences include race, age, ancestry, national origin, class, creed, culture, language, family (marital or registered domestic partner status), disability (physical or mental disability, medical condition), gender (including gender identity and expression), sex (including sexual orientation, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, or related medical conditions), and religion (including all aspects of religious belief, observance, and practice including religious dress and grooming practices).

⁵ "Humankind, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single self, and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread forth countless men and women; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another, and of your ties of kinship: God is always watching you" (Qur'an 4:1);

"Someone who saves a person's life is equal to someone who saves the life of all" (Qur'an 5:32);

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and with your entire mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

We believe in ensuring equity across every structure of Emmanuel – from hiring practices to course offerings, classrooms, curriculum, worship spaces, resource distribution and beyond. We passionately seek to listen to the experiences of minoritized and racialized peoples, honoring them as crucial to the work of achieving equity at Emmanuel, where everyone may thrive. Emmanuel thus rejects patronization and tokenization of minoritized and racialized groups' experiences. Equity work cannot be done by one group and must involve critical consideration of intersecting social markers and power differential at play.

Accountability⁶

Every decision and action that the college makes has significant impact to its members.⁷

As we strive for greater dignity and inclusion, we seek to hold ourselves accountable and be held accountable by the members of our community. We must welcome community voices that have been missing or dismissed, challenge existing racialized prejudices and biases, and create spaces for diverse worldviews and cultures that reflect our constituencies. These diverse voices will help us evaluate our success in achieving our desired goal.

Responsibility

Collectively, we share the responsibility for ensuring a safe and equitable learning environment for all people. In the same light, our social positions within the institution render us differently able, and thereby differently responsible, for contributing towards the safety and equity of all individuals within Emmanuel's spaces.

Through the deepening of faith experiences and spiritual traditions as represented at Emmanuel, practicing our faith requires that we participate in the work of engendering socially just conditions. Our diverse faiths encourage a shared struggle against selfishness, cruelty and systemic patterns of oppression, discrimination and dehumanization. We intend to practice what we preach by fostering introspection and a sense of shared responsibility for standing up to oppressive structures and inherited patterns of domination. Our aspiration is to become a community of religious and

⁶ "The vocation of the intellectual is to let suffering speak, let victims be visible, and let social misery be put on the agenda of those in power" (Dr. Cornel West).

⁷ "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 John 3:18).

spiritual actors who can find common ground in ensuring and celebrating the rights and dignity for all. We do so by prophetically creating spaces that are necessary for the personal, group and institutional growth required for engendering social justice, dignity, equity and difference.