

The Chester Ronning  
Centre Newsletter  
is published  
twice a year

The Chester Ronning Centre  
for the Study of Religion and Public Life  
**Newsletter**

Editor  
Dittmar Mündel

Volume 8

Issue 2

Fall 2013

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Managing Editor  
Nicholas Wickenden

*From the Director's Desk...*

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Associate Editor  
Rebecca Warren

Photography  
Reiner Loewan

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**The Chester Ronning  
Centre for the Study  
Of Religion and  
Public Life**

University of Alberta  
Augustana Campus  
4901 - 46th Avenue  
Camrose, AB  
T4V 2R3  
<www.augustana.ualberta  
.ca/ronning>

Director  
David J. Goa  
<david.goa@ualberta.ca>  
Office: 780 679 1104  
Cell: 780 504 5942

Associate Director  
Dittmar Mündel  
<pdmundel@telusplanet.net>  
Office: 780 672 1581

Assistant Director  
Rebecca Warren  
<rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca>  
Office: 780 679 1146

## The Curious Shape of Our Public Spheres

A number of the fall offerings of the Ronning Centre will explore the curious shape of the public sphere both in Canada and in several other countries. Leading this exploration will be the 2013 Augustana Distinguished Lecture(s) "Toward a New Public Theology" given by one of Canada's fine thinkers on public policy, David Pfrimmer, Principal-Dean and Professor at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary on the campus of Wilfrid Laurier University. Dr Pfrimmer will give four lectures drawing on his recent thinking and rich experience as Director of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy. You may read more about these events further on in this Newsletter.

In November we will host a conference on "Spirit of the Land: Building a Community Land Ethic", shaped jointly by Dittmar Mündel and Rajan Rathnavalu, deepening the conversations that emerged from last November's considerations on recent developments in the petro-chemical industry and agriculture. This will dovetail with a series of evening lectures and discussions on "Economy, Nature, Morality" scheduled in Camrose for the fall term. Everyone is invited to attend.

Our colleague Dan Bogert-O'Brien, pastor of Colebrook United Church in Surrey, BC, will be with us for a few days and will give two lectures bringing together his work on Thomas Merton and Ivan Illich. The first lecture, "Ethics, Ethos and Mythos: Merton, Potlatches and Technology" will be given in Camrose and a second, exploring how these two remarkable thinkers have engaged the modern world, will be given in Edmonton.

The theme, "Is Everything Up for Sale?" based on the provocative book by Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy* (2013) will shape the vigorous conversations in our Philosophers' Cafés held every two weeks in Edmonton.

Two new initiatives of the Ronning Centre will move forward this fall. Brian Evans, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta, has published his biography of Chester Ronning with the University of Alberta Press under the title *The Remarkable Chester Ronning* and we are planning a book-launch in Camrose honouring one of our city's first citizens. Evans notes in his book how odd it is that there has not been a lectureship in the memory of Chester Ronning and taking note of his remarkable diplomatic work. We intend to rectify this with the "Chester Ronning Lecture on Religion and Diplomacy".

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In forthcoming Augustana Distinguished Lectures

## David Pfrimmer Looks Toward A New

“Toward a New Public Theology” is the theme for a series of lectures presented for the Ronning Centre this fall by David Pfrimmer, Principal-dean and Professor of Applied Christian Ethics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in Wilfrid Laurier University.

The series will comprise four lectures, including the Augustana Distinguished Lectures for 2013, plus a Philosophers’ Café talk (details, including dates and locations, can be found in the calendar section of this newsletter). His titles are:

“What Do Politicians Expect of the Faithful and What Should the Faithful Expect of Politics?”

“A Tale of Two, or Three, or Four National Stories”

“Why a New Public Theology is Necessary for Canada”

“Dispatches from the Front: Church Contributions to the Public Purpose”

“Is Nothing Sacred? Is Everything for Sale” (as part of the Edmonton Philosophers’ Café series on markets)

Pfrimmer defines public theology as the place “where our faith intersects with the public purpose, where we have something to offer the world, where it’s facing some of its most pressing and urgent needs. That could be in the area of a crisis of misery (poverty, economic justice, human rights) or a crisis of meaning (the nihilism that takes over, where we look for answers to life questions). Public theology helps us address those ultimate life questions.”

In a world that “isn’t particularly sympathetic to people of faith”, public theology “offers a way of articulating what faith contributes to the public purpose”. Faith may be dismissed in what Stephen Carter called the “culture of disbelief”, yet it remains deeply important in the lives of Canadians.

Pfrimmer explains that it’s important for the church not get into “spiritual tourism”, where we

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### *Director’s Desk*

#### *Continued from page 1*

A second initiative comes at the invitation of the Faculty of Theology of Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Turkey. Turkey is poised to play a lead role in what its leaders, political and intellectual, see as the development of “a new civilization”. Turkey’s distinctive understanding of Islam, its economic power and political astuteness will have a substantial impact throughout the Muslim world and, I dare say, in Europe and North America. We are pleased to be invited to

work with a group of our Turkish colleagues on preparing the next generation of leadership to engage their contemporary society across its many and varied boundaries.

We welcome you to join in thinking of a wide range of compelling issues and themes related to the shaping of our various public spheres, here and abroad. We also invite you to consult our website for our annual report which was just published and to join in making it possible for our common work to flourish.

—David J. Goa

# Public Theology for Canada

focus on our own spiritual practices to the exclusion of being grounded in the current moment, the current time. “I think the churches suffer from some missional confusion these days we’re not sure what we’re supposed to do. We need to enlist people in God’s story. Public theology is a way of enlisting people in the divine narrative.”

Pfrimmer sees Lutherans in the last twenty years or so as captivated by a kind of unity theology, which has led to an introspective focus on mergers and institutions getting along with each other to the exclusion of an outward focus.

To all Canadian churches who are struggling to find their role in the public realm, Pfrimmer offers this simple advice: “Get out more.” Taking a cue from Bonhoeffer, who spoke of Jesus as being a man “for others”, we need to be other-focused, neighbour-focused, to get out there and listen to our neighbors beyond the walls of the church.

Pfrimmer urges his students to check out their local MP office, the mayor’s office, social service agencies, First Nations communities—and to go “with a discerning eye” and a listening ear to learn what is happening there. “People are looking for a platform to tell their stories to someone who will listen. One cannot underestimate the importance of having your story heard.”

To those who insist the church knows nothing about economics, or that the church shouldn’t be involved in politics, Pfrimmer suggests a refresher course in Canadian history, which since the Second World War has been littered with ecumenical contributions to policy. “Church leaders have forgotten their history,” Pfrimmer laments. With new faith groups in Canada, we need to bring for-



ward this history so it’s part of the dialogue and conversation today.

After decades working on public policy issues in the ecumenical/multifaith community and a recent research focus on the history of Canadian ecumenical social justice movements, Pfrimmer knows at first hand the history of which he speaks.

In addition to his distinguished career of service and teaching, Pfrimmer has been spotted singing in a global choir (where he insists he often lip-syncs and is only there to fill a spot) and canoeing in Algonquin Park. He is an engaging story-teller and promises to open up the conversations in important ways. In his own words, “I love the opportunity to be curious about the world.”

The Ronning Centre is delighted to host him for this series of lectures, expecting that those of us who attend will find themselves delighting in being curious right along with him.

—Rebecca Warren

## Prison Fellowship President Speaks

# Ron Nikkel Presents a Vision of Justice



*Ron Nikkel speaks to Martin Tweeddale at the Philosophers' Café.*

Ron Nikkel has been the president and CEO of Prison Fellowship International for over 30 years. During that time, he has met with criminal justice officials all over the world and has visited more than 1000 prisons in over 100 countries.

That wide experience has led him to a vision of what justice really means. During his visit to Edmonton in March 2013 as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow of the Ronning Centre, he explained that justice is “a relationship” between people and it also involves communities. Any crime often represents the violation of a relationship, so part of justice is working to restore that relationship between victim and offender, and between the offender and the community.

What justice looks like in Nikkel’s world is a restorative model. Justice rescues or brings relief to the oppressed. Justice ensures responsibility, being held accountable for actions (not revenge or punishment, but accountability). Justice restores by repairing the harm caused by the crime. And justice sets things right, engages in a kind of peacemaking to repair the relationships that have been broken.

In contrast, Nikkel points out that “injustice would be retribution or punishment *without* resto-

ration, rehabilitation, reparation. Justice should change people and structures so they are better than they were.” Looking at the state of our corrections system today, we have to wonder if we are leaving offenders and communities better than they were at the end of the process.

As recently as ten years ago, Canadian prisons were exemplary among the ones Prison Fellowship International President, Ron Nikkel, has visited. But that is changing. Little by little we are cutting the programs that were focused on rehabilitation, education, and the spiritual lives of inmates. This ultimately will have a huge cost not only to those within the corrections system, but to our communities and to our nation. The changing focus on retribution and punishment over rehabilitation is reflective of a trend in the U.S. system to build more prisons, increase mandatory minimum sentences, and enact legislation such as the “three strikes” rule (where offenders receive significantly higher sentences after two prior convictions).

When we let our fear and anger drive policy, we make prisons that are what Vivien Stern called a “sin against the future”. As Nelson Mandela explained, “It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.” By drawing a false dichotomy between victim and offender, we belie the truth that many offenders were themselves also victims of abuse or other kinds of traumatization at one point in their lives.

“Is there anyone who does *not* deserve justice?” Nikkel asks. Most often, those denied justice are the poor, the powerless, the outcasts of society, and inevitably these groups are overrepresented in prison populations.

Instead of functioning to create healing and restoration, more often prisons function as “universities

for crime”, where offenders are given no opportunity to exercise responsible decision-making and yet are somehow supposed to know how to do it by the time they are released.

As Nikkel points out, prisons may be “the most counter-intuitive system in the world”. His hope is that organizations like Prison Fellowship are “bringing grace into a graceless system” by advocating for projects that help restore offenders and victims and heal the community itself.

One example of this kind of restorative work took place in Rwanda after the genocide, where they used an adaptation of Prison Fellowship’s Sycamore Tree model called the Umuvumu Tree Project. In this process, offenders and victims met together several times to begin to understand

what relational justice looks like, including an acknowledgment of the suffering, a confession (sometimes followed by offering of forgiveness), and making amends. Some participants in this project ended up building homes for survivors as a way of making a tangible offering that helped reconstruct not only the devastating losses, but rebuild the entire community as a result.

If that is what justice looks like, then we can hope that our prison systems will all move toward a more just and restorative model led by visionaries like Nikkel and the leaders at Prison Fellowship.

— Rebecca Warren

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## Natasha Martel Receives Yang Award

The 2013 Rev Dr and Mrs Hsi Shao Yang Award in memory of Chester Ronning and established in gratitude by the Yang family has been awarded to a superb student at Augustana, Natasha Martel.

Natasha began her studies in 2010 and will be graduating from Augustana in summer 2014. According to David Goa, Ms Martel “has demonstrated her research skill and her interest both in the intellectual life and in how the work of young scholars may have traction within both religious communities and in the public sphere.”

Martel has used this award to develop an annotated bibliography on The People’s Republic of China dealing with a range of issues and themes, including: current policy in China on religion and the freedom of religious institutions and communities, the status of Christian communities in China today, and the status of other religious communities, including Buddhist and Muslim communities and their relationship to the state.

“I have found this research quite interesting,” explains Martel, “because it seems that whenever

there is a focus on separating church and state, the two become more tightly entangled. Also, the issues facing many of the faithful in the People’s Republic of China are quite different from anything I have ever heard of before. This has been an eye-opening experience and I am very thankful for the opportunity to be a part of it.”



The Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life has augmented this award for Ms. Martel to write a briefing paper on this set of issues and themes. David Goa adds, “We are delighted with Ms Martel’s fine work in the sure knowledge that Dr Ronning would be pleased that his commitment and interest in China and its various peoples remains a central concern for the Augustana campus of the University of Alberta and in the work of the Ronning Centre that gratefully bears his name.”

## Engaging “Strong Religion”

*The International Council for Middle East Studies in Washington, D.C., under the leadership of a friend and colleague of the Ronning Centre, Professor Norton Mezvinsky, planned a panel discussion on the “Role of Faith, Freedom of Speech: Islam and Muslims in America” in July. After careful background work Mezvinsky invited Pastor Terry Jones of the Dove World Outreach Center in Florida to engage Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, Imam of the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center in Virginia.*

*Pastor Jones had captured the attention of the media when he threatened to burn and then burned the Qur'an as an auto de fé. Imam Johari, a superb spokesperson for Islam in America, was selected to engage him by Imam Mohamed Magid, the president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), who initially supported the initiative. In a lovely act of hospitality and since this was to take place during Ramadan, the Imam offered to provide the Iftar meal following the conversation. Iftar is normally served by Muslims when the sun has set during this holy month.*

*Mezvinsky approached two churches in the Washington area to host the event and was turned down by both, not because of the Muslim speaker, but because they were not willing to have Pastor Jones in their presence. The third church he approached, the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, under the leadership of the senior pastor Rev. Roger Cench, immediately saw the importance of this engagement and opened its doors for the evening.*

*A week before the scheduled event on Tuesday, 16 July, ISNA, perhaps influenced by other Muslim organizations, cancelled its participation in the event. Why they withdrew was never explained to Professor Mezvinsky despite his efforts to contact the leadership and discuss the matter. Mezvinsky then wrote to all involved and to those who had received notification of the event that his organization regrettably had to cancel the event “because of the late and sudden Muslim withdrawal of support and participation”.*

*When Mezvinsky was in the planning process and called me to discuss the challenges involved I wrote the following to him at his request. In the hope that such courageous initiatives will continue I offer my comment to our readers.*

The time has passed when interfaith conversations may only be held between likeminded people whatever their faith commitments may be. I remember the curmudgeonly G.K. Chesterton remarking after the first two decades of the ecumenical movement in the UK that it looked to him to be gatherings of Christians from various denominations “in their mutual unbelief”. Chesterton’s comment is a bit too reductive from my perspective, since the ecumenical movement has done important work particularly on social justice issues. But it does get at an important matter when it comes to conversations between people of different faiths.

A number of years ago when we had a gathering in Edmonton of a North American interfaith organization associated with the Parliament of Religions, I gave a talk on the need to bring those with a “strong religion” to the table. Most of the “professional interfaith dialogue” folks were somewhat disturbed by my remarks. Many who typically gather for such conversations here do so as “representatives” of their faith community, put the best face on, ignore difficult issues and the particular aspects of theology and faith, and share a critique of the “bad behaviour” of their coreligionists who have a strong religion. Those with a strong religion whom they considered to have behaved badly are never invited, listened to, or talked with — in fact there is little discussion seeking to understand what is behind such bad behaviour; rather, they are seen as an embarrassment and cast into a kind of outer world. Liberal minded religious people from all faiths (and the Christians have often taken the lead in this in my experience) banish those with a strong religion and do so under the umbrella of interfaith dialogue.

Two decades ago, perhaps, this didn’t matter. Now it is obvious to any thoughtful person that engaging those with a strong religion — fundamentalists, those with vigorous spiritual disciplines, those who see their faith as ultimate and the best — is paramount. It is where the action is, for three obvious reasons: (1) those with a strong religion speak and act in ways that have dramatic

## — *An Open Letter to Norton Mezvinsky* —

implications for the public sphere that we share; (2) we no longer live just within our own nations and those with a strong religion and express aspects of it can colour international relations; and (3) tragically, those with a strong religion can colonize the image of their religion, and religion as such, through the media and shrink the capacity of religious ideas and actions that draw from deeper wells of understanding and insight.

Over the better part of four decades I have shaped my work around conversations with women and men who live out of and in reference to their faith. Very early on I noticed that those with serious spiritual disciplines (often confused with strong religion) had less fear and more elasticity of heart than those whose relationship to religion was through the lens of a particular ideology, either liberal or conservative. Bringing those with strong spiritual disciplines together with those who have a strong religion rooted in a particular ideology has important implications. Many have noted that there are religious leaders and others who hold to a strong religion who are sociopaths. We can do little to change their mind or heart. What we can do and must do is engage them because they bring along their disciples. When we engage them with hospitality and with an understanding of their faith tradition equal to or greater than their own understanding, we may not change their mind, but we shall have an effect on the mind and heart of their disciples. This is the new public work desperately needed in Canada, in the United States of America, and in many other countries riven by religious fascism and ignorance.

I admire how you have gone about preparing for and shaping the event in Washington. We can only do such work if we are willing, as you have admirably shown, to go and talk at length with those you wish to invite to the table. We need to understand what they are saying and understand why they are saying it and what is behind it. Where is it coming from for them? What is its traction in particular religious communities and in the public sphere? Pastor Jones' ideas and actions, I suspect, are the warp and woof of a basket that

contains all sorts of fear and disappointment, much of which has nothing to do with Islam. But what he has done and intends to do is social mischief. We can never see into the basket unless we are willing to take the time to get to know the person in their own terms first. Only then can we invite them to a table of hospitality and begin the work of peeling back what is in the basket.

When an event such as you are planning is shaped, not around a debate, but to hear what is said, to listen for what it means to the person, and to unfold, in this case, the living faith of a serious and hospitable Muslim and witness him field and respond in life-giving ways to what is said, the event will likely be transformative for many who attend and will most assuredly reframe their discourse.

A last note. So many young people, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, only see the way the media frames controversial events involving religion. It is curious to me why we never hear that Pastor Jones's view of Islam and Osama bin Laden's view of Islam are the same. And, they both require the same violent action to prove faithfulness. Strange bedfellows. So many young people in Muslim communities are faced with an awful image of Islam in the media, an Islam that appears to be colonized by violence. Christian young people see Pastor Jones and his violence. Do they wish to identify with this religious making? This combines with the media's appetite for the diet served up over the last decade by the late Christopher Hitchens and others who, like bin Laden and Jones, reduce religion to violence and, thus, call for the complete rejection of religion. Two awful choices, it seems to me.

So, Norton, this work you have set your hand to opens new pathways, precisely because it brings into the light and places face to face the burdens and sufferings carried in the basket of "those who do not know what they do", and, in so doing, participate in the wounding of their faith and decreasing its capacity to speak a healing word in a deeply troubled world.

—David J. Goa



## Alberta Voices: Continuing the Conversation on Fracking



*Rajan Rathnavalu, Dittmar Mündel, Allison Bortolon, Hans Asfeldt: The Alberta Voices Team*

The public discourse on hydraulic fracturing has continued to unfold since Augustana hosted “Responsibility for the Land: Conversations on Fracking in Alberta”, a conference last November. The spirit of the event was to create a reflective space where differing perspectives could meet at a common table to discuss this challenging issue. Many conversations took root and this summer, the Ronning Centre continued to support our efforts to make the discussion on fracking more complete with a project called Alberta Voices.

Alberta Voices was created to provide support for people who hope for greater care of our natural environment and human health alongside resource development. In May, we unveiled a website at <[www.albertavoices.ca](http://www.albertavoices.ca)> where a growing collection of Albertans’ stories of oil and gas issues are shared through film, photography and written work.

In response to the oft-repeated notion that there are “no documented cases” of negative impacts caused by fracking, we have worked with Albertans to compile public documentation of the human stories behind water contamination, air pollution, and fractured communities. Our hope is that this project will help empower the voices of those who have not been fully included in the discussion of energy development in Alberta.

Throughout the summer, two Augustana students, Hans and Alison, travelled parts of rural Alberta, and had the privilege of meeting farmers and

ranchers and citizens of all kinds. Listening to their stories was both humbling and inspiring. One would expect that it might be difficult to find hope in a story of struggle, but the storytellers themselves modelled courage that was itself a reason for optimism. While each person shared new insights, all were united by a strength that allowed them to speak out even when their livelihoods stood to be compromised further.

We have learned a great deal from these conversations and our mission now is to share these stories to help inform the public. We hope that Alberta Voices continues to help balance and enrich the discussion of oil and gas development and we invite you to join the conversation. Visit <[www.albertavoices.ca](http://www.albertavoices.ca)> to read the stories and watch the films, and then spread the word so that everyone is informed as we make decisions (consciously or unconsciously) about the future of our province.

If you have a story that you would like to share or know of someone who might, please e-mail a blog post, photos, or a video to <[albertavoices@gmail.com](mailto:albertavoices@gmail.com)> and we will help add your voice to the discussion through our guest blog. If you are interested in receiving additional updates, you can subscribe on our website to receive our blog-posts by e-mail. We look forward to hearing from you!

—The Alberta Voices Team  
Hans, Alison, Raj, and Dittmar



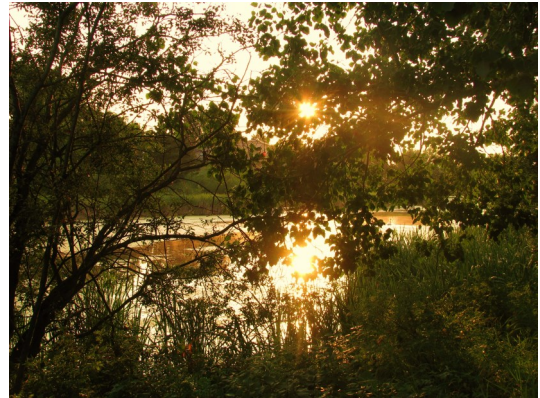
# Spirit of the Land: Building a Community Land Ethic

*Nothing so important as a land ethic was ever written...  
it arises in the minds of a thinking community.*  
—Aldo Leopold

The “Spirit of the Land” conference builds on the success of the “Responsibility for the Land: Conversations on Fracking in Alberta” conference held last winter 2012, which welcomed almost 200 attendees from across Alberta. Broad in its appeal and addressing a timely topic, “Responsibility for the Land” was attended by local community members, farmers, industry representatives and government officials, as well as students and academics. The event also featured “roundtable” discussions amongst attendees to foster dialogue across differing perspectives.

Drawing from many of the relationships developed last year, “Spirit of the Land” takes a deeper look at our society’s relationship to the land and its people. At its heart, the conference hopes to create space to have a deeper conversation about land and community to foster a renewed and life-giving land ethic. In particular, the weekend seeks to draw a connection between the healthy spiritual and relational life of a community and wise land stewardship.

Recognizing that discussion of a land ethic involves the participation of the land’s First People, we have invited Sylvia McAdam as our opening keynote speaker on Friday evening. As one of the founders of Idle No More, Sylvia McAdam is internationally recognized as a leading voice for ecological protection in Canada. Saturday morning, former Augustana Dean Roger Epp will discuss how we might re-imagine settler-indigenous relations as a wise ethical foundation for renewed land stewardship. The conference will again feature discussion and active participation amongst attendees; in the afternoon, a panel of First Nations leaders, farmers and ecologists will facilitate



engagement of conference participants in visioning a “community land ethic”.

The project has garnered the support of a wide network. Bill Hackborn and Dittmar Mündel will lead a complementary, community-based class Thursday evenings. The “Spirit of the Land” course will guide students and community members in using contemplative approaches to engage wider ecological concerns.

A supporting website is being developed at <[www.spiritoftheland.ca](http://www.spiritoftheland.ca)> and, as part of her MA studies, Leslie Lindballe is developing further web-based opportunities for interaction and discussion. Leslie joins several current and former Augustana students as part of a growing team helping ensure a successful fall program. In addition to Ronning Centre sponsorship, both Augustana Campus and the U of A’s Undergraduate Research Initiative have also offered generous financial support.

As the weekend is as much a celebration as it is education and critique, we have partnered with Rose City Roots for a Saturday evening concert featuring First Nations musicians. During the day, we are fortunate to have Cree drummers and singers from Pê Sâkâstêw Centre in Hobbema helping close the conference.

—Rajan Rathnavalu

# Partnership Plan Proposed To Bring Turkish Theology Students to Camrose



*Students attending the conference in Konya*

A partnership plan is under discussion that would bring theological students from Turkey to the Augustana Campus at Camrose for periods of intensive study of English and an introduction to religious life in Canada.

The proposed plan would be administered jointly by the Chester Ronning Centre at Camrose and the theological department of Necmettin Erbakan University at Konya, in central Turkey.

The plan envisages that for a period of time during the summer months students from Konya would be able to make use of the residential space available on the Augustana campus. Academic staff with expertise in teaching English as a second language would provide specialized instruction for them.

In addition, Fellows of the Chester Ronning Centre, along with colleagues from Necmettin Erbakan University, would offer weekly seminars on a mutually agreed upon set of themes relating to religion and theology. The accent would be on the Muslim experience in Turkey and the Christian experience in Canada, as well as on Islam in Canada and Christianity in Turkey.

The Ronning Centre would also organize a set of field trips for the students to points of interest in Western Canada and visits to a variety of religious communities. An exceptionally wide spectrum of such communities, including representatives of

many of the diverse traditions of Islam, is a distinctive feature of Alberta's cultural landscape.

The presence of a Turkish community in Alberta would offer the visiting students a valuable point of access to learning about local conditions.

The proposal reflects the keen interest among many Turkish academics in participating in the Anglophone scholarly community. It is envisaged that faculty members from Konya accompanying the students could pursue teaching as well as research while in Alberta.

Although located in the very ancient city of Konya, known in classical times as Iconium, Necmettin Erbakan University is a modern foundation that has been in operation for just three years. It has a special focus on teacher training. In 2011 it was named in memory of the late Dr Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011), a distinguished engineer who served for a time as prime minister of Turkey.

Discussions about the partnership are continuing, involving the Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Konya, Professor Ahmet Saim Aritan, and members of his Faculty, as well as David J. Goa, Director of the Chester Ronning Centre, Augustana Dean Allen Berger, and the eminent Islamic scholar Professor Bilal Kuspinar, a Fellow of the Centre.

—Nicholas Wickenden

# Religious Studies Contributing to Global Peace

This last May eighty-five scholars from a variety of countries were invited to Konya, Turkey, by the Necmettin Erbakan University. We were asked to think about the various ways the study of religion may do its part to nurture peaceful relationships within religious communities and between them.

We were asked to do this, in large part, because many scholars and politicians in Turkey have a newfound sense of global leadership. The economy of Turkey is burgeoning and the government has reached out to its neighbours, to the Arab and Muslim world as well as to Europe and North America and various countries in Asia.

Many authorities have realized the significance of the study of religion to address various geopolitical issues tearing nations and communities apart. In the last decade eighty-five theological and religious studies faculties have been established. At our host university in Konya, they have one hundred faculty members in the various Islamic sciences, interfaith dialogue and the history of religions. Two thousand students are studying in this faculty, eighty-five percent of them women.

The government is working feverishly to address the legacy of decades of higher education when the study of religion was not possible. Religion and the study of religion are seen as one of the important keys to nurturing a new civilization and they have set their hand to this remarkable work.

I was invited to speak to the meaning of divine justice as we find it portrayed in scriptures, Jewish, Christian and Muslim. How are such texts heard in ways that move human beings from enmity to empathy? What do we make of the long standing habit of faith communities who have revealed to them the mercy and compassion of God acting in death-dealing ways convinced they do so out of divine justice?

The organizers did a marvellous job bringing us together, shaping our formal considerations, and then, in the true spirit of the symposium, insuring we have plenty of time to talk in a spirit of deep

hospitality. Hours of conversation occurred as our hosts brought us to restaurants overlooking the beautiful city of Konya.

Overlooking the city I thought of the Apostle Paul, who visited when it was known as Iconium, and his vigorous conversations in its flourishing Jewish community, as well as with Timothy and his friend Thecla. We went on to Çatalhöyük, the Neolithic site discovered by James Mellaart in 1958, one of the first large human settlements that reached its apex nine thousand years ago.

We spent an afternoon in the beautiful precinct of the Sufi order founded by the great mystic Mevlana Jalaluddin-I Rumi and joined the thousands of pilgrims in a prayer of thanksgiving before his tomb. On one beautiful evening we were taken to the mystical dance of the whirling dervishes in praise of God, joining the whole cosmos in the hymn of adoration.

Then, in the spirit that animated all our time together, we visited the village of Sille (Sylata), a short eight kilometres from Konya, a way station on the king's road in ancient times with its ruins dating to 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, another place the Apostle Paul visited. It had been a Greek village since Roman times and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the mother of the Emperor Constantine had built the lovely cross-form stone church that graces the hillside, the Aya Elenia Church. After the tragic exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece in 1923 the local Greek population migrated. Today the Aya Elenia Church is undergoing substantial restoration as part of the national heritage of Turkey.

In May we enlarged the circle of Ronning Centre friends and scholars who will be joining us in our common good work.



—David J. Goa

At the interface of religion and diplomacy

## New Lecture Series To Commemorate Chester Ronning

Chester Ronning, CC, AOE (1894-1984) was a consummate diplomat and played a singular role in the forging of Canada's relationship with China following their revolution. He was honoured by China and by Canada for his service.

In commemoration of his remarkable life of public service, David J. Goa, Director of the Ronning Centre, has announced plans to inaugurate an annual lecture in his name. The lecture series will deal with the full range of issues in religion and diplomacy at play in international relations and of importance to both faith communities and the modern state.

The Centre is exploring a partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada under Minister John Baird. Chester Ronning served with Canada's diplomatic service in China (1945-1951), Norway (1954-1957), India (1957-1964), and at the United Nations.

Dr Ronning is remembered not only by various people associated with the Canadian diplomatic service but also in China, where he continues to hold a place of honour as an important friend during the first several decades of the People's Republic of China.

The Centre is also exploring a partnership through the newly formed government Office of Religious Freedom in Ottawa. Given such a partnership it would be appropriate to have the lecture given twice, in Camrose or Edmonton and in Ottawa. There may also be possibilities of partnering on this lecture with China.

The Centre has drawn up a list of internationally distinguished individuals active in religion and politics who might be invited to deliver lectures in the new series.

Further announcements will appear as definite arrangements take shape.

New course at the Augustana Campus

## Economy, Nature, and Morality Seen in Relationship

Do we have to make people [and nature] sick to have a healthy economy?

—Erich Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*

This fall, Dittmar Mündel will teach a course that seeks to provide ecological, economic, moral, and religious frameworks for understanding the damage to people, land, and community caused by the current economic system, as well as for creating a life-giving economy.

Some of the questions the course will ask are:

- What are major causes of the crises and instabilities of the current global economic system?
- What is true wealth vs. phantom wealth?
- Why are the religious traditions and many philosophical traditions against usury?

- What is the essence of good work, good enterprise, and good farming?

The course will encourage conversation among the participants, using the writings of Chris Hedges (*Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*), Wendell Berry (*What Matters?*), and David C. Korten (*Agenda for a New Economy*), and with guest lectures by David Goa and a variety of Ronning Centre fellows. It will be co-ordinated by Dittmar Mündel.

Members of the public are warmly invited to attend from 7:00 to 9:00 pm every Monday night with a \$150 suggested donation to the Chester Ronning Centre. The course begins on Monday, 9 September, in C014 (Classroom Building) at the Augustana Campus.



## Ronning Centre Cafés for Fall 2013

### At Edmonton

The fall Philosophers' Cafés in Edmonton will focus on the general theme of "Is Everything Up for Sale?" based on *What Money Can't Buy* by Michael Sandel.

All sessions at Steeps, The Urban Tea House  
11116 - 82 (Whyte) Ave, Edmonton

#### Introduction by Sandel Himself (via video)

*Martin Tweedale, University of Alberta*  
21 September, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### Pay Your Dough and Jump the Queue

*Fred Judson, University of Alberta*  
5 October, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### You Can't Have All of Me, But I'll Sell You a Part

*Elizabeth Panasiuk, Grant MacEwan University*  
19 October, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### Is Nothing Sacred?

*David Pfrimmer, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary*  
2 November, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### Prostitution: Marketing Sexual Favours

*Bert Pitzel, Archdiocese of Regina*  
16 November, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### Paying People to Do the Right Thing

*Janet Wesselius, Augustana Campus*  
30 November, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

#### The Market: Frankenstein's Monster or the Goose That Lays the Golden Egg

*Don Carmichael, University of Alberta*  
30 November, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

### At Camrose

The fall Religion and Public Life Cafés in Camrose will focus on the theme "Vocation: The Gift of Service."

All sessions at Café Connections  
at The Open Door, 4825 - 51 Street, Camrose

#### My Vocation as Parent, Teacher, and Citizen

*Pat Mader Mundel*  
Friday, 20 September 8:30-10:00 a.m.

#### How Can I Help You?

*David Stolee*  
Friday, 4 October, 8:30-10:00 a.m.

#### The Accidental Judge

*Harry Gaede*  
Friday, 18 October, 8:30-10:00 a.m.

#### Cultivating the Fields of Meaning

*Will Pattison*  
Friday, 15 November, 8:30-10:00 a.m.

#### Discerning the Living Presence

*Linda Gervais*  
Friday, 6 December, 8:30-10:00 a.m.





# Calendar of Coming Events - Fall 2013

*For up-to-date information where details are not complete, please check the Ronning Centre website or call 780 679 1146*

## SEPTEMBER

### **A Sufi Speaks to the Modern World**

*A Ronning Centre Lecture by*

*Distinguished Visiting Fellow Bilal Kuspinar,*

*Director of the International Rumi Centre*

Thursday, 12 September, Camrose

### **I Am a Bird from Heaven's Garden: Music, Sound, and Architecture in the Muslim World**

*A Symposium Co-Sponsored by the Ronning Centre  
and Other Partners*

Friday, 13 September–Sunday 15 September

Program details and registration information,  
as well as a full list of sponsors is available at:

<http://heavens-garden.org>

University of Alberta, Edmonton

### **My Vocation as Parent, Teacher, and Citizen**

*A Religion and Public Life Café animated by*

*Pat Mader Mundel*

Friday, 20 September, 8:30–10:00 am

Café Connections at The Open Door

4825 - 51 Street, Camrose

### **Introduction by Sandel Himself**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Martin Tweedale,*

*Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, Univ. of Alberta*

Saturday, 21 September, 1:00–3:30 pm

Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

## OCTOBER

### **Screening of "Hellbound"**

*A Ronning Centre Consultation, Panel discussion  
with Eugene Boe, David Goa, and Randal Rauser*

Thursday, 3 October, 7:00–9:30 pm

\$5 admission charge

Faith & Life Chapel, Augustana Campus

### **How Can I Help You?**

*A Religion and Public Life Café animated by*

*David Stolee*

Friday, 4 October, 8:30–10:00 am

Café Connections at The Open Door

4825 - 51 Street, Camrose

### **Pay Your Dough and Jump the Queue**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Fred Judson,*

*University of Alberta*

Saturday, 5 October, 1:00–3:30 pm

Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

### **Two Mendicant Anti-Professionals in the Age of the Simulacra of the Professions and the System**

*A Ronning Centre Lecture with*

*Distinguished Visiting Fellow Dan Bogert O'Brien,*

*United Church Minister*

Wednesday, 9 October 2:00–3:30 pm

Library, St Stephens College, Edmonton

### **Ethics, Ethos, and Mythos: Merton, Potlatches, and Technology**

*A Ronning Centre Lecture with*

*Distinguished Visiting Fellow Dan Bogert O'Brien,*

*United Church Minister*

Thursday, 10 October, 7:00 pm

Epp Conference Room (2-004)

Augustana Campus, Camrose

### **The Accidental Judge**

*A Religion and Public Life Café animated by*

*Harry Gaede*

Friday, 18 October, 8:30–10:00 am

Café Connections at The Open Door

4825 - 51 Street, Camrose

### **You Can't Have All of Me, But I'll Sell You a Part**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Elizabeth*

*Panasiuk, Grant MacEwan University*

Saturday, 19 October, 1:00–3:30 pm

Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

### **Dispatches from the Front: Church Contributions to the Public Purpose**

*The Augustana Distinguished Lecture with David*

*Pfimmer, Principal-Dean and Professor of Applied*

*Christian Ethics, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary*

Wednesday, 30 October, 2:15 pm

Epp Conference Room, 2-004

Augustana Campus, Camrose

## Calendar of Coming Events - Fall 2013

*For up-to-date information where details are not complete, please check the Ronning Centre website or call 780 679 1146*

### Canada: A Tale of Two, or Three, or Four National Stories

*The Augustana Distinguished Lecture with David Pfrimmer,  
Principal-Dean and Professor of Applied Christian Ethics,  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary*  
Wednesday, 30 October, 7:00 pm  
Messiah Lutheran Church  
4810 – 50 Street, Camrose

### Toward a New Public Theology for Canada

*The Augustana Distinguished Lecture with David Pfrimmer,  
Principal-Dean and Professor of Applied Christian Ethics,  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary*  
Thursday, 31 October, 9:30 am–3:30 pm  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
10014 – 81 Ave, Edmonton  
*A light lunch will be served. The event is free but please RSVP to  
rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca by 28 October.*

### Reflections from Peru on Our Relationship with the Land

*A Ronning Centre Seminar with Carmelle Mohr,  
Canadian Lutheran World Relief*  
Thursday, 31 October, 7:00 pm  
Epp Conference Room (2-004)  
Augustana Campus, Camrose

### Dispatches from the Front: Church Contributions to the Public Purpose

*The Augustana Distinguished Lecture with David Pfrimmer,  
Principal-Dean and Professor of Applied Christian Ethics,  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary*  
Friday, 1 November, 1 pm  
N 109, King's University College  
9125 – 50 Street, Edmonton

### NOVEMBER

### Spirit of the Land: Building a Community Land Ethic

*A Ronning Centre Conference co-sponsored by the  
Aboriginal Student Office, Augustana Campus*  
Friday, 1 November, Registration opens 6:30 pm,  
Conference begins 7 pm  
Saturday 2 November, Registration opens 8:15am,  
Conference begins 9 am  
See <[spiritoftheland.ca](http://spiritoftheland.ca)> for complete  
schedule and details.  
Faith & Life Chapel, Augustana Campus, Camrose

### Is Nothing Sacred?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by David Pfrimmer*  
Saturday, 2 November, 1:00–3:30 pm  
Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

### Cultivating the Fields of Meaning

*A Religion and Public Life Café animated by  
Will Pattison*  
Friday, 15 November, 8:30–10:00 am  
Café Connections at The Open Door  
4825 – 51 Street, Camrose

### Prostitution: Marketing Sexual Favours

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Bert Pitzel*  
Saturday, 16 November, 1:00–3:30 pm  
Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

### Catholic Social Teachings on the Economy

*A Ronning Centre Consultation with Bert Pitzel*  
Monday, 18 November, 7:00 pm  
C014, Classroom Building  
Augustana Campus, Camrose

### Paying People to Do the Right Thing

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Janet Wesselius*  
Saturday, 30 November, 1:00–3:30 pm  
Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

### DECEMBER

### Discerning the Living Presence

*A Religion and Public Life Café animated by  
Linda Gervais*  
Friday, 6 December, 8:30–10:00 am  
Café Connections at The Open Door  
4825 – 51 Street, Camrose

### The Market: Frankenstein's Monster or the Goose That Lays the Golden Egg?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Don Carmichael*  
Saturday, 7 December, 1:00–3:30 pm  
Steeps, 11116 – 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Edmonton

## BUILDING TOWARD THE FUTURE

**The Ronning Centre Distinguished Visiting Fellows Endowment** provides the Centre with a nimble way of bringing creative thinking on current issues and themes into its work. The fellowships will attract scholars as well as public intellectuals to contribute thoughtfully and constructively to the discussion of the complex themes. James and Sonja Hendrickson in a challenge to our community, continue their pledge to match gifts to this endowment.

*"It is our hope that others will value the work of the Centre and join us in this effort so the endowment can grow to its full potential"* — James & Sonja Hendrickson

**The Ronning Centre Student Internships** provide opportunities for Augustana students to work directly with Centre staff on research projects and program development, expanding their knowledge and understanding while developing the sensitive skill set needed by the next generation of scholars and public intellectuals to engage in the many demanding issues of religion and public life in restorative ways.

**The Ronning Centre Annual Fund and Friends publications** enhance the ongoing work of the Centre making it possible for many to learn and contribute to the understanding of religious perspectives on public life and public understanding of religious perspectives.

To find out how you can be a part of this visionary endowment and for information on matching funding please contact:

Bonita Anderson  
Director of Development  
University of Alberta  
Augustana Campus  
1-800-590-9992 ext. 1183  
or 780-679-1183  
bonita.anderson@ualberta.ca



*Photo of Chester Ronning with a young Queen Elizabeth, courtesy of the Noel and Wendy Cassidy Collection.*

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*We have endeavoured to make this list as accurate as possible.*

*Please accept our apologies if your name has been omitted or misspelled and please let us know so we may correct our records.*

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## THE CHESTER RONNING CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

University of Alberta, Augustana Campus | 4901 46 Ave Camrose AB T4V 2R3 | 780.679.1558

[www.augustana.ualberta.ca/ronning](http://www.augustana.ualberta.ca/ronning)

**OUR PURPOSE** is to cultivate a deep understanding of issues and themes at the intersection of religion, faith and public life and to do so in the public sphere and in religious spheres.

**OUR MISSION** is to nurture a hospitable context that brings forward the finest thinking of women and men of faith and the depth and texture of their traditions in conversation with public intellectuals and various secular ideologies on the nature and shape of public life in our age of pluralism.

**OUR GOALS** are to focus the work of scholars on issues and themes where religion, faith and public life intersect and to nurture the public conversation as well as religious understanding of these issues and themes through:

- interdisciplinary research and publications shaping a new community of scholars and public intellectuals;
- thoughtful and ethical reflections which draw on religious sources associated with human rights, our care for the life of the world and our understanding of difference;
- expanding and communicating an understanding of the vital role of religious perspectives and their complex sources as they are brought to bear on public discourse in our communities;
- deepening the understanding within religious communities of the fragile and complex nature of the public sphere in a pluralistic society.



OVER ➔

With your gift to the *Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life*, you become an honoured member of the **Friends of the Chester Ronning Centre**, connecting you to information and updates about the centre.

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THE CHESTER RONNING CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE focuses its work on a set of issues and themes that demand our attention whether or not we are religious. We invite you to become a *Friend of the Centre* and join the table of hospitality that brings depth and texture to the discussion of vital questions on points where religion, faith and public life intersect.

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Gifts to the Ronning Centre have direct impact on the depth and breadth of the program we are able to offer each year. Gifts pledged over time help to stabilize our funding and plan into the future by providing us with the security we need to engage speakers, support research and publications and to expand our reach into the communities we seek to inform.

### Sample Payment Schedule Based on a 3 Year Pay Period and 20% Initial Gift

* A gift of:	20% Initial gift	Monthly (36 payments)	Annually (3 payments)
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\$8,000	\$1,600	\$178	\$2,133
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AUGUSTANA CAMPUS



Chester Ronning Centre  
for the Study of Religion and Public Life

## *Mevlana Celaladdin Rumi's Tomb and Pilgrimage Site*



*David Goa Visits Konya, Turkey*  
*See page 11*