

2009 Christian Legal Fellowship National Student Conference Report University of Manitoba – February 19-22, 2009

“I can say that a deeper change happened in my life during the conference: for the first time in my life, I truly believed that the law of this land belongs to the Lord. This is both a relief and a burden: a relief in the sense that my study of law is not separate from my love for the Lord, since the law belongs to the Lord; and a burden because it means that Christian lawyers like myself face the task of redeeming the law for God’s glory.” – Student, Osgoode Hall

“Overall, I am deeply inspired by what God has spoken to me throughout the conference. The speakers have encouraged me to witness as an individual member and to seek to lead others to Christ. They have also encouraged me to demonstrate responsible Christian love in the home, office, community and church. I will continue to explore, study, and assert to the legal community and society at large the relevance of the Christian faith to every issue of private life and public concern.” – Student, University of Calgary

This year the CLF National Student Conference was hosted by Christian Legal Fellowship, Robson Hall at the University of Manitoba. It was a group effort, with significant contributions by many law students, local lawyers, and, of course, the amazing people at CLF National. Our theme was *Critical Moves: Defending Your Faith*.

First of all, thank you so much to everyone who supported the Conference through prayer, donations, and time commitments. And of course thank you to everyone who attended. A special thanks to our speakers who traveled long distances to grace us with their presence, wisdom, and passion for Christ’s truth.

We kicked off the Conference at Robson Hall on Thursday evening as students and speakers began to arrive from across the country. It was a time of fellowship and getting to know one another over food, games, and worship.

Friday morning everyone showed up excited and eager to learn from our inspirational speakers. After a warm welcome from Ruth Ross and Robson Hall Dean Chris Axworthy, Cal Beresh taught us about the two key elements required to defend our faith: unity and boldness. Following Cal’s devotional, Professor William Wagner walked us through the process of hearing and responding to God’s ringtone. In the afternoon, students had a choice of participating in one of two workshops: (1) Against the Tide: Advocating for the Kingdom in a Post-Christian Society and (2) Establishing Yourself as a Christian in Your Workplace. Once we reconvened from the workshops, Stephanie Luck discussed practical ways to effect change and impact the world for Christ and Professor Michael P. Schutt spoke on the topic: “Critical Moves at a Critical Time in a Critical Place: The Law Student’s Calling”. Throughout the day, students participated in mentorship sessions and worship.

Friday we were also joined by five pre-law students. They had the opportunity to attend the main sessions, as well as two sessions held specifically for them. As a result of this experience, we realized the importance of informing high school and university students interested in law about the need for Christians in the legal profession.

Friday evening was a blast! Most of us went glow bowling at Academy Lanes, an activity that provided us with a great opportunity to mingle further and get to know each other even better. It was also a new experience for some who tried 5-pin bowling for the first time ever!

Saturday was equally inspirational. Rev. Reid Cooke blessed us with a morning devotional, centred around Jonah 2:8 which says “*those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.*” Ben Turner, a medical student from Ontario, then challenged us with his brave writing project on freedom of conscience for medical professionals. Directly following Ben, the lovely Ruth Ross presented a message titled “Embracing Your Calling to Defend Truth.” That afternoon the men and women went their separate ways to hear from panels on Work-Life Balance; the women’s panel consisting of Charlene Thomas, Melanie Bueckert and Ruth Ross and the men’s panel consisting of Brian Clarke, Cal Beresh, Phil Watts, and Scott Kennedy. After one more mentorship session, the students took off for an afternoon at the Festival du Voyageur.

Saturday evening was our Celebration Banquet Dinner, where we all dressed up and enjoyed a delicious feast at the University Centre. After dinner Professor Arthur Braid paid tribute to the late Professor Cliff Edwards of the University of Manitoba. Next we were graced with the presence of Jeffery Ventrella who gave us an inspirational and encouraging message about defending our faith. Of particular encouragement was this quote: “Those who want to win the world for Christ have to have the courage to come into conflict with it.” When the formal part of the evening was over, the remainder was a great time of fellowship and worship – led by an amazingly talented group of musicians from Winnipeg.

Last but not least, was the Sunday morning worship service at The Meeting Place Church in downtown Winnipeg. After attending the service, those who were still with us went downstairs for pizza and fellowship. While there, we were greeted by The Meeting Place Church lead Pastor John Neufeld and heard from students about what the Conference meant to them and how it affected their hearts.

We have to say that as we heard from various students over the weekend, particularly as they shared with us Saturday evening and Sunday morning, we were encouraged and inspired by their bravery and strength as they prepared to go back to their schools to defend the truth and further the Kingdom of God. Students left excited about what the Lord has in store, and although we are spread out across the country, we know we can remain unified and bold.

Keri Anderson
Lauren Fourmeaux Clements
University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law
Co-Directors, 2009 CLF National Student Conference