

Atlantic School of Theology

The past year at AST has been one of transitions and foundation building for the future.

With the departure of President Eric Beresford in June 2014 the Board opted to appoint a temporary President whilst conducting a search for a permanent replacement for President Beresford. Dr. Daniel O'Brien who served a one year term as President three years ago was again enlisted to serve this role. You may be aware from previous announcements Dr. O'Brien is an experienced university President having served sixteen years as President of St. Thomas University, Fredericton. Since retiring from that post he has maintained a very active consulting practice and has served both AST and NSCAD University in transitional Presidency roles. A very thorough search for a new permanent President was successfully concluded with the selection and appointment of Reverend Neale Bennet effective July 1, 2015. Bennet, a graduate of AST is an Anglican priest with a background in strategic organizational leadership, organizational learning, and leadership development. He is currently Director of Organizational learning at Nova Scotia Community College and previously was Director of Organizational Development and Transformation at Capital Health. He co-leads the vision, strategy and support team on Building Healthy Leadership for the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI and is a conference leader at the annual diocesan gathering for those discerning a call to ordained ministry. An Honorary Assistant at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Halifax, the Rev. Bennet was ordained in 2004 after a successful career in the marketing and communication business.

Another major initiative concluded this year was finalizing and approving a comprehensive five year strategic Plan which contains our hope, aspirations and measurable action plans.

A further major undertaking this year has been the teasing out of alternate options for "right sizing" our campus and its buildings. We have received interesting proposals from bona fide groups which we are deeply involved in vetting at the current time. Ultimate go-forward decisions will be balanced against demonstrable improvements to our financial sustainability; quality and adequacy of alternate space on our campus; compatibility of alternate users with our mission and purpose; confidence that the risks associated with alternate developments are tolerable.

We have been actively engaged in early stages of new program development in inter-faith programs and in Pastoral counselling with a particular focus on the spiritual care of those facing imminent end of life.

A final initiative this year has been in the area of student recruitment. Under the leadership of Dean Jody Clarke a new robust recruitment plan has been developed, and approved, and is in the process of implementation.

As my time at AST is drawing to a close I should like to thank all those in our community who have supported me as an "outsider" in this all important transitional year.

Dr. Daniel O'Brien, C.M., O.N.B.
President Atlantic School of Theology