

a real LIFE SAVER

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WHEN ART KUNG ARRIVED AT SAIT in the late 1980s, he was a young man looking for adventure. He graduated from the Emergency Medical Technician program with the skills to save people's lives.

Now, 27 years later, Kung has returned to SAIT. As one of five chaplains working out of SAIT's Interfaith Centre, he's much more concerned with mending people's souls.

Kung remembers what first drew him to SAIT's EMT program. "I was studying physical education at Mount Royal, thinking I might become a teacher, when a friend told me about the paramedic program. I liked the idea a lot. I didn't want to be stuck in an office doing mundane things like crunching numbers. The outdoors always interested me. People interested me. It seemed like an exciting job, an adrenaline junkie job; always changing. It was exactly what I was looking for."

Being a paramedic lived up to Kung's expectations, but it wasn't long before it started taking its toll.

"It started on my very first solo call – my first time without a preceptor [supervisor]. We were called to a lake about a half hour out of Lac La Biche," Kung recalls. "Someone had already been doing CPR on the patient for half an hour when we took over. I continued CPR all the way to the hospital, which took another half hour. As a person of faith, I kept praying for this person, for his life and his soul. As soon as we got to the hospital, the doctor told me to stop administering CPR. The patient was gone. I was devastated. I had put all my heart and soul and energy – everything – into saving him, but there was nothing we could do."

Alumnus Art Kung's spiritual journey has brought him back to SAIT, where he is becoming well-known across campus – and not just for his distinctive mustache. As one of five chaplains with the SAIT Interfaith Centre, Kung (EMT '90) helps SAIT students on their journey towards a career by asking thought-provoking questions like, "Are you finding your purpose?"



WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH ART KUNG IN THE DIGITAL VERSION OF LINK AT SAIT.CA/ALUMNI

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SAIT Interfaith Chaplain Art Kung (this page, at bottom) engages students in conversations that can range from hockey to "dad jokes" to faith. Shown clockwise starting this page (top), students James Nakamura, Herlina Siagan, Heidi Yip, Curtis Lo and Tammy Lazaroff. Lo says, "Art inspires me to ask how I can be more humble, more genuine, just like him."

Kung remembers returning to the firehall, taking a shower and crying. Then he talked to one of his mentors, who gave Kung some advice that he took to heart. "He said, 'You can't invest yourself so much in every call. If you do, you won't last. You'll be done in weeks.'"

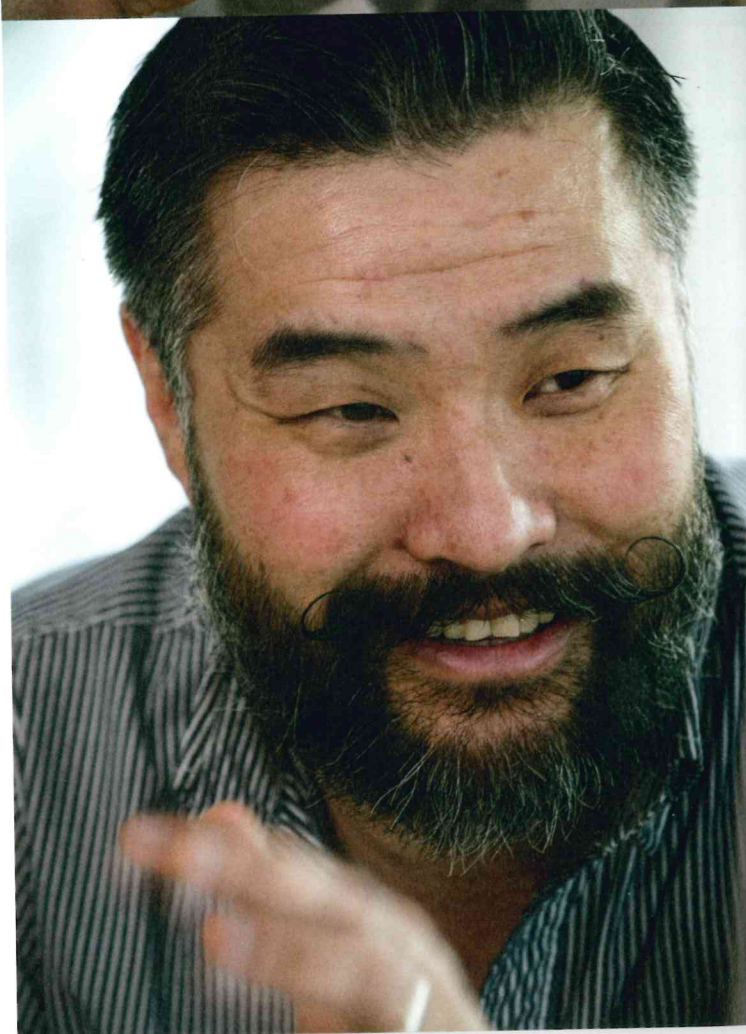
As time went on, Kung says, he removed his personal feelings from the job. Eventually he moved to the air ambulance service based in High Level, Alta., sometimes working on ground ambulance calls and often on the plane accompanying patients to Edmonton. Although he kept an emotional distance from his patients, many heart-wrenching events still linger in his mind, such as an accident where three people died when a vehicle slammed into a moose.

Kung says his work didn't suffer, but his soul did. "I lost who I was as a person. I removed myself so much that I was no longer being 'personal' with people. After six years I realized feelings for my fellow man were gone. That's when I decided to try to regain my passion for humanity."

He and his wife, Corina, quit their jobs and together studied with an organization called Youth With a Mission. They spent eight months in spiritual training and then travelled the world, mostly to developing countries and poverty-stricken urban areas of Canada. They dug ditches, mended roofs, fed the hungry and prayed with people who lived in poverty.

After eight years of fieldwork, Kung said it was time for another change, which led him back to his hometown of Calgary and to work as chaplain, first at Mount Royal University and eventually at his alma mater, SAIT.

"I was invited to visit SAIT and I was shocked at how great it was. I hadn't been to campus since I was a student and the transition was amazing – the beautiful buildings and the energy all around. I was floored. Then my boss suggested that since I was an alumnus, would I consider transferring from Mount Royal to SAIT, full time. After a few visits I decided, 'I'm in.'"





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- ART KUNG (EMT '90)

Kung is one of five chaplains, each representing a different faith community (see the sidebar to this story).

"In the Interfaith Centre, our job is to facilitate discussions among students of different faiths," Kung says. "What I do is travel around, walk the halls and have coffee with as many people as I can, no matter their faith or 'non-faith.' I try to connect with them. I ask them questions about their studies. 'Are you finding your purpose? Are you finding meaning in what you're doing?'"

"Sometimes students ask me questions they may not want to ask their priest or pastor. I try to give them a safe place to ask me anything. I don't presume to have the answers, but we discuss issues openly."

Outside of work hours, Kung also coaches hockey, and he's able to draw from those skills for his job. "As a chaplain, I see myself being like a coach or mentor."

Curtis Lo has come to see Kung as his mentor. The 23-year-old is a fourth-year student in SAIT's Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting program and he's president of a small Christian student club. He says Kung is an "uncle" figure to him and his fellow students, a guy you can always talk to, and someone who sprinkles his wise counsel with "dad jokes."

"He meets people where they're at," says Lo. "He can talk to Christian, Muslim and Hindu students all the same. He tries to talk to people and really get to know them."

"Art is a loving, genuine and humble guy," says Lo. "He inspires me to ask how I can be more humble, more genuine, just like him."

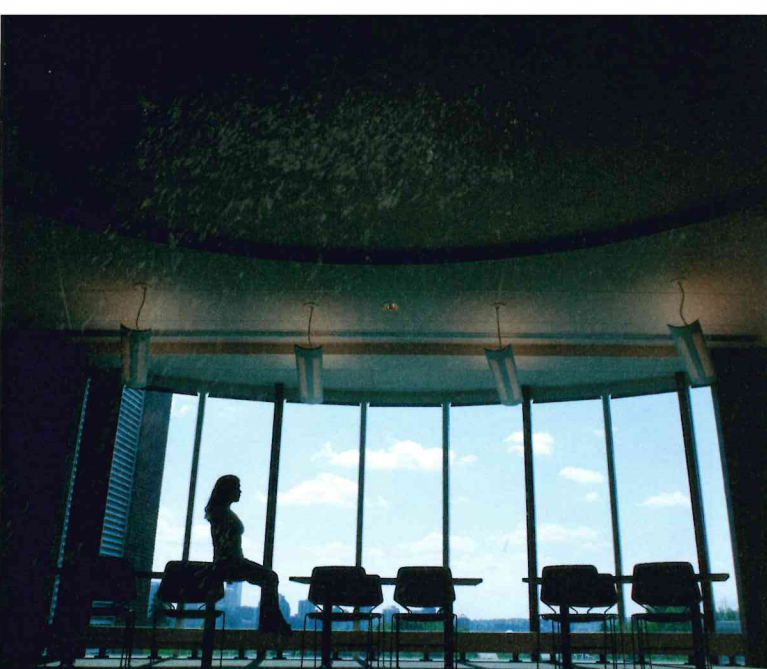
Kung remembers the strong bond he had with classmates as an EMT student and the career-long relationships he formed with them. He also recalls with great fondness his instructors and the skills he learned from them. He says while SAIT students find inspiration about their careers in class, his goal is to talk about spiritual issues and to help students along their journey towards a career. He nudges them towards working for the greater good, to help create a better community.

"If all we do is study to make money we simply become selfish people," Kung says. "Being less selfish creates a world of beauty."

And, when asked finally what inspires him, it's no surprise Kung quotes Proverbs 3:3, a verse from the Bible that reads:

Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
Then you will win favour and a good name
in the sight of God and man.

GEORGE WEBBER PHOTO



YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH

SAIT's Interfaith Centre and the Chinook Lodge Resource Centre offer students religious and spiritual support on campus.

Chinook Lodge is a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. It organizes visits by tribal elders for personal consultations and meetings, and also organizes events such as an annual powwow that include a strong spiritual component.

SAIT's Interfaith Centre is an open place for students and staff to gather; it includes a comfortable lounge for reading, reflecting and engaging in conversation. As well, the Interfaith Meditation Room is open daily for scheduled prayer and religious services. The Centre is served by five chaplains:

- **Daniel Love, Chaplain Coordinator; Christian and Missionary Alliance**
As well as serving as the volunteer Chaplain Coordinator, Love works as an English as a Second Language teacher and has been with SAIT's English Language Foundations department for more than five years.
- **Reverend Tim Nethercott, United Church of Canada**
Before becoming ordained, Nethercott had careers in book publishing, teaching English and with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
- **Imam Fayaz Tilly, of the Sunni Muslim religion**
The Imam attended the Institute of Higher Islamic Learning in Buffalo, New York and is the founder and director of Tahfeez-ul-Quran, a Quranic memorization program in Calgary.
- **Father Sajo Jacob, Roman Catholic**
A priest for 16 years, Jacob was born in India and received his academic training in India and Canada. He has degrees in theology and philosophy.
- **Art Kung, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada**
As an alumnus of SAIT's Emergency Medical Technician program, Kung's intense career experiences stirred in him difficult questions of life and death, meaning and purpose. Read his story (left) and watch an interview with him in the digital version of LINK at sait.ca/alumni