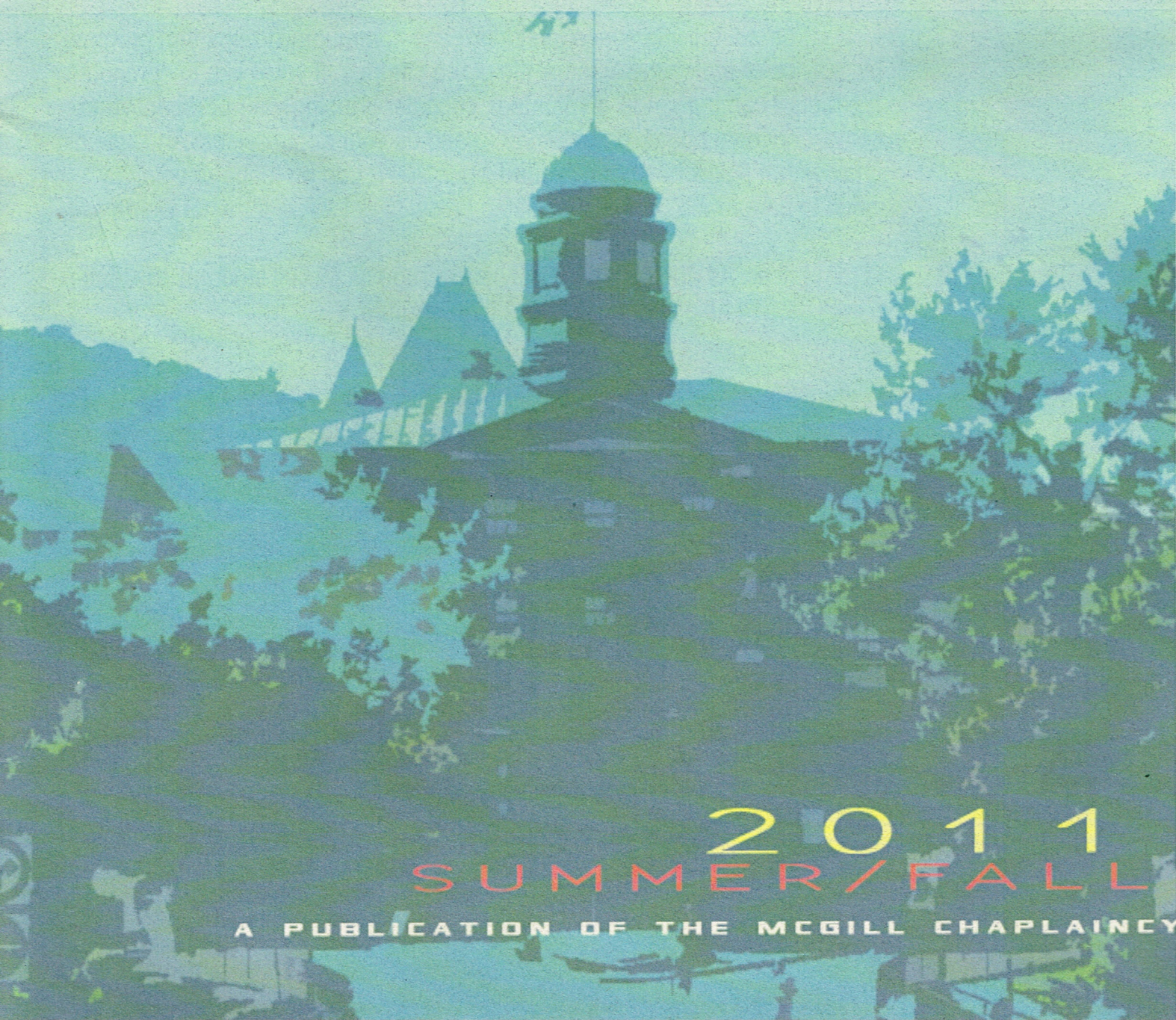


# Radix

Spirituality      Philosophy      Religion

## CHANGES ON THE HORIZON:

DEALING WITH  
CHANGES AND NEW  
SITUATIONS IN A  
MEANINGFUL WAY



2011  
SUMMER/FALL

A PUBLICATION OF THE MCGILL CHAPLAINCY



# WELCOME

Maybe you've read us before and maybe you haven't. Perhaps you're a new student at McGill or maybe you're in your graduating year. Either way, RADIX is here to serve and enlighten – or at least to add a bit of perspective to your busy student life.

"Radix" is Latin for "root," and the student-run Radix newsletter aims to be a voice of the many religious and cultural "roots" at McGill. Published about five times a year, Radix is available on stands around both campuses, and each issue explores a theme from different spiritual and philosophical perspectives.

We offer free advertising space to student and community groups that promote social justice or enrich the spiritual life of the campus. If you'd like to contribute to the McGill community as a volunteer, consider bringing your perspective to the Radix editorial board, or better yet - send us your submissions! And little did you know that Radix has been around since 2001! Log on to the chaplaincy website to peruse the back issues listed below to get a feel for what we do.

And remember: As always we actively encourage all McGill students to volunteer with us and help in brainstorming for the future.

## Follow us on Facebook



Search Facebook page

"Radix: A Publication of the  
McGill Chaplaincy"

**Submit work via message**  
**Follow events and contests**  
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## Contact the Chaplaincy

Suite 4400  
Brown Student Services Building  
(West Wing)  
3600 McTavish Street  
Montreal, QC  
H3A 1Y2

**514-398-4104**

[chaplaincy@mcgill.ca](mailto:chaplaincy@mcgill.ca)



## Editor's Message

Erin Schwabe-Fry

Welcome to the new school year at McGill from Radix, McGill Chaplaincy's interfaith magazine. At Radix, we're dedicated to publishing McGill students' submissions representing diverse philosophical and religious perspectives. We believe that all people can co-exist in peace, much like the goals of a new United Nations initiative, World Interfaith Harmony Week, described in our first article.

As we head into the new year at McGill, this Radix issue focuses on changes on the horizon, and dealing with new situations in meaningful way. Michael Clarke's contemplative piece focuses on the role of doubt in change, and how our innate curiosity can give us the confidence to explore the unknown. Next, Serena Yung's personal conversion story showcases the thoughtful process of questioning and self-understanding that can underlie whatever faith or perspective we hold.

This issue concludes with a guide to McGill Chaplaincy and an introduction to the Chaplains. As you navigate the new school year, McGill Chaplaincy provides support and volunteer opportunities for students of all philosophical, religious and non-religious backgrounds.

## RADIX ONLINE

Check it out on our uber-cool blog:

[mcgillradix.blogspot.com](http://mcgillradix.blogspot.com)

### Editors

Zayaan Schuck

Erin Schwabe-Fry

### This Issue's Contributors

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Michael Clarke

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~

**Want to give feedback?  
Share your ideas?  
Join our mailing list?**

Email us:

[radix.chaplaincy@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix.chaplaincy@mail.mcgill.ca)

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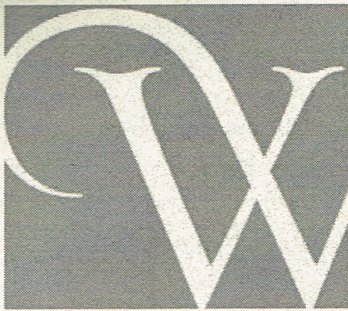
**GET TO KNOW YOUR CHAPLAINS**



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Cover Design by: Zayaan Schuck





World Interfaith  
Harmony Week

# World Interfaith Harmony Week: Civilizations Shall Clash No More

By Erin Schwabe-Fry

With the ongoing political upheaval in the Middle East, uncertainty looms large over diplomatic relations within the Middle East and beyond. Samuel Huntington's infamous "Clash of Civilizations Theory" controversially asserts that such diplomatic tensions with Muslim countries are the result of an inherent and immutable rift between Islamic civilizations and the West. However, in light of democratic protests in the Middle East, New York Times columnist David Brooks recently argued that the Clash of Civilizations theory is flawed and ignores the common ground between the Middle East and the rest of the world. Brooks writes that "underneath cultural differences, there are universal aspirations for dignity, for political systems that listen to, respond to and respect the will of the people."

The notion of a polarized and oppositional relationship between the Muslim world and the West nevertheless persists in some segments of the public arena. Most recently, as the incendiary vitriol of a Qur'an-burning American Christian minister received international attention, extremists in Northern Afghanistan responded with tragic violence, killing seven United Nations workers.

The United Nations, however, remains a stalwart supporter of peaceful interfaith and diplomatic relations. In February of 2011, the United Nations celebrated for the first time its newest commemoration event, World Interfaith Harmony Week. Proposed by HM King Abdullah II of Jordan and unanimously approved by the U.N in October of 2010, World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrates, according to its website, "the message of harmony and tolerance among the followers of all the world's religions, faiths and beliefs. It seeks to do this by promoting their common basis of 'Love of God and Love of the Neighbour, or Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour'."



“A unique, historical and unprecedented potential to promote the healing of interfaith tensions in the world.”

Ban Ki-moon,  
UN Secretary-General



Photo: WorldInterfaithHarmonyWeek.com

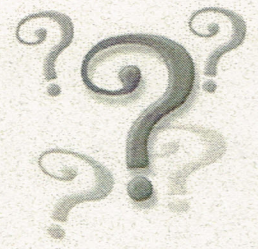
Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, the author of the World Interfaith Harmony Week resolution, stated that the three major goals are as follows: “to co-ordinate and unite the efforts of all the interfaith groups doing positive work with one focused theme at one specific time annually; to harness and utilise the collective might of the world’s second-largest infrastructure (that of places of worship — the largest being that of education) specifically for peace and harmony in the world; and to permanently and regularly encourage the silent majority of preachers to declare themselves for peace and harmony and providing a ready-made vehicle for them to do so.” Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad believes that “if preachers and teachers commit themselves on the record once a year to peace and harmony, they will be less likely to relapse into parochial fear and mistrust,” and can instead “resist the winds of popular demagoguery when the next inter-religious crisis or provocation occurs.”

World Interfaith Harmony Week is related to the United Nation’s more grand-scale Alliance of Civilizations Initiative. The Alliance of Civilizations was created in 2004 as per the suggestion of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of Spain after terrorist bombings in Madrid killed 191 people. Former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan emphasized that such an initiative would “prove that the polarization between cultures is actually artificial and contrived.” The Alliance of Civilizations Initiative provides financial and logistical support for projects from youth employment to reforming media outlets and education curricula to present a less polarized version of cultures and religions. As a complement to the Alliance of Civilizations project, World Interfaith Harmony Week, in its inaugural year, was a largely symbolic event – from February 1-7, commemorative breakfasts and other interfaith events were coordinated around the world. In future years, the United Nations hopes that World Interfaith Harmony Week will generate positive publicity for interfaith relations, celebrating the common ground of love and compassion for one’s neighbour across religions and civilizations.

*Erin is a U2 student in Music.*



# doubt and change



by MICHAEL CLARKE

The most difficult thing about change is doubt. What is doubt? Doubt is that persistent nagging thought in your head which makes you believe that everything that you have done thus far in your life was right and that to change up on this pattern would mean certain disaster. Doubt is believing that if it is difficult now, it will continue to be difficult later. Doubt is when you have trouble believing in your own ability to adapt and to survive novel experiences. Doubt is natural. It happens to me and to you and to everyone that I have ever met or known.

But, why is doubt so intrinsic to change? The answer to that question appears to lie in the notion that change means something different. And if you are a sane person, you would recognize that different scenarios, situations, environments, or tasks imply learning new things. This is difficult for some and easier for others. Learning necessarily requires an attitude of humility. You cannot learn from a situation unless you put your ego in check and try to absorb as much as possible from the situation. Children are really good at this because they retrieve all the information from their parents on a daily basis. They never doubt what their parents teach them because they could never imagine themselves to be wiser or smarter than their parents.

As you grow older and you begin to understand the world a little better and develop stronger and stronger opinions, you can begin to assert independence of thought and interpretation. This is a good thing, to be sure but it comes with the pit-fall of developing too large of an ego. How do you ask for help from someone when you have been right for so long? How do you return to humility when you have been superior in opinion, knowledge, or creativity for so long? I struggle with this question myself and the only way that I feel comfortable adapting to change or humility is by re-asserting the perspective of a child.



“If you believe that it is alright to not understand something, then you will be most adept at developing your understanding and your ability.”

See, a child has confidence that the day will last forever but also that another day will follow. A child has confidence that whatever challenges (s)he faces, something new and interesting will steal his/her attention away. Essentially, what a child has that adults lose is curiosity. Curiosity has the beautiful capacity to turn work into interest, to mitigate effort into development and most importantly, to turn difficulties into opportunities for growth. Children crave growth and change and that is because they understand that there is so much to learn and understand about this world. Once you lose that, how will you ever face a challenge or a new situation with confidence?

Although it may seem to be an oxymoron, I do hold faith in this maxim: To have confidence in what you do not understand is to transform doubt into potential. Although a new situation may be daunting, if we accept that we do not understand or know the answer and stick with it nonetheless, the knowledge will come with familiarity. If you believe that it is alright to not understand something, then you will be most adept at developing your understanding and your ability. Humility will always trump doubt, every time but it requires the fuel of curiosity.



# My Conversion Story

## By Serena Yung

I never knew I was no more than a hopeful agnostic until now. I said I believed in God, prayed to God, and liked God. But at the same time, I always reassured myself that even if he didn't exist, I would still get the psychological comfort and encouragement in my life. Little did I know that that was absolutely nothing compared to what true belief—true faith, and real awareness of divine existence is.

There were at least three forces that drove me to my ultimate conversion. For one, I was noticing more and more ridiculous coincidences and funny, wonderful miracles happening in my life; and they seemed to be happening with increasing frequency. Then there was my English literature course Engl 348 Great Writings of Europe 2. St Augustine's *Confessions* was so heartrending in the sheer sincerity and depth of his love for God; I had never experienced anything like it. The paradise in Dante's *Divine Comedy* was also so beautiful, I enjoyed those endless scenes of love, joy, and perpetual light; heaven, or paradise, was just so breathtakingly stunning that it helped me discover more about God's world. But one of the crowning forces that drew me to Christianity was when a dear friend cleared my many misunderstandings about the religion.

I thought being Christian meant I had to submit myself to a whole institution of rules—the end of my freedom, and that would be violating one of my personal principles. But actually, Christianity is not about following rules, it's just about developing a meaningful relationship with God. Also, it is very much about individuality, freedom, and personal creativity, to my delight. I really like the central foundation of love and compassion too; it's especially to be cherished in the societies that value competition over kindness and sheer goodwill towards your fellow human beings. As well as that, I love how much Christianity embraces equality, and that every single individual is equally good, equally great, creative, and therefore to be equally respected. I still can't believe how much Christianity chimes with all my central values and ideals. I have finally found the place I was looking for all my life! Simply living in this new universe—this new wonderland—gives me so much support in realizing all my wildest, most passionate dreams. This fact still touches me.

Thinking back to the way I came from, I realize now that our society is such a biased one. It favors too much the doctrines of materialism and skepticism. Speaking of skepticism, this is really a joke on itself. Since we so eagerly promote the freeing of our minds, to consider all the possibilities in critical thinking, then why on earth can't magic exist? Can't spirits exist? Why do we have to stick so stubbornly to empiricism, where we can only accept things that we can perceive with our physical senses or scientific instruments? It's pretty ridiculous to assume that all real and "valid" things can be completely detected as physical substances, don't you think? Just by analogy, we know that our eyes can't perceive the whole spectrum of light wavelengths, and our microscopes still can't see the quantum particles in our world. It would be therefore so preposterous, just utter naivety, to believe that nothing exists outside what we and our instruments can one day perceive. How do you know that there aren't some things that will always be beyond our scope, no matter how hard we try? This just shows how one can be so absurdly trapped by a social belief system and I'm so glad I've finally broken free of its drugging influence. Now I know that this, is what thinking out of the box really means.



More on the biased trends of our society, I think postmodernism and relativism have gone too far. It's good to keep a healthy dose of skepticism to protect yourself from overzealous false convictions, but being suspicious of everything and believing that everything is relative, subjective, and thus never stable is just too much. It becomes a danger. How is one supposed to preserve one's sanity, center, and purpose in life if nothing can be reliable and solid anymore? That would surely be so painful and mind-wrenching to live through. I would much prefer to keep at least one Absolute in my life, one completely objective Truth—and I choose God.

About listening to God, from what I've understood so far, it's related to following your heart, or obeying your intuition. I adore reasoning and rationality too, but why does society (again) scorn the intuition so much as if it's just some random whimsical thing? Why can't intuition and feeling be just as valid as a way of knowing as reason? This really confounds me. Some of us have abandoned and neglected it for so long, it's such a shame. We could have taken it more seriously and trained our powers of intuition, trained ourselves to be more sensitive to God and thus acquire much more knowledge and understanding of the spiritual and divine.

Despite all my above protests against materialism and empiricism, I'm not against science at all. I love science, and it's sad that some have to see science as the enemy of religion. It's not. In fact, science, especially quantum mechanics, has recently reaped some new interpretations of our reality to support the existence of God. The author of *The Science behind the Secret: Decoding the Law of Attraction* shows how quantum waves can explain this curious phenomenon: of how people attract opportunities and circumstances related to their deepest intentions just by thinking about them so much. Each thought is a quantum wave. When we emit each wave, this coheres with similar waves but de-coheres from dissimilar ones. So our thoughts can select and attract for us the relevant opportunities pertaining to our goals. I suspect God might be emitting his influence on our lives and helping us through these quantum waves, or at least partly. This could very well be the physical correlate of God's power to answer prayers! How exciting, though a bit frightening this possible prospect is.

Apart from explaining the law of attraction, quantum physics has offered us perhaps an even more astounding possibility of the Divine. A physicist suggests that by looking at the quantum particles that we and our world are made of, everything looks astonishingly like computer pixels. Our universe and we could possibly be a virtual reality of some sort, or at least a created reality. Also, there's the observer effect: when you look at a specific part of something, the quantum particles of that part move, in reaction to your observing. This is also curiously similar to computers, where our view of something becomes clearer as soon as you focus on that spot, as soon as we magnify that area—the pixels there seem to "move." Thus, perhaps we have finally found some real evidence for God. When will the story characters ever realize the existence of their writer? When will the video game characters ever discover their creator and player? Of course, what God creates is definitely far more than mere stories or video games, but the implications for us here are still so vast and overwhelming to imagine.



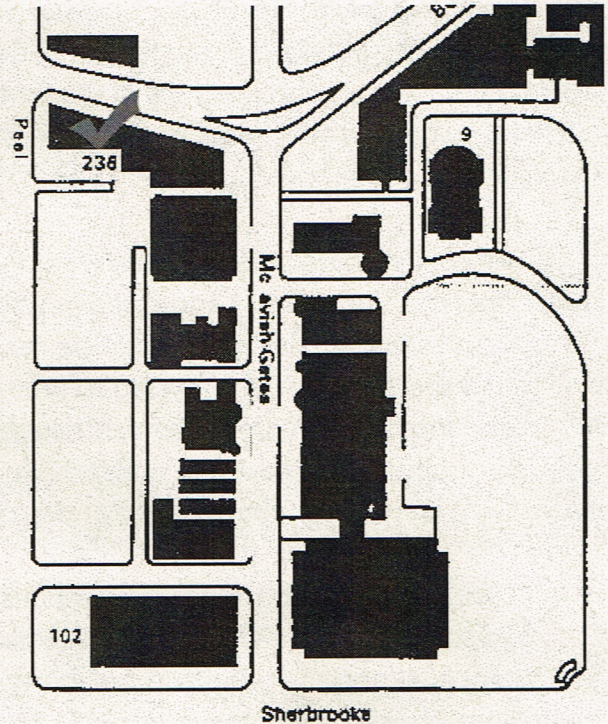
# Guide to the Chaplaincy

## Where are we?

McGill Chaplaincy is located on the 4TH FLOOR of the BROWN STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING at the top of McTavish Street right before the stairs leading up to Dr. Penfield.

Alternatively, There is an entrance to the BROWN building on Dr. Penfield, about 10 metres before PEEL.

REMEMBER: Chaplaincy is in the WEST WING of the Brown building—just upstairs from McGill health services and just downstairs from McGill mental health. If you are taking the elevator, the entrance to the chaplaincy is just in front of the 4TH floor elevator door.



## What do we do?

A consistent preconception many people have is that the chaplaincy is solely a Christian resource – nothing could be further from the truth! The chaplaincy is in fact home to McGill's several chaplains, each from a varying denomination.

In addition to offering one-on-one time that is a great alternative/supplement to McGill's counseling and mental health services, the chaplaincy also coordinates several multifaith events each year as well as coordinating McGill's student parent network and a free winter coat bank ("Winter Coat Project") for international students.

Home to a meditation room, a common area perfect for relaxing and enjoying complementary refreshments and a team of friendly chaplains and staff, the chaplaincy is open weekly during the day and no appointment is needed – chaplains will meet with a member of any or no religious denomination.

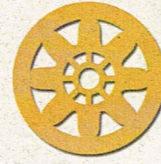
## McGill Student Parents' Network

The McGill Student Parents Network is an international, multi-generational community of parents, children, and student volunteers. We offer a number of support services for students and their families, including in-house babysitting, "Study Saturdays," and regular social events for fun and fellowship. The MSPN is coordinated by McGill Chaplaincy, but is not a faith-based initiative.

If you're interested in joining the student parent network, or would like to get involved as a student volunteer, call (514)398-4104, or email [mcgillspn@gmail.com](mailto:mcgillspn@gmail.com).



# Meet the Chaplains



## **Salam Elmenyawawi (Muslim)**

Salam Elenyawawi is President of Muslim Council of Montreal and leads the Friday afternoon Jumu'ah prayer at McGill.

## **Jill Foster (Presbyterian)**

Before returning to Montreal, Jill enjoyed travelling and working in various places from Toronto to South Africa. She has studied history, philosophy and theology. At the Chaplaincy she offers a morning prayer breakfast, a dinner and small group Bible study. And welcomes anyone who has something on their mind to come by for coffee and talk.

## **Nathan Gibbard (Catholic)**

Nathan Gibbard is the director of the Newman Centre. Originally from Calgary, he has been in Montreal for a number of years working towards a doctorate in Religious Studies at McGill University. His academic interests include the study of the philosophy and practice of dialogue, inter-religious encounter, documents from the Holy See, and religion and popular culture.

## **Father Ihor Kutash (Christian Orthodox)**

Fr. Ihor Kutash was ordained to the priesthood of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada in Montreal in 1969 and supplemented his education at McGill University with a Master's and then a Doctor's degree in Religious Studies. He has also been a university chaplain at McGill for many years. Fr. Ihor has taught courses on Eastern Christianity at four universities and is active in ecumenical dialogues, including the Christian Jewish Dialogue of Montreal.

## **Zengetsu Myokyo Judith McLean (Zen Buddhist)**

Zengetsu Myokyo Judith McLean was ordained as a Zen Osho (Priest) in 1999, receiving the religious name Zengetsu. In Montreal, Myokyo is involved with the larger Buddhist community and in inter-religious dialogue through the Interfaith Council of Montreal. She serves as an Associate Buddhist Chaplain at Concordia University as well as at McGill. Her work on campus is to provide instruction in Zen meditation and to lead weekly meditation sessions. Myokyo can be reached by email.

## **Manjit Singh (Sikh)**

Manjit Singh has been working at McGill as a volunteer chaplain for Sikh students since 1999. He also teaches an introductory course on Sikhism (RELI 254) to undergraduates at the Faculty of Religious Studies since January 2002. Manjit has a M.A. in History with specialization in Medieval India, the period during which Sikhism started.

## **Dr. Victoria Talwar (Baha'i)**

Dr. Victoria Talwar is a member of the Montreal Baha'i community and an Associate Professor in the Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University. She is happy to serve as a representative of the McGill Baha'i community at McGill's Chaplaincy Service and happy to meet with students whatever their religious background.

## **Rabbi Shmuly Weiss (Jewish)**

Rabbi Weiss: "We, at Chabad, are dedicated to the holistic well-being of each and every student and strive to be the nexus of their social, cultural and religious needs. We offer students emotional security, spiritual growth, and personal guidance in a warm and nurturing environment. Furthermore, we empower students with the tools to engage in the higher education of Judaism. Students are able to explore and discover their heritage in an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation infused with Jewish values and traditions."

## **Neil Whitehouse (Anglican, United)**

Neil Whitehouse was ordained by the British Methodist Church in 1992 and has worked in international and national youth work, local London churches and founded a well-being centre in the centre of Soho London with an inclusive and multi-faith approach. Since moving to Montreal he has transferred into the United Church of Canada working for Rosedale-Queen Mary United Church in NDG. As Protestant Ecumenical Chaplain, he is happy to chat with any student regardless of religious or non-religious identities.



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 newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca  
 www.newmancentre.org

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## The Muslim Students Association of McGill

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 (Shatner building, room 430)

**3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14**  
 www.msamcgill.com

## The Montreal Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

welcomes all for silent worship at 11 am every Sun-  
 day at the Greene Centre in Westmount (1090  
 Greene).

Directions are on our website.  
<http://montreal.quaker.ca>

## Prayer Breakfast

If you'd like to get centered in God before  
 the day begins, join us for prayer and  
 breakfast (provided).

**Wednesdays 7:45 - 8:30 am.**

Birks Student Lounge.

Jill Foster, Presbyterian Chaplain, McGill  
 Chaplaincy. (SY)

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 (Discussion & Instruction  
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Regularly we offer free of charge to  
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 sessions for parents with babysit-  
 ting for children.

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 the MSPN coordinator at [mcgill-  
 spn@gmail.com](mailto:mcgill-<br/>
  spn@gmail.com) or at  
 (514) 398-4104

## Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting



Social get-togethers  
 Newman Centre, 3484 Peel  
 Contact Manjit Singh,  
 Chaplain  
[manjit.singh@mcgill.ca](mailto:manjit.singh@mcgill.ca)

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Fridays, 1-5 pm

Email: [RabbitHoleCafe@gmail.com](mailto:RabbitHoleCafe@gmail.com)



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 cussions on Jewish topics, Jewish feminist  
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 message boards, and much more!!!

3460 Stanley Street

(Hillel library)

845-9171 rab-

bi@hillel.ca

[www.hillel.ca](http://www.hillel.ca)



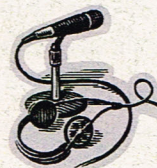
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 Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

**3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400**  
**Monday-Friday, 9:30-4:30**  
**398-4104**



## The Big Idea

Wednesday 7:30-8am  
 talk and music about  
 religion/spirituality

on CKUT 90.3 FM and @  
<http://bigideackut.blogspot.com>



Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volunteers  
 to work with seniors living in and around the McGill  
 Ghetto. No major time commitment required —  
 flexible hours, just a couple of hours per month! Great  
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Evening Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 4:30 pm

Eucharist Wed. 11:30 am (followed by lunch),

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All are welcome!

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