

# radix



**MCGILE'S STUDENT SPIRITUALITY MAGAZINE**  
**SUMMER 2019 - EVERYDAY SACRED**

# CONTENTS

---

- 3     **INTRODUCTION**  
          *CARLENE GARDNER*
- 4     **SACREDNESS IN ONENESS  
AND NUMEROUS-SELVES**  
          *JASSIM AHMED*
- 6     **A BEAUTIFUL THING**  
          *BRIANNA CHENG*
- 7     **HERE IN SPACE**  
          *BRIANNA CHENG*
- 8     **DRAWING**  
          *JM*
- 9     **SACRED SYNCRETISM AND PROTEANISM**  
          *ANONYMOUS*
- 10    **MCGILL'S SPIRITUAL  
STUDENT LEADERS**
- 11    **PHOTO**  
          *LIZ TKACH*
- 12    **WE ARE ALL**  
          *JEFFREY MACKIE*
- 13    **PHOTO**  
          *WAKABA*
- 14    **MYDAY.JAVA**  
          *BENJAMIN RUDSKI*
- 15    **COMMUNITY SHARE: EVERYDAY SACRED**
- 16    **RECOGNIZING THE SACRED IN OUR DAY:  
TIPS FROM IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA**  
          *REVEREND DR. JOHN MEEHAN, SJ*
- 16    **PHOTO**  
          *HELENA AUGUSTA LISBOA DE OLIVEIRA*
- 18    **MEET MORSL'S MULTI-FAITH TEAM**
- 19    **CLASSIFIEDS**

**RADIX** is a student-centred magazine providing literary and artistic space for expression on spiritual themes, produced by the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life. Visit us at: [mcgill.ca/morsl/radix-magazine](http://mcgill.ca/morsl/radix-magazine)

*Cover artist Jassim is a Bengali student of Computer Science and Philosophy who prides over his ability to read people's minds.*

*Back cover artist Helena is curious about the essence of matter and reality. She found answers to her questions in Spiritism.*

 @MORSL

 @MORSLMcGill

 @SpiritualMcGill

 morsl@mcgill.ca

## INTRODUCING EVERYDAY SACRED

---

Since this theme was chosen at the end of May, I've had many occasions to think about my daily routine, and where I might find the holiness in it. At first glance, "Everyday Sacred" might seem like a contradiction. After all, don't we usually think of the sacred as something set apart from our worldly concerns in this earthly life? What if we blurred the lines between those notions and indulged our desire for mystery and meaning at any moment we choose? To choose implies intention; in moments of more intentional living and being, we can find stillness, feel reverence for the beauty and kindness we take for granted, and give thanks. For me, part of my everyday sacred this summer has been as simple as taking just a second to brush my hands against some incredibly soft leaves on my way to work. To stop and smell the roses, as the proverbial saying goes, is often more than just a lighthearted break – through intention, that moment can nourish our spiritual selves, and make us feel grounded and connected. And blessed.

In this issue of Radix, we see in each piece collected here something of that common thread of intentionality. Father John's reflection on the Examen prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola is an intentional practice in itself. In "We Are All", Jeffrey Mackie reminds us to be present, and not just pass through. Jassim Ahmed illustrates the practice of seeking and striving – intentionally – to find the sacred in oneself. Benjamin Rudski demonstrates how his day is punctuated (literally!) with intentional moments of gratitude and humility. Brianna Cheng's poetic description of caring for an old violin shows us how a simple daily task can be transformed into an expression of love. Visual artists Liz, Wakaba, JM and Helena reveal the holy and sacred through elements of the natural world, if we only open our eyes to see the wonders before us each day.

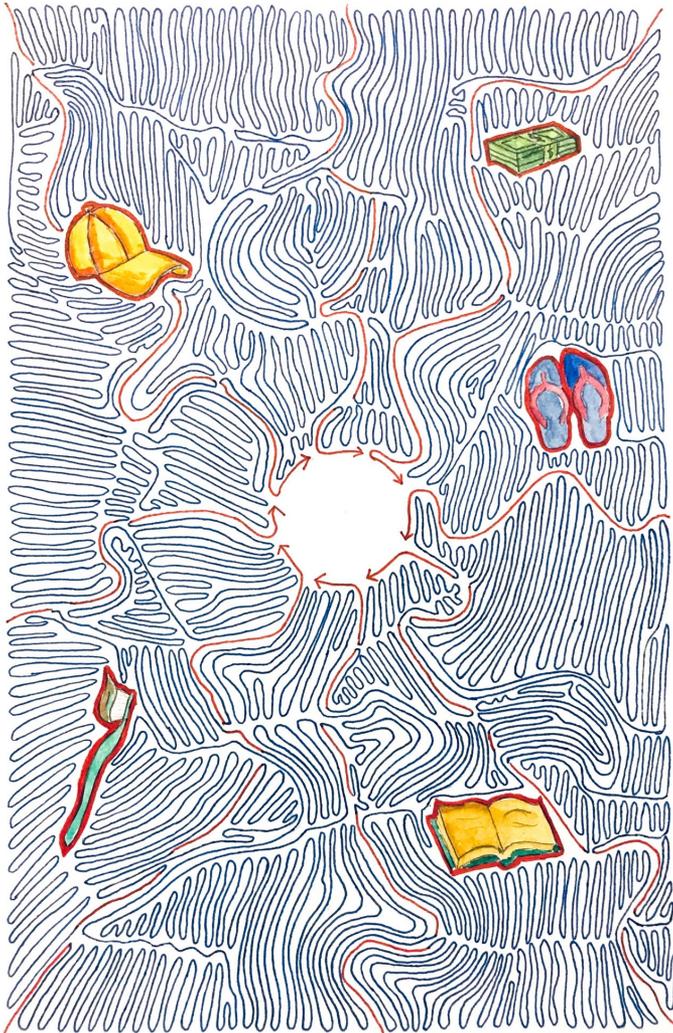
We are deeply grateful to the contributors to this issue of Radix for so generously sharing their own personal everyday sacred with us. As you browse through our magazine, we hope that these pages will awaken your senses to the many aspects of sacredness all around you. Take a break and allow yourself the time to feel these blessings - you might just discover that your day suddenly got a lot brighter!

*Carlene Gardner, Director of MORSL*



## *Sacredness in Oneself and Numerous-selves*

I have seen the sacred, and I have felt it.  
When I visited the two Forbidden Mosques.  
I saw the light of the world. Through a lens sacred.  
Refreshing all that's in my life and others around me.  
I saw the sacred in everything. A new breeze in life.  
That shook me conscious to see the value in all things.  
I plunged into the waters and found the smiting cold sacred.  
In the dead scarecrow driving away those alive.  
I witnessed the sacred.



Such is the sacred that touches down at every point. There's no noise made nor any clue given. To find this sacred, noise has to be made in the self. And then, the self must strive to understand it. When this understanding is ripe, it has the possibility to discern others. That is it can try to comprehend the sacredness of others, and in others. There's no limit to the sacred because if it did, God wouldn't be available at every time and place. If there's any limit to it, that limit is defined by the situation of the inner being. A rusty being, devoid of all sacredness, can hardly complain if he doesn't see any sacredness in the world. But on the other hand, the ripened person, the juicy watermelon of the tree, will feel the smell of musk from other objects. Their perfume will increase his, and thereby increase his vision. His increased vision will be yet another source of light for him to discern the world hidden to some open to others. Some may find similarity in this light with the light mentioned in the "Light upon Light" metaphor found in the Koran. There is, however, a crucial difference. Whereas the Koranic light is guidance from the indivisible One, here the light is oneself. Here the potential is not from the One, but from oneself, perhaps part of the One, but found in oneself.

The picture (left and on cover) is a representation of this reality of the path towards sacredness. The circular center is the obvious metaphor for unity of being—a totality that completes the personal self. But when and how does someone reach this unity? It is reached by taking myriad paths; there are four corner and four center beginnings indicated by red lines. Those red lines thereafter turn blue taking a complex route and finally the paths end around the circle with arrow marks. The red line indicates a starting point of every seeker. The seeker must pass through many ways, often a complex route, in order to reach the sacred within himself. This path is not devoid of daily existence. In fact, it is essential for him to recognize the spiritual value that his daily life can provide. When the mundane combined with his own spiritual path synergizes to produce goodness within him and those around him, only then does he walk in the true path of witnessing the sacred in everything. Such a task is difficult to do since his clothing, the wealth he earns, the books he reads, and even the way he rests his shoes must be done with a spell of consciousness of the sacred. How often does anyone see unity in the chaos? Not often. Because it takes a painful training to do so. It requires consciousness of oneself and others constantly and consistently until a time comes when everything is divine. His own being becomes part of the divine reality. Though this was always true, it becomes true for himself with instruction.

*Jassim is an artist/writer looking out for creative pursuits.  
Contact via Instagram (@jaxhmed) or email (md.ahmed@mail.mcgill.ca).*

# BRIANNA CHENG

---

## *a beautiful thing*

how do you love  
a beautiful thing?

who deserves to love  
a beautiful thing?

thing  
beautiful thing  
    a violin  
    a thing

holy in her chamber's warmth  
glowing in her amber tones awash  
her curves sigh  
beautiful thing

the métro dweller caressed her  
tried polishing this beautiful thing  
his blackened hands scrubbed her  
with some distant fervour  
and some noble goal  
to persist in futility

but maybe that's love  
to proffer ourselves whole  
though lacking and lost  
and accepting this too  
so we may love and be loved  
by a beautiful thing

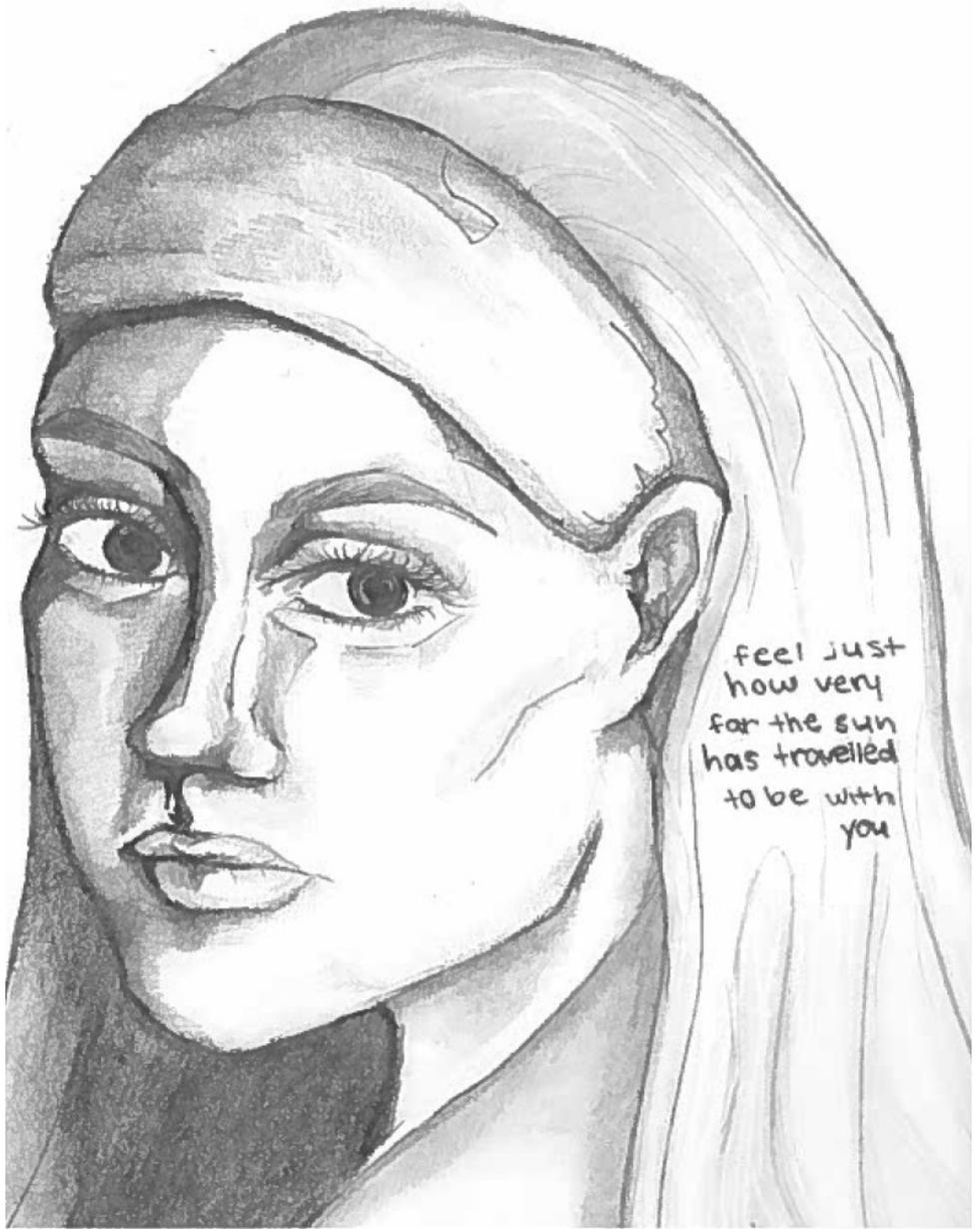
*here in space*

sacred passage  
hold me together  
help me remember  
quiet pleas uttered  
words expanding, rising  
like warm shower steam  
gently pervading, diffusing  
as i pass through these  
revolving doors again

gilded gates  
seal me in your pleural space  
a moment to think, a reprieve in suspense  
meditation guided by your heavy pace  
in a kind of watery shuffle  
with no sharpness of air  
not quite asleep  
not quite awake

carousel door  
what an insulation you are  
between my harried morning  
and my evening escape  
you are an interface  
from which i can  
rebound  
and recoil

*with courage, with joy, with brianna*



*Drawing by J.M.*

---

*Sacred Syncretism and Proteanism*

When I was younger and visiting my family in South America, I came across a statue, an event that has stayed with me since. It was a statue of Jesus on the Cross, above which were several symbols, both from Christianity and from the Quechua indigenous culture. Such syncretism is not uncommon, of course. Personally, whenever I think of it, I am moved, not by either of the cultural symbols, mind you, but by the amalgamation process itself. Witnessing social ideas rising and falling, merging and splitting, creating beautiful social offspring, is fascinating. There is something beautiful in such mixing of cultures, a kind of “sacredness” that is ever-present and creative.

This ubiquitous force of melding and merging can be quite subtle, working without most people’s notice. From the comedic genie in Disney’s Aladdin to your local yoga class, social merging and splitting is common in everyday activities. Changes do not always occur unnoticed, of course. There are groups that work to reduce such borrowing and merging of concepts from other cultures, often to avoid insulting or disenfranchising members of a social group. While this may be a laudable effort from a moral sense, I feel it will do little to stem the crashing waves of change. In the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the author, who is a character in his own book, is asked why he would write an anti-war book, since it is akin to writing an anti-glacier book. I hold an analogous view towards syncretism, although the belief that nothing can stem the movements of glaciers probably seems quaint considering the current climate crisis. A more current metaphor may be a person trying to stem the flow of waves with their hands.

Maybe my fascination with changing culture, elevating it to a beautiful process worthy of respect, comes from being an amalgamation of cultures myself. As my ancestry ranges from American indigenous to Middle Eastern cultures, the activities of my family have never been “purely” of this or that culture. Amalgamation was the norm.

Whatever the case, perhaps I am not alone, and other people see such ubiquitous and unstoppable social merging and splitting as beautiful and “sacred,” whether in a literal or metaphorical sense. We might call ourselves Protites, after the sea god Proteus, known for his shape shifting and an association to the ever-changing nature of water. Of course, who knows what my sweet Proteanism will become after others get their mitts on it. Alas, it is the way of things.

## MCGILL'S SPIRITUAL STUDENT LEADERS

---

As the new school year approaches, we reached out to some student leaders in our community to introduce themselves to new students. Through their work with their own clubs and with MORSL, these students help foster McGill's religious and spiritual side. We asked them about their faith background as well as their personal associations with this issue's theme, "Everyday Sacred."



"My favorite thing about Islam which is also tied to what 'Everyday Sacred' is to me is the religion's incredible capacity to put your heart at rest with the world. God says in the Holy Qur'an that '...Verily, in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest' (13:28). Another translation which tries to grasp as much of the richness of the original meaning is 'find satisfaction.' To always remember God and to truly realize that He is always close no matter what, is an extreme relief to me and to much of the Muslims around the world. In Everyday life, there is always an opportunity to remember God and to me the Sacred is best found in times of difficulty.

We are asked to never despair from any problems we face and to put our trust in whatever God has destined for us, be it our desired outcome or not. God says that '...perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not' (2:216). This is extremely crucial for my life here as a student where I often set expectations for myself. There are huge moments of difficulty, self-doubt and uncertainty, but having God by my side, I can often easily get through them. By realizing that, the One who knows all that has happened and will happen, and has put me in existence, surely knows what is best for me better than myself!

All of that sounds very good in theory, but is sometimes hard to keep in practice, especially when everything is going well! It's when life gets difficult and we feel alone that we tend to turn to God the most. We feel like He is really the only One who can truly understand and help us. It is also incidentally often in these situation that I find the Sacred!"

*Hamza Lahmimi is a member of the Muslim Students' Association which represents the Islamic faith on campus.*

“One of my favourite things about my faith is its principle of independent investigation of the truth. I think that has really driven me to become more curious and to not blindly accept things that people tell me. My idea of everyday sacred is the attitude in which I approach everything in my day. Approaching life with an attitude of service allows me to see inconsequential, and sometimes frustrating, parts of my day in a larger context and allows them to become expressions of the sacred.”



*Dylan Wong is a member of the Association of Baha'i Studies, which represents the Baha'i Faith.*

“To me, everyday sacred means any part of the day where I focus my thoughts inwards and clear my mind of any unnecessary/negative thoughts. I am best able to reach this mindset through yoga. It makes me feel more connected to myself, others, and my spirituality. I unfortunately don't do yoga every day so something sacred that's part of my everyday routine is listening to music. Whether it's through headphones, in the car, or blasting through speakers, it's a part of my day that brings me a lot of joy.”

*Julia Dunoyer is the president of the McGill Yoga Club.*



*Photograph by Liz Tkach, an accounting student who loves looking up at the stars and making her friends smile.*

# JEFFREY MACKIE

---

## *WE ARE ALL*

We could be barred from our own club  
For not wearing the right opinion  
Thinking the right thought  
Arriving bare faced to the masked ball.

We are all emotional,  
Emergencies waiting to happen

We are all undiscovered geniuses,  
And unrepentant sinners

We are all engaged in the important work,  
Of remaining alive

We are all put forth on our own,  
From time to time

Like models and film stars  
We have a good and a bad side  
A way that we want to be seen  
We may be open or closed about our past  
And worry about how long  
We will be the centre of attention.

If we arrive in last century's coat,  
Will we seen as daring and innovative  
Or merely retro?  
Will doors open and mouths close?  
We are all nursing wounds,  
That really should be looked at

We are all looking through windows,  
That could use a cleaning

We are all passing,  
When we should be present.

Are we like superheroes,  
Our talents and powers created,  
In the imagination of others?  
Drawn as how they would want  
A hero to be.

It takes strength to know,  
Your weaknesses.  
To design your own costume,  
And swing into action.

I am not as fearless as these words  
I awake at night not to fight crime  
But to battle doubt  
To pace, to pray  
To beg for the sun  
To rise again.

*Jeffrey Mackie is a Theology Student at Montreal Diocesan College.*



*Photograph by Wakaba, a McGill Master's student  
from the Rocky Mountains with Japanese-Shinto roots.*

# BENJAMIN RUDSKI

---

*Note from the author: As a student in computer science, I try to figure out how to represent the real world in terms of code that can be run by a computer. In my daily (or almost daily, taking the Sabbath into account) life, I often run into problems that I cannot figure out. When something finally works, my first reaction is usually “Thank G-d!”. This piece is an attempt to represent my daily coding in code. Often, the beauty of a working program is the sacred in my everyday.*

```
// MyDay.java
// Benjamin Rudski

/**
 * This program defines a pretty typical day in my life as an Orthodox Jew.
 * Please refrain from running it on the Sabbath or the Jewish Holidays. See
 * class MyHolyDay (not included) for the script for those days.
 */
public class MyDay{
    public static void doWork(){
        while (!work.complete){
            boolean success = doSmallWork();
            if (success){
                thankG_d();
            }
            else{
                askG_dForHelp();
            }
        }
    }
    public static void main(String args[]){
        // Beginning of day
        wakeUp();

        // Morning prayers
        say(prayers.Shacharit);

        doWork();

        if (currentLocation == "outside"){
            say(new prayers.custom("Thanks for the beauty of nature"));
        }

        // Take a lunch break. Remember to thank G_d
        eat(meals.Lunch);
        say(prayers.GraceAfterMeal);

        doWork();

        if (currentWeather == "Storm") ponder("G_d's strength and power in the
        Universe");

        else if (currentWeather == "Sun") say(new prayers.custom("Thanks for the
        beautiful weather"));

        // Afternoon prayers
        say(prayers.Mincha);

        eat(meals.Dinner);
        say(prayers.GraceAfterMeal);

        // Evening prayers
        say(prayers.Maariv);

        // End of day
        return;
    }
}
```

# COMMUNITY SHARE: EVERYDAY SACRED

---

the dappled afternoon light, the waxing July moon, the smell of the flowers.  
IT BRINGS ME PEACE. SACREDNESS FINDS ITS WAY INTO MY DAY-TO-  
DAY - music, plants, sleeping - but I try to make all of my moments sacred. I'm not good at this yet! So many things can be sacred -  
THINKING OF ALL I HAVE TO BE GRATEFUL FOR REMINDS ME HOW AMAZING THE WORLD IS!  
A great run for health and prayer. Judaism tells us that holiness is everywhere: in those around me; it brings me peace. Sacredness finds its way into my day-to-day - music, plants, sleeping - but I try to make all of my moments sacred. I'm not good at this yet! So many things can be sacred - thinking of all I have to be grateful for reminds me how amazing the world is!

Contributors: Ffion Hughes, Rabbi Ellen Greenspan,  
David Summerhays, Jeffrey Mackie

## REVEREND DR. JOHN MEEHAN, SJ

---

### *Recognizing the Sacred in Our Day: Tips from Ignatius of Loyola*

Our fast-paced lives can leave little time for reflection. Yet moments of calm reflection help us appreciate the many blessings of life. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”

But often we are too busy to notice this. Every day - and each moment of every day - the sacred tries to communicate its beauty, truth and wisdom but we can miss it if we are too busy or distracted. It's like being on a bus driving through a beautiful countryside - with the curtains closed.



*Photo by Helena Augusta Lisboa de Oliveira (bio on page 2).*

A practical way of finding the sacred in our daily life is the Examen prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Some have called it the “Examen of Consciousness” and, more than any other spiritual practice, it has helped me find the sacred each day. It can be done by anyone, of any religious persuasion or none, in five simple steps:

- 1. Realize you are in the presence of the Sacred:** Find a quiet space, one that brings you calm and peace. Feel free to dim the lights, burn some incense or repeat a sacred text or chant - whatever helps you connect with the sacred.
- 2. Slowly Review the Day:** Without forcing it in any way, gently let the events of the past day float up in your mind and wash over you. What stands out from today? What do you take away from the day (ie: highlights, key events, meetings, conversations)? Compare the day you planned with the day you actually experienced. Note how they differ and reflect on some of these sacred surprises.
- 3. Identify the Consolations & Desolations:** As you reflect on the day, where did you feel an increase of peace, joy, hope and love (consolation)? Where did you feel the opposite, an increase of fear, angst, despair and alienation (desolation)? Let the key moments return to you without judgment, guilt or condemnation. Feel free to linger or dwell on the moments of special significance, letting them nourish your spirit.
- 4. Thanksgiving:** Give thanks for all you received today, both the positive and negative moments. What have you learned about yourself from these? What might you do differently next time you are in this situation?
- 5. Look Forward to Tomorrow:** As you end this time of prayerful reflection, think of your plans for tomorrow. What are you most looking forward to? What gives you hope and joy? Now that you have found the sacred today, know that it will come to you again tomorrow, often in surprising ways.

This Examen exercise has become a daily practice for me, taking about 15 minutes each evening. When practiced faithfully, it can help us live more intentionally, less frenetically and more attuned to how the sacred comes to us each day. It opens our eyes to recognize the sacred, our ears to hear it and our hearts to feel it.

Happy reflecting!

*Rev. Dr. John Meehan, SJ is a Chaplain at the Newman Centre  
and a member of the MORSL Multifaith Network.*

# MEET MORSL'S MULTI-FAITH TEAM

---

**Adriana Cabera Cleves** *clevesadriana@gmail.com*

Adriana is our Bahá'í volunteer and serves as Director of the Inter-religious Affairs Bureau-External Affairs of the Montreal Bahá'í Community.



**Catherine Jarvis** *jarvis\_catherine1@hotmail.com*

Catherine is our volunteer with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She's also their Director of Public Affairs for Quebec.

**Father Ihor Kutash** *ikutash@gmail.com*

Father Ihor is our Orthodox Christian volunteer. He is a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada and a theology professor.



**Rev. Jean-Daniel Williams** *jd@mcgillprotestant.ca*

Jean-Daniel is our Protestant volunteer, sponsored by the United and Anglican Churches of Canada.

**Rev. Mr. Jonathan Stewart** *jonathanchristopherstewart@gmail.com*

Jonathan is our Gnostic Faith volunteer. He's long had a passion for all things Gnostic, esoteric, and mystical.

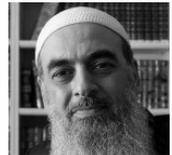


**Rabbi Shmuly Weiss** *shmuly@chabadmcgill.com*

Shmuly, our Chabad Rabbi, leads the Chabad Student Center on Peel, where they offer spiritual growth, and personal guidance.

**Imam Salam Elmenyawi** *smenyawi@gmail.com*

Salam, our non-denominational Muslim volunteer, serves both McGill and Concordia, and also presides the Muslim Council of Montreal.



**Nicole Perkins and David Summerhays**

*nicole.perkins@mail.mcgill.ca; david.summerhays@pm.me*

Nicole and David are our Quaker volunteers. Nicole is available for a chat about faith, and David helps to organize meditations in the Quaker tradition.

**Rabbi Ellen Greenspan** *rabbigreenspan@templemontreal.ca*

Rabbi Greenspan has been serving as the Rabbi-Educator at Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom in Westmount since 2014.



**Juss Kaur** *juss.kaur.magon@mcgill.ca*

Juss is our Sikh volunteer. She is open to chat over tea with Sikh students or anyone with questions about Sikhism.

**2019 DISCOVER SPIRITUAL  
MCGILL FAIR**

Get ready for the 2nd Annual Discover Spiritual McGill fair on September 26 in the Brown Building. This event showcases our rich religious and spiritual life on campus, with special focus on student communities. Curious? Mark your calendar and stop by to browse our exhibits and attend our panels and workshops! Come explore the three dimensions of our 2019 theme, Care: Self-Care (wellness), Care for Others (social justice), and Care for Creation (environmentalism).

*Who:* All members of the McGill community interested in learning about how spirituality intersects with wellness, social justice and climate action.

*Why:* Learning about different faiths is an important part of being a global citizen and a first step toward understanding each other's world view. This Fair is an excellent opportunity to talk to people about their faith, their beliefs, spiritual practices and celebrations, and to understand what role these things play in their life, especially as it relates to wellness, creating a more just and equitable world, and offering unique approaches to combating climate change.

**MY NEIGHBOUR'S FAITH SERIES**

This series of regular visits to Montreal's places of worship provides a guided experience of various world religions being practiced in the city. Email us at [morsl@mcgill.ca](mailto:morsl@mcgill.ca) to join the mailing list!

**COLLOQUIUM ON RELIGION  
& CLIMATE CHANGE**

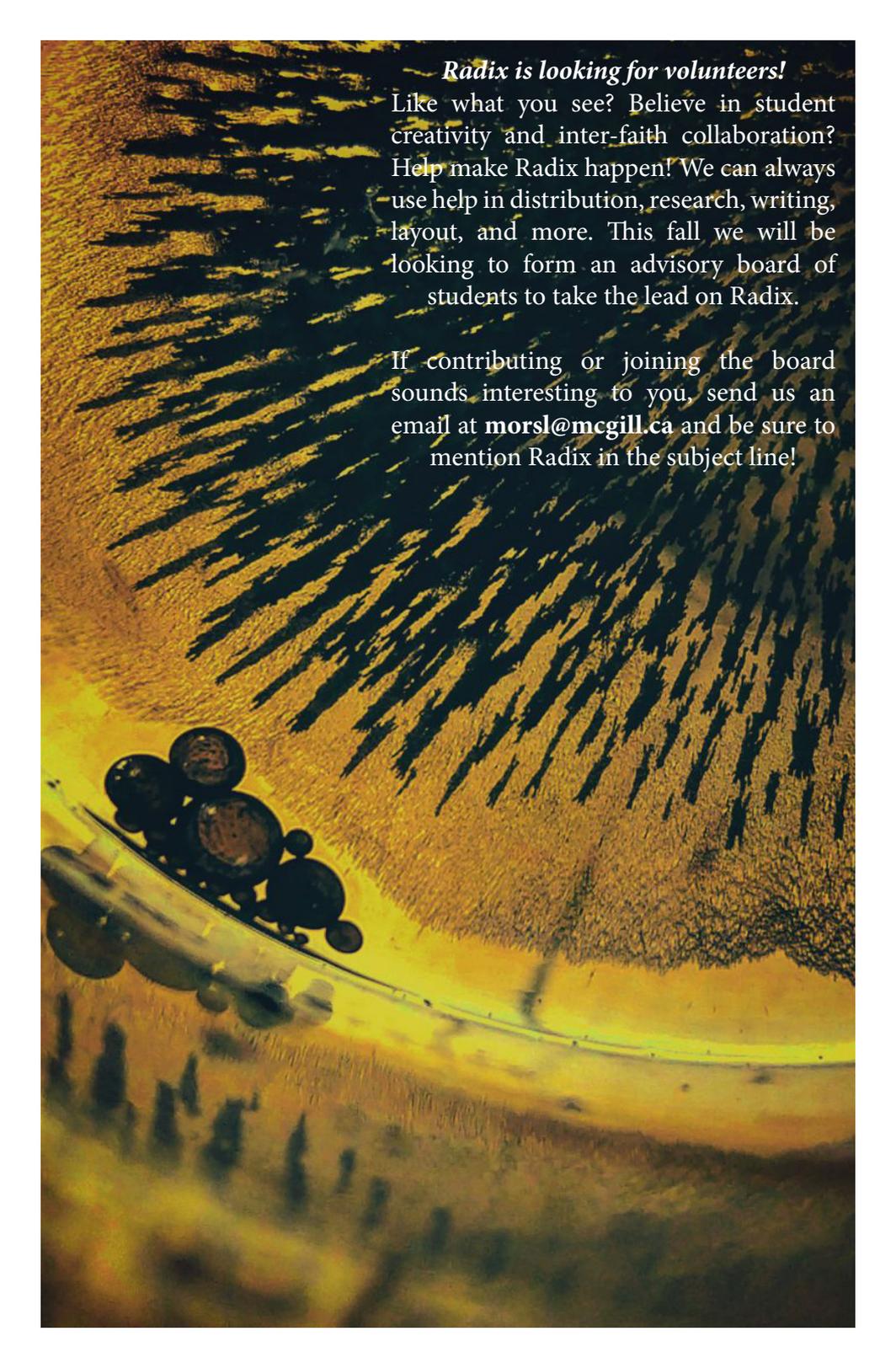
Organized by CREOR, this colloquium will take place on September 20th 2019 in the Birks building. Several McGill scholars will discuss the many intersections between religion and climate change and how handed-over traditions from ancient times and from east and west can inform how to better respond to the effects of present-day climate change. This includes not only catastrophic influences to the natural world, but also encompasses changes to our lives, our hopes and fears (increased anxiety, depression, doomsday feelings) as well as changes in society and politics (from new literary and movie genres, to discussions about divesting, immigration politics, inter-national relations etc.). With Professors Stephanie Posthumus, David Barney, Gregory Mikkelson, David Goodin and others.

**MORSL INTERFAITH LOUNGE**

Tea, cocoa and couches in a welcoming space. Come for the meditation and prayer room or our selection of books on religion, spirituality, and colouring. Open M-F 10am-4pm. 3495 Rue University, 2nd floor.

**MIDWEEK QUAKER MEDITATION**

During the academic year, the Montreal midweek Quaker Meeting meets Wednesdays 17:30-18:30 in the Ryan Library on the 2nd floor of the Newman Centre (3484 Peel Street). Keep an eye on our Facebook group for updates: [Facebook.com/groups/MTLMidweek](https://www.facebook.com/groups/MTLMidweek).

An aerial photograph of a forest at sunset. The trees are silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sky. A road curves through the forest, and a car is visible on it. The overall mood is serene and golden.

***Radix is looking for volunteers!***

Like what you see? Believe in student creativity and inter-faith collaboration? Help make Radix happen! We can always use help in distribution, research, writing, layout, and more. This fall we will be looking to form an advisory board of students to take the lead on Radix.

If contributing or joining the board sounds interesting to you, send us an email at [morsl@mcgill.ca](mailto:morsl@mcgill.ca) and be sure to mention Radix in the subject line!