



## Special Session on Interfaith Dialogue

November 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 from 5:30pm- 6:30 pm.

This interactive session by MORSL sought to introduce participants to the value of interfaith dialogue and open a discussion on how we can foster more interfaith on campus. Participants were invited to identify obstacles to interfaith and propose suggestions for future action. McGill student faith club leaders and MORSL volunteers were joined by special guests from the Concordia Multifaith and Spirituality Centre (MfSC).

### Present

- Adriana Cabrera Cleves- Baha'i
- Ahamed Ghawanmeh-MSA student
- Ariel Pan-Newman student
- Aviya Cammy-McGill Hillel students
- Candice Wendt- LDS volunteer
- Carlene Gardner-Director, MORSL
- Cassie Powell- Power to change student
- Chloe Liu- McGill Graduate Christian Fellowship student
- Elisheva Eisenberg- McGill Hillel student
- Fr. Anthony Atansi– Chaplain, Newman Centre
- Fr. Ihor Kutash- Ukrainian Orthodox
- Manum Shahid- SSMU student
- Mathew Birgen-MORSL staff
- Nancy Kaul-Dharma Society student
- Olivia Bala- LDS student
- Rev. Ellie Hummel-Chaplain and Coordinator of MfSC Concordia
- Sonia Masand- Interfaith Facilitator, MfSC Concordia

### Brief remarks on the value of interfaith dialogue

1. Why Interfaith?
  - a. Rev. Ellie Hummel
    - Interfaith offers an opportunity to work together around areas of commonality
    - Interfaith offers community
    - It provides an understanding of the other in a more friendly environment
  - b. Sonia Masand
    - Interfaith is a source of building community
    - You get to see resilience and strength when people of different faith come to work together, especially during COVID-19
  - c. Mathew Birgen
    - Religions seeks to respond to human needs, so we can live successfully in being human. Goal of interfaith is to seek ways through which we achieve this goal, with results like the charter on human rights.
    - Interfaith work has led to improved social relations. At the heart of interfaith work is to establish a society that can live with its conscience.

d. Carlene Gardner

- We experience rich conversation when we engage different faiths. We can learn from each other and integrate elements from various religions.

Report from Breakout sessions

(Discussing participants' experience with interfaith work/dialogue, hindrances to doing interfaith dialogue/work, Suggest ideas/way forward)

1. Motivations for and Experiences with Interfaith

- Most students have experienced a semi-interfaith work among different denominations within their own religion/faith.

- Enrich own faith, allows for more introspection and deeper understanding

- Interfaith experiences within one's own family are not uncommon

2. Hindrances/challenges to doing interfaith events

- Time restraints; organizing activities can be time consuming. Faith club leaders are already busy and sometimes they would like to do all these great projects but they get more involved with their own club activities, beside their school work.

- Lack of leadership and/ or precedence on how to do interfaith work.

  - Tied to the leadership challenge is the huge turnover of executive leadership every year as students graduate. Thus, no leader is able to see their major projects run to fruition.

  - Covid challenges; people are strained in what they can or cannot do. Interfaith activities can tend to attract more people hence hard to imagine logistics around COVID-19 regulations.

3. Ideas/Suggestions.

- Faith clubs can host signature events and then invite other faith clubs to join in. This would make it easy in terms of planning. Such events can stir conversations among attendees. They also serve to establish relationship, strengthen existing ones and grow their own faith.

- The nature of events should be social e.g. meals to the streets for the homeless etc.

- Stand on common ground

- Can work on a specific topic (social and practical)

- Need to frame the scope of the conversation

Brainstorming Future Actions

- Start with events that can get people going and talking with one another (for precedent setting).
- Activities that are geared towards means of knowledge preservation.
- Work on a topic but within a framework e.g. talk about Bill 21.
- Set ground rules, e.g. no proselytizing.
- Key: Start small even with small social events that can bring two or three people into conversation with one another. Small conversations matter a lot in this context.

**Meeting closed at 6:40 pm.**