



**MCGILL OFFICE
OF RELIGIOUS AND
SPIRITUAL LIFE**

**MULTI
FAITH NETWORK**

Report of MORSL's Winter Multi-Faith Network Meeting -- Thursday March 25, 2021

Part one: Welcome and introductions

Members present.

1. Chloe Liu
2. Sharon Dwozark
3. Karl-Antoine Hague
4. Ffion Hughes
5. Jasroop Seran
6. Babatunde Alli
7. Regina Basumatary
8. Laurianne Debanné
9. Jeremy Ross
10. Alhusain Abdalla
11. Mustafah Fakhri
12. Sara Elkady
13. Ariel Pan

14. Bell Pan
15. Adriana Cabrera Cleves
16. Peter Xing
17. Shreya Mahasenan
18. Juss Kaur
19. Carlene Gardners-MORSL
20. Mathew Birgen-MORSL

Members absent.¹

1. Sophie Sklar
2. Godswill Agbofode
3. Olivia Bala
4. Abigail Drach

Part two: MORSL Updates

1. Remote Fall Programs.
 - Weekly Programs
 - Meditation technique classes
 - Spiritual yoga off the mat
 - Midweek Morsl with Morsl

Challenges: We had no in-person activities and so ours was mostly an experimentation with the digital programming. Overall, there was recorded a low attendance to these programs as well as for our virtual tabling events.

- Special programs
- Discover McGill spiritual fair. (Cultivating hope)
2. Our winter initiatives
 - We had more ad-hoc events with our partners off-campus.
 - Mental health, religious diversity, equity and inclusion and spiritual centering.

Challenges: Challenges of curfew, fatigue, little interaction on virtual tabling.

- Our digital efforts
 - Good news- we had almost the same reach as our newsletter. We also have a small but growing Instagram page.

¹ These are members who had confirmed attendance but were unable to attend the meeting.

- Not so good news: We noted a 50% reduced website traffic compared to last year, and we saw a 40% reduced reach with our Facebook page.
 - Some new digital campaigns: We have programs including “How I celebrate” series, cross promoting with other FB/IG pages, and we are expanding our YouTube offerings (now 20+ hours of content).
3. Our Summer tentative plans.
- We are currently brainstorming ideas. We welcome your suggestions.
 - Tentative events for May and early June.
 - Website update to enhance accessibility.
 - Internal planning for Fall semester (Mathew and Carlene)
 - Recruiting workshop leaders and students’ staff for the fall
 - Big events: Parliament for the world religions is set to take place online from October 17-18, 2021.

Part Three: Group Updates

1. Power to Change (Laurianne).

- Success
 - Their discipleship program and small group activities continues to register consistency. In January they had a bigger event themed “Relevant week” that had more people attend.
- Summer plans:
 - They plan on hosting small group once a week to help stay connected.
- Challenges:
 - Getting more people attend some of their low-key activities. Additionally, planning for future events has been hard since it is unclear whether in-person activities will have resumed, or online connections will continue.

2. McGill Sikh students association (Jasroop)

- Success
 - They have experienced consistent attendance to their prayer meetings every day from 7-8 pm.
 - They hosted some speaker series and invited speakers from England and other places. These series drew in more attendance from their club membership and beyond.
 - They were able to do events focusing on wellness and cultivating hope using art.
- Summer Plans
 - They plan on doing some quiz nights in order to keep the connection going.
 - The online meetings on Tuesday and Saturday evenings continues to remain open to anyone willing to join.
- Challenges
 - Online programming continues to be a challenge as interpersonal connection is made impossible.

3. Newman Catholic Students center (Ariel).

- Success
 - They opted for smaller events rather their usual programs. They have recorded a consistent number of students turn out to these events.
 - The Bi-weekly Friday nights social games have also fostered connection among members.
 - They revamped their social media platform: Instagram after the account was dormant for some time. Due to social media promotion, more people became aware of their programs and started attending. This was rewarding.
 - They come together to listen to a Bible broadcast and discuss
- Summer plans
 - They are hosting a talk by a community seminarian on a topic TBD.
 - They will have elections and transition of club leadership.
- Challenges
 - Some events are popular, and some aren't. Also, timing and planning of these events has been a challenge.

4. Falun Dafa (Peter).

- Success
 - They were able to continue their physical exercise sessions via online platform for 2.5 hrs.
 - They have been to connect with 10 other groups in various universities in North America. Together they did a movie watch-party.
- Summer plans
 - Continue similar events i.e., more movies.
 - Might consider outdoor events too.
- Challenges
 - Less number of people are attending their weekly reading and sharing time.

5. Muslim Students Association (Mustafa).

- Success
 - They have changed to a student service, as voted in recent SSMU referendum.
 - Educational courses/programs continue to draw a consistent attendance. Speakers to these events have come from beyond Montreal especially made possible through the online access. Less engagement in ad hoc events.
 - There are some new members registering into the group.
 - Quran reading and recitation (sisters) class ongoing on Saturdays.
- Summer plans
 - Preparation for the month of Ramadan, from April 12- May 10.
 - Game nights events to continue.
 - There is going to be a new team of leaders coming into office.
- Challenges

- There is noted a limited participation.
- No access to Friday prayers due to ongoing public health regulations

6. Graduate Christian Fellowship (Chloe).

- Success
 - They continue to have their regular weekly Monday fellowship.
 - Attendance is stable for evening programs.
 - Through this live online discussion, the focus on topics related to the life as students on campus as well as hope in time of covid.
- Summer/future plans
 - They hope to have in person programs.
 - They hope to increase their membership.
- Challenges
 - Changes in leadership and structure.

7. St. Martha's chapel (Ffion)

- Success
 - Weekly Sunday evening services-community led.
 - Wednesday night games and Saturday bible study
 - Hosted an event with a local pastor and a Rabbi.
- Summer plans
 - TBD.
- Challenges
 - They miss seeing each other in person.

8. Dharma Society- application in process (Shreya)

- Success
 - They have managed to put up a team and a document to submit to SSMU for recognition.
 - Their social media promotion invitation to students enabled them to get requisite support for application to SSMU and more people are interested to know about them. They received amazing support.
- Challenges
 - Their application to SSMU was turned down. They are trying to demonstrate a distinction between religion and nationality based religion.
- Summer /future plans.
 - They hope to pursue certification process with SSMU and working with them to move forward and to have more visibility on campus.
 - Engage in more educational activities and information promotion on campus. There is more curiosity and sustained interest in this tradition.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS.

1. Baha'i Community (Adriana).
 - They currently run community building activities, meaningful conversation around topics of interest and topics of concern.
 - These activities are open to everyone.
 - They have study groups focused on capacity building.
 - Art and interfaith activities.
 - From 1st-19th March, members observed fasting period.
 - Friends of humanity-Focused conversation and activities around human rights.
 - There are new students soon joining McGill university who will form part of Baha'i community.
2. A & P Presbyterian Church (Sharon)
 - They host weekly meetings to discuss varying topics in groups. Topics suggested by students.
 - Involvement in community service e.g. the volunteering (500 bags for Christmas) but more such opportunities have thinned out lately due public health regulation.
 - Coldest night of the year walk was a success. It is aimed as a way to connect with the homeless.
 - Weekly study groups. They choose two books to study for an hour for six weeks.
 - Movie nights in the future. She needs help with logistics.
 - In the summer, they hope to have a re-union, perhaps a picnic, or some form of outdoors gathering.
 - Low attendance to their programs has due to zoom fatigue has been a challenge.
3. Church of the Latter Day-Saints (Candice).
 - Visited young singles adulthood congregation. Wants to do training on interfaith work.
 - They hosted a fire-side conversation event on mental health.
 - Challenges noted: there is a young adult social media platform that she has no control over and yet there is need for more connection. She is thinking of setting up a new social media platform for Latter Day Saints Mcgillians in order to connect and to stay in touch.

STUDENT GOVERNMENTS.

1. MCGSS-Karl-Antoine
 - The campus currently experiences slow pace for community life is mostly happening online.
 - They have had Yoga, meditation and wellness activities.
 - They won't be having any programs in the summer since the campus is basically closed. More activities will pick up in the fall.
2. MCGSS-Regina
 - She is new to MCGSS, after election for different positions.
 - They have been sharing information on scholarships.

3. PGSSS-Babatunde

- No in-person activities due to health guidelines
 - Lower costs allowed more “travel” awards for virtual conferences.
- They are programming for graduate students’ symposiums.
- Usual activities happening on Zoom and they are consistent e.g., French lessons continue to register consistent attendance. No decline in interest.
- Focus on the health of graduate students. Keep me safe programs-free mental health services offered in 60 languages available 24/7.
- They are also implementing new doctor access for mental health services for graduate students.

Part four: What’s Next – Assessing Needs and Planning for Fall

MORSL aims:

- To learn more about student needs in these unique times and how we can help meet them
- To continue to nurture our interfaith community through events like Discover Spiritual McGill, the Multi-faith network and ad-hoc partnerships on events
- To support our student groups and help enhance religious & spiritual life on campus

Break out sessions

Needs:

- An interfaith worship/event similar to the commemoration event would be good since students found the commemoration services very meaningful. It will also help bring all faiths together.
- Help with connecting graduate student groups to PGSS, more awareness that these student clubs exist and are active on campus
- Help with transitioning new club executives into the cycle of annual events at McGill and MORSL
- More interfaith events like Trivia Nights with MORSL

Challenges:

- Leaders are struggling to run programs via online platforms. They need some training.
- Interfaith discussion that also brings in SSMU
- Club listing: one of their groups had their application turned down on the basis that it was redundant.
- Groups to be included in weekly communication.

Fall Planning (In view of Principal's town hall meeting)

1. Assumptions

- Resumption of in-person classes, with some exceptions
- Probably have some level of public health measures
- Technology/Zoom likely to keep a foothold.

4. No official word on in-person events for student clubs and university gatherings (e.g., orientation, social events).

- This is a challenge for us as we plan for next year.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting ended at 7:30 pm.