



**MCGILL OFFICE  
OF RELIGIOUS AND  
SPIRITUAL LIFE**

# Multi-Faith Network Winter 2020 Part 2

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Author(s): Anna Stafford  
Approved: Carlene Gardner (2020-04-09)

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## Introduction

We decided to hold a second Multi-Faith Network meeting this semester because of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. We held another Zoom Multi-Faith Network on Monday April 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 to check in with our network, receive updates on their locations and programming since things are changing so quickly, and begin to potentially plan an online interfaith event for May.

## Overview of Winter 2020 Multi-Faith Network Part 2

Most of our faith communities have remained well connected throughout the pandemic, some feel they are even more connected than before! They have each found their way navigating online programming and appear to be doing well. There are certainly high stress and anxiety levels, as well as increased loneliness, leading to our discussion about planning an interfaith event addressing mental and spiritual wellness in light of COVID-19.

## How are your students coping with COVID-19? Have some left Montreal? Programming?

Father Ihor (Orthodox Christian faith volunteer): Their group is continuing Tuesday night bible studies with about the same small group as in the beginning of the year. Various Orthodox churches are continuing Easter plans, including St. Sophie's (his church) which has offered several live-streamed services via Facebook live. They have adapted social-distancing versions of sacraments. The OCF student group is still very vibrant and engaged.

Sarah Alevy (Am McGill student rep): Most of their out-of-town membership have gone home, but many who are graduating have stayed in Montreal. Passover is coming up and they have created a document on how to put on a Seder during quarantine which is posted on their Facebook page. Many people are doing virtual Seders.

Giordan (Newman Catholics student rep): The McGill and Concordia student groups are running nightly rosaries online; there are virtual Mass reading sessions, and the students are offering even more programming than they have in the past! Most students have gone home. Some students are as far away as Hong Kong but attend online events.

Father Joachim (Newman Centre): The centre itself has closed. There is some online programming. Prayer meetings are happening at 3pm for example. Palm Sunday and Holy Week are coming up so they are encouraging students to listen to the Bishop or the Pope online. There are online prayer services happening throughout the week.

Gabriel (IJV student rep): Many people have gone home (many from the States), and it has been a hard transition to online programming. IJV usually does Shabbats and workshops in person and they are having a difficult time now because of that, and because it's a generally stressful time. IJV McGill is a part of IJV Canada which is offering online workshops and programming. Will consult Am McGill's suggestions for online Seders and will share with their network.

William Jin (Falun Dafa student rep): Members are studying teachings online, doing exercises individually at home, most members are still in Montreal (many are from here).

Omar Eidabat (Muslim faith volunteer): Weekly online programming run through Sanad Collective (shared through MORSL's facebook). There are kids programs, prayer programs, and more. They are offering lots of programming through Facebook live. Ramadan is in two weeks which will feel very different this year, since Ramadan is all about community. MSA is starting a Zoom-based weekly halaqa class on Wednesdays at \*pm with Razia Hamidi (background as a Muslim premarital counsellor).

Candice Wendt (LDS): The LDS community just had their 10-hour general conference live streamed. They have decided to fast with other dominations on Good Friday, though they don't normally, out of solidarity. Candice herself is not very connected with the students, as hers is a largely family-based congregation. They are confronting the challenge of how to administer sacraments, particularly to single women living alone. Older community members are struggling with the technological learning curve.

David Summerhays (Quaker faith volunteer): Still virtually meeting every Wednesday. Things are going well.

We were pleased to learn that our faith communities have mainly remained very engaged and connected. We think perhaps this means faith communities will explore online methods of engagement even once the pandemic has ended.

## Mental and Spiritual Health Programming

We began discussing the possibility of creating programming addressing mental and spiritual wellness together, since online programming appears to be very effective. We decided we will explore an Interfaith panel on the intersections of mental health and spirituality, as well as how the online communication aspect is affecting communities. The panelists will include a mix of students and non-students from our communities.

We will likely hold the panel over Zoom since most of the McGill community has become familiar with this platform in the past few weeks. We are keeping security concerns in mind with Zoom, but since this will be a public event we are not too concerned.

We will hold this event in May, once students are done exams. Right now students still have a lot to keep them busy as they complete assignments and exams to finish the semester. Into the summer when fewer students (if any) are doing classwork, they might run into more difficulty with keeping busy, keeping a routine, and staying connected with the McGill community in general. Right now people seem plugged in, but in May things might become more challenging.

Panelists: A mix of students and non-students. If you have suggestions for potential speakers please email us!

## Update from MORSL

We have lots of online programming continuing regularly! We hold Tuesday night yoga class over Facebook live, Wednesday night meditation sessions over Zoom, and in late April/May we will hold a meditation techniques class. On Thursday April 16<sup>th</sup> we have a MORSL trivia night over zoom!

## Conclusion

Upon concluding this network we will begin planning our Interfaith Panel on Mental and Spiritual Health in light of COVID-19. We were very glad we could connect with our community even in these strange times, and are hopeful about and aware of the positives that have arisen out of the current circumstances, and mindful of the unique set of challenges that students, and everyone, are facing and will continue to face. We will remain connected in the coming months and reassess the situation and the best means of programming continually.