



**MCGILL OFFICE
OF RELIGIOUS AND
SPIRITUAL LIFE**

Multi-Faith Network Fall 2020

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Introduction

The Fall 2020 Multi-Faith Network meeting took place on **Thursday October 1st** from 6:00PM to 7:00PM. In addition to 3 MORSL staff members, 9 people attended from the various faith clubs and organizations, including both students and non-student partners. The meeting was held over Zoom due to the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. The main purpose of this meeting was to share updates from the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, get updates from faith clubs and associations on campus, and from faith volunteers. It was also to set in motion the planning for the Discover Spiritual McGill Fair 2020.

Most of the attendees connected from Montreal.

Update on MORSL activities

There are new COVID guidelines in place that have meant closing all in-person services and activities. MORSL had already moved its activities to online platforms (e.g. Zoom) but we were unable to reopen our lounge, and non-denominational prayer and meditation space. Campus access was available briefly during late August and September, and it was during that time that MORSL moved into its new offices located on 3610 McTavish with a larger meditation room. The offices are currently closed as long as the university is closed for non-teaching and non-essential services. A new staff and volunteer have joined the MORSL team; Vella Abur as Student Engagement (clubs liaison) and Ramla Barise as the female peer Muslim faith volunteer. There has been a total of 50 events since the lockdown with approximately 400 participants.

Updates from the Clubs and Faith Volunteers

Lauren Goldman – Hillel staff: Had a slow start to the year, students are zoomed out. Celebrated Rosh Hashanah and are now ramping up for sukkot. They have Friday Shabbat packages and are still planning virtual events

Jordan Drury/Fr Joachim Ostermann – Newman Catholic Students Society / Newman Center: Has a physical center and are social distancing and complying with the COVID rules. Will be having a games night, arts and crafts. Fish frosh really helped as the executives were already leaders which made planning easy. Haven't discussed yet what is happening at Christmas. The Red zone severely limits what they can do, now mass is open only to those who live in the center.

Omar Edaibat– Muslim Faith Volunteer: MSA has interesting events online and is in touch with Yasin Dwyer who gives a weekly series on Thursdays. Had to stop gatherings for Friday prayers, no real Friday service online, adapt by praying more frequently or in smaller circles. There are one-on-one meetings with those who need it.

Morgan Fournier – InterVarsity McGill Christian Fellowship: Regular Bible studies online with daily prayer at different times of the day. Have an online event every 2 weeks on Mondays. Everything online a huge barrier, lower participation. First year students need help connecting with other people, very isolating experience

Sarah Alevy - Am McGill: Semester OK so far, lower attendance, fewer new students who come and stay. Some success with delivery of food to break the fast. More virtual shabbats and Havdalah's once or twice a month. Planning a panel with the MSA on Oct 15th (Jewish & Muslim stories, similarities). Might have some more social events like learning how to cook something.

Rakeea Chesick Gordis – McGill Chavurah: The club is completely student-run and changes each year with new student leadership/membership. Focus has been on shabbat dinners and service in the past and included dinners at students' apartments. There's not so much going on now with the lockdown, and they don't do online events for Shabbat or on holidays as the club is more traditional. Had an event in Jeanne-Mance park on 2nd day of Rosh Hashanah (20 people). Partnered with Am McGill on challah baking, and the Mile End Chavurah. Re-evaluating now and trying to collaborate with other groups.

God'swill Agbofode – InterVarsity International Student Ministry: Community involvement and membership is hard, used to hold weekly meetings, attendance dropped. Outreach to new students is a major problem because of focus on International students. Tried using outlets like Fish Frosh and virtual events that got a lot of views but didn't really get a lot of one on one sessions. Continued with the Bible session. Lower attention span online. Hold events every 2 weeks. Usually have a Christmas camp but not likely to happen. Unsure at the moment if they will hold anything online.

Olivia Bala – Church of the Latter-Day Saints: Has been doing pretty well, in Institutes with religious classes a few times a week. Some service projects had to either adapt to online format or got canceled. Increased their workshops and participation. Worldwide broadcast of LDS church coming up that they will tune in to watch together.

Sikh students (report given via email): Full calendar, calligraphy workshops, charity events and a talk session to follow in November. Launched Instagram page. Can now reach wider audience through the virtual platform.

Ethan Burg – Independent Jewish Voices: Had a successful event for Rosh Hashanah and some outside events early in the semester, but no inside events at this point. In-person events canceled until 2021. Plan on doing informal events on Zoom, community building, perhaps invite a speaker or a virtual speaker.

Falun Dafa (report given via email): Hold weekly exercise workshops(online) and are having a collaborative movie screening with clubs from other universities.

Discover Spiritual McGill 2020

The proposed theme for the fair is **Hope** scheduled for November 2-5. The fair is to be held virtually with different events spanning four days. We asked for input from the club leaders and faith volunteers in terms of planning, what activities to have and ideas of what activities to have. It was proposed that clubs with activities happening that week could convert them for the fair, if appropriate.

The suggestions included:

- LDS – have regular workshops with a faith leader; could do one about the theme.
- Interfaith panel on Hope and Faith
- Multifaith concert of hope: **Jordan Drury, Omar Edaibat, evangelical choir, Olivia Bala**
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Art session
- Panels with students, with faith volunteers
- Movie night
- Potluck over zoom

The attendees agreed that Hope was a good theme because it is something everyone needs in this season of the pandemic.

MORSL will follow up with the individual clubs to coordinate the event calendar for the week.

Conclusion

Like the rest of campus life at McGill, our faith clubs are continually trying to innovate and serve their members via remote platforms. As the situation changes, it is important to keep in touch and to leverage our interfaith community for support and outreach. The Discover Spiritual McGill fair will be a good opportunity to come together again, and the MFN attendees were happy to give input on planning the fair and are looking forward to the event.